



Special Olympics

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS COACHING GUIDE



Acknowledgements

Special Olympics wishes to thank the professionals, volunteers, coaches and athletes who helped in the production of the *Rhythmic Gymnastics Coaching Guide*. They have helped fulfill the mission of Special Olympics: to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people 8 years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Special Olympics welcomes your ideas and comments for future revisions of this guide. We apologize if, for any reason, an acknowledgement has been inadvertently omitted.

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Special Thanks To the Following for All of Your Help and Support

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Planning a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training &
Competition Season



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Goals

Realistic yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Please see the Principles of Coaching section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

Benefits of Goal Setting

- ♦ Allows the coach to measure the athletes' development and improvement
- ♦ Allows the coach to take a progressive approach to training
- ♦ Allows the coach to manage the training sessions more efficiently
- ♦ Teaches organization and time management for both coaches and athletes
- ♦ Gives the athletes clear expectations
- ♦ Puts the athletes' focus on personal achievement during training, rather than the outcome of the competition

Goal Setting and Motivation

Developing Self-Confidence through Goal Setting

Accomplishing goals at practice in settings similar to the competition environment will instill confidence. The main features of goal setting include:

1. Goals should be set jointly by the coach and athlete.
 - ♦ Goals that seem realistic to the coach may seem unattainable to the athlete because of a lack of self-confidence. For example, you may feel the athlete can toss and catch the ball with one hand, while the athlete may not have the confidence to see that as a realistic goal. Perhaps set the goal of tossing with one hand and catching with two hands until the athlete has the confidence to try one hand catches.
2. Goals must be structured as short-term, intermediate and long-term.
 - ♦ At the beginning of the season, short term goals would be learning body and apparatus skills. Intermediate goals would be combining the apparatus skills with body movements in sequences from the competitive routines. Long-term goals would be perfecting routines and participating in competitions.
3. Goals should be viewed as stepping stones to success.
 - ♦ Break complex skills down into parts. Each part is a goal to be accomplished and praised. For example, if the athlete's goal is to jump three times consecutively over the turning rope, begin with jumps over the rope in a U-shape. Then, practice just the overhead swing. Finally, combine the swing with one jump over the rope. The athlete can add more jumps as he/she becomes more confident. By breaking the skill down into parts that the athlete can accomplish, you can make a seemingly unattainable goal become realistic with small stepping stones.
4. Goals should vary in difficulty — from easily attainable to challenging.
 - ♦ Athletes need to feel successful in each training session and competition. Set goals that are easy for them to reach, such as performing with a smile during the competition. Also, set more challenging goals, such as catching a high toss during the routine, keeping straight legs and pointed toes, or finishing the routine with the music.
5. Goals must be measurable.
 - ♦ Athletes need to have a tangible way to know when goals are attained. For example, when an athlete is learning tosses with the hoop, keep track of how many successful catches the athlete does in a training session. Set a goal to catch the hoop five times during each practice. When that goal is met, change the goal to ten catches. When the athlete has mastered the toss and catch, begin to work on consistency. Make the goal catching the hoop five times out of ten tosses, and finally five in a row.
6. Goals should be used to establish the athlete's training and competition plan.



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Athletes with or without an intellectual disability may be more motivated by accomplishing short-term goals than long-term goals; however, do not be afraid to challenge athletes. Include athletes in setting their personal goals. There are participation factors that may influence motivation and goal setting:

- ♦ Age appropriateness
- ♦ Ability level
- ♦ Readiness level
- ♦ Athlete performance
- ♦ Family influence
- ♦ Peer influence
- ♦ Athlete preference

Performance Goals versus Outcome Goals

Effective goals focus on performance, not outcome. Performance is what the athlete controls. Outcomes are frequently controlled by others. An athlete may have an outstanding performance and not win a competition because other athletes have performed even better. Conversely, an athlete may perform poorly and still win if all other athletes perform at a lower level. If an athlete's goal is to finish a routine with the music at a competition, the athlete has more control over achieving this goal than winning. This performance goal ultimately gives the athlete more control over her performance.

Motivation through Goal Setting

Goal setting has proved to be one of the most simple and effective motivational devices developed for sport within the past three decades. While the concept is not new, today the techniques for effective goal setting have been refined and clarified. Motivation is all about having needs and striving to have those needs met. How can you enhance an athlete's motivation?

1. Provide more time and attention to an athlete when she is having difficulty learning a skill.
2. Reward small gains of achievement in skill level. Praise the athlete's effort toward improving skills.
3. Develop measures of achievement other than winning awards at competition.
4. Show your athletes that they are important to you.
5. Show your athletes that you are proud of them and excited about what they are doing.
6. Instill a sense of self-worth in your athletes.

Goals give direction. They tell us what needs to be accomplished. They increase effort, persistence and the quality of performance. Establishing goals also requires that the athlete and coach determine techniques for how to achieve those goals.

Measurable and Specific

Effective goals are measurable and specific. Goals stated in the form of "I want to be the best that I can be!" or "I want to improve my performance!" are vague and difficult to measure. It is positive sounding but difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether these goals have been reached. To be realistic, measurable goals must establish a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks.

Difficult, but Realistic

Effective goals are perceived as challenging, not threatening. A challenging goal is one perceived as difficult but attainable within a reasonable amount of time and with a reasonable amount of effort or ability. A threatening goal is one perceived as being beyond one's current capacity. Realistic implies that judgment is involved. Goals based upon a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks are likely to be realistic.

Long- versus Short-Term Goals

Both long- and short-term goals provide direction, but short-term goals appear to have the greatest motivational effects.



Short-term goals are more readily attainable and are stepping stones to more distant, long-term goals. Unrealistic short-term goals are easier to recognize than unrealistic long-term goals. Once they are identified, unrealistic goals can then be modified before valuable practice time has been lost.

Positive versus Negative Goal Setting

Positive goals direct what to do rather than what not to do, whereas negative goals direct our attention too heavily to the errors we wish to avoid or eliminate. Positive goals also require coaches and athletes to decide how they will reach those specific goals. Once the goal is decided upon, the athlete and coach must determine specific strategies and techniques that allow the goal to be attained successfully. For example, a positive instruction is telling an athlete, “keep your legs straight,” whereas a negative instruction is telling an athlete, “don’t bend your knees.”

Set Priorities

Effective goals are limited in number and meaningful to the athlete. Setting a limited number of goals requires that athletes and coaches decide what is important and fundamental for continued development. Establishing a few carefully selected goals also allows athletes and coaches to keep accurate records without becoming overwhelmed with record keeping.

Mutual Goal Setting

Goal setting becomes an effective motivational device when athletes are committed to achieving those goals. When goals are imposed or established without significant input from the athletes, motivation is unlikely to be enhanced.

Formal versus Informal Goal Setting

Some coaches and athletes think that goals must be set in formal meetings outside of practice and require long periods of thoughtful evaluation before they are decided upon. Goals are literally progressions that coaches have been using for years but are now expressed in measurable performance terms rather than as vague, generalized outcomes.

Goal Setting Domains

When asked to set goals, athletes typically focus on the learning of new skills or performances in competitions. A major role of the coach is to broaden the athlete's perception of those areas, and goal setting can be an effective tool. Goals can be set to enhance fitness, improve attendance, promote sportsmanship, develop team spirit or establish consistency.

Short-Term Objective

Learning rhythmic gymnastics in a fun environment

Long-Term Goal

The athlete will acquire basic rhythmic gymnastics skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in rhythmic gymnastics competitions.



Essential Components of a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training Session

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. An organized plan, prepared before you get to the facility, will help establish such a routine and help make the best use of your limited time. A basic training plan is outlined below.

Warming Up

Aerobic Activity

Music is an integral part of rhythmic gymnastics, and the aerobic section of the warm-up is a good place to teach tempo and rhythm, timing, and moving to different types of music. By choosing dance or locomotor movements that relate to lively music, you can create an aerobic warm-up that will be fun for the athletes, as well as training for essential body skills. For a sample aerobic warm-up to music, refer to the Skills section of this guide.

Stretching

The stretching portion of the warm-up can also be done to music. Choose softer music with a slower tempo to encourage long, slow stretches. You can include graceful, flowing music to practice arm and body waves during this section of the warm-up. Use transitions between the exercises to make the stretching session flow. Be sure to include stretches for all parts of the body. For a sample stretching and body waves warm-up to music, refer to the Skills section of this guide.

Skills Instruction

Body Skills

Rhythmic gymnastics body skills are divided into four categories: pivots/turns, jumps/leaps, balances and flexibilities. The body positions and technique are those used in classical ballet. It is the coach's responsibility to have a good, working knowledge of the dance elements in the routines, as well as progressions for teaching those elements with proper technique and body alignment.

Apparatus Technique

There are five pieces of rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. For each apparatus, there are basic skills specific to that apparatus. Teaching hints that will relate to all pieces of equipment are listed below:

- ◆ Coaches should practice new skills themselves before teaching the athletes. This is a good way to figure out appropriate ways to break the skill down into parts and to identify possible problems they might encounter in teaching the skill.
- ◆ When teaching apparatus skills, it is important to teach the skill correctly, with good technique, from the very first attempt. It is difficult, if not impossible, to make corrections in technique after the athlete has practiced incorrectly for several sessions. For example, when learning tosses, the athlete should focus not on the catch, but on tossing the apparatus with straight arms. When she can toss correctly with straight arms, her tosses will become consistent and the catches will be easy.
- ◆ Teach new skills in parts. First, demonstrate the complete skill. Then, break the skill down into parts and practice each part separately. For example, to learn straight jumps over the rope, the athlete must first practice swinging the rope overhead. She can also practice holding the rope in a U-shape and jumping over. Finally, in slow motion, she can swing the rope overhead to the U-shape, jump over and continue with another swing. Teaching in parts not only promotes good technique, but also allows the athlete to be successful when learning new skills.
- ◆ Apparatus skills should be taught progressively. For example, the athlete must first learn to swing a hoop forward and backward in the sagittal plane before she can learn to toss the hoop. Likewise, she must be able to do consistently good tosses and catches, with correct technique, before she adds a body skill. The coach should choose skills that are appropriate to the level and ability of each athlete.



- ♦ When the athlete has mastered several skills with a piece of apparatus, the coach can introduce combinations. For example, with ball: toss and catch, roll in and out the arms, bounce and catch. If the athlete loses the technique when doing combinations, go back and practice each skill separately.
- ♦ Once correct technique has been learned, repetition is the key to mastery of a skill. Remember – perfect practice makes perfect!
- ♦ Creativity is important in rhythmic gymnastics, but can be detrimental if athletes are allowed to experiment on their own too much, practicing poor technique which could easily turn into bad habits.

Competition Experience

- ♦ Taking into consideration the length of the training period, as well as the abilities of each athlete, the coach must determine the level and number of routines an athlete is capable of learning and competing successfully.
- ♦ During each training session, the coach must choose appropriate activities in the process of teaching the competitive routines.
- ♦ Teach competitive routines in parts:
 1. Teach the presentation to the judge at the beginning and end of each routine as an integral part of the routine.
 2. Teach the identified skills. The athlete should learn the body skill and the apparatus skill separately before combining the two.
 3. Teach the identified skills within sequences from the routine, one section at a time.
 4. Combine the sections to practice the complete routine without music.
 5. If a television is available, play the DVD segment showing the version of the routine that is filmed from the back, and have the athletes follow.
 6. As a training aid, have the athletes practice the routine to the music that has vocal cues.
 7. Practice the routine with music.
 8. If possible, have a practice competition. The athletes should perform in competition attire before an audience. Regardless of whether the routines are being scored, someone should sit at a judges table and acknowledge the athletes as they present themselves before and after each routine.
- ♦ The ultimate goal is to train athletes to perform routines independently, but some athletes may need visual cues, especially in the first competition. Others may always need visual cues.
- ♦ If an athlete has physical disabilities that make a skill too difficult or impossible to perform, try to find a way to alter the skill so that the athlete can include it in the routine. Remember – there are deductions for changing the routine, but the athlete should have the opportunity to compete within her abilities.
- ♦ Teach the presentation to the judge as an integral part of each routine. The athlete should know how to acknowledge the judge, walk onto the floor and assume the beginning pose for each routine and with each piece of apparatus. The athlete should also practice the salute to the judge at the completion of each routine.



- ♦ In a competition, the judges will sit by Side 1 of the floor exercise mat. Refer to the Rules section of this guide for a diagram of the competition floor.
- ♦ Athletes should be dressed neatly in appropriate attire for competition. Long hair must be securely pulled back. Remember, the judge forms a first impression as the athlete walks onto the floor!



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- ♦ Special Olympics regulations follow the current FIG rules for competition attire. At the coach's discretion, seated athletes are allowed to wear workout apparel for competition.
- ♦ The athlete's rhythmic apparatus should be color coordinated with the competition attire. Apparatus is available in many colors. Decorative tape may be added to the hoop and clubs. Ropes and ribbons may be dyed to show different colors.

Cooling Down

Strength and Conditioning Exercises

The coach should determine appropriate strength and conditioning exercises based on the evaluation of the athlete's performance during training.

Stretching

Stretching at the end of a training session is a good way for athletes to cool down. This is a good time to talk about the day's practice, assign homework and plan for upcoming events.



Considerations for Training

- ◆ When designing training sessions, consider the strengths and weaknesses of your athletes. Choose activities that allow your athletes to improve.
- ◆ Make training fun. Design training exercises that hold the athletes' attention. When practicing skills, do enough to improve technique, yet not so much as to bore your athletes.
- ◆ Keep your talking to a minimum. Short, concise instructions are better than long explanations.
- ◆ Be creative in developing skill progressions to meet unique needs of your athletes.
- ◆ When introducing new skills, continue to review fundamental technique.
- ◆ Introduce new skills early in the training session, when athletes are fresh and attentive.
- ◆ Above all, be organized.

Preparing for a Training Session

Your Training Plan

Organize your training plan progressively. During the first weeks of training, introduce and practice individual skills. Next, begin working on parts of the routines and finally practice full routines with music. Refer to the steps listed above for teaching competitive routines in parts.

Equipment Setup

Before each training session, ensure that you have all apparatus, music and an adequate practice area prepared.



Principles of Effective Training Sessions

Keep all athletes active	Athletes need to be active listeners
Create clear, concise goals	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them
Give clear, concise instructions	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction
Give positive feedback	Emphasize and reward the effort that the athletes put forth as well as skills they are doing well
Provide variety	Vary exercises – prevent boredom
Encourage enjoyment	Training and competition is fun – help keep it this way for you and your athletes
Create progressions	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known to unknown• Simple to complex• General to specific
Plan maximum use of resources	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively
Allow for individual differences	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities



Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions

- Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance with your training plan.
- When possible, have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive.
- Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- Review intended program with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- Alter the plan to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
- Change activities before the athletes become bored and lose interest.
- If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- Summarize the session and announce arrangements for next session.



Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of rhythmic gymnastics. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Rhythmic gymnastics is typically not a dangerous sport, but injuries do occur. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at the first training session, and enforce them.
 - Keep your hands to yourself.
 - Use rhythmic equipment for its intended purpose (not as a weapon).
 - Listen to the coach.
 - Ask the coach before you leave the practice area.
 - Respect other athletes' space.
2. Keep a fully stocked first aid kit with equipment; restock supplies as necessary.
3. Train all athletes and coaches in emergency procedures.
4. Review your first aid and emergency procedures. It is recommended to have someone who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on or very near to the facility during training and competition.
5. Check the facility and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are training in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that an athlete might run into.
6. Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each training session to prevent muscle injuries. Cool down at the end of each training session.
7. Train to improve the general fitness level of your athletes. In addition to being able to perform better, physically fit athletes are not as prone to injury as athletes who are in poor physical condition.



Nutrition

Guidelines for a Balanced Diet

- ◆ Eat lots of different kinds of food – vegetables, fruits, fish, meats, dairy products and grains.
- ◆ Eat fresh food rather than ready prepared, canned or frozen foods.
- ◆ Eat a high proportion of complex carbohydrate-rich foods.
- ◆ Grill, steam or bake foods. Avoid boiling or frying.
- ◆ Avoid fatty meals and sweet and salty snacks.
- ◆ Check fiber intake by eating whole grain breads, cereals and pastas.
- ◆ Eat brown rice instead of white rice.
- ◆ Flavor food with herbs and spices, rather than salt.
- ◆ Drink small amounts of water and fruit juices often.

Pre-Competition Meal/Nutrients

Your body's energy levels need to be high before training and competition. The high-performance diet above will supply this everyday requirement. Athletes are individuals and require different foods, and their body responds differently to certain foods. Generally speaking, the guidelines below will help your athletes consume the proper nutrients before competition.

- ◆ Eat a small, easily digestible meal, usually less than 900 calories.
- ◆ Eat about 2 ½-4 hours before competing.
- ◆ Limit proteins and fats since they digest slowly.
- ◆ Avoid foods which form gas in the digestive system.
- ◆ Drink small amounts of water often: before, during, and after competing.

During Competition Nutrients

- ◆ Besides hydration, nutrients are not needed for events that last less than one hour.
- ◆ For events that have more than one hour of continuous activity, carbohydrate drinks or fruit will supply the needed energy for continued effort.
- ◆ During competitions lasting more than two hours, let your athletes nibble on small pieces of banana, peanut butter sandwiches, noodles or plain pasta (complex carbohydrates) when they have at least a half hour break before their next routine. Do not fast your athletes during a 6-8 hour event.

Post-Competition Nutrients

- ◆ To replenish energy, foods with readily available carbohydrates (fruits, carbohydrate drink, granola bars) should be eaten in small amounts immediately after exercise.
- ◆ Throughout the remainder of the day, meals should contain 65% complex carbohydrates to replenish energy.



Hosting a Competition

- ♦ Select a date, secure the venue and send out entry information to invited teams.
- ♦ Select judges and provide them with a copy of the official Special Olympics Rules, a DVD of the compulsory routines and the Judging Guidelines.
- ♦ On competition day, you should have the following technical staff:
 - Line judges positioned on opposite corners of the competition floor.
 - Music technician with copies of all compulsory music.
 - Announcer – Traditionally, each athlete is announced as he/she walks onto the floor for each routine.
 - Floor manager to assist with staging for the march-in and lining up the athletes in competition order.
 - Judges' secretary to do unofficial score tabulations at the judges table.
 - Scorekeeper.
 - Score flashers to display the competitors' scores.
 - Runners to take the score sheets from the judges table to the score keeper.
 - Timer to time optional routines.
 - Equipment measurer.
 - Medical staff.
 - Awards committee.
- ♦ On competition day, you should have at the venue:
 - A copy of the official Special Olympics Rules and Judging Guidelines.
 - Score sheets for each athlete, each routine – available in the official Special Olympics Rules or on GMS (Games Management System), custom reports you can request from SOI.
 - Copies of music for compulsory routines, all levels.
 - Protest forms.
 - Copies of the Body Skills Form for Level 4 athletes – available in the official Special Olympics Rules.
 - Copies of the Request for Equipment Modification Form – available in the official Special Olympics Rules.
 - Equipment measuring board.
 - Rotation sheets with the running order of competition.
 - Stop watch.
 - Awards.
- ♦ If you have one judge or one panel of judges, you will run one event at a time.
- ♦ If you have two panels of judges, two events can run at the same time, alternating events. For example: Panel 1 will judge a competitor with rope, and while they tabulate the score, Panel 2 will judge a competitor with hoop, and so on.
- ♦ Olympic order of events is: rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon.
- ♦ When there are two days of competition, preliminaries and finals, the score from preliminaries will count as 25% of the total score, and the score from finals will count as 75% of the total score.



- ♦ When there are two days of competition, the athletes can be put into divisions (with athletes of similar abilities) based on the score achieved for each event in preliminaries.
- ♦ When there is one day of competition, the score achieved on each event on that day can be used to put athletes into divisions for awards or the competition management can request coaches to submit scores from a previous competition to be used in assigning divisions.



Rhythmic Gymnastics Attire

Discuss with parents/guardians and athletes the types of attire that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. For the safety of the gymnast, no jewelry is allowed in training or competition.

Workout Attire

For training, athletes need to wear clothes which will allow them to move freely. Leotards are appropriate and may be worn with footless tights or bike shorts. Warm-up pants and a fitted t-shirt are fine for male and female athletes. Long hair should be pulled back securely in a ponytail or bun. Athletes should not wear jewelry, with the exception of stud earrings in pierced ears. Athletes may practice in bare feet, socks, gymnastics shoes or rhythmic half-slippers.

Competition Attire

For competition, athletes who compete in Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 should wear a leotard or unitard.

- ♦ Long tights (down to the ankle) may be worn under the leotard.
- ♦ Skirted leotards, with the skirt no longer than upper thigh, are acceptable.
- ♦ Leotards may be with or without sleeves, but dance leotards with narrow straps and a low cut back are not allowed.
- ♦ The cut of the leotard at the top of the legs must not go beyond the fold of the crotch (maximum).
- ♦ Any decoration added to the leotard, either loose or stuck to the garment (flowers, ribbons, etc.) must adhere to the leotard.
- ♦ Leotards must be non-transparent material. Lace or other sheer fabric should be lined in the area of the trunk.
- ♦ Bare feet, gymnastics slippers or rhythmic half-slippers (recommended) are acceptable.
- ♦ Hairstyles should be neat.

