



## PRACTICAL IDEAS

### FOR IMPLEMENTING GYMNASTICS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

#### AIMS OF AN ELEMENTARY GYMNASTICS PE LESSON:

1. Fun
2. Physically challenge the students
3. Keep students reasonably active throughout
4. Give them new experiences of movement
5. Increase their confidence in learning how to move their own bodies
6. Develop co-ordination, gross and fine motor control, flexibility and core strength
7. Opportunities to experience success and achievement in a physical capacity
8. Provide a strong foundation on which to develop more advanced skills
9. Equip students with tools that will make participation in other sports easier and more enjoyable
10. To make 'indestructible children!'



#### WARM-UPS

These can be games or fun activities which incorporate a lot of the gymnastics positions, landings or locomotions.

Animal movements and locomotions, particularly for the Kindergarten and grades one and two are good for developing co-ordination and strength: e.g bunny hops, frog jumps, donkey kicks, kangaroos, elephants, bear walk, crab walk etc...

Warm up games can also incorporate spatial awareness and use of direction, levels and tempo.

## IDEAS FOR CIRCUITS AND STATIONS

1. Circuit focusing on landings (feet and hands) – forwards, backwards and sideways – can be set up using mats and benches. In between the activities different locomotion exercises can be used, so that children do not simply walk in between the tasks.
2. Upside down benches make great beams – mats can be placed under the narrow strip to soften the edges of the benches, should the children fall off. Lines on the floor can also be used to practise beam and balancing skills. **Beam activities:** walk forwards, backwards, sideways, same on toes, jumps and leaps, turns, balances.
3. Mats can be used for rolling, donkey kicks and other animal movements. Mats can also be placed against a wall for the children to practise handstands STOMACH FACING WALL (sometimes called sticky bugs)
4. Mats can be arranged in such a way that it creates an incline for practising rolling activities. This can be one station if mats are limited or several inclines can be used if there are enough mats.
5. Hoops can be placed on the floor either in a line, to practise the ‘motorcycle’ jumps or as a target for children to land in when jumping from a bench or a box top.
6. Various platforms of any kind are great for jumping from. Aims of this can be to practise landings and to practise various shapes or turns in the air.
7. If using the above landing practice, progress to the forward and backward shoulder rolls. Incline can be available to practise the skills initially, but then the child can perform a jump from a height, a landing (on the feet first!) and then a fall or a roll.
8. Benches or box tops can be used to make the first introduction to the cartwheel.

“Bunny hopping” over the bench or box top with hands on, makes the feet go from one side of the hands to the other, and then legs can start to kick higher and one at a time.
9. Circles on the floor or on mats can be used for practising cartwheels. Stand on the circle with both feet, with stomach facing into the circle. Hands and feet stay on the circle at all times and stomach faces into the circle at all times.
10. Foot patterns and foot combinations are a good activity for older grades. This is particularly important when teaching the two footed take off (for a vault for example). From a run, jump onto two feet on a board or trampette, to land on two feet (eventually!). (If there is a vault in between, the child will make contact with the vault first). This foot pattern can be practised using hoops on the floor. The five basic jumps are:
  - one foot to two feet
  - two feet to one foot
  - one foot to the same foot (hop)
  - one foot to the other foot
  - two feet to two feet
11. Ropes can be used to practise swinging and climbing. **Swinging:** start from a bench or platform. Encourage a jump backwards first and then hold the rope close to the body. Drop on the outswing (another chance to practise a landing!). With the younger children, just ask them to take the rope away from the centre a little and see if they can pick up their feet and swing to the same distance the other side. **Climbing:** pull with arms, push with legs. When reaching a height, hands must walk back down the rope until it is safe to drop.
12. Ropes can also be used for strength holds – hold up legs, hold two ropes and get feet up over head, or all the way over (skin the cat).