



Safety and Supporting Techniques for Gymnastic Coaches

This online information leaflet is available in order to provide you, as the coach, with relevant information regarding safety and supporting techniques for all gymnastic levels. We aim to provide information on the importance of supporting but also seek to raise awareness of possible dangers and implications of supporting.

Importance of Safety.

When teaching gymnastics, it is vital that the safety of your gymnast is a top priority. However, as a coach you must be able to protect yourself and keep yourself safe too. Gymnastics is a sport where safety is a top consideration as the nature of the sport can be dangerous. As a coach it is your duty to keep not only athletes safe but yourself safe also. Safety covers many aspects including the safety of athletes, coaches and environments. Safe environments must be provided to ensure that both athlete and coach will remain safe when practicing the sport. Governing bodies must provide correct and relevant information to your gymnastics club and keep you regularly up to date with duty of care information.

The Coaches' Role within Safety.

It is clear that as the coach, you have a responsibility to ensure gymnasts, other coaches and yourself remain safe. In order to fulfil this responsibility, it is important to fully understand aspects of safety within the sport.

To do this;

- It is crucial that you have the correct coaching qualifications and you are only supporting skills that you are qualified to support.
- Before carrying out a coaching session it is important that you are prepared to lead the session and have an understanding of what you are going to teach and support.
- Clear instructions must be given to a gymnast before they are going to be supported.
- The gymnasium must be checked regularly for faulty equipment to ensure the gym is a safe environment.

Supporting.

Supporting refers to the physical assistance of a gymnast through a movement or skill. Supporting can also be referred to as spotting. The main goal of supporting a gymnast is ultimately to keep them safe and it should allow the gymnast to feel safe.

In order for gymnasts to progress, coaches will need to provide physical support. As a coach it is important to understand when a gymnast may need supported through a skill. If the gymnast is worried about trying a new skill, you can step in to provide support. If a gymnast is carrying out a skill and their technique is dangerous, providing support should be a priority in order to keep the gymnast safe.



Possible Implications of Supporting.

Supporting is in place to keep gymnasts safe but you as the coach must be aware that supporting does not go to plan all of time.

Although supporting a gymnast is crucial in the gymnast's development, it is important to be aware of the possible dangers of supporting. Due to the complexity of supporting, it cannot be carried out effectively 100% of the time. Supporting is ultimately down to human judgement and precision, which puts a lot of pressure on coaches to support perfectly all of time.

Fact: Gymnastics is now one of the least taught sports within physical education due to the complexity of supporting.

To keep yourself safe when supporting you must have the appropriate coaching qualification for the skill you are supporting. Without the right coaching qualification, you are putting yourself and the gymnast at risk. Accusations can be made if the support given is wrong or dangerous. Always make sure the gymnast is aware that support is going to be given and ensure that the gymnast is ok with it. If the gymnast does become injured due to supporting, log the injury in an accident report log. Keeping a report log will keep yourself and gymnastics club from accusations.

Rescue Spotting.

Rescue spotting/supporting refers to a supporting technique where a coach must step in to catch a falling gymnast in order to prevent injury.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frU3GkGBE2U>

Why is Rescue Spotting Important?

This type of supporting technique enables a gymnast to gain trust in you as the coach. Rescue spotting is crucial in gymnastics as gymnasts can often fall from skills or equipment. Therefore, your job as the coach is to attempt to catch the gymnast. This type of supporting technique enables gymnasts to eliminate fear of attempting new skills. They will gain confidence in you as the coach, trusting that you will be there to step in and provide support if needed.

Implications.

Although the rescue spotting technique is fundamental in gymnastics, it is important to raise awareness of possible implications. Implications can occur at any point within supporting but it is important that you are not put off by them and continue to practice supporting techniques. The rescue spot technique is an unplanned support. Therefore, no signal or instruction can be given prior to supporting the gymnast. As supporting is solely down to human judgement on when to step in, injury of the gymnast can still occur. To prevent injuries, it is important to gain knowledge around supporting techniques and keep up to date with governing body policies.



Keeping yourself protected.

Due to the nature of gymnastics and the outfits that gymnasts are required to wear, the sport can be sexualised. To avoid accusations from gymnasts and outsiders it is important to keep up to date with governing body guidelines on supporting and appropriate touch. To protect yourself from touch accusations it is vital to adhere to guidelines. In order to coach a gymnast, you must physically, hands on support them. If you are worried about touch accusations, they can be avoided by always ensuring you have a professional coaching style. Furthermore, when supporting always make sure the gymnast is aware that support is going to be given and ensure the gymnast is ok with the support being given. In circumstances that you cannot tell the gymnast you are going to support them (e.g., rescue spot) make sure you are only stepping in to support the gymnast if they are likely to injury themselves if support is not provided.

Supporting is a key part of a gymnast's progression, without support a gymnast will struggle to learn new skills and have confidence in you as the coach. Do not be put off by the implications mentioned within this leaflet but instead allow them to give you confidence and knowledge in order to keep yourself safe.

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