Athletes who compete in Levels A and B may wear warm-up pants and t-shirts.

Refer to the Special Olympics Rules for all regulations concerning the athlete's attire.

Examples of Competition Attire

Rhythmic shoes





Leotard



Skirted leotard



Unitard





Attire for Seated Athletes



Hair in a ponytail



Short hair pulled back





Hair in a bun





Rhythmic Gymnastics Equipment

There are five pieces of rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. Below, you will find the required dimensions for each apparatus. Athletes may use smaller apparatus as a training aid, but in competition, all apparatus must be the correct size. (Note - there is a form to complete if your athlete has a disability that necessitates their using equipment that does not meet Special Olympics specifications). The size of the apparatus can range from child size to senior equipment, based on the gymnast's size and skill level. Equipment should be color coordinated with the athlete's leotard.

Rope Specifications



Material

The rope may be of hemp or synthetic material, provided that it possesses the identical qualities of lightness and suppleness as rope made of hemp.

Length

The length should be proportionate to the size of the gymnast.

Ends

Handles of any kind are not allowed, but one or two knots are permitted at each end. At the ends (to the exclusion of all other parts of the rope), a maximum of 10 centimeters may be covered by an anti-slip material, either colored or neutral.



Shape

The rope may be either of a uniform diameter or progressively thicker in the center, provided that this thickness is of the same material as the rope.

Color

The rope may be any color or combinations of colors.



How to select the appropriate size rope for your athlete

Holding one knot in each hand, the athlete stands on the middle of the rope. The knots should come up to her armpits.



Hoop Specifications



Material

The hoop may be of wood or plastic, provided that the latter retains its shape during movement. Foreign particles should be removed from inside the hoop before use.

Diameter

The interior diameter of the hoop should be 60-90 centimeters.

Weight

A minimum of 150-300 grams and up.

Shape

The cross-section of the hoop may be in several different shapes: circular, square, rectangular, oval, etc. The hoop may be smooth or ridged.



Color

The hoop may be any color or combination of colors. The hoop may be partially or fully covered with tape to add colors.



How to select the appropriate size hoop for your athlete

Find a hoop that the athlete can pass through and handle easily. Generally when the hoop is placed at the athlete's side, the upper rim will come to her hip.



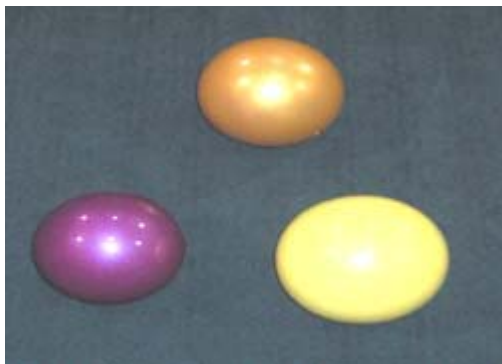
Ball Specifications





Material

The ball may be made of rubber or synthetic material (pliable plastic), provided that the latter possesses the same elasticity as rubber.



Diameter

14-20 centimeters.

Color

The ball may be of any color.

How to select the appropriate size ball for your athlete

Find a ball that the athlete can hold without gripping and catch easily.

Clubs Specifications



Material

The clubs may be made of wood or synthetic material.

Length

Each club is 40 to 50 centimeters from one end to the other.



Shape

A shape similar to that of a bottle. The wider part is called the body. The narrow part, the neck, ends in a small sphere, the head. The head has a maximum diameter of 3 centimeters. The head may be replaced by an enlargement of the end of the neck. An anti-slip material may cover the head, provided that the diameter for this part remains at the regulatory specification of 3 centimeters. The neck and the body of the club can also be covered with adhesive tape.



Color

The clubs may be of a neutral color or may be colored (all or partially) with one or several colors.



How to select the appropriate size clubs for your athlete

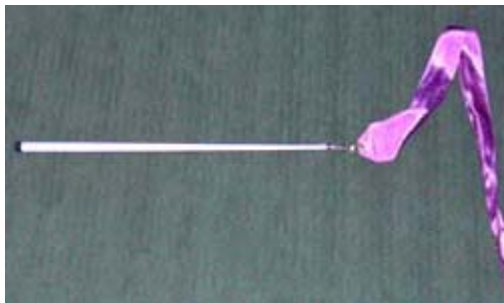
Find clubs that are shorter than the distance between the athlete's wrist and shoulder.

Ribbon Specifications





Stick



Material

Wood, bamboo, plastic, fiberglass.

Diameter

A maximum of 1 centimeter at its widest part.

Shape

Cylindrical or conical, or a combination of the two shapes.

Length

45-60 centimeters, including the ring, which permits the fastening of the ribbon to the stick. The bottom end of the stick may be covered by an adhesive, anti-slip tape or may have a rubber handle a maximum length of 10 centimeters at the level of the grip. The top of the stick where the ribbon will be attached may consist of:

- ◆ A supple strap (string or nylon) held in place by a nylon thread wound around the stick for a maximum of 5 centimeters.
- ◆ A metal ring fixed directly onto the stick.
- ◆ A metal ring (vertical, horizontal or oblique) fixed to the stick by two metal pins held in place by nylon or metallic thread wound around the stick for a maximum of 5 centimeters.
- ◆ A metal ring (fixed, mobile or pivoting) or a supple strap fixed to a metal tip of no more than 3 centimeters.
- ◆ A metal ring fixed by two metal pins held by a metal tip of 3 centimeters long, which is lengthened by nylon or metallic thread wound around the stick, adding up to a maximum length of 5 centimeters.

Color

Any choice.

Ribbon

Material

Satin or similar non-starched material.



Color

Any choice of a single color, two colors or multicolored.



Width

4-6 centimeters.

Length

From one end to the other, the finished length of the ribbon should be a minimum of 3 meters to a maximum of 6 meters. This part must be in one piece.

- ♦ The end that is attached to the stick is doubled for a maximum length of 1 meter. This is stitched down both sides. At the top, a very thin reinforcement or rows of machine stitching for a maximum of 5 centimeters is authorized.
- ♦ This extremity may end in a strap, or have an eyelet (a small hole, edged with buttonhole stitch or metal circle), to permit attaching the ribbon.

Attachment of the ribbon to the stick

- ♦ The ribbon is fixed to the stick by means of a supple attachment, such as thread, nylon cord or a series of articulated rings.
- ♦ The length of this attachment is a maximum of 7 centimeters (not counting the strap or metal ring at the end of the stick where it will be fastened).



How to select the appropriate size ribbon stick for your athlete

When the athlete holds the ribbon stick down to her side, it should not touch the floor.

How to select the appropriate size ribbon for your athlete

Find a ribbon that the athlete can use to perform the patterns easily, without knots.

Floor Specifications

13 meters by 13 meters with a security zone of 1 meter around. A carpeted area may be used, or a floor that is neither too tacky nor slippery. The ceiling height does not need to be 8 meters (26 feet 3 inches), but should be fairly high.



Special Olympics

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS COACHING GUIDE

Teaching Rhythmic Gymnastics Skills



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Warm-up

A warm up-period is the first part of every training session, as well as preparation for competition. The importance of a warm-up, prior to exercise, cannot be overstressed. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments and cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

For rhythmic gymnastics, this part of the workout should be more than just a series of calisthenics used to warm up and stretch the athletes' muscles. A traditional rhythmic gymnastics warm-up is done to music, beginning with locomotor movements traveling around the mat and then moving on to stretching exercises, combined with body skills and dance elements. Many rhythmic gymnastics workouts begin with a ballet barre, which focuses on the athlete's body position and alignment as well as warming up and stretching the muscles. Incorporating movement to music in the warm-up will not only be fun, but will instill a sense of rhythm and musicality that is important in rhythmic gymnastics.

Warming Up

- ♦ Raises body temperature
- ♦ Increases heart and respiratory rate
- ♦ Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise
- ♦ Stretches the muscles to increase the athlete's range of motion
- ♦ Creates an awareness of correct alignment and body position
- ♦ Instills a sense of timing and rhythm to music
- ♦ Begins the practice session with fun and energy

The warm-up may be different for each practice session. Depending on the phase of the competitive season, the warm-up will vary in length and content. For example, in the first weeks of training, the warm-up may take up to 30 minutes, because the athlete will be learning basic body positions and skills during that time. As the season progresses and competition draws near, more practice time will be spent on performing competitive routines, and the athletes will just need sufficient time in the warm-up to prepare their muscles for the movements they will do in their routines. A warm-up period will include the following basic sequence and components:

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Aerobic activities, which may include locomotor movements to music	Warms up the muscles, teaches locomotor skills, increases musicality	5 minutes
Stretching	Increases range of motion	10 minutes
Body skills & dance elements	Introduces rhythmic gymnastics movements that will later be incorporated into routines	Depends on the phase of the season



Aerobic Warm-Up to Music

This part of the warm-up may be performed to any type of music, beginning slowly and gradually increasing in tempo. Remember to incorporate arm and body movements with the locomotor skills. Here is a sample aerobic warm-up to music.





Aerobic Warm-up

Section 1 – Walk

- 1- 16 walking steps
- 2- 8 steps on tiptoe while raising the arms, turn right as arms lower to sides, 8 steps on tiptoe while raising the arms, turn left as arms lower to the sides
- 3- 4 walking steps as arms move to high 5th, 2 walking steps as right arm pushes to the right, 2 walking steps as left arm pushes to the left
- 4- 4 walking steps as arms move to high 5th, 2 walking steps as right arm pushes to the right, 2 walking steps as left arm pushes to the left
- 5- Repeat # 3 with a plié and contraction on the first 2 steps
- 6- Repeat #4 with a plié and contraction on the first 2 steps
- 7- Jump

Section 2 – March, Kick, Step, Hop

- 1- 16 marching steps
- 2- 8 walking steps with 3 sagittal arm circles right, clap thighs twice
- 3- 8 walking steps with 3 sagittal arm circles left, clap thighs twice
- 4- 8 walking steps with 3 sagittal arm circles right, clap thighs twice
- 5- 8 walking steps with 3 sagittal arm circles left, clap thighs twice
- 6- 16 marching steps on toes

DEEP BREATH

- 7- 3 walking steps kick left
- 8- 3 walking steps kick right
- 9- 3 walking steps kick left
- 10- 3 walking steps kick right
- 11- 3 walking steps, hop lifting left knee
- 12- 3 walking steps, hop lifting right knee
- 13- 3 walking steps, hop lifting left knee
- 14- 3 walking steps, hop lifting right knee
- 15- 3 walking steps in relevé kick left
- 16- 3 walking steps in relevé kick right
- 17- 3 walking steps in relevé kick left
- 18- 3 walking steps in relevé kick right

DEEP BREATH

Section 3 – Run, Chasse

- 1- 32 running steps
- 2- 8 running steps as arms move to high 5th, 4 running steps as right arm pushes to the right, 4 running steps as left arm pushes to the left
- 3- 8 running steps as arms move to high 5th, 4 running steps as right arm pushes to the right, 4 running steps as left arm pushes to the left
- 4- 8 running steps as arms move to high 5th, 4 running steps as right arm pushes to the right, 4 running steps as left arm pushes to the left
- 5- 8 running steps as right arm circles sagittally 2 times, clap thighs twice
- 6- 8 running steps as left arm circles sagittally 2 times, clap thighs twice
- 7- 8 running steps as right arm circles sagittally 2 times, clap thighs twice
- 8- 8 running steps as left arm circles sagittally 2 times, clap thighs twice
- 9- 6 chasses right, arms side middle, turn to face outside the circle
- 10- 6 chassés left, arms side middle, turn to face inside the circle
- 11- 6 chassés right, arms circle, turn to face outside the circle
- 12- 6 chassés left, arms circle, turn to face inside the circle



- 13- 8 runs to center of circle, raising arms to high 5th
- 14- 8 runs backward as arms lower
- 15- 8 runs to center of circle to high 5th
- 16- 8 runs backward as arms lower
- 17- Step right with tendu left, curtsy left



Stretching

Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm-up, especially for an athlete participating in rhythmic gymnastics. Not only are flexible muscles stronger, healthier and less prone to injury, but they allow the athlete to perform with supple and fluid body movements, which are integral to the sport of rhythmic gymnastics. Please refer to the Stretching section for more in-depth information.

Specific Rhythmic Gymnastics Skill Progressions

All skills, whether body or apparatus skills, can be broken down into parts. Athletes will have more fun and experience more success if they can learn complex skills in small segments. Make each small segment a goal to be accomplished and reward the attempt, whether the athlete accomplishes the complete skill or not.

In rhythmic gymnastics, it is important to teach body skills and apparatus skills separately. The warm-up is an ideal time to introduce and practice the body skills the athlete will later perform while using the hand apparatus.

Specific Warm-Up Activities

- ♦ Body Skills – Jumps/leaps, pivots/turns, balances, flexibilities – Please refer to the Skills Section for more in-depth information.
- ♦ Body Waves – Supple arm and body waves are important in rhythmic gymnastics. Here is choreography, which includes stretching as well as body waves. Practicing to music will help the athletes learn to interpret the music with body movements. Note – The Body Waves Choreography is shown two times, once from the front and once from the back, which will be easy to follow.





Body Waves Choreography

Hold 8 counts

0 – 0:23

- ♦ Right arm - Arm wave front, overhead to arm wave side, overhead to arm wave front
- ♦ Left arm - Arm wave front, overhead to arm wave side, overhead to arm wave
- ♦ Front

0:23 – 0:42

- ♦ Both arms – 2 arm waves front, overhead with relevé to arm wave side with plié, close in low 5th
- ♦ Repeat

0:42 – 1:00

- ♦ Arms overhead – Swing arms down & back as body contracts in plié, plié & swing arms forward & up
- ♦ Repeat swings 2 more times
- ♦ Lower right arm softly in front
- ♦ Lower left arm softly in front

1:00 – 1:08

- ♦ Tendu left as arms move right – side body wave left through plié & finish in tendu right, with arms left
- ♦ Side body wave right
- ♦ ¼ turn right to face sideways, arms overhead

1:08 – 1:30

- ♦ Back body wave, finishing with a front arm wave with both arms
- ♦ 3 alternating front arm waves
- ♦ Repeat body waves 2 times. No arm wave on the last body wave.

1:30 – 1:37

- ♦ Bourrée turn to face front, arms overhead
- ♦ As arms lower, kneel on right leg, then left leg to finish sitting on heels

1:37 – 2:02

- ♦ Body circumduction right. Place right hand on floor, extend left leg. Finish sitting on both heels.
- ♦ Body circumduction left. Place left hand on floor, extend right leg. Finish sitting on both heels.
- ♦ Body circumduction right.
- ♦ Sit on left hip, then straddle sit facing front

2:02 – 2:57

- ♦ Stretch to right leg (1-2), arms round in front (3-4), stretch to left leg (5-6), arms round in front (7-8)
- ♦ Hug knees (1-4)



- ♦ ¼ turn right to sit on heels facing the side, raise arms (5-6)
- ♦ Lower front arm (7)
- ♦ ¼ turn right to straddle sit facing back (8)
- ♦ Repeat stretches 2 times, once facing back & once facing front
- ♦ On the last repeat, as the front arm lowers, stand & face front

2:57 – 3:06

- ♦ 3 alternating side arm waves to finish in low 5th

3:06 – 3:27

- ♦ Both arms circle counterclockwise to finish with arm wave right (10 counts)
- ♦ Both arms circle clockwise to finish with arm wave left (8 counts)

3:27 – 3:45

- ♦ Repeat arm circles right & left with bourrée right & left (8 counts each way)

3:45 – 3:52

- ♦ 3 alternating arm waves to finish in low 5th

3:52 – 4:12

- ♦ Both arms – 2 arm waves front, overhead with relevé to arm wave side with plié, close in low 5th
- ♦ Repeat

4:12 – 4:26

- ♦ Step right to curtsy as right arm circles overhead to arm wave right
- ♦ Step left to curtsy as left arm circles overhead to arm wave left
- ♦ Finish in 1st position



Ballet

Rhythmic gymnastics combines dance with the use of hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. When training the athletes, it is easy to focus on the apparatus skills and overlook the importance of learning correct technique for the dance elements. Ballet is very important for the rhythmic gymnastics competitor! Using a ballet warm-up at the beginning of the practice session will give the athletes a foundation for learning all the body skills. If a dance studio is not available, you can do the ballet warm-up in the gym or in another open space.

Ballet will benefit the athlete by:

- ♦ Developing a strong core, which aids the athlete in learning balances and pivots.
- ♦ Strengthening the ankles and legs, which allows the athlete to jump/leap with amplitude and good form.
- ♦ Teaching correct body alignment.
- ♦ Teaching the basic positions for the feet and arms.
- ♦ Teaching musicality.
- ♦ Teaching sequencing of steps.





Ballet Positions

There are five basic positions in ballet. In rhythmic gymnastics, the most commonly used positions are:

First Position

The athlete learns to turn out the legs from the hips and to hold the arms in a fixed, rounded position.



Fifth Position

Arms may be either in low fifth or high fifth.

- ◆ Fifth Position with Arms in Low Fifth

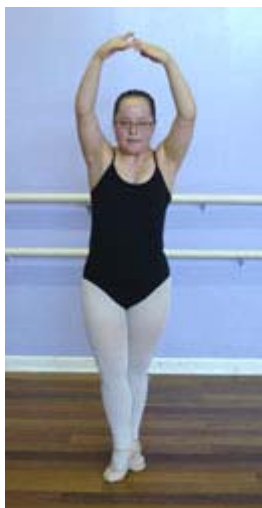




- ◆ Fifth Position with Arms in High Fifth



- ◆ Sous-Sus - Fifth position in relevé, with one foot directly in front of the other foot.



Here is a sample ballet warm-up, which includes exercises at the barre and in center. If you do not have access to a ballet barre, the back of a chair or anything that will give the athlete something stable to hold onto for support will be acceptable.



Ballet Warm-up

1. Plié and relevé – Warms up the legs. Teaches turnout and balance.



- ◆ Plié in first position



- ◆ Relevé and balance in first position





- ◆ Plié in second position



- ◆ Relevé and balance in second position



- ◆ Upper back stretch





- ♦ Side stretch



2. Tendu (front, side and back) and balance in passé – Tendu teaches straight, tight legs and pointed toes. The passé (parallel and turned out) teaches the correct position for balances and pivots. Working at the barre allows the athlete to experiment with the passé position and find the correct body alignment for balance. Practice this exercise with both the right and left legs.





- ◆ Tendu to the front



- ◆ Tendu to the side



- ◆ Tendu to the back





- ◆ Parallel passé



- ◆ Turned out passé



- ◆ Balance in passé





3. *Dégagé* – Teaches quick, dynamic movements with the feet and legs. Practice this exercise with both the right and left legs.



- ◆ Additional exercise:
 - From first position, lift the heel of one foot.



- Push to extend the foot, pointing the toes.





4. Rond de jambe and balance in arabesque – Rond de jambe teaches extension of the legs and turnout from the hips, with the leg to the front, side and back. Practice this exercise with both the right and left legs.





5. **Developpé** – Teaches the turned out passé position and the extension of the free leg to the front, side and back. The athlete should concentrate more on keeping the body in proper alignment than on lifting the leg high.



- ◆ Before attempting the développé, practice passé to tendu (front, side and back)



- ◆ Passé and développé to the front





- ◆ Passé and développé to the side



- ◆ Passé and développé to the back



- ◆ Add stretches forward and backward at the end of the exercise





- 6. Grand Battement – Develops the dynamics and strength necessary to lift the leg into high kicks, leaps and other dance movements. Teaches turnout from the hips and an awareness of fully extended legs.



- ♦ Grand battement to the front



- ♦ Grand battement to the side





- ♦ Grand battement to the back



- ♦ Add a heel stretch at the end of the exercise



7. Port de Bras – Teaches the athlete to move the arms gracefully and classically in a fixed shape.





8. Jumps – Strengthens the ankles and teaches basic jumping technique. Every jump must begin and end in plié.





♦ Jumps in first position



♦ Jumps in second position





9. Reverance – Shows the grace and fluidity of ballet movement.





Stretching

Flexibility is especially important for athletes participating in rhythmic gymnastics, because the sport is characterized by supple body movements and graceful, fluid dance steps. Flexibility is achieved through stretching. As with other parts of the warm-up, stretching exercises can be performed to music, which will not only develop flexibility, but will increase the athletes' ability to move with the music.

Before stretching, the athletes should warm up the muscles with a series of aerobic exercises. Stretches should be done gently and held for several seconds. Never use ballistic bouncing to stretch or force the athletes to stretch farther than they can do comfortably. To achieve the maximum benefit, the athletes must do the stretches with correct body position and alignment.

It is also important to breathe deeply while stretching. As you lean into the stretch, exhale. Once the stretching point is reached, continue to inhale and exhale while holding the stretch. Encourage the athletes to make stretching a part of their daily lives. Regular, daily stretching has been demonstrated to:

1. Increase the length of the muscle-tendon unit
2. Increase joint range of motion
3. Reduce muscle tension
4. Develop body awareness
5. Promote increased circulation
6. Improve self image and overall wellness

Some athletes, such as those with Down Syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear very flexible. Be careful not to allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range. To prevent injuries, athletes who are extremely flexible will need to develop the strength to control their flexibility.

In this guide, we will focus on stretches that are important for athletes participating in rhythmic gymnastics. Many of the stretches serve a dual purpose, because they are preparations for specific Body Skills. For example, splits show the position an athlete will try to achieve during a leap. Also, exercises such as pointing and flexing the feet develop strength and flexibility in the ankles, as well as teach the athlete to point the toes, which is very important in all gymnastics skills. You will find more of these references listed with the stretches below.

Neck

Exercises to warm up the neck will teach the athlete to use the head in different positions. It is important for the body to remain motionless, in alignment, when the athlete moves the head. In rhythmic gymnastics, the athlete will move the head to follow the hand apparatus, especially on tosses, and in the choreography of competition routines. Note – never circle the head in a complete rotation or move the head forcefully.



Head – Look up and down



Head – Look side to side





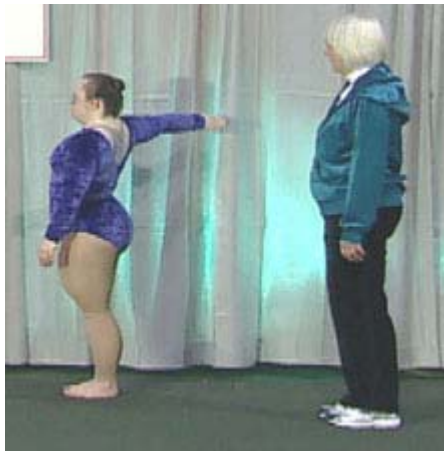
Head – Tilt side to side



Arms and Shoulders

Many skills in rhythmic gymnastics require shoulder flexibility. During the warm-up, athletes can learn to keep their arms straight and moving on plane, which will be important for sagittal circles and swings with all hand apparatus. Shoulder flexibility is also important for supple body waves and an elegant carriage of the upper body.

Arm Circles



Torso and Back

In rhythmic gymnastics, torso and back flexibility are very important. Many skills, such as body waves, require the athlete to move with suppleness from an arched to a contracted position or from a contraction on one side to a contraction on the other side. A supple torso and back will give the athlete the appearance of moving effortlessly from one element to the next.



Side Stretch

- For the correct position in the side stretch, the athlete must stand squarely on both feet, with the hips in alignment.



- The position is incorrect when the athlete pushes the hips to the side, weights the feet unevenly or bends a knee.



Cat Stretch

This exercise will develop the supple back movement for body waves.

- The athlete kneels on the hands and knees.





- The athlete shows an arched position.



- The athlete's back moves in a supple manner to a contracted position.



Arch and contract on knees

This exercise will develop the supple back movement for body waves.

- Arch down





- Contract up



Donut

This exercise stretches the back in an arched position, which is important for skills such as the Back Arch on Knees.



Tabletop

Not only is it important for the athlete to be able to arch and contract the back, but he/she must also be capable of maintaining a straight body position.





Backbend

The backbend is an acrobatic element that increases back flexibility. When spotting the backbend from a stand, the coach must support the athlete with one hand under the back and one hand under the shoulder. Athletes who have Down Syndrome and have been diagnosed with atlanto-axial instability should not do this exercise.



- Backbend



- Backbend lifting one leg



Legs and Feet

Strength and flexibility of the legs and feet are of the utmost importance for rhythmic gymnastics. All jumps, leaps and high kicks should be performed with the legs and feet extended. Pivots and balances must be executed with the athlete standing high on the toes, with a straight supporting leg.



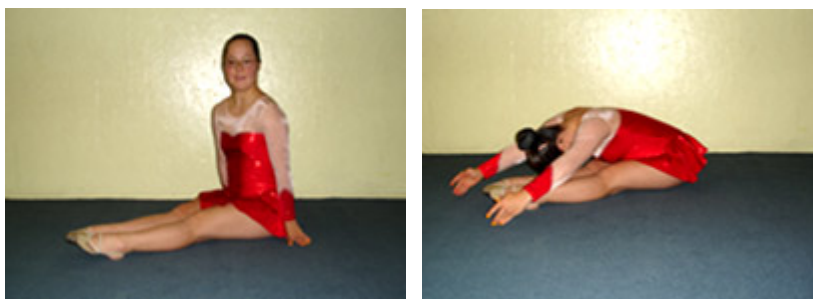
Point and Flex

- The athlete sits in a pike position and points and flexes the feet.



Pike

- The athlete sits tall in a pike position and then stretches forward.



Tuck

- The athlete can practice the tuck position during the warm-up.





Heel Stretch

- Heel stretch with one leg



- Heel stretch with both legs



- Practicing the heel stretch sitting is a good way to begin learning an assisted side balance.





Straddle

- Sitting in a straddle position



- Stretching to the side in a straddle position



- Stretching to the front in a straddle position



Lunge (on one knee)

- In the correct lunge position, the knee will be directly over the foot.





- In the incorrect lunge position, the knee will be in front of the foot.



Splits

- Front split



- Straddle split





Stretching - Quick Reference Guidelines

Begin with an aerobic warm-up

Begin stretching only when the athletes' muscles are warm.

Be Systematic

Start at the top of body and work your way down.

Check body position and alignment

Athletes must always have the correct body position and alignment. Remember, stretching exercises are also training exercises for Body Skills.

Relate stretches to rhythmic gymnastics skills

Remind the athletes that the stretches during the warm-up will be the same motions they will repeat later when they practice body skills and work with the hand apparatus.

Emphasize fluidity and suppleness

Make slow, progressive stretches.

Do not bounce or jerk to stretch farther.

Never force an athlete to stretch farther than is comfortable.

Use Variety

Make stretching fun!

Stretch to music.

Use different exercises, such as ballet, to work the same muscles.

Breathe Naturally

Do not hold your breath.

Use breathing to increase the amount of stretch.

Allow for Individual Differences

Athletes start and progress at different levels.

Reward any attempt to improve flexibility.

Be aware that athletes who are extremely flexible need to develop the strength to control that flexibility.

Stretch Regularly

Stretch during every practice session.

Encourage athletes to stretch at home.



Cool-Down

The cool-down is as important as the warm up; however, this portion of the workout is often ignored. Stopping an activity abruptly may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete's body. It may also cause cramps, soreness, and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool-down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. Since rhythmic gymnastics is not a sport that requires constant aerobic activity, the cool-down is most often a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition. It is also a good time to do stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements. The cool-down period may be used for strength and conditioning training.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic jog	Lowers body temperature Gradually lowers heart rate	Depends on the nature of the practice session. May not be necessary.
Stretching	Removes waste from muscles Improves flexibility	5 - 10 minutes
Strength and conditioning	Improves overall fitness Improves areas of weakness that affect the athletes' performance	5 - 10 minutes Especially important in the pre-competitive season



Body Skills

Body Skills for rhythmic gymnastics are divided into four categories:

Jumps/Leaps

An athlete must have strength and flexibility to jump and leap well. She can develop ankle strength by doing relevés and jumping rope. For skills such as hitch kicks and split leaps, grand battements (high kicks) will increase the strength in her legs. Splits and other stretching exercises will increase her flexibility. Again, core strength is necessary for the athlete to maintain a stable upper body position during jumps and leaps. Only with a stable upper body can the athlete have control of her arm position.

- ♦ Cat leap
- ♦ Chassé
- ♦ Hitch kick
- ♦ Leap
- ♦ Step hop
- ♦ Straight jump

Pivots/Turns

In order for an athlete to turn well, she must have good posture and body alignment. Core strength is essential for maintaining correct alignment of the torso and pelvis. For basic turns on two feet (tiptoe and chainé turns), the athlete has to maintain a straight body position. This can be practiced lying on the floor: first learning to activate the core muscles necessary to achieve the straight body position and then doing a log roll to learn to maintain that position. The next progression is to learn pivots standing on one foot (for example, passé pivots). This requires more balance and greater control over body alignment. The athlete should first practice standing flat-footed in the position of the pivot, then balancing in that position in relevé. Once the athlete can balance successfully, she can try a 180° and then 360° pivot. Remember – always teach the correct position first and then the pivot!

- ♦ Chainé turn
- ♦ Passé pivot
- ♦ Tiptoe turn



Balances

Good posture and body alignment are the keys to good balances. The same progressions can be used for balances as for pivots and turns. The athlete must learn to activate the core abdominal muscles to maintain correct alignment of the torso and pelvis. Pilates exercises are excellent for developing this strength. Always practice balances first flat-footed and then in relevé. Pay attention to details, such as placement of the free foot and the arms.

- ♦ Arabesque (front and back)
- ♦ Passé
- ♦ Relevé



Flexibilities

Rhythmic gymnasts must demonstrate supple body waves, as well as elements of leg and back flexibility. Some athletes are naturally supple and must train with strength exercises in order to prevent injuries when working on flexibilities, while other athletes are naturally stiff and must stretch in order to perform the flexibilities. The coach must identify the strengths and weaknesses of each rhythmic gymnast and design an appropriate training plan.

- ♦ Back arch on knees
- ♦ Body waves (front, back and side)
- ♦ Grand battement



Arabesque (Front)



Stand on one leg with the other leg extended to the front, toe pointed on the floor. Keeping both legs straight, lift the front leg off of the ground, as high as possible with good body position. Arm position is optional.

- ♦ To achieve the correct body position, the athlete can practice the front arabesque holding onto a ballet barre.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Arabesque (Front)

Error	Correction
Athlete's free leg is bent.	Practice tendu to the front. Pay careful attention to stretching the leg. Practice developpé to the front. Pay careful attention to the extension of the leg.
Athlete's feet are flexed.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference.
Athlete is off balance.	Check the body alignment. Make sure the supporting leg is straight and the body is aligned, with the torso upright. Have the athlete lower the free leg to get better balance. Practice the front arabesque with the athlete holding onto a ballet barre for support.



Arabesque (Back)



Stand on one leg with the other leg extended to the back, toe pointed on the floor. Keeping both legs straight and the torso upright, lift the back leg off the ground, as high as possible with good body position. Arm position is optional.

- ♦ To achieve the correct body position, the athlete can practice the back arabesque holding onto a ballet barre.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Arabesque (Back)

Error	Correction
Athlete's free leg is bent.	Practice tendu to the back. Pay careful attention to stretching the leg. Practice developpé to the back. Pay careful attention to the extension of the leg.
Athlete's feet are flexed.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference.
Athlete is off balance.	Check the body alignment. Make sure the supporting leg is straight and the body is aligned, with the torso upright. Have the athlete lower the free leg to get better balance. Practice the back arabesque with the athlete holding onto a ballet barre for support.



Back Arch on Knees



The athlete kneels and arches backward.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Back Arch on Knees

Error	Correction
Athlete sits on feet.	Have athlete extend the hips forward and grow tall before the back arch. Spot the athlete by holding her hips in the proper position.
Athlete holds arms too far forward and does not arch backward.	Have the athlete grow tall and arch back with arms by the ears. Have the athlete hold a club (the head in one hand and the body in the other) when she arches back. The athlete will be able to see the club if the arms are too far forward.
Athlete is afraid to arch backward and has trouble coming up.	Spot the athlete with one hand on the back and one hand on the shoulder blade. Never ask the athlete to arch back farther than is comfortable. Develop core strength to help the athlete control the arch.



Body Waves

With the three body waves listed below (front, back and side), the athlete must involve the whole body in the wave. It is incorrect to move only the arms.



Body Wave (Front)



- ♦ A front body wave must have a contraction, an arch and a supple wave through the body.
- ♦ Separate the movements so that the knees go forward first, then the hips go forward, the back arches and finally the body straightens.
- ♦ The athlete should finish the body wave in a balanced position.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Body Wave (Front)

Error	Correction
Athlete does not contract.	Hold an upright hoop in front of the athlete. Have her contract forward so that the body conforms to the shape of the hoop.
Athlete does not arch.	Stand behind the athlete and have her bend backward to look at you.
Athlete does not show a supple wave throughout the body.	In the contraction, make sure the athlete begins with slightly bent knees. Separate the movements so the knees go forward first, then the hips go forward, the back arches and finally the body straightens to an upright position.



Body Wave (Back)

- ♦ A back body wave must have an arch, a contraction and a supple wave through the body.
- ♦ Separate the movements so the back arches first, then the body contracts, the knees go forward, the hips go forward and then the body straightens.
- ♦ The athlete should finish the body wave in a balanced position.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Body Wave (Back)

Error	Correction
Athlete does not contract.	Hold an upright hoop in front of the athlete. Have her contract forward so that the body conforms to the shape of the hoop.
Athlete does not arch.	Stand behind the athlete and have her bend backward to look at you.
Athlete does not show a supple wave throughout the body.	With the athlete standing in the arched position, hold an upright hoop in front of her. Have her knees contact the hoop first, followed by the midsection of the body and finally the upper body and head.



Body Wave (Side)

A side body wave must have a contraction to one side, a supple wave through the body and finish with a contraction to the other side. The athlete begins in a tendu to the side, passes through a second position pli , and finishes in a tendu to the other side.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Body Wave (Side)

Error	Correction
Athlete does not contract to the side.	Have the athlete imagine that her leotard is wrinkled on one side and stretched on the other side.
Athlete loses body alignment during the pli�.	Remind the athlete to keep the shoulders directly over the hips. Have her imagine doing the pli� in a narrow hallway.
Athlete does not show a supple wave throughout the body.	Make sure the athlete passes through pli� while changing the contraction from one side to the other. Practice the body waves from side to side, allowing the hips and shoulders to swing. Remember to keep the shoulders above the hips.



Cat Leap



The cat leap is done with the legs bent in a front attitude position (turned out). The athlete steps and kicks one leg in front, jumps and changes legs in a scissor-like motion.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Cat Leap

Error	Correction
Athlete's feet are flexed.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference. Practice the front attitude position sitting or standing. It is often difficult to bend your leg and point your toes at the same time.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	Practice the kick and change of legs without the jump, paying careful attention to body position, until the athlete has the strength and body control to add the jump. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete has no control over arm position.	Practice the arm movement separately from the jump.



Chainé Turn



Keeping the feet in first position relevé, the athlete performs a three-step 360° traveling turn on the toes. She should turn 180° with each step.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Chainé Turn

Error	Correction
Athlete takes too many or too few steps.	Have the athlete stand on a line on the floor and take three steps while turning 360°. If you have access to a ballet barre, have the athlete practice holding onto the barre, turning 180° with each step. Try putting three pieces of tape in a line on the floor and tell the athlete to step on each one.
Athlete turns the wrong direction.	Stand behind the athlete and direct the shoulders in the correct direction.
Athlete turns flat-footed.	Have the athlete practice standing in relevé (on toes). Then, have the athlete walk in relevé. Finally, add the turn. If you have access to a ballet barre, have the athlete practice holding onto the barre, turning 180° with each step, and staying in relevé.
Athlete has difficulty controlling the arms.	Have the athlete hold an object (such as a ball) with both hands directly in front of the bellybutton.



Chassés

In the two types of chassés listed below (front and side), the athlete must jump high enough to point the toes and show the correct position of the feet.

Chassé (Front)

The athlete performs a forward gallop step. The athlete should practice the front chassé with both the right and left foot in front.



- ♦ The feet should be closed together in the air, with one foot in front of the other.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Chassé (Front)

Error	Correction
Athlete's feet do not close together in the air.	To demonstrate the correct position of the feet, have the athlete sit on the floor in a pike position with ankles crossed and toes pointed.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	Have two coaches walk with the athlete, locking arms with the athlete to add stability. Practice slowly, with a small jump, until the athlete can keep her body still and in alignment. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete does not jump high enough to point the feet in the air.	Practice straight jumps until the athlete learns to point the toes when jumping. Relevés and jumps will strengthen the ankles so the athlete can jump high enough to be able to point the toes.



Chassé (Side)

The athlete performs a sideways gallop step. The athlete should practice the side chassé to the right and left.



- ♦ The feet should be together, side by side, in the air.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Chassé (Side)

Error	Correction
Athletes' feet do not close together in the air.	To demonstrate the correct position of the feet, have the athlete sit on the floor in a pike position with the feet side by side, toes pointed.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	Have the athlete face a ballet barre and practice the chassé. Practice slowly, with a small jump, until the athlete can keep her body still and in alignment. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete does not jump high enough to point the feet in the air.	Practice straight jumps until the athlete learns to point the toes when jumping. Relevés and jumps will strengthen the ankles so the athlete can jump high enough to be able to point the toes.



Grand Battement

The athlete performs a high kick to the front, side, or back.



Grand Battement to the front

- ♦ The Grand Battement to the front is a skill that may be used in routines for competition. In addition, this skill prepares the athlete to thrust the front leg dynamically forward for leaps, jumps and flexibilities.
- ♦ In the Grand Battement to the front, the athlete must keep both legs straight and the upper body stretched tall. It is helpful to teach this skill first with the athlete holding onto a ballet barre behind her, with the feeling that he/she is standing as tall and straight as the wall. Next, progress to holding onto the barre with one hand, for stability. Remember - the athlete's free arm must be held in a defined shape. Finally, progress to the center of the floor.





Grand Battement to the side

- ♦ The Grand Battement to the side is a skill that may be used in routines for competition. In addition, this skill prepares the athlete to kick the leg dynamically to the side for side leaps and other jumps. The kick to the side is also a preparation for catching the leg to do advanced balances and flexibilities.
- ♦ In the Grand Battement to the side, the athlete must keep both legs straight and the shoulders and hips square. Teach this skill with the athlete holding onto a ballet barre with one hand for support.
- ♦ The position of the Grand Battement to the side is not with the leg directly to the side by the shoulder. Most athletes do not have the hip flexibility to be able to achieve this position without moving the body out of alignment. The correct position will be determined by each athlete's flexibility and will probably be a little diagonally side and to the front. Therefore, do not teach this skill with the athlete facing the barre.



Grand Battement to the back

- ♦ The Grand Battement to the back prepares the athlete to lift the back leg straight and with dynamics during leaps and other jumps.
- ♦ In the Grand Battement to the back, the athlete must keep both legs straight and the shoulders back and square. It is helpful to teach this skill first with the athlete facing the ballet barre, keeping the shoulders square to the wall. Next, progress to holding onto the barre with one hand and, finally, to the center of the floor.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Grand Battement

Error	Correction
Athlete's legs are bent.	Practice tendu, emphasizing straight legs.
Athlete's feet are flexed.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference. Then, stand and practice degagés.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	<p>Have the athlete lie on her back and practice grand battement to the front or side, paying attention to engaging the core abdominal muscles to maintain stability.</p> <p>When the athlete is standing, keep the kicks smaller until she has control of position and alignment.</p> <p>Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.</p>
Athlete's legs are turned in.	<p>Have the athlete tendu to the front, side and back and correct the alignment of the hips. Repeat with the athlete lifting the leg slightly.</p> <p>Rond de jambe and developpé are good ballet exercises for improving turnout.</p>
Athlete bends the supporting leg.	Have the athlete do the kicks lower and concentrate on stretching the supporting leg.



Hitch Kick

Keeping both legs straight, the athlete steps and kicks one leg high in front, jumps and changes legs in a scissor-like motion.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Hitch Kick

Error	Correction
Athlete's legs are bent.	Practice tendu and grand battement to the front, concentrating on extending the legs.
Athlete's feet are flexed.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference. Practice grand battement to the front, concentrating on pointing the toes.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	Practice the kick and change of legs without the jump, paying careful attention to body position. When the athlete has the strength and body control, add the jump. Then, have two coaches walk with the athlete, locking arms with the athlete to add stability. Practice slowly, with a small jump, until the athlete can keep her body still and in alignment. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.



Leap

The athlete kicks one leg straight in front, takes off from the back foot and leaps forward, landing on the front foot. In the air, the athlete should show the maximum possible split of the legs. A split leap will show at least 180° split of the legs. A stride leap will show a lesser degree of split.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Leap

Error	Correction
Athlete's legs are bent.	Practice tendu and grand battement to the front and back, concentrating on extending the legs.
Athlete's feet are flexed.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference. Practice grand battement to the front and back, concentrating on pointing the toes.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	Have two coaches walk with the athlete, locking arms with the athlete to add stability. Practice slowly, with a small jump, until the athlete can keep her body still and in alignment. If possible, have the coaches suspend the athlete in the air long enough for her to experience the feeling of straight legs and pointed toes. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete's legs do not split in the air.	Practice splits on the floor to improve flexibility. Practice grand battement to increase strength.
Athlete does not jump high enough.	Practice relevés and straight jumps to increase ankle strength. Practice step hops to learn to take off from one foot. On the step hops, emphasize pushing with the take-off foot enough to extend that foot and point the toes.



Passé

The athlete stands on one foot with the toes of the free foot pointed to the knee of the supporting leg.

- ◆ In a turned out passé, the knee should be opened to the side.



- ◆ To learn the correct position, the athlete can sit on the floor to practice the passé.





- ♦ In a parallel passé, the knee will face forward.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Passé

Error	Correction
Athlete's knee is positioned incorrectly and/or the toes are not pointed.	To demonstrate the correct placement, have the athlete sit on the floor in a pike and position one leg in passé. Make sure the knee is either turned out to the side or facing forward, and the hips remain square. The foot should be pointed, with the big toe touching the inside of the opposite leg just below the knee.
Athlete is off balance.	To practice balancing, have the athlete hold onto a ballet barre or something sturdy. With the support of the barre, the athlete can work to find the proper body alignment that will allow her to balance. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete bends supporting leg.	Have the athlete practice pliés, emphasizing the straightening of the legs at the end of each plié. That stretched feeling should be the same for the supporting leg during a passé.



Passé Pivot

Standing on one leg, the athlete pivots 180° or 360° in a turned out passé position.



Use this progression to teach the passé pivot:

- ◆ Preparation: a forward lunge with the feet turned out, hips square, one arm rounded in front, one arm rounded to the side.



- ◆ Passé balance flat-footed.
- ◆ Passé balance in relevé.
- ◆ 180° pivot in the passé position.
- ◆ 360° pivot in the passé position.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Passé Pivot

Error	Correction
Athlete's knee is turned in and toes are not pointed.	To demonstrate the correct placement, have the athlete sit on the floor in a pike and position one leg in passé. Make sure the knee is turned out to the side and the hips remain square. The foot should be pointed, with the big toe touching the inside of the opposite leg just below the knee.
Athlete is off balance.	Before turning, have the athlete practice just a passé balance until she has the proper body alignment and control. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete bends supporting leg.	Have the athlete practice pliés and relevés, emphasizing the straightening of the legs into the relevé. That stretched feeling should be the same for the supporting leg during a passé pivot. Before turning, have the athlete practice the preparation and relevé into passé, emphasizing the push from plié into relevé with the supporting leg stretched. It is helpful for the athlete to practice this movement while holding onto a ballet barre for support.
Athlete does not complete the turn.	Give the athlete an object to focus on at the completion of the pivot. (Spotting) Check the body alignment and placement of the arms during the pivot.



Relevé

The athlete stands high on the balls of the feet and toes.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Relevé

Error	Correction
Athlete stands flat-footed or low on toes.	Have the athlete practice relevés holding onto a ballet barre or something sturdy for support.
Athlete stands with ankles improperly aligned.	Remind the athlete to distribute the weight on all five toes.
Athlete is off balance.	<p>Check the athlete's body alignment.</p> <p>Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.</p> <p>Have the athlete practice holding onto a ballet barre, releasing one hand and then the other when she can maintain balance.</p>



Step Hop

The athlete performs a basic step hop in a parallel passé position. Other leg positions, such as arabesque, are appropriate after the athlete has mastered the technique of the step hop.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Step Hop

Error	Correction
Athlete's knee is not lifted into a passé and toes are not pointed.	To demonstrate the correct placement, have the athlete sit on the floor in a pike and position one leg in parallel passé. The foot should be pointed, with the big toe touching the inside of the opposite leg just below the knee.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body. The take-off leg is bent and the toes are not pointed.	Have two coaches walk with the athlete, locking arms with the athlete to add stability. Practice slowly, with a small jump, until the athlete can keep her body still and in alignment. If possible, have the coaches suspend the athlete in the air long enough for her to experience the feeling of a straight leg and pointed toes on the take-off leg. Practice relevés and straight jumps to develop leg strength. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
The athlete has no height in the jump.	Strengthen the ankles by doing relevés and small jumps.



Straight Jump

- ♦ The athlete jumps in a straight body position.
- ♦ The legs should be extended and the toes pointed straight under the torso.
- ♦ The arms should swing forward and extend overhead during the jump.
- ♦ The jump should start and finish in a plié.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Straight Jump

Error	Correction
Athlete begins or ends the jump with straight legs.	Have the athlete practice pliés.
Athlete has excessive movement in the upper body.	Have the athlete lie down on her back and tighten the abdominal muscles until she feels the straight body position. Have the athlete try to duplicate that feeling when jumping. Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.
Athlete has flexed feet and bent knees in the air.	Sit on the floor and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference. Relevés and small jumps will develop the ankle strength that will allow the athlete to jump high enough to extend the legs and point the toes.



Tiptoe Turn

With many small steps in relevé, the athlete turns in place (bourrée turn).



Faults & Fixes Chart – Tiptoe Turn

Error	Correction
Athlete turns flat-footed or cannot balance in relevé.	Have the athlete practice standing in relevé first and then add the turn. Hold the athlete’s hands during the turn.



Apparatus Skills

- ♦ All skills should be practiced with both the right and left hands.
- ♦ Athletes should be proficient with the apparatus skills and technique before trying to combine the apparatus skills with body skills.
- ♦ For competition, all apparatus must meet Special Olympics specifications. For training, especially at the beginning of the season, use apparatus that will allow the athletes to succeed. For example, the athletes will find it easier to control a shorter ribbon when they begin, and can learn to use longer ribbons as they progress.
- ♦ Take the time to teach good technique! It is much easier to teach apparatus skills correctly from the beginning than it is to correct basic handling errors later.
- ♦ Reward the attempt! Set the athletes up for success by breaking each skill down into parts. Know your athletes' capabilities and challenge them, but do not set goals that will be too difficult or impossible to reach.

Axis – Horizontal and Vertical

- ♦ An axis is an imaginary line around which the hand apparatus or gymnast rotates.
- ♦ The horizontal axis is an imaginary line drawn from side to side (like the horizon). For example, the flip toss with the hoop rotates around a horizontal axis.
- ♦ The vertical axis is an imaginary line drawn up and down. For example, the hoop spin rotates around a vertical axis.

Directions – Clockwise and Counter-clockwise

Directions for circles and rotations with the apparatus are termed clockwise and counter-clockwise. When teaching directions to the athletes, it is helpful to have a clock nearby that has minute and hour hands.

On the frontal plane:

- ♦ Hold the clock in front of the athlete.
- ♦ For clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will follow the direction of the hands on the clock (circling to the right).
- ♦ For counter-clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will move in the opposite direction of the hands on the clock (circling to the left).

On the sagittal plane on the right side of the body:

- ♦ Hold the clock by the athlete's right side.
- ♦ For clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will follow the direction of the hands on the clock (circling backward).
- ♦ For counter-clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will move in the opposite direction of the hands on the clock (circling forward).

On the sagittal plane on the left side of the body:

- ♦ Hold the clock by the athlete's left side.
- ♦ For clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will follow the direction of the hands on the clock (circling forward).
- ♦ For counter-clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will move in the opposite direction of the hands on the clock (circling backward).



Planes – Frontal, Sagittal and Horizontal

- ♦ A plane is an imaginary, two-dimensional surface in which movements are performed.
- ♦ The frontal plane divides the body in half, front to back. For example, a large ball circle on the frontal plane will be performed in front of the athlete and can be practiced facing a wall.
- ♦ The sagittal plane divides the body in half, side to side. For example, a large sagittal circle with the ribbon will be performed on the side and can be practiced standing beside a wall.
- ♦ The horizontal plane divides the body in half, upper and lower body. For example, a hoop on the horizontal plane will be held flat (like the horizon).

Turns, pivots and rotations in degrees

- ♦ $1/4 = 90^\circ$
- ♦ $1/2 = 180^\circ$
- ♦ Full = 360°



Rope

General Rope Technique

- ♦ The rope must always maintain a defined shape.
- ♦ The athlete should hold the ends of the rope on the knots. Different types of grips are listed below.
- ♦ On swings, rotations and jumps the rope should not hit the floor.
- ♦ On swings and rotations the rope should be on plane (frontal, sagittal or overhead).
- ♦ When the rope is held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.

How to Hold the Rope

U-shape

The athlete holds one knot in each hand with the rope making the shape of a U.



Both knots in one hand

The athlete holds both knots in one hand and the folded end of the rope hangs free. The free arm must show a defined shape.





Doubled

The athlete holds both knots in one hand and the folded end of the rope in the other hand; both hands are in an over-grip.



Doubled, holding the middle of the rope with the other hand

With arms extended shoulder-width apart, the athlete holds both knots in one hand, in an over-grip, and with the other hand holds near the middle of the rope, in an under-grip.





Quadrupled

With arms extended shoulder-width apart, the athlete holds both knots in one hand in an over-grip, and the other hand holds near the middle of the rope, in an under-grip. The athlete holds the folded end of the rope between the thumb and forefinger of the hand that is holding the knots.





Rope Skills

The following types of rope skills will be shown:

- ♦ Swings
- ♦ Rotations, including figure 8's
- ♦ Wraps
- ♦ Jumps
- ♦ Release

Swings

Swings in a U-shape

- ♦ The rope must maintain the U-shape during the swing. In order to do this, the athlete should swing the rope gently.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked.

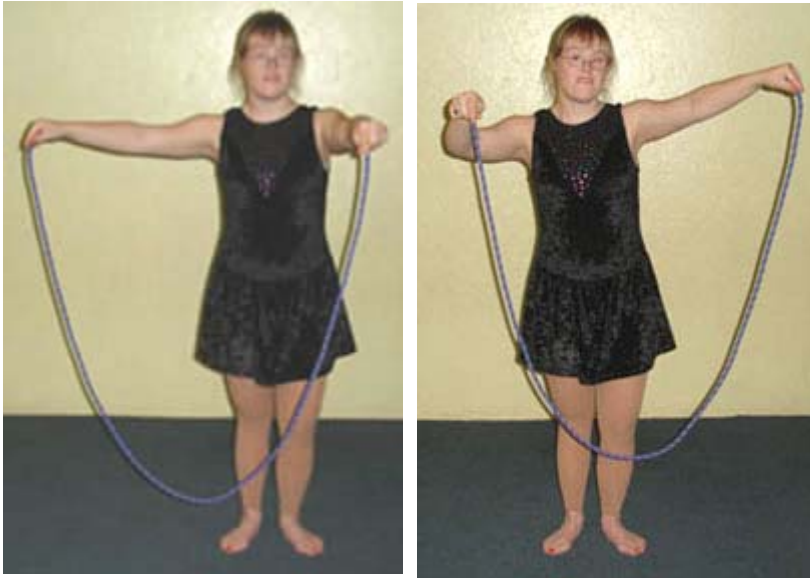


- ♦ The rope should not touch the floor during the swing.



Swings in a U-shape side to side

- ♦ Hold the arms wide to the sides and swing the rope gently to maintain the U-shape.



Swings in a U-shape front and back

- ♦ Extend the right arm to the side. Place the left hand by the right shoulder. Swing the rope gently forward and back, maintaining the U-shape.
- ♦ Reverse the skill, extending the left arm to the side.





Swings in a U-shape overhead

- ♦ The athlete must learn to swing the rope overhead forward and backward in a U-shape as preparation for jumps over the turning rope.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked, as she swings the rope overhead either forward or backward.
- ♦ Try to keep the rope from touching the ground.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Swings in a U-shape

Error	Correction
Rope hits the ground.	Have the athlete extend the arms to the side and hold the rope higher.
Rope gets out of U-shape.	Have the athlete swing the rope more gently.
Rope swings out of plane (swings side to side).	Have the athlete stand facing a wall to correct plane.
Rope touches the athlete.	Have the athlete extend the arms and swing the rope more fluidly and on plane.



Rotations

- ♦ Rotations must be on plane.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked, and rotate the rope from the wrist.
- ♦ The athlete should practice with the right and left hands.



- ♦ Remember to keep the free arm in a defined position.

Rotations with a doubled rope on the frontal plane





Rotations with a doubled rope on the sagittal plane



Overhead rotations





Rotations on the sagittal plane holding the middle of a doubled rope



Rotations overhead holding the middle of a doubled rope





Faults & Fixes Chart – Rotations

Error	Correction
Rope hits the ground.	Have the athlete extend the arms and hold the rope higher.
Rope gets out of shape.	Have the athlete use the wrists to circle the rope more fluidly.
Rope swings out of plane (frontal and sagittal planes).	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct the plane.
Rope touches the athlete.	Have the athlete extend the arms and circle the rope more fluidly and on plane. Have the athlete practice with a shorter rope.
Excessive arm movement during rotations.	Have the athlete extend the arms and perform the rotations from the wrist.
Athlete bends the arms excessively.	Have the athlete stretch, but not lock, the elbows.



Figure 8's

- ♦ The Figure 8's must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice rotations separately on each side of the body before attempting the full Figure 8.



Figure 8's holding two knots in one hand

Figure 8's holding one knot in each hand





Faults & Fixes Chart – Figure 8’s

Error	Correction
Rope hits the ground.	Have the athlete extend the arms and hold the rope higher.
Rope gets out of shape.	Have the athlete swing the rope more fluidly.
Rope swings out of plane.	Tell the athlete to imagine standing in a narrow hallway and doing the Figure 8’s without letting the rope hit the walls.
Rope touches the athlete.	Have the athlete extend the arms and swing the rope more fluidly and on plane.
Excessive arm movement during rotations.	Have the athlete perform the rotations from the wrists.
Athlete bends the arms excessively.	Have the athlete stretch, but not lock, the elbows.
Athlete does not complete the full Figure 8 motion.	Have the athlete complete a full circle on each side of the body. Practice the rotations on each side of the body separately before doing a complete Figure 8.
Figure 8 is not continuous.	Stand behind the athlete and guide her through the Figure 8 motion.
The arms are separated too far when the athlete is holding one knot in each hand.	Have the athlete touch her wrists together. Tell the athlete to imagine that the wrists are tied together.



Wraps



Around one arm



- ◆ Extend the right arm to the side. Place the left hand by the right shoulder.
- ◆ Swing the rope forward and backward in a U-shape. On the backswing, begin circling the extended arm until the rope wraps around the arm.
- ◆ Circle the rope in the opposite direction to unwrap the arm.
- ◆ Reverse the skill by extending the left arm to the side.



Around the waist



- ◆ Holding both knots in the right hand, swing the rope, crossing the right arm in front of the waist.
- ◆ When the rope circles around the waist, catch near the looped end of the rope with the left hand.

Around one leg

- ◆ Holding both knots in the right hand, begin counter-clockwise rotations on the frontal plane.
- ◆ Kick the right leg forward, allowing the rope to wrap around the leg.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Wraps

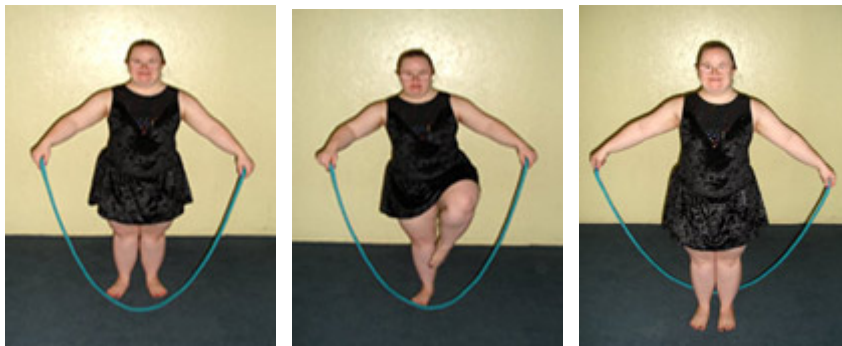
Error	Correction
Wrap is incomplete.	Have the athlete circle the rope faster.
The rope does not wrap around the athlete’s arm, leg or body.	Make sure the rope is on plane.



Jumps

- ♦ When the athlete is jumping, the rope should not hit the floor.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked, and turn the rope from the wrists.
- ♦ The athlete should jump high enough to extend the legs and point the toes on every jump.

Jumps forward and backward over a U-shape



- ♦ Hold the rope in a U-shape.
- ♦ Step forward and backward over the rope, maintaining the U-shape.
- ♦ When the athlete has mastered the steps over the rope, try a small jump over the rope with one foot, closing with the other foot.
- ♦ Jump over the rope with two feet together.



Straight jumps forward (with and without a rebound)



- ◆ Swing the rope overhead in a U-shape.
- ◆ Stop the rope as it nears the floor, and jump over with both feet together.
- ◆ When the athlete can jump over the still rope, have her try jumping while the rope is swinging.
- ◆ When the athlete can jump once over the turning rope, add more jumps, with or without a rebound (2 jumps for each turn of the rope).

Straight jump backward (with and without a rebound)



- ◆ Follow the same progression as for forward jumps.

Runs over the rope (with the same foot and alternating feet)



- ◆ Swing the rope overhead in a U-shape.
- ◆ Stop the rope as it nears the floor and step over with one foot, then the other.
- ◆ Continue swinging the rope and stepping over as you travel across the floor, gradually making the steps into small jumps.



- ◆ When the athlete can step/jump over the still rope, have her try stepping/jumping over the turning rope.
- ◆ Practice with the same foot stepping over the rope each time, and with alternating feet.

Cat leap over the rope

- ◆ Holding one knot in each hand, begin Figure 8s with the rope.
- ◆ Separate the hands, making a U-shape with the rope, and cat leap over.
- ◆ As soon as the rope passes overhead, put the hands together and return to the Figure 8s.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Jumps

Error	Correction
Rope hits the ground.	Have the athlete extend the arms and hold the rope higher.
Rope gets out of shape.	Have the athlete swing the rope more fluidly.
Excessive arm movement during jumps.	Have the athlete perform the swings from the wrists.
Athlete bends the arms excessively.	Have the athlete stretch, but not lock, the elbows.
Athlete does not complete the jump.	<p>Break the jump into parts, separating the swing of the rope and the jump. Practice in slow motion until the athlete can do the swing and the jump correctly.</p> <p>Do conditioning exercises to strengthen the ankles so the athlete can jump higher.</p>
Jumps are not continuous.	Have the athlete begin slowly, swinging the rope and jumping continuously. Increase the speed when the athlete can jump successfully slowly.
Athlete has excessive upper body movement and incorrect alignment.	<p>Have the athlete jump without the rope to improve her form.</p> <p>Do conditioning exercises to develop core strength.</p>
Athlete looks down and rounds the shoulders.	<p>Have the athlete focus on an object directly in front of her, at eye level.</p> <p>Do stretching exercises to open the shoulders.</p>
Athlete's toes are not pointed in the air during the jump.	<p>Have the athlete jump without the rope to improve her form.</p> <p>Sit in a pike position and practice pointing and flexing the feet until the athlete understands the difference.</p> <p>Do conditioning exercises to strengthen the ankles so the athlete can jump high enough to point the toes.</p>



Release

- ♦ The athlete will hold one knot, with the rope extended behind.
- ♦ Then, swing the arm forward and upward to catch the free end of the rope.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Release

Error	Correction
Rope swings at an angle.	First, make sure the rope is extended in a straight line behind the athlete. Then, check to see that the athlete swings the arm on plane, in a straight line forward.
Rope does not swing high enough to catch.	Have the athlete swing the rope more forward, lifting the arm holding the knot higher.
Rope swings too high to catch.	Have the athlete stop the arm swing sooner, usually slightly above shoulder height.
Rope is in the correct place, but the athlete cannot catch the knot.	Make sure the athlete is looking at the rope during the catch. If appropriate, think of a way to toss the knotted end of the rope to the athlete. That way, the athlete can just concentrate on the catch, without worrying about the swing.



Hoop

General Hoop Technique

- ♦ The hoop should always be on plane.
 - Frontal plane



- Sagittal plane





- Horizontal plane



- ♦ All hoop tosses and catches should be performed with the arms extended. On the release, the arm should point in the direction of the toss.



- ♦ Swings should be performed from the shoulders, and rotations should be performed from the wrists.
- ♦ When the hoop is held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.





How to Grip the Hoop

Undergrip

One or both hands hold the hoop with palms facing upward.





Overgrip

One or both hands hold the hoop with palms facing downward.



Mixed grip

Hold the hoop with one hand in an overgrip and the other hand in an undergrip.





Outside grip

Hold with the hands in an overgrip on opposite sides of the hoop.





Hoop Skills

The following types of hoop skills will be shown:

- ♦ Swings
- ♦ Passing the hoop around the body
- ♦ Rolls on the floor
- ♦ Spins
- ♦ Passing through the hoop
- ♦ Rotations
- ♦ Tosses and catches

Swings

- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms extended.
- ♦ The swings must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice sagittal swings with the right and left hands.

Swing side to side in the frontal plane

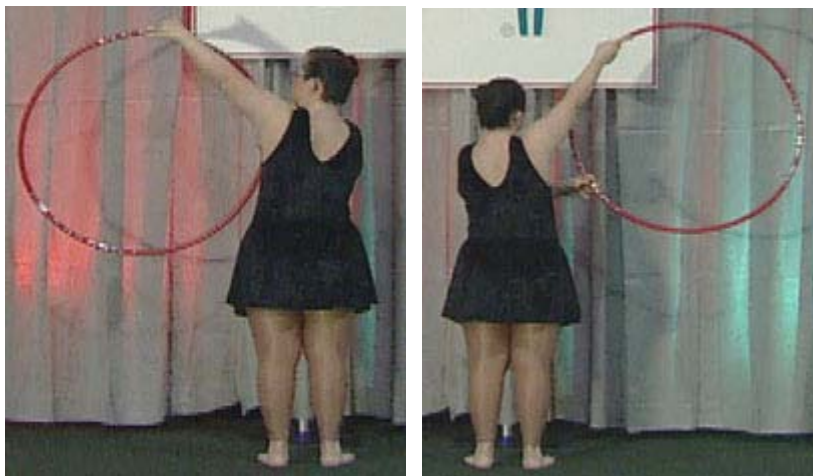


- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop in an undergrip.
- ♦ The athlete must keep the arms straight, swinging from the side, down in front close to the body, and then to the other side.





- ♦ The hoop must stay on the frontal plane. The athlete should practice this swing facing a wall.



Swing side to side in the horizontal plane



- ♦ In an undergrip, the athlete holds the hoop on the horizontal plane and, keeping the arms extended, swings the hoop from side to side.



Swing front and back in the sagittal plane



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop with one hand on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane during the swing. The athlete should practice standing beside a wall.
- ♦ On the forward swing, the arm must stay extended.
- ♦ Depending on the size of the hoop, the arm may relax slightly on the backswing. If the athlete has to bend her arm completely, change to a smaller size hoop.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The sagittal swings are especially important because they progress to tosses. For this reason, it is vital that the athlete swings the hoop on plane with an extended arm.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Swings

Error	Correction
Hoop swings out of plane.	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct the plane.
Hoop touches the athlete.	Have the athlete extend the arms and swing the hoop on plane.
Athlete holds the hoop with an incorrect grip.	Practice different grips until the athlete understands which grip is correct.
Athlete swings the hoop with bent arms.	Hold your hand high, in the place where the athlete should swing the hoop, and ask her to touch your hand with the hoop. Practice bending and straightening the arms until the athlete knows the difference.



Passing the Hoop Around the Body

- ♦ The athlete starts with the leading hand in an overgrip, passes the hoop behind the back, catches with the other hand in an overgrip, and continues passing the hoop to the front.
- ♦ To explain the grips and show how the correct grip keeps the hoop on plane, teach this skill with the athlete kneeling.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Passing the hoop around the body

Error	Correction
The athlete changes the plane of the hoop while passing it around.	Make sure the athlete holds the hoop with both hands, in an overgrip, behind the body. Have the athlete kneel and pass the hoop around with the outer edge resting on the floor.



Rolls on the floor

- ◆ Rolls should be smooth. Assisted and free rolls should pass easily from one hand to the other.
- ◆ Rolls must be on plane.
- ◆ Practice the boomerang roll with the right and left hands.

Assisted roll



- ◆ Using the hands to roll the hoop from one side to the other, the athlete momentarily holds the hoop with both hands in front of the body.
- ◆ At the beginning and end of the roll, when the athlete holds the hoop with one hand, the free arm must be in a defined position.

Free roll



- ◆ The athlete pushes the hoop with one hand to roll it in front of the body to the catch with the other hand.
- ◆ The athlete must push the hoop straight so it rolls on plane.
- ◆ The free arm must be in a defined position.



Boomerang roll



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop with one hand on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ With a flick of the wrist to create a backspin, the athlete rolls the hoop forward and catches it when it returns.
- ♦ The farther the hoop rolls away from the athlete, the more backspin is required to make it return, so practice first with small boomerang rolls.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Rolls on the floor

Error	Correction
Hoop rolls out of plane (assisted and free rolls).	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct plane. Make sure the athlete's hands and arms push the hoop in the intended direction of the roll.
Hoop bounces on the floor (boomerang rolls).	Have the athlete flick the wrist quicker for a faster backspin on the hoop. Make sure the athlete is doing a boomerang roll and not a toss.
Hoop does not roll far enough (free and boomerang rolls).	Have the athlete roll the hoop faster.
Athlete changes the plane of the hoop in the movement after the roll.	Make sure the athlete has the correct grip, which will keep the hoop on plane.



Spins

- ◆ Spins on the floor must rotate around the vertical axis.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.



Assisted spin

- ◆ In the assisted spin, the athlete keeps one hand on the top of the hoop.

Free spin



- ◆ In the free spin, the athlete flicks the wrist to cause the hoop to spin on its own.
- ◆ On the spin, the hoop must be far enough away so it does not touch the athlete's leg.
- ◆ The athlete should catch the hoop before it begins to spin off the axis.

Spin the hoop to change hands



- ◆ The athlete holds the hoop in one hand and begins a spin around the vertical axis in the direction the hoop is traveling across in front of the body.
- ◆ Continuing the spin, the athlete changes hands in front of the body.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Spins

Error	Correction
Hoop tips off of the axis (assisted and changing hands).	Make sure the athlete holds her hand directly on top of the hoop.
Hoop tips off of the axis or falls over (free).	Have the athlete twist the wrist more forcefully to spin the hoop faster.



Passing through the Hoop

Stepping through the hoop



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop low, with an undergrip, on the frontal plane.
- ♦ The athlete steps over the bottom edge of the hoop, which may be resting on the floor.
- ♦ After stepping over with both feet, the athlete moves the hoop up and over the head.

Cat leap through the hoop

- ♦ The cat leap is a progression of stepping through the hoop.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Passing through the hoop

Error	Correction
Athlete has a hard time passing through without the hoop touching the body.	Check to make sure the hoop is the appropriate size for the athlete.
Athlete has a difficult time passing the hoop over her head.	Check to make sure the hoop is the appropriate size for the athlete. Extend the arms as the hoop passes overhead. Make sure the athlete is holding the hoop in an undergrip. Assist with moving the hoop overhead.



Rotations

- ♦ Rotations must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

Rotations on the frontal plane



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop on the frontal plane.
- ♦ The hoop should rotate around the hand, with the arm extended.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane. The athlete should practice facing a wall.
- ♦ Practice the rotations clockwise and counter-clockwise. Imagine the clock is on the wall facing the athlete.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The free arm should show a defined position.



Rotations on the sagittal plane



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ The hoop should rotate around the hand, with the arm extended.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane. The athlete should practice beside a wall.
- ♦ Practice the rotations clockwise and counter-clockwise. Image the clock is on the wall on the side the athlete is doing the rotations.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The free arm should show a defined position.

Overhead rotations



- ♦ The athlete rotates the hoop on the hand held above the head.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane.
- ♦ Practice the rotations in both directions and with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The free arm should show a defined position.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Rotations

Error	Correction
Hoop rotates around the arm instead of the hand.	Have the athlete place the hoop on the hand and begin again.
Hoop rotates out of plane.	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct the plane.
Athlete moves the wrist during rotation.	Have the athlete point the thumb to the ceiling with the other four fingers pointing forward, and draw small circles with the hand (frontal plane).
Athlete cannot make the hoop rotate.	Face the athlete and hold hands, with the hoop on the athlete's forearm. Help the athlete by moving her arm in a small circle. When the athlete gets the feeling, have her try rotations around the arm and, finally, around the hand.



Tosses

Flip toss with 180° rotation



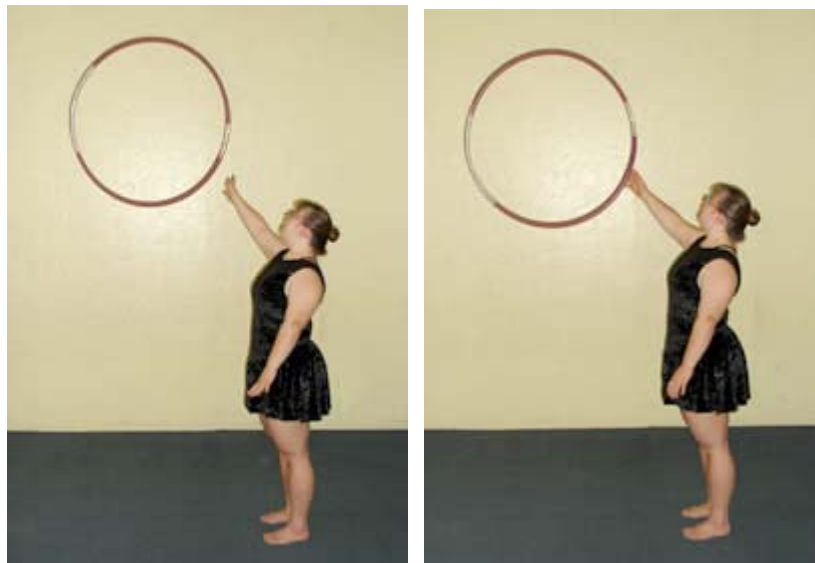
- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop in front of the body on the horizontal plane in an undergrip.
- ♦ With arms extended, the athlete tosses the hoop upward and catches after it has rotated 180°.
- ♦ Flip tosses must rotate around the horizontal axis. The athlete should try to make the hoop rotate slowly, because a hoop rotating fast will be difficult to catch.

Flip toss with 360° rotation

- ♦ The athlete should be able to do the flip toss with 180° rotation easily before trying the flip toss with 360° rotation.



Swing to toss and catch with one hand



- ◆ Tosses from a swing should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ◆ On the release, the arm should point in the direction of the toss.



- ◆ With the arm extended, the athlete catches the toss with one hand on the bottom edge of the hoop.
- ◆ The athlete should catch the hoop, with the arm high, and then complete the downward swing.
- ◆ Practice tosses from a swing with the right and left hands.





Swing to toss and catch with two hands



- ♦ The athlete catches the toss with two hands, one higher than the other.

Swing to toss and catch with rotations

- ♦ The athlete catches with her hand inside the hoop and begins rotations on the sagittal plane.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Tosses

Error	Correction
Athlete has difficulty flipping the hoop (Flip toss).	Teach the athlete to spread the hands wider on the hoop. Toss higher if necessary, but do not use the wrists to flip the hoop fast. Check that the athlete is holding the hoop in an undergrip.
Hoop is spinning too fast (Flip toss).	Make sure the athlete does not flick the wrists on the release.
Athlete has difficulty catching the hoop (Flip toss).	Make sure the athlete catches the hoop in an undergrip. Make sure the hoop is not spinning too fast. Remind the athlete to look at the hoop on the catch.
Toss goes in the wrong place (Swing to a toss).	Keep the arm straight and release with the hand pointing in the direction the hoop should travel. Make sure the hoop is swinging on plane.
Athlete catches the hoop with bent arms (Swing to a toss).	Teach the athlete to keep the arm extended after the release and catch with the arm still extended.



Ball

General Ball Technique

- ♦ The ball should rest in the palm of the athlete's hand. The fingers should be separated, but not gripping the ball.
- ♦ The athlete should never grip the ball or press the ball against any part of the body.
- ♦ All tosses, bounces and catches should be performed with straight arms.
- ♦ When the ball is held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.



How to Hold the Ball

Correct way to hold the ball





Incorrect ways to hold the ball

- ◆ Holding the ball close to the body



- ◆ Gripping the ball





Ball Skills

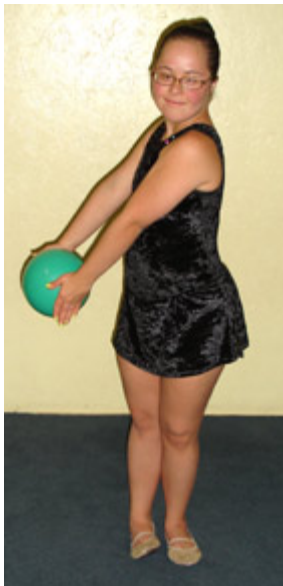
The following types of ball skills will be shown:

- ♦ Swings
- ♦ Passing the ball around the body
- ♦ Bounces
- ♦ Rolls
- ♦ Tosses and catches

Swings

- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms extended.
- ♦ The swings must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The athlete should not grip the ball.

Two hand sagittal swing

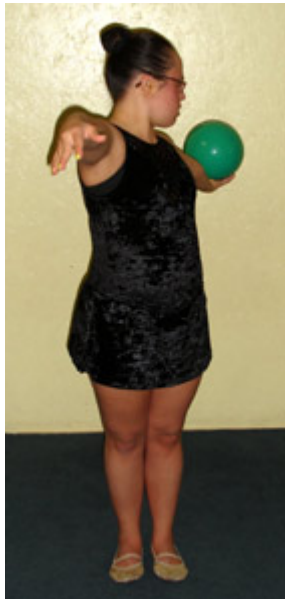


- ♦ The athlete holds the ball with two hands in front of the body.
- ♦ Keeping the ball close to her side, the athlete swings the ball sagittally on the right and returns to the front.



- ♦ Repeat the swing on the left side.
- ♦ The arms may relax during the swing. Make sure the ball doesn't touch the forearm on the backswing.

One hand sagittal swing



- ♦ The athlete holds the ball with the right hand in front of the body.
- ♦ Keeping the ball close to her side, with the elbow leading, the athlete swings the ball sagittally on the right and returns to the front.
- ♦ Repeat the swing to the left, holding the ball in the left hand.
- ♦ Relax the elbow slightly so the ball does not touch the forearm on the backswing.
- ♦ The free arm must show a defined position.



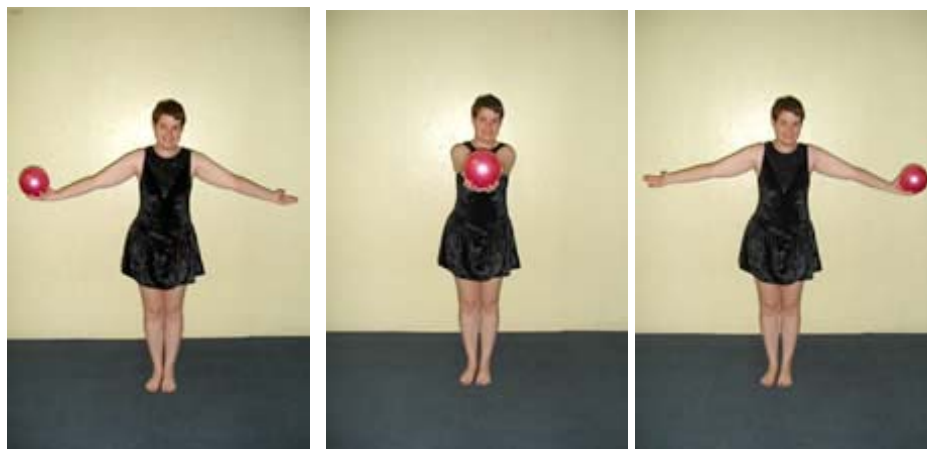
Two hand swing to frontal circle



- ♦ The athlete holds the ball with two hands, low in front of the body.
- ♦ Keeping the circle on the frontal plane, the athlete moves both arms in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction to complete either a swing from side to side or a full circle.
- ♦ The arms should be extended throughout the swing or circle.
- ♦ The athlete should practice facing a wall to keep the circle on plane.

Swing in front, passing the ball from hand to hand





- ◆ With both arms extended to the sides, the athlete holds the ball in the right hand.
- ◆ Both hands move in front of the body, where the athlete passes the ball to the left hand.
- ◆ Open both arms to the sides.
- ◆ Repeat the swing, passing the ball from the left hand to the right hand.
- ◆ The ball should rest in the palm of the hand throughout this skill.

Swing, passing the ball from hand to hand overhead





- ◆ With both arms extended to the sides, the athlete holds the ball in the right hand.
- ◆ Both hands move overhead, where the athlete passes the ball to the left hand.
- ◆ Open both arms to the sides.
- ◆ Repeat the swing, passing the ball from the left hand to the right hand.
- ◆ The arms should remain extended throughout this skill.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Swings

Error	Correction
Ball swings out of plane (Sagittal swing).	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct plane.
Ball touches the athlete's forearm on the backswing (Sagittal swing).	Have the athlete relax the back arms slightly on the backswing.
Arm turns to the outside on the backswing (Sagittal swing).	Have the athlete lead with the elbow and keep the wrist in line with the elbow.
Athlete grips the ball.	Have the athlete do smaller swings. Try a different size ball to see if the athlete can handle it more easily.



Passing the ball around the body

- ♦ The ball should not rest on the forearms or other parts of the body.
- ♦ The athlete should not grip the ball.

Passing the ball around the waist



Passing the ball around the knees





Faults & Fixes Chart – Passing the ball around the body

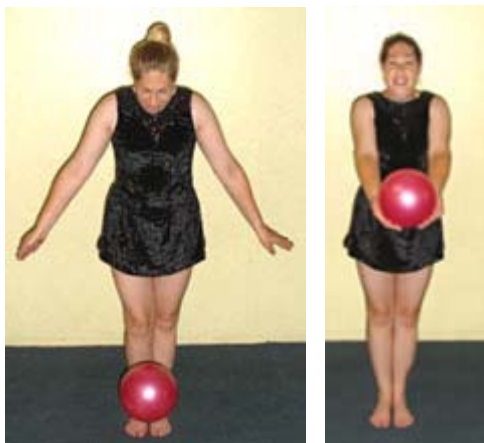
Error	Correction
The ball touches the athlete's body.	Try a different size ball to see if the athlete can handle it more easily. Pass the ball around a smaller part of the body. For example, pass the ball around the knees instead of the waist.
Athlete grips the ball.	Try a different size ball to see if the athlete can handle it more easily.



Bounces

- ♦ The athlete should bounce and catch with straight arms.
- ♦ The athlete should bounce the ball energetically.

Bounce and catch with two hands



Bounce with one hand and catch with two hands



Bounce and catch with one hand





Bounce in a V



- ◆ Hold the ball in the right hand.
- ◆ Bounce the ball at an angle toward the left hand.
- ◆ Catch in the left hand.
- ◆ Repeat, bouncing the ball from the left hand to the right hand.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Bounces

Error	Correction
Athlete grips the ball (Bounce with one hand and in a V).	Have the athlete turn the hand over and release immediately.
Ball does not bounce high enough.	Have the athlete actively push the ball down to the floor. Make sure the ball is inflated correctly.
Athlete bounces and catches the ball with bent arms.	Teach the athlete to keep the arms extended after the release and catch with the arms extended. Place a hoop on the floor a little in front of the athlete and have her bounce the ball into the hoop.
Ball does not bounce to the opposite hand (Bounce in a V).	Have the athlete bounce the ball sideways at a greater angle.
Loud noise on the catch.	Teach the athlete to scoop the ball up on the catch, instead of letting the ball drop into the hands.



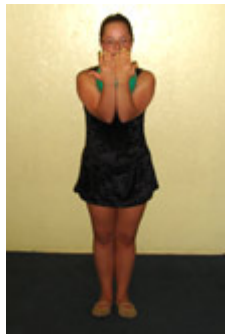
Rolls

- ◆ Whether on the floor or on the body, rolls should be smooth, without bouncing.

Rolls on the floor



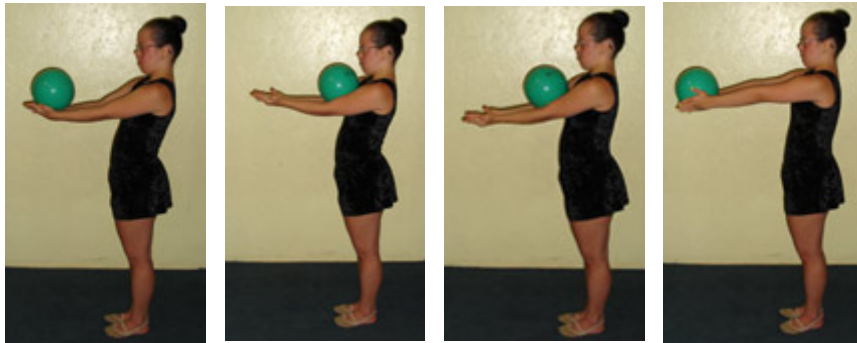
Roll up the body and out the arms



- ◆ Hold the ball with two hands, low in front of the body.
- ◆ Using the fingers, roll the ball up the body. The elbows should open to the sides.
- ◆ Move the elbows close together and straighten the arms to allow the ball to roll out the arms.
- ◆ Raise the arms slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.



Roll in and out both arms



- ◆ With the arms extended forward, hold the ball in two hands.
- ◆ Lift the arms slightly to allow the ball to roll in toward the chest. Do not flex the wrists or grip the ball against the forearm to initiate the roll.
- ◆ When the ball reaches the chest, lower the arms slightly to allow the ball to roll out the arms.
- ◆ Raise the arms slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.



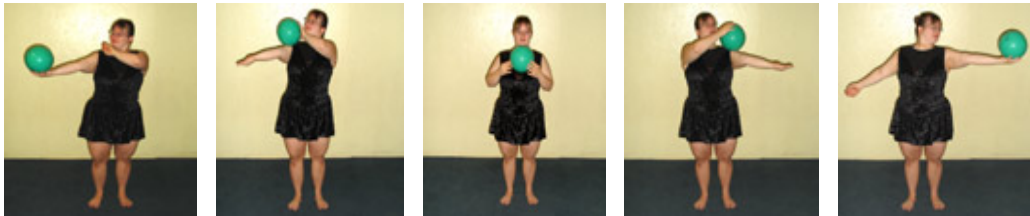
Roll in and out one arm



- ◆ With the right arm extended to the side, hold the ball in the right hand. Position the left hand by the right shoulder.
- ◆ Extend and lift the right arm slightly to allow the ball to roll in toward the shoulder. Do not flex the wrist or grip the ball on the forearm to initiate the roll.
- ◆ Catch the ball with the left hand.
- ◆ Push gently with the left hand to roll the ball back out the arm to the hand.
- ◆ Lift the right arm slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.
- ◆ Keep the elbow extended, but not locked, during the rolls.
- ◆ Repeat with the left hand.



Roll in one arm, across chest, and out the other arm



- ♦ With the right arm extended to the side, hold the ball in the right hand. Position the left hand by the right shoulder.
- ♦ Extend and lift the right arm slightly to allow the ball to roll in toward the shoulder. Do not flex the wrist or grip the ball on the forearm to initiate the roll.
- ♦ Catch the ball with the left hand.
- ♦ Using both hands, roll the ball across the chest to the left shoulder.
- ♦ Holding the ball with the right hand, extend the left arm to the side.
- ♦ Push gently with the right hand to roll the ball out the left arm to the hand.
- ♦ Lift the left arm slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.
- ♦ Repeat, rolling the ball from left to right.
- ♦ Keep the elbows extended, but not locked, during the rolls.
- ♦ This skill is a progression for rolling the ball across both arms and the chest.

Roll across both arms



- ♦ The athlete should be proficient at rolling the ball in and out each arm before attempting this skill.



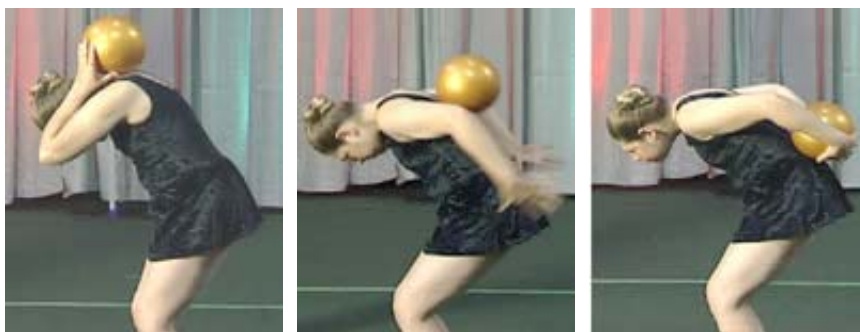
- ♦ The roll across both arms is performed with the same technique as the previous skill, but the ball rolls freely in one arm, across the chest and out the other arm.

Assisted roll on the legs

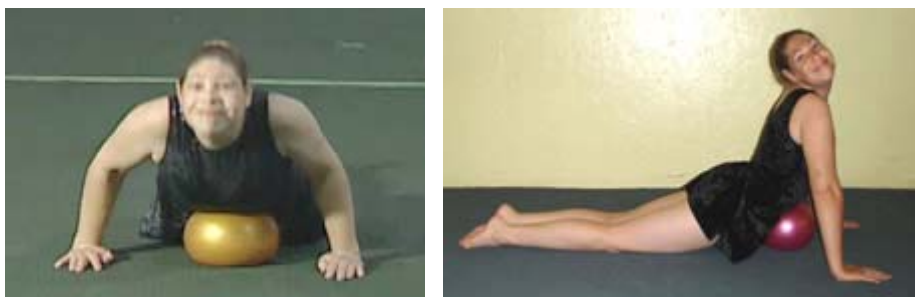


- ♦ The athlete sits in a pike position and uses the hands to roll the ball down the legs toward the feet and back up the legs toward the body.

Roll down the back



Rolling with the chest on the ball





Faults & Fixes Chart – Rolls

Error	Correction
Ball bounces on the floor (Roll on the floor).	Have the athlete put the back of her hand on the floor and gently push the ball.
Ball does not roll in a straight line on the floor.	Have the athlete extend the hand or arm in the direction that she wants the ball to roll.
Athlete cannot catch the ball (Roll on the arms).	Have the athlete raise the arms slightly at the end of the roll.
Ball does not roll on the athlete's arms.	Have the athlete extend, but not lock, the elbows. Lift the arm slightly or extend the arm under the ball to initiate the roll.
Athlete has trouble rolling the ball on her legs.	Make sure the athlete has the legs straight and together.
Athlete has trouble catching the ball (Roll down the back).	First, stand behind the athlete and catch the ball for her, until she has the feeling of the correct release and the ball roll. Make sure the athlete bends far enough forward so the ball rolls down the back, instead of just dropping.
Athlete does not roll correctly on the ball. (Roll with chest on the ball)	Make sure the athlete contacts the ball with the chest and only rolls to the hips. The athlete should push up and straighten the arms at the end of the roll.



Tosses

- ♦ Tosses begin with a swing. Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms straight.
- ♦ The athlete should swing to extend the arm in the direction of the toss.
- ♦ The athlete should catch the ball quietly, with the arm extended, and then complete the downward swing.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

Toss and catch with two hands



Toss with one hand and catch with two hands



Toss and catch with one hand





Toss and trap the ball in the arms



Toss and trap the ball on the legs



Faults & Fixes Chart – Tosses

Error	Correction
Toss goes in the wrong direction.	Make sure the athlete keeps the arms straight and releases with the hands pointing in the direction the ball should travel. Make sure the ball is swinging on plane (One hand toss). Make sure the ball is held evenly with both hands (Two hand toss).
Athlete catches the ball with bent arm(s).	Teach the athlete to keep the arm(s) extended after the release and catch with the arm(s) still extended high toward the toss.
Ball makes a loud noise as the athlete catches.	Have the athlete make contact with the ball higher, and lower the arms with the ball.



Clubs



General Clubs Technique

- ◆ The clubs should be an extension of the athlete's arms.
- ◆ All tosses, catches and swings should be performed with straight arms.
- ◆ All swings should be performed from the shoulders.
- ◆ Small circles should be performed from the wrists.
- ◆ When the clubs are held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.

Parts of the clubs

- ◆ Head



- ◆ Neck



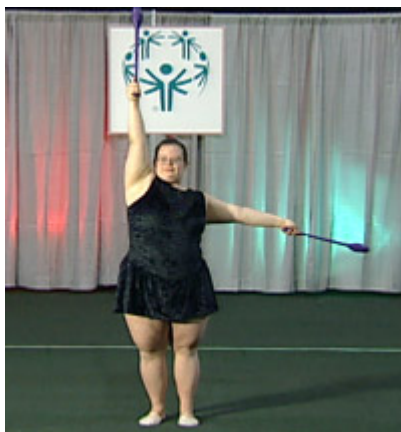


- ◆ Body



How to Hold the Clubs

The clubs should be held as an extension of the arms.





Holding the clubs by the head

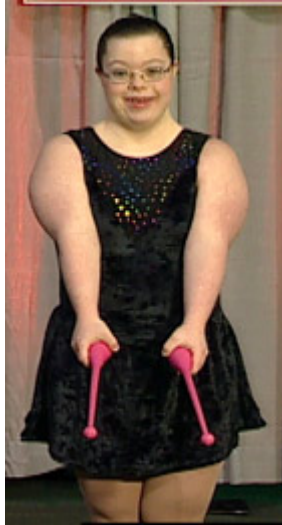


Holding the clubs by the neck

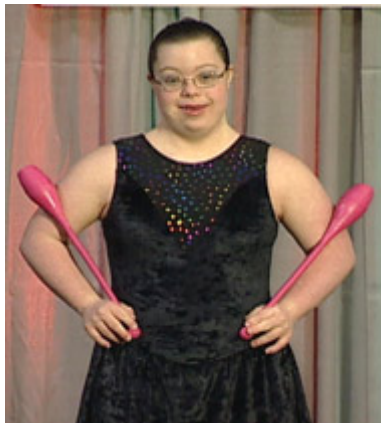




Holding the clubs by the body



Holding the clubs with hands on waist



Incorrect ways to hold the clubs





Clubs Skills

The following types of clubs skills will be shown:

- ♦ Swings
- ♦ Tapping
- ♦ Small circles
- ♦ Tosses and catches

Swings

- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ♦ The arms must be on plane, with the clubs as an extension of the arms.



- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands separately and then with both hands together.





Swings side to side



Swings front and back



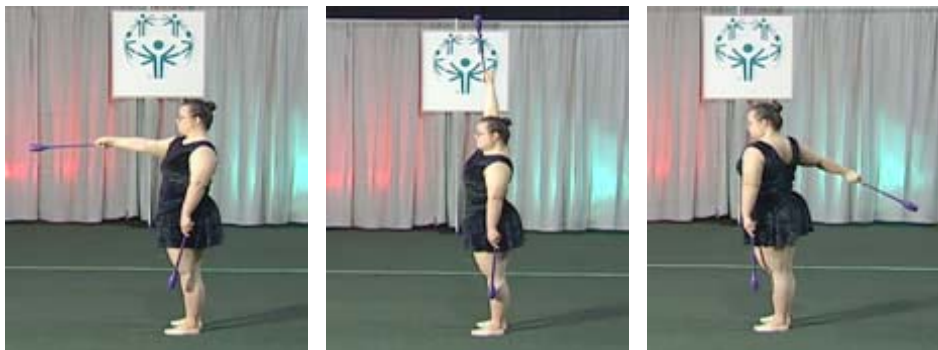
- ♦ The swings front and back are important as a preparation for sagittal circles and tosses.
- ♦ The arms must remain straight, with the clubs as an extension of the arms.
- ♦ The swings must be performed on plane. Practice standing beside a wall.

Circle in the frontal plane



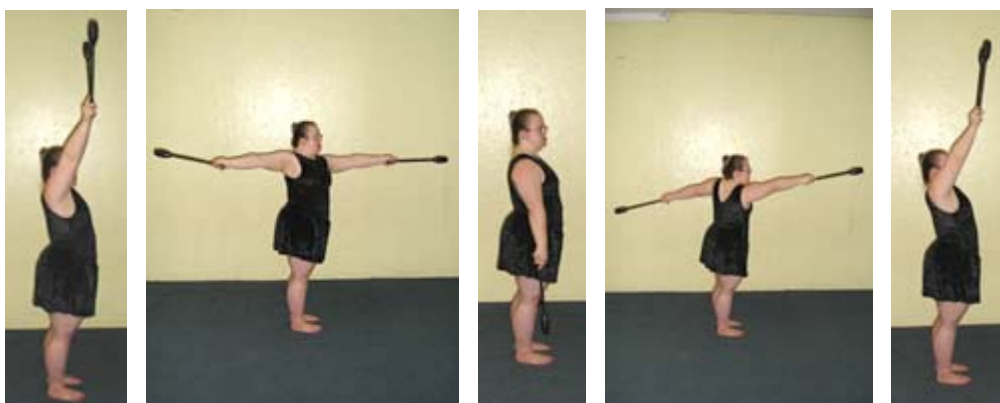


Backward sagittal circle



- ◆ Keeping the arm straight, with the club as an extension of the arm, the athlete circles the arm backward on the sagittal plane.
- ◆ The arm should pass close to the ear and the hip.

Opposition arm circle



- ◆ Practice the opposition circle first in quarters, with four checkpoints:
 - Extend both arms overhead.
 - Move the left arm to the front at shoulder height and the right arm to the back at shoulder height.
 - Continue the circle until both arms are extended down by the hips.
 - Move the right arm to the front at shoulder height and the left arm to the back at shoulder height.
 - Continue the circle until both arms are extended overhead.
- ◆ Next, practice the opposition circles in halves, with checkpoints overhead and low by the hips.
- ◆ Finally, practice the full opposition arm circle. Make sure the arms stay fully extended and move on plane.



Windmill



- ◆ Extend one arm up overhead and the other arm down by the hips.
- ◆ Moving at the same time, circle the arms.
- ◆ The arms must stay 180° apart, with a straight line from one club to the other.



- ◆ Practice the windmill in quarters and halves, like the opposition arm circle.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Swings

Error	Correction
Clubs swing out of plane.	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct the plane. Make sure the athlete has straight arms. On any swing in the sagittal plane, make sure the athlete's arm passes close to the ear and the hip.
Athlete holds the clubs out of line with the arms.	Have the athlete grip the clubs tighter and keep the wrists straight.
Athlete bends the arms.	Have the athlete perform all swings from the shoulders. Practice straightening and bending the arms until the athlete feels the difference.



Tapping

- ◆ Tapping is part of a swing. Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms straight. The wrists will initiate the taps.
- ◆ The arms must be on plane, with the clubs as an extension of the arms.
- ◆ Tapping on the floor can be done in different rhythms.

Tapping high and low





Tapping behind the back



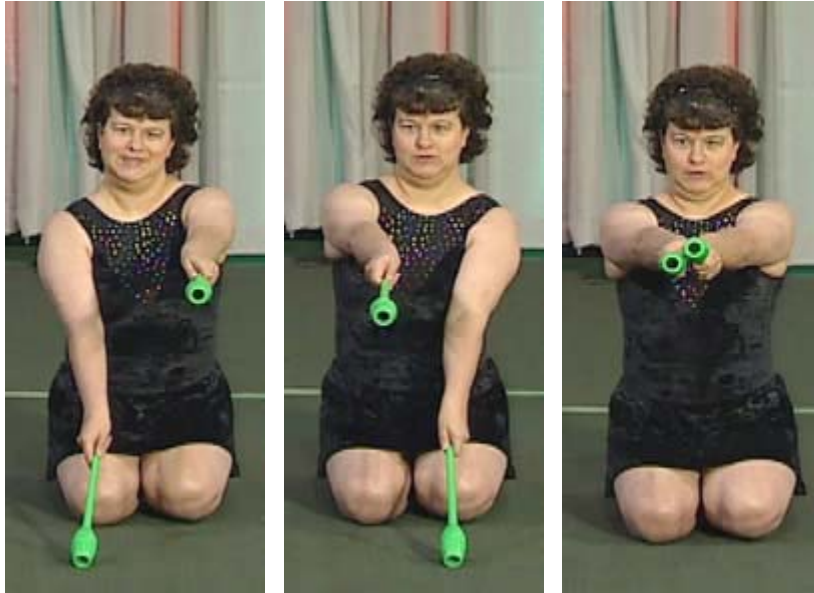
Tapping under one leg





Kneeling

- ♦ Tapping on the floor in a rhythm



- ♦ Rolling the clubs on the floor





Faults & Fixes Chart – Tapping

Error	Correction
Athlete holds the clubs out of line with the arms and cannot tap the clubs together.	Have the athlete grip the clubs tighter and keep the wrists straight.
Athlete bends the arms.	Have the athlete perform all swings from the shoulders. Practice straightening and bending the arms until the athlete feels the difference.



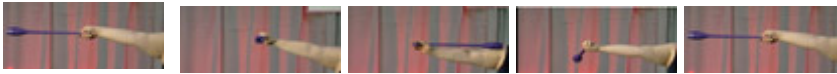
Small Circles

- ♦ Small circles should be done from the wrist, keeping the arm extended.
- ♦ The clubs should be held loosely to allow them to circle freely.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands separately and then together.
- ♦ When learning the small circles and Figure 8's, do only one circle and stop. When the athlete can do one circle easily, begin continuous circles or Figure 8's.

Horizontal circles over and under the arm



- ♦ On the horizontal circles over the arm, hold the club loosely so the circle will stay on plane.



- ♦ On the horizontal circles under the arm, hold the club loosely so the club will circle on plane, as close to the arm as possible without hitting the elbow.



- ♦ A good way to practice the horizontal circles under the arm is to kneel and circle the club, holding loosely, trying to get it closer and closer to the floor.





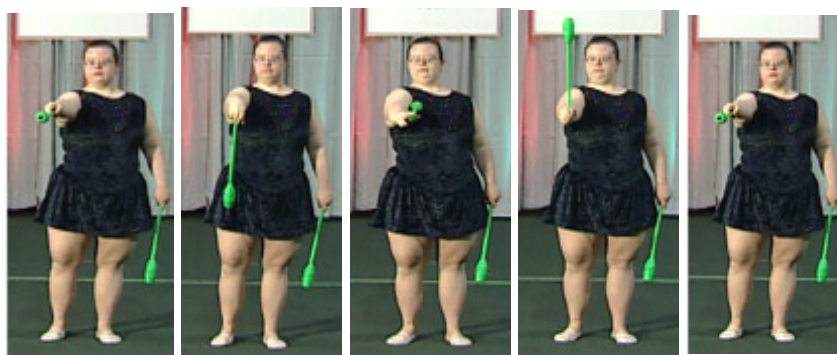
Horizontal Figure 8's

- ◆ First, practice one circle over the arm and stop. Then, one circle under the arm and stop.
- ◆ Continuously, circle once over the arm, once under the arm and stop.
- ◆ Finally, perform the Figure 8's continuously many times without stopping.
- ◆ Practice the Figure 8's circling inward as well as outward with each hand. This is a progression to horizontal mills.

Horizontal Mills



Vertical circles inside and outside the arm



- ◆ First, practice one circle inside the arm and stop. Then, one circle outside the arm and stop.
- ◆ Continuously, circle inside the arm, then outside and stop.
- ◆ Finally, perform the vertical circles continuously many times without stopping.
- ◆ The vertical circles is a progression to vertical mills.



Vertical Figure 8's

Vertical Mills



Faults & Fixes Chart – Small Circles

Error	Correction
Clubs do not circle.	Have the athlete hold the clubs loosely. Put a tennis ball inside a long sock and have the athlete practice circles and Figure 8's.
Clubs do not circle on plane.	Have the athlete hold the clubs loosely.
Athlete hits her arms with the clubs.	Have the athlete keep the elbows extended but not locked.



Tosses

- ♦ Tosses begin with a swing. Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms straight.
- ♦ The club will rotate by itself because one end is heavier than the other. The athlete does not need to flick the wrist to make the club rotate.
- ♦ The athlete should have control of the tosses with 180° rotation before she attempts the tosses with 360° rotation.
- ♦ The athlete should catch the club with the arm extended and then continue the downswing.
- ♦ Practice the tosses with the right and left hands.

Toss with 180° rotation





Toss with 360° rotation





Faults & Fixes Chart – Tosses

Error	Correction
Toss goes in the wrong place.	<p>Make sure the athlete keeps the arm straight and releases with the hand pointing in the direction the club should travel.</p> <p>Make sure the arm is swinging on plane.</p> <p>On the release, the palm should be pointing down and the athlete should be able to see a V between the thumb and forefinger.</p>
Athlete catches the clubs with bent arms.	Teach the athlete to keep the arms extended after the release and catch with the arms still extended.
Clubs spin too fast in the air.	Have the athlete keep the wrists straight when she releases the clubs.
Clubs rotate too many times in the air.	<p>Have the athlete toss lower and keep the wrists straight when she releases the clubs.</p> <p>Have the athlete slow down the arm swing before she releases the clubs.</p>
Athlete catches the wrong end of the clubs.	Have the athlete adjust the height of the toss so that the club will rotate the correct amount of times.
The toss is correct, but the athlete has trouble catching the club.	Remind the athlete to look at the club on the catch.



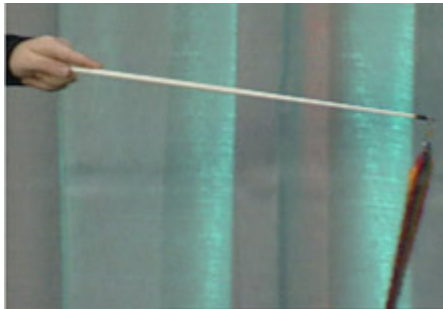
Ribbon

General Ribbon Technique

- ♦ Large ribbon patterns are performed from the shoulders and must be on plane.
- ♦ Small ribbon patterns are performed from the wrists.
- ♦ The free arm should be held in a defined position at all times.
- ♦ Ribbon patterns should not touch the floor, except when specified.
- ♦ The ribbon should be moving at all times, never lying static on the floor.
- ♦ Practice all patterns with the right and left hands.
- ♦ Practice moving from pattern to pattern or changing from hand to hand without letting the ribbon stop.

How to Hold the Ribbon Stick

Correct and incorrect ways to hold the ribbon stick





Ribbon Skills

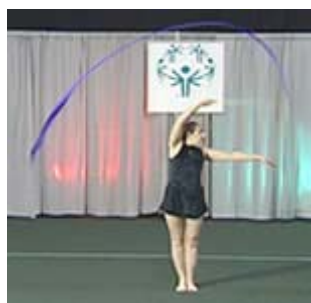
The following types of ribbon skills will be shown:

- ♦ Swings
- ♦ Large circles
- ♦ Figure 8's
- ♦ Spirals
- ♦ Snakes
- ♦ Locomotor movements with ribbon

Swings

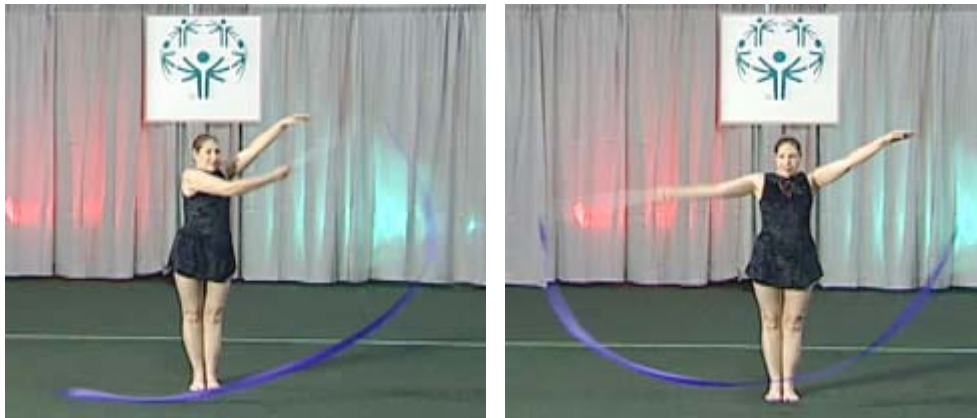
- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ♦ The ribbon must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

Overhead swings side to side





Low swings side to side



Sagittal swings front and back



Faults & Fixes Chart – Swings

Error	Correction
Ribbon swings out of plane.	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct plane.
Swing is done from the elbow instead of the shoulder.	Have the athlete move the whole arm from the shoulder.
Ribbon makes a snapping sound.	Have the athlete swing the arm more fluidly.



Large Circles

- ♦ Large circles should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The ribbon must be on plane. The athlete can stand by a wall to practice keeping the circles on plane.



Large circle on the frontal plane

- ♦ Practice the circles clockwise and counter-clockwise.
- ♦ Practice facing a wall to learn to keep the ribbon on plane.





Large circles on the sagittal plane

- ♦ The arm must stay straight and pass close to the ear and the hip on the sagittal circle.
- ♦ Practice the circles clockwise and counter-clockwise.



Large circles overhead

- ♦ To keep from getting tangles in the ribbon, keep the arm extended and make the circles as large as possible.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Large Circles

Error	Correction
Ribbon circles out of plane.	Have the athlete stand by a wall to correct plane (frontal and sagittal planes). Make sure the athlete has a straight arm throughout the entire circle, especially in the back. The arm should pass close to the ear and the hip (sagittal plane).
Large circles are done from the elbow instead of from the shoulder.	Have the athlete move the whole arm from the shoulder.
Ribbon makes a snapping sound.	Have the athlete swing the arm more fluidly.



Figure 8's

- ◆ Figure 8's, like large circles, should be done from the shoulder.
- ◆ When the athlete has the ribbon stick in the right hand:
 - The right arm should stay straight, passing close to the right leg and right ear, when the athlete does the large sagittal circle on the right side of the body.
 - The right arm will bend slightly when the athlete crosses over the body to do the circle on the left side.



- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Figure 8’s

Error	Correction
Shape of the 8 is too wide.	Have the athlete circle the arm closer to the body on each side.
Ribbon touches the athlete.	Have the athlete extend the arm and swing the ribbon in larger, more energetic patterns.
Athlete bends the arms.	Have the athlete use the whole arm from the shoulder.
Athlete does not complete the full Figure 8 pattern.	Have the athlete complete a full circle on either side of the body. Make sure the athlete is moving the arm and the whole ribbon, not just the stick.
Athlete cannot make the Figure 8 pattern or keep it moving continuously.	Stand behind the athlete and guide her through the Figure 8 motion.



Snakes

- ◆ Snakes should be done from the wrist, keeping the arm extended.
- ◆ Depending on the length of the ribbon, the pattern should show three to six snakes.
- ◆ The ribbon must not touch the floor.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.

Horizontal snakes behind the back



- ◆ Swing the ribbon up and behind the back.
- ◆ Keeping the arm extended, point the stick downward at an angle and begin a side-to-side motion from the wrist.
- ◆ If the ribbon becomes tangled in the stick, point the end of the stick farther downward.
- ◆ To move the snakes down in front of the body, leading with the elbow, lower the arm to the front, continuing the snakes.
- ◆ The free arm must show a defined shape.

Horizontal snakes in front





Vertical snakes





Faults & Fixes Chart – Snakes

Error	Correction
The end of the ribbon touches the floor (Vertical).	Have the athlete hold her arm higher and circle the wrist faster. Practice with a shorter ribbon.
The pattern is done from the elbow instead of the wrist (Horizontal and Vertical).	Have the athlete take her opposite hand and place it under the elbow to make sure the elbow stays stationary while the wrist is moving side to side or up and down. Have the athlete extend the arm and move the wrist side to side.
The pattern is not established or performed continuously (Horizontal and Vertical).	Have the athlete practice moving the wrist up and down. Practice with a shorter ribbon.
The size of the snakes is uneven (Horizontal and Vertical).	Have the athlete practice moving the wrist up and down. Practice with a shorter ribbon.
The ribbon becomes tangled in the stick (Behind the back).	Have the athlete extend her the arm and point the end of the stick, which is attached to the ribbon, downward at an angle. Practice with a shorter ribbon.
The ribbon becomes tangled in the stick (Moving down in front of the body).	Have the athlete lead with her the elbow, and then her the wrist, followed by the ribbon stick.



Spirals

- ♦ Spirals should be done from the wrist, keeping the arm extended.
- ♦ Depending on the length of the ribbon, the pattern should show three to six spirals.
- ♦ The ribbon must not touch the floor.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

Spirals in front



Spirals on the side (with the arm crossed over)





Faults & Fixes Chart – Spirals

Error	Correction
The end of the ribbon touches the floor.	Have the athlete hold the arm higher and circle the wrist faster. Practice with a shorter ribbon.
The pattern is done from the elbow instead of the wrist.	Have the athlete take her opposite hand and place it under the elbow to make sure the elbow stays stationary while the wrist is circling.
The pattern is not established or performed continuously.	Have the athlete practice circling the wrist. Practice with a shorter ribbon.
The size of the spirals is uneven.	Have the athlete practice circling the wrist. Practice with a shorter ribbon.



Locomotor Movements with Ribbon

Walk with horizontal snakes behind

- ♦ The athlete walks forward across the floor while performing horizontal snakes behind the back.
- ♦ When the athlete can do the ribbon pattern consistently well, try other locomotor movements such as skipping and running.



Chassé with large frontal circles

- ♦ The athlete chassés sideways across the floor while performing large frontal circles with the ribbon.
- ♦ The ribbon circles must stay on plane.



Walk backward with spirals

- ♦ The athlete walks backward across the floor while performing spirals with the ribbon.





Faults & Fixes Chart – Locomotor Movements with Ribbon

Error	Correction
Ribbon pattern is not shown.	Have the athlete practice just the ribbon pattern first and then add the locomotor movement. See the charts above for specific corrections for the ribbon patterns.
Locomotor movement is incorrect.	Have the athlete practice just the locomotor movement first and then add the ribbon.

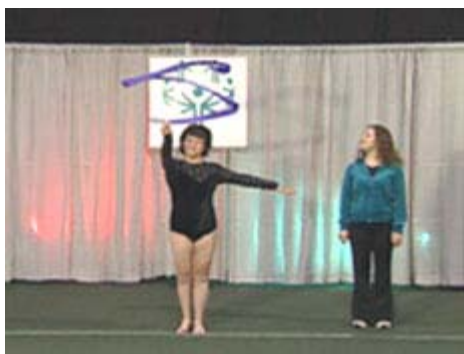


Combinations with Ribbon

- ◆ Athletes must learn to move fluidly from one ribbon pattern to the next without stopping the movement of the ribbon.
- ◆ Combinations that include large and small ribbon patterns teach the athlete to move from the shoulder in the large patterns and from the wrist in small patterns, combining the two techniques.
- ◆ Athletes must learn to pass the ribbon stick from one hand to the other without affecting the ribbon pattern.
- ◆ The athlete must keep the ribbon from stopping or touching the floor when changing patterns or changing hands.
- ◆ The athlete should practice combinations of patterns with the right and left hands.

Swing the ribbon up and do horizontal snakes down in front

- ◆ Keeping the arm extended and moving from the shoulder, the athlete swings the ribbon up and behind the back.
- ◆ Leading with the elbow, the athlete moves the arm down in front of the body while performing horizontal snakes with the ribbon.



Swing the ribbon overhead and do vertical snakes across in front

- ◆ Beginning with the arms extended to the sides, the athlete performs an overhead swing with the ribbon. This pattern is done from the shoulder.
- ◆ Moving the arm across in front of the body, the athlete performs vertical snakes. This pattern is done from the wrist.
- ◆ The ribbon should keep moving at all times during the combination.
- ◆ Practice this combination with the right and left hands to lead up to the complex combination below.





Cross one arm over and do spirals on the side to a large frontal circle

- ◆ Holding the ribbon stick in the right hand, with the right arm crossed in front of the body, the athlete performs spirals on the side.
- ◆ Swinging the ribbon down first, the athlete performs a large counter-clockwise frontal circle with the ribbon.
- ◆ When the athlete is proficient at the ribbon pattern, she can walk forward during the spirals and step or cat leap over the ribbon on the large circle.



Complex combination

Swing the ribbon overhead and do vertical snakes across in front, adding a tiptoe turn and changing the ribbon stick from hand to hand behind the back. (Repeat the combination with the left hand.)

- ◆ This combination requires the athlete to perform ribbon patterns using different techniques as well as work with both hands.
- ◆ The ribbon must keep moving throughout the whole combination.





Group

Whether the athletes compete in Rhythmic Gymnastics Group or not, training through group exercises has many benefits:

- ♦ Athletes learn to work together as a team.
- ♦ Athletes take on leadership responsibilities within the group.
- ♦ Athletes learn to toss, bounce and roll the hand apparatus to another athlete or coach.
- ♦ Parents, siblings and friends can join in activities with the athletes.
- ♦ Group activities are fun!

With and without the hand apparatus, athletes learn to perform elements:

- ♦ In formations.
 - The athletes perform movements in set formations, such as straight lines, learning to maintain the prescribed relationship between all members of the group.
- ♦ In synchronization.
 - The athletes perform movements in synchronization, all moving at the same time.
- ♦ In sequence.
 - The athletes perform movements in sequence, one after the other.
- ♦ With partners.
 - The athletes perform movements with a partner: holding hands, sharing a piece of equipment, or just moving together.
- ♦ With apparatus exchanges.
 - The athletes exchange one or two pieces of hand apparatus with a partner.

Below, you will find examples of each. Be creative and make up group activities and encourage the athletes to do the same. Remember – good body and apparatus technique are important during group activities.



Group Activities in Formations

Walking in a line



- ◆ Have several athletes stand side by side in a line.
- ◆ As a group, staying in the line, the athletes walk four steps forward, stop and make a quarter turn to the right.
- ◆ The athletes walk four steps forward one behind the other in a line, stop and make a quarter turn to the right.
- ◆ The athletes walk four steps forward side by side in a line, stop and make a quarter turn to the right.
- ◆ The athletes walk four steps forward one behind the other in a line, stop and make a quarter turn to the right to return to the original position.
- ◆ To increase the difficulty of the exercise, have all athletes step on the same foot at the same time.
- ◆ This pattern can be done with any locomotor skill.

Star formation





- ◆ A group of athletes stand in a circle with their right hands together in the center of the circle. The left arm is extended outside the circle.
- ◆ The athletes walk forward around the circle. This is a good time to practice walking in relevé.
- ◆ Reverse and walk around the circle with the left hands in the center.

Star formation with ball



- ◆ The athletes perform the star formation holding a ball in the hand that is in the center of the circle.



Group Activities in Synchronization

Arabesque balance



- ♦ The athletes stand side by side in a line.
- ♦ All athletes step forward on the same foot at the same time and point the other foot behind.
- ♦ All athletes lift the back leg into arabesque at the same time.
- ♦ All athletes close the foot at the same time.
- ♦ The arm movements must also be performed in synchronization.

Arabesque balance with ball



- ♦ The athletes perform the arabesque balance holding a ball.



Flip toss with hoop and jump through



- ◆ The athletes stand side by side in a line.
- ◆ The athletes perform a flip toss with 180° rotation at the same time.
- ◆ The athletes jump through the hoop and raise the hoop overhead at the same time.



Group Activities in Sequence

Tiptoe turn

- ♦ The athletes stand side by side in a line.
- ♦ The first athlete at the end of the line performs a tiptoe turn.
- ♦ The next athlete performs a tiptoe turn, continuing down the line, one athlete at a time.



Half tiptoe turn with hoop

- ♦ In sequence, the athletes perform a 180° tiptoe turn while swinging the hoop up and overhead.





Group Activities with Partners

Chassé with a partner

- ♦ Side to side
 - Two athletes face each other and hold hands.
 - The athletes chassé sideways, stop and chassé sideways in the other direction back to their starting position.
- ♦ In a circle
 - Two athletes face each other and hold hands.
 - The athletes chassé sideways around the circle, stop and chassé sideways around the circle in the other direction.
- ♦ Side to side with hoop
 - Two athletes face each other, each holding the edge of a hoop, and perform the chassés side to side or in a circle.





Chainé turn facing a partner

- ♦ Two athletes face each other.
- ♦ Each athlete performs a chainé turn to the right, which will move them away from each other.
- ♦ Each athlete performs a chainé turn to the left, which will move them back together to finish in their starting position.



Walking under an arch

- ♦ Holding hands, the athletes stand in a line side by side.
- ♦ The two athletes at one end of the line raise their arms to make an arch.
- ♦ The athlete at the other end of the line leads the athletes under the arch, returning to the original line.





Group Activities with Apparatus Exchanges

Rolling the hoop



- ◆ Roll the hoop with good technique. Place both hands on top of the hoop, with the fingers pointing forward. Extend the arms in the direction of the roll to push the hoop forward.
- ◆ First, practice the exchange with one hoop.



- ◆ When the athletes can exchange one hoop successfully, practice the exchange with two hoops.





Tossing the hoop



- ◆ Toss the hoop with good technique – a straight arm pointing in the direction of the toss.
- ◆ Catch the hoop with one or two hands.
- ◆ First, practice the exchange with one hoop.



- ◆ When the athletes can exchange one hoop successfully, practice the exchange with two hoops.





Rolling the ball



- ◆ Two athletes sit in a straddle position, facing each other.
- ◆ The athletes roll the ball back and forth.

Bouncing the ball



- ◆ Bounce the ball with good technique.
- ◆ Catch the ball with one or two hands.
- ◆ First, practice the exchange with one ball.
- ◆ When the athletes can exchange one ball successfully, practice the exchange with two balls.

Tossing the ball



- ◆ Toss the ball with good technique – a straight arm pointing in the direction of the toss.
- ◆ Catch the ball with one or two hands.
- ◆ First, practice the exchange with one ball.



- ◆ When the athletes can exchange one ball successfully, practice the exchange with two balls.

Rolling the ball with a group



- ◆ Standing in a straddle position, the athletes form a line one behind the other.
- ◆ The athlete at the front of the line rolls the ball backward through the athletes' legs.
- ◆ The athlete at the back of the line catches the ball and walks to the front of the line.
- ◆ Repeat the exercise until each athlete has a turn at the front of the line.



Seated Activities

Athletes who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility can easily participate in rhythmic gymnastics. For competition, Special Olympics provides seated routines for these athletes. Below are several skills with each apparatus for seated athletes. Remember to find the correct size apparatus the athlete can handle easily.

Rope

Rotations holding the middle of a doubled rope



Twist a doubled rope



Spin a doubled rope





Place a doubled rope behind the neck



Hoop

Twist in the sagittal plane



Twist on the frontal plane





Tap hoop on the floor



Swing on a horizontal plane





Ball

Roll on the arms



Roll on the legs





Toss and catch



Toss and trap in the arms



Swing to pass the ball from one hand to the other





Ribbon

Horizontal snakes



Spirals





Overhead circles



Swing up, horizontal snakes down in front





Modifications and Adaptations

Success and safety are priorities during Special Olympics training and competition. Success is not measured by medals and other external awards, but by the sense of accomplishment the athletes feel. For this reason, it is often necessary to make adaptations to the rhythmic gymnastics equipment in order for the athletes to experience success. For example, ribbon skills are often difficult for the athlete to learn with a long ribbon that meets Special Olympics specifications for competition. However, the same skills may be accomplished easily with a shorter ribbon. As the athlete becomes more proficient with the shorter ribbon, you can gradually increase the length of the ribbon to one that meets competition specifications. Training can only be safe and fun when the athletes have control of the apparatus.

Likewise, many body skills are difficult for the athletes to learn and must be broken down into parts to ensure the athletes' success in training. For example, a *passé pivot* can be taught first as a balance and later as a pivot. Remember – it is important to break skills down into parts and to reward the athlete's effort!

For competition, the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules* specify the size of equipment and the requirements for routines and also provide forms to submit to the competition management if an athlete needs special modifications because of physical disabilities.

Modifying Exercises

Be creative and find ways to modify rhythmic gymnastics skills so that all athletes can participate. For example, an athlete who has limited use of one arm may only be able to perfect skills with the dominant hand. Encourage that athlete to try the skills with the weaker arm, whether with assistance from a partner or with a limited range of motion. Even if the technique of the skill is compromised, the attempt is what matters!

Accommodating an Athlete's Special Needs

Each athlete will present different needs and challenges, strengths and weaknesses. There are many ways to accommodate these special needs:

- ♦ Modify the apparatus to make it easier to handle.
- ♦ Allow the athlete to wear sneakers or other shoes that make balancing easier.
- ♦ Have athletes who are hearing impaired practice routines with a partner to learn rhythm.
- ♦ Guide the visually impaired athlete through skills.
- ♦ Make rhythmic gymnastics fun, no matter the ability level of the athlete.

Modifying Your Communication Method

Athletes learn differently. Some respond better to vocal instructions, while others require visual cues. Some athletes learn best if the coach guides them through the exercises. Try a combination of all methods until you identify which works best for each athlete.

Modifying Equipment

There are many ways to modify the rhythmic gymnastics equipment to make it easier for the athletes to handle.

Rope

- ♦ Use a shorter rope.
- ♦ Tie two knots at each end to make the rope easier to hold.

Hoop

- ♦ Use a larger or smaller hoop.
- ♦ Tape the hoop with bright colors to make it easier to see.



Ball

- ♦ Use a larger or smaller ball.
- ♦ Deflate the ball slightly to make it easier to hold.

Clubs

- ♦ Use shorter clubs.
- ♦ Tape the neck of the clubs with a bright color to make them easier to see.

Ribbon

- ♦ Use a shorter ribbon.
- ♦ Pad the ribbon stick to make it easier to hold.





Cross Training in Rhythmic Gymnastics

One of the keys to success in a sport is staying healthy and injury free. Cross training developed as a result of injury rehabilitation and is now also used for injury prevention. Cross training means substituting exercises unrelated to the specific skills of a particular sport. In most sports, athletes overuse some muscles; with cross training, they can maintain muscular balance and thus help prevent overuse injuries.

Rhythmic gymnastics requires more flexibility than many other sports, so it is especially important for the athletes to do strength training in order to be able to control that flexibility. Core strength and stability are necessary for the rhythmic gymnastics participant to be able to perform most of the body skills correctly. Body placement and alignment are of the utmost importance.



Pilates

Pilates is an excellent cross training system to complement rhythmic gymnastics. Following is a modified Pilates mat class. It is important for the athletes to perform the exercises with good form. It is more beneficial to do a few correct repetitions than many repetitions with poor form and alignment. Once the athletes progress beyond these exercises, find a certified Pilates instructor to teach the next variations using the proper technique. Remember – it is easier to teach the exercises with good form from the beginning than to try to correct mistakes later.



The Hundred



- ♦ Lie on your back. Reach the arms long by the sides. Scoop the abdominals in and up. Lift the head and focus on your belly. Pump vigorously with the arms, inhaling for five counts and exhaling for five counts. Below are two options for placement of the legs.
- ♦ The Hundred modified





- ♦ The Hundred with legs in a tabletop position



- ♦ Teaching Hint – Hold the athlete's hands to teach the pumping motion.



Half Roll Down



- ♦ Sit with your legs bent and together, feet flat on the floor. Place your hands lightly behind your thighs. Scoop your abdominals in and up so that your body forms the shape of a C.





- ◆ Keeping the shape of the C, round back. Return to the sitting position.



Single Leg Circles

- ◆ Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Reach the arms long by the sides. Bend one leg in toward your chest and extend it toward the ceiling.



- ◆ Cross the extended leg over the body to begin the circle. Circle the leg five times in this direction.





- ◆ Open the extended leg slightly to begin the circle in the opposite direction. Circle the leg five times in this direction.



- ◆ Remind the athlete to engage the abdominal muscles to keep the hips and torso still.
- ◆ Teaching Hint – Hold the athlete’s foot to guide the leg during the circles.

Rolling like a Ball



- ◆ Athletes who have Down Syndrome and have been diagnosed with atlanto-axial instability should never do this exercise.
- ◆ Sit in a tight ball (tuck position), with heels together and knees apart. Hold the ankles. Lift the feet off the floor and balance.

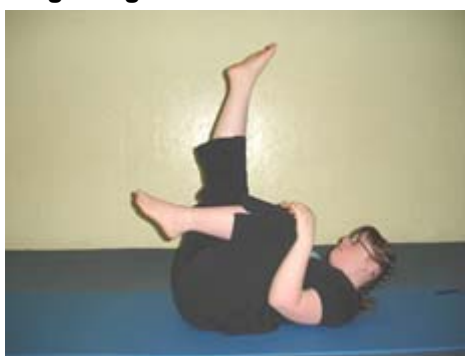




- ♦ Roll back onto the shoulders and return to the balanced position.



Single Leg Stretch



- ♦ Lie on your back. Bend both knees into your chest. Lift your head. Place both hands on your right knee (outside hand can move close to the ankle) and extend the left leg. Change to the other leg. When you first learn this exercise, you might need to practice just changing the hands from leg to leg.



Spine Stretch Forward





- ◆ Sit tall with your legs extended, a little wider than hip width apart. Flex your feet. Extend your arms forward.



- ◆ Round forward and return to the sitting position.



- ◆ Teaching Hint – Hold a foam roller behind the athlete’s back to show the correct posture.



Saw





- ◆ Sit tall with legs extended, a little wider than hip width apart. Flex your feet. Extend your arms to the sides.



- ◆ Twist to the right, reaching toward the little toe on the right foot with the left hand.



- ◆ Return to your starting position. Reverse the exercise, twisting to the left.



- ◆ Teaching Hint – During the twist, hold the athlete’s hips in place. Remind the athlete to scoop the abdominals in and up to achieve stability in the hips.



Special Olympics

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS COACHING GUIDE

Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules, Protocol & Etiquette



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Teaching Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules

The best time to teach the rules of rhythmic gymnastics is during practice. For example, athletes must learn the routines they will perform in competition. Please refer to *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules* for the complete listing of rhythmic gymnastics rules.

Rules for Sport Competition

- ◆ FIG (Fédération Internationale Gymnastique) regulations govern competitions, except when they are in conflict with *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*.
- ◆ Special Olympics order of events is: rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon.

Levels of Competition

- ◆ The current rhythmic gymnastics rules and routines can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*.
- ◆ For each level, there are four routines.
- ◆ Athletes who perform all four routines in the same level are considered All-Around. The All-Around score is the sum of the scores from each of the four routines. Athletes may receive an award for their placement in the All-Around.
- ◆ Level A
 - Routines for athletes who compete seated.
 - Male and female athletes may participate.
- ◆ Level B
 - Routines for lower level athletes who are mobile.
 - Male and female athletes may participate.
- ◆ Level 1-3
 - Compulsory routines – The music and choreography are prescribed.
 - Female athletes may participate.
- ◆ Level 4
 - Optional routines for the advanced level athlete – The music and choreography are individual for each athlete.
 - Female athletes may participate.
- ◆ Group
 - Compulsory routines for groups of either four or six athletes.
 - Female athletes may participate.

Age Groups

- ◆ Competitors are divisioned into age groups according to the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*: 8-11, 12-15, 16-21, 22-over.
- ◆ Age groups may be combined in divisioning if there are not enough athletes of similar ability within an age group to allow for fair competition.

Apparatus

- ◆ Specifications for the size of the hand apparatus can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*. If an athlete needs to use modified equipment due to a disability, the coach must submit (to the competition



management) the Request for Equipment Modification Form, which can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*. (Refer to the Training and Competition section for more information.)

- ♦ During competition, one replacement apparatus for each routine may be placed by the competitive floor. A deduction will be taken if the athlete uses the replacement apparatus. (For example, the athlete will receive a deduction if the attachment of the ribbon to the ribbon stick breaks during the routine and she uses the replacement ribbon to complete the routine.)
- ♦ Spectators should be instructed not to touch the apparatus if it goes out of bounds. An additional deduction is taken if the athlete has help retrieving the apparatus.
- ♦ The apparatus should be measured before competition to make sure it meets Special Olympics specifications. The apparatus may be re-measured as the athlete leaves the competition floor at the completion of a routine.

Attire

- ♦ Regulations pertaining to competition attire can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*. However, if FIG rules regarding attire should change between *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules* updates, athletes may follow the current FIG rules. (Refer to the Training and Competition section for more information.)

Judging

- ♦ Each routine is judged by one judge or a panel of judges, depending on the organization of the competition.
- ♦ Judging forms and guidelines can be found in the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*.
- ♦ The score awarded by the judges is final. See the section below regarding protest procedures.
- ♦ Line judges should be positioned at opposite corners of the competition floor to record out-of-bounds violations. All other deductions are determined by the acting judge or judges.
- ♦ Most neutral deductions (out of bounds, apparatus, attire, etc.) follow FIG rules. There are some neutral deductions that are unique to Special Olympics. Because many athletes have memory problems and require assistance during the routines, coaches are allowed to stand in designated areas, in view of the judges, to provide help as needed. Deductions will be taken for physical assistance, verbal assistance and gestures.

Compulsory Routines are judged on:

- ♦ Exactness of Text
 - Difficulty (Identified Skills)
 - Connections (All parts of the routine except the Identified Skills)
 - Floor Pattern
 - Music
- ♦ Execution and Amplitude
 - Execution includes form (straight legs, pointed toes, position, extension of the upper body, etc.) and apparatus errors (drops, incorrect handling, static, etc.)
 - Amplitude refers to the general extension of both the body (height of jumps, extension of the legs and upper body, high on toes, etc.) and apparatus (height of tosses, extension in swings, etc.)



- ◆ Elegance and General Impression
 - Elegance includes graceful, soft, flowing arms, supple body movements and an elegant carriage of the upper body.
 - Good general impression is a performance with few errors. The gymnast must be full of confidence and perform with style and emotion.

Optional Routines are judged on:

- ◆ Technical Value (Body Skills in the routine)
- ◆ Apparatus Technical Movements (four required technical movements for each apparatus)
- ◆ Connections and apparatus technique
- ◆ Musicality
- ◆ Floor pattern and use of space
- ◆ Execution and Amplitude
- ◆ Elegance and General Impression

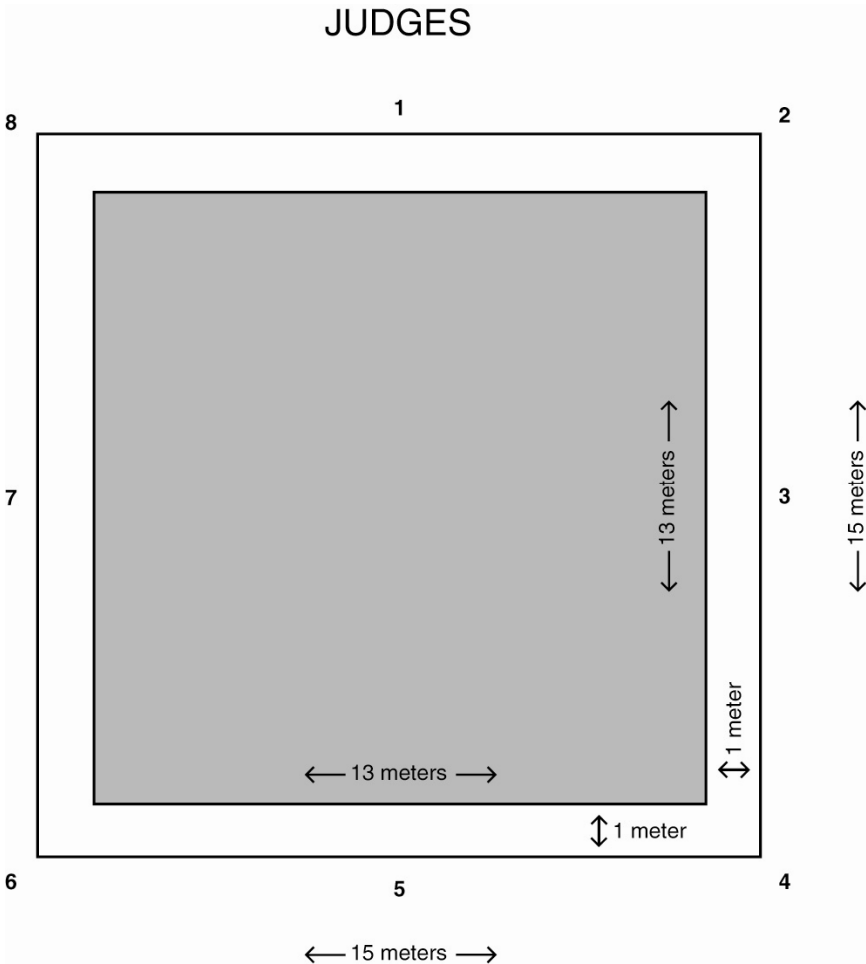
Group Routines are judged on:

- ◆ Difficulty (Identified Skills and Formations)
- ◆ Connections
- ◆ Uniformity of the group
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Execution and Amplitude
- ◆ Elegance and General Impression



Competition Floor

- ♦ The judges will always sit by Side 1 of the competition floor. Athletes should train routines and learn floor patterns accordingly.
- ♦ Traveling clockwise (to the right) around the competition floor: Side 1, Corner 2, Side 3, Corner 4, Side 5, Corner 6, Side 7, Corner 8.





Protest Procedures

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition and may change from competition to competition. Only rules violations can be protested. Judgment calls made by officials or divisioning decisions cannot be protested. The protest must be written, cite a specific violation from the rules, and state why the coach feels the rule was not followed.

The coach should check with the competition management team prior to a competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition. The protest period is time sensitive. Coaches should be aware of the impact on their athletes and competition time schedule.

The role of the competition management team or jury is to enforce the rules. As a coach, your duty to your athletes and team is to protest any action or events while your athletes are competing that you think violated the *Official Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules*. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome of an event. Filing a protest is a serious matter that may impact a competition.



Rhythmic Gymnastics Protocol & Etiquette

During Practice

Coaches should:

- ♦ Arrive early to make sure the gym is set up appropriately for training (floor area free of clutter, equipment in good repair, music ready)
- ♦ Set a good example for the athletes by dressing in workout attire
- ♦ Have a general plan for the training session, and good knowledge of the skills and teaching progressions to be utilized
- ♦ Maintain discipline and pay attention to safety at all times
- ♦ Be prepared to react appropriately in case of an injury or emergency
- ♦ Interact with all athletes during each practice session
- ♦ Have enough assistant coaches to conduct a well organized training session

Coaches should instruct athletes to:

- ♦ Arrive on time for practice
- ♦ Wear proper attire
- ♦ Be ready to work when practice begins
- ♦ Listen to all instructions
- ♦ Use their own apparatus or the apparatus given to them by the coach
- ♦ Use apparatus safely and for its intended purpose
- ♦ Respect other gymnasts' personal space on the floor
- ♦ Receive the coach's permission when leaving the floor
- ♦ Respect coaches



At Competition

Coaches should:

- ♦ Fill out all entry forms correctly and in a timely manner
- ♦ Tell the athletes the location and the time of the competition
- ♦ Instruct the athletes what to wear for the competition
- ♦ Bring rhythmic apparatus to the competition site or instruct the athletes to bring their personal apparatus
- ♦ Bring music (for routines) to the competition site; for optional routines, instruct the athlete to bring an extra copy of her music
- ♦ Arrive early for competition
- ♦ Check with Competition Management to determine that all athletes are entered correctly
- ♦ Notify Competition Management of any scratches
- ♦ Attend all coaches meetings
- ♦ Be responsible for the athletes under your supervision
- ♦ Make sure the athlete is ready to compete when the official calls for that athlete
- ♦ Provide any necessary assistance to your athletes and remain in the designated coaches area when doing so
- ♦ Be respectful of all competition staff, officials and other participants
- ♦ Be positive and enthusiastic, and promote good sportsmanship

Coaches should instruct athletes to:

- ♦ Arrive on time for competition
- ♦ Wear proper competition attire
- ♦ Bring their personal apparatus if instructed to do so by the coach
- ♦ Bring an extra copy of music for optional routines
- ♦ Display good sportsmanship at all times
- ♦ Respect other gymnasts' personal space on the floor during warm-up
- ♦ Stay in the designated warm-up and competition areas
- ♦ Receive the coach's permission when leaving the area
- ♦ Respect all judges and officials
- ♦ Keep all personal belongings and apparatus in designated area
- ♦ Eat and/or drink only in designated areas

Coaches should instruct parents/guardians and spectators to:

- ♦ Display good sportsmanship at all times
- ♦ Respect all judges and officials
- ♦ Stay in designated spectator areas
- ♦ Not retrieve any apparatus that leaves the floor during the competition
- ♦ Not use flash photography



Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is both the coaches' and athletes' commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Lead by example. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes.

Competitive Effort

- ♦ Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- ♦ Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.

Fair Play at All Times

- ♦ Always comply with the rules.
- ♦ Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- ♦ Respect the decision of the officials/ judges at all times.

Expectations of Coaches

1. Always set a good example for participants and spectators to follow.
2. Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities, and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics the top priorities.
3. Respect judgment of officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
4. Treat opposing coaches, directors, participants and fans with respect.
5. Demonstrate a high standard of sportsmanship.

Expectations of Athletes

1. Treat fellow competitors with respect.
2. Encourage competitors when they make a mistake.
3. Respect the judgment of officials and abide by the rules of the competition.
4. Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
5. Define winning as doing your personal best.
6. Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.
7. Have Fun!

Remember

- ♦ Always display good sportsmanship.
- ♦ Have a positive attitude about competition.
- ♦ Reward the attempt, not only the outcome!



Rhythmic Gymnastics Glossary

Term	Definition
Amplitude	Refers to the extension of both the body (including height of jumps, extension of legs and upper body, high on toes) and apparatus (including height of tosses and extension in swings).
Arabesque	Ballet – One leg is held extended to the front or back.
Arch	Body position – An extended position with the upper body inclined backward, showing an arch in the back.
Assisted roll	Hoop, ball – A roll of the apparatus with guidance from one or both hands throughout the roll.
Attitude (position)	Ballet – One leg is held to the front or back in a bent, turned out position.
Backbend	Body position – The athlete is in an arched position with the hands and feet on the floor and the abdomen raised.
Balance	Body Skill – A movement requiring the athlete to stay immobile in a position. May be either flat footed or in relevé.
Body alignment	Correct posture, with the head, shoulders, ribs and pelvis in alignment. The hips and shoulders should be square.
Body Skills	There are four categories of body skills: Jumps/Leaps, Turns/Pivots, Balances, Flexibilities. Acrobatic skills are sometimes added.
Body wave	A wave-like movement which moves through the entire body. There are front, back and side body waves.
Boomerang roll	Hoop – A free roll with a back spin that rolls away from the athlete and returns.
Bourrée	Ballet – Small steps performed high on the toes.
Cat leap (pas de chat)	Ballet – An aerial transfer of weight from one foot to the other, lifting the knees in a front attitude position (bent and turned out).
Chainé turn	Ballet – A three-step traveling turn performed high on the toes.
Chassé	Ballet – A gallop step in which the feet are closed together in the air. May be done to the front, side or back.
Circumduction	Dance – A 360° circle of the trunk maintaining an even degree of bend. May be done to the right or left.
Compulsory routine	Competition – A routine with prescribed choreography and music.
Contraction	Body position – A forward bend of the trunk with the abdominal muscles pulled in, pelvis tucked under, knees bent and the head down in line with the body.
Core	The center of the body – the abdominal muscles which stabilize the torso and pelvis, allowing the athlete to work with proper body alignment.
Dégagé	Ballet – A brush to point the foot in an open position slightly off the floor. The arches are fully extended. May be done to the front, side or back.



Term	Definition
Developpé	Ballet – A movement in which the working leg is drawn up to the knee of the supporting leg and slowly extended to an open position in the air and held there with perfect control. May be done to the front, side or back.
Execution	Refers to the way a skill is performed, including straight legs, pointed toes, body alignment and good technique on the body and apparatus skills.
Figure 8	Apparatus – Two circular movements in the same plane performed in succession, such as a sagittal circle performed on the right side of the body followed by a sagittal circle on the left.
Flexibility	Body Skill – A movement requiring suppleness of the back, torso and/or legs.
Flip toss	Hoop – A toss around the horizontal axis.
Formation	Group – A pattern formed by the athletes' placement on the floor.
Free arm	The arm that is not holding the hand apparatus. The athlete must show a defined position with the free arm at all times.
Free roll	Hoop, ball – A roll of the apparatus without direction from the hands during the roll.
Free spin	Hoop – A spin without hand placement on the hoop during the spin.
Frontal plane	In front. (See Skills section for more information.)
Grand battement	Ballet – An exercise in which the working leg is raised from the hip into the air and brought down again. May be done to the front, side or back.
Hand apparatus	Rope, hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon
Hitchkick	Dance – An aerial transfer of weight from one foot to the other with the legs lifted in an extended position. May be done to the front or back.
Hop	Dance – A jump beginning and landing on the same foot, with the free leg in a defined shape. (Examples: passé, arabesque.)
Horizontal axis	An imaginary line from side to side around which the apparatus rotates. (See Skills section for more information.)
Horizontal plane	Parallel to the floor. (See Skills section for more information.)
Identified skills	In compulsory routines, the main skills. These skills are listed in the <i>Official Special Olympics Rules</i> .
Jump	Dance – A spring from two feet landing on two feet, with the legs in a defined position. (Examples: straight, tuck, straddle.)
Leap (Grand jeté)	Ballet – A spring from one foot to the other with the legs in a defined shape. (Examples: split, stag, ring.)
Locomotor movements	Dance – Steps that travel across the floor. (Examples: walk, run, skip, chassé.)
Lunge	Body position – Standing with the support leg bent and the other leg extended to the back, side or front.
Mills	Clubs – Small windmill club circles in figure 8s, performed with the wrists close together. May be done vertical, horizontal or overhead.
Mixed grip	Hoop – Holding with one hand in an overgrip and one hand in an undergrip.



Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Coaching Guide
Rhythmic Gymnastics Rules, Protocol & Etiquette

Term	Definition
Neutral deductions	Competition – Deductions taken by the judge at the end of the routine, such as out of bounds, coaching and apparatus/attire violations.
Optional routine	Competition – A routine with choreography and music that is individual to the athlete.
Outside grip	Hoop – A grip with the hands on opposite edges of the hoop.
Overgrip	Hoop – Holding the hoop with one or both hands facing down or toward the body.
Passé	Ballet – A movement in which the foot of the working leg is lifted to the knee of the supporting leg. May be either parallel or turned out.
Pike	Body position – Sitting, legs are together and extended.
Pilates	A cross-training method of body conditioning that combines stretching and strengthening exercises. Pilates was developed by Joseph Pilates.
Pivot	Body Skill – A turn performed on one foot.
Plié	Ballet – A bending of the knee or knees.
Port de bras	Ballet – Carriage of the arms.
Presentation	Competition – Raising one or both arms at the beginning and end of each routine to acknowledge the judge.
Relevé	Ballet – A position standing high on the balls of the feet and toes.
Reverance	Ballet – A combination done at the end of the ballet class.
Rond de jambe	Ballet – A circular movement of the leg: from the front, to the side, to the back, or reversed: from the back, to the side, to the front.
Rotations	Rope, hoop – The apparatus moves in a circular pattern.
Sagittal plane	On the side. (See Skills section for further information.)
Snakes	Ribbon – Small side-to-side (horizontal) or up-and-down (vertical) patterns performed from the wrist.
Sous-sus	Ballet – A relevé in fifth position, with one foot placed directly in front of the other foot.
Spirals	Ribbon – Small circular pattern performed from the wrist.
Split	Body position – On the floor or in the air during a jump/leap, position with a large separation of the legs. May be performed with one leg front and one leg back or in a straddle position.
Straddle	Body position – Legs are extended to the sides.
Swings	A smooth motion with the body, arms or apparatus. May be performed up, down, to the side, overhead and on any plane.
Synchronization	Group – All athletes performing a skill at the same time.
Tendu	Ballet - The working foot slides to a pointed position on the floor. May be done to the front, side or back.



Term	Definition
Tiptoe turn (Bourrée turn)	Ballet – A turn in place with many small steps in relevé.
Toss/throw	Apparatus – The athlete throws the apparatus into the air and, after a moment with no hand contact, catches the apparatus.
Trap	Catching the apparatus with a body part other than the hands.
Turnout	Ballet – The ability of the athlete to turn his/her feet and legs out from the hips.
Tuck	Body position – Legs are together and bent.
Undergrip	Hoop – Holding the hoop with one or both hands facing up or away from the body.
Wraps	Rope – The rope wraps around a part of the body.
Vertical axis	An imaginary line up and down, around which the athlete or apparatus rotates. (See Skills section for more information.)
Windmill arms	Dance – Large circles executed with the arms separated by 180°.