

# Training Guidelines

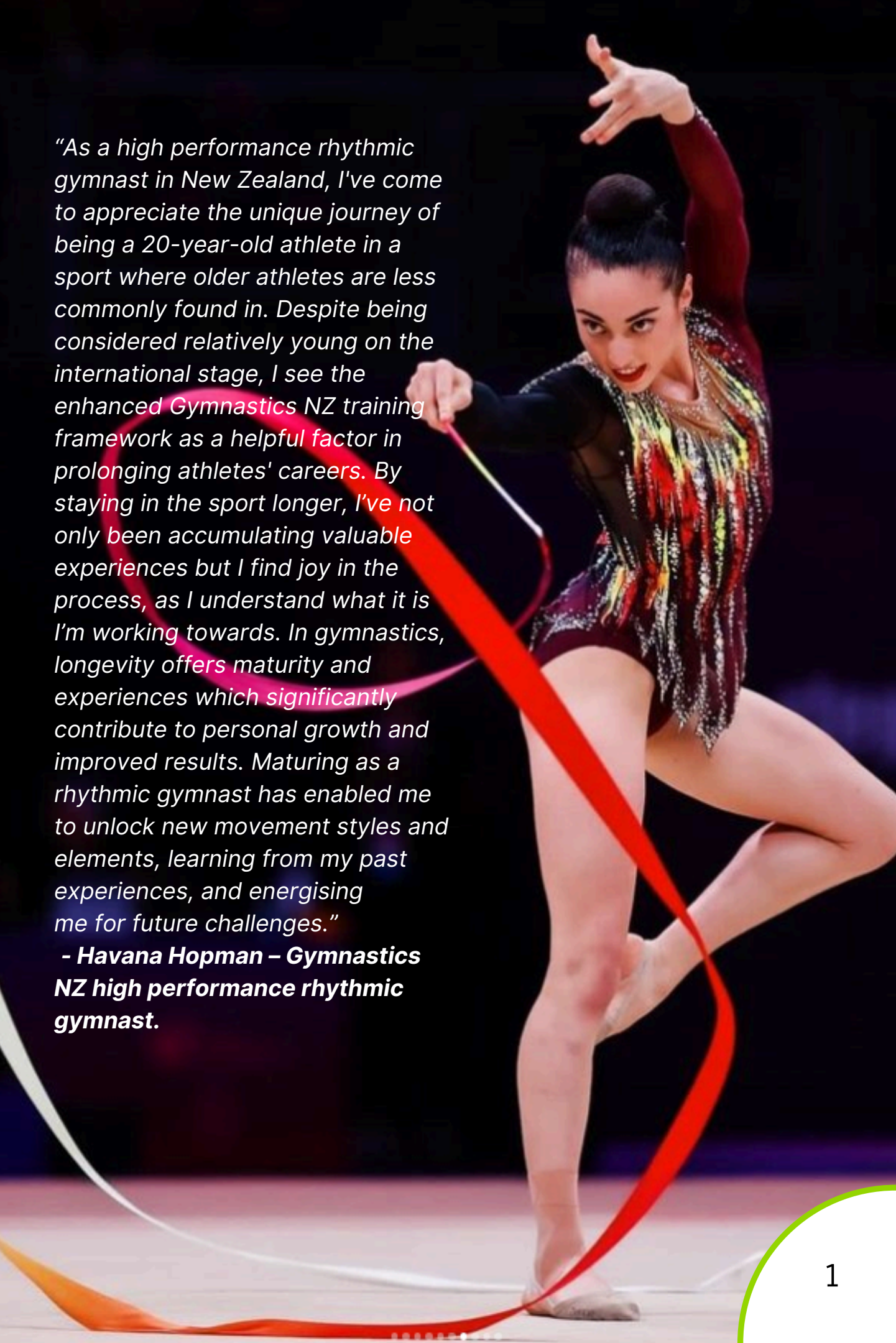


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*“As a high performance rhythmic gymnast in New Zealand, I’ve come to appreciate the unique journey of being a 20-year-old athlete in a sport where older athletes are less commonly found in. Despite being considered relatively young on the international stage, I see the enhanced Gymnastics NZ training framework as a helpful factor in prolonging athletes’ careers. By staying in the sport longer, I’ve not only been accumulating valuable experiences but I find joy in the process, as I understand what it is I’m working towards. In gymnastics, longevity offers maturity and experiences which significantly contribute to personal growth and improved results. Maturing as a rhythmic gymnast has enabled me to unlock new movement styles and elements, learning from my past experiences, and energising me for future challenges.”*

**- Havana Hopman – Gymnastics NZ high performance rhythmic gymnast.**





# Introduction

Gymnastics is a sport that inspires athletes all over the world with an exciting combination of acrobatic and artistic movements - it is dynamic, it is superhuman and it is beautiful. To achieve this unique quality of movement in a safe, progressive and enjoyable way, the right training conditions need to be achieved.

Gymnastics training environments are changing. Increased access to evidence-based strategies, evolving technical requirements, varied club settings and even the emergence of different codes is driving the sport in new directions. In such a dynamic environment it can be difficult to know what is the right training approach for our setting.

The intention of these training guidelines is to help New Zealanders design and deliver great programmes for New Zealanders.

## Safe Sport

Gymnastics New Zealand (Gymnastics NZ) is committed to creating a positive culture within the sport of gymnastics that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all involved, with particular emphasis on children and young people.

Those involved in the delivery of gymnastics including coaches, judges, administrators and committee/board members should be familiar with the Gymnastics NZ Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and abide by the expectations and processes outlined within it.

Please refer to the [Gymnastics NZ website](#) for more information and policies.

## Purpose

There are three overarching objectives for this resource aligned with the Gymnastics NZ Strategy.

1. Growth in participation
2. Thriving club community
3. Effective performance pathways

We want to attract more people to our awesome sport, provide training guidance that aligns with their level of engagement, and assist with the safe and effective development of our aspiring gymnasts.

Additionally, this piece of work links back to the [Shaping the Future of Gymnastics in Aotearoa Work Plan](#) - item M2: Gymnastics Athlete Framework.

### Gymnastics NZ Strategic Plan Overview

**Our Vision**  
To be New Zealand's first choice sport.

**Our Purpose**  
To enable POSITIVE gymnastics experiences for EVERYBODY.

Growth in Participation

Thriving Club Community

Effective Performance Pathways

**Our Foundation Principles**  
Diversity, Athlete Voice, Participant Wellbeing, Environmental Sustainability, Our commitment to uphold the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation

**Our Values**  
Manaakitanga (care for others, bring alongside)  
Manahau (joyful, positive energy)  
Rangatiratanga (action, leadership)  
Manawanui (steadfast, committed)



# Guiding Values

At the heart of the Gymnastics NZ training guidelines lies a set of deeply rooted values that have been woven into our approach.

Manaakitanga - representing care for others and inclusivity.

This value resonates with our Athlete-Centered approach. It is a constant reminder that every decision and every action are to be made with the gymnast's best interests at heart. It calls us to understand, connect, and walk alongside all kinds of athletes in their journey.

Manahau - we infuse our guidelines with joy and positivity.

At its core gymnastics should be a joyful endeavour! Our Training Guidelines consider that our training environments need to be filled with positive energy, where successes are celebrated, and with joy as a priority.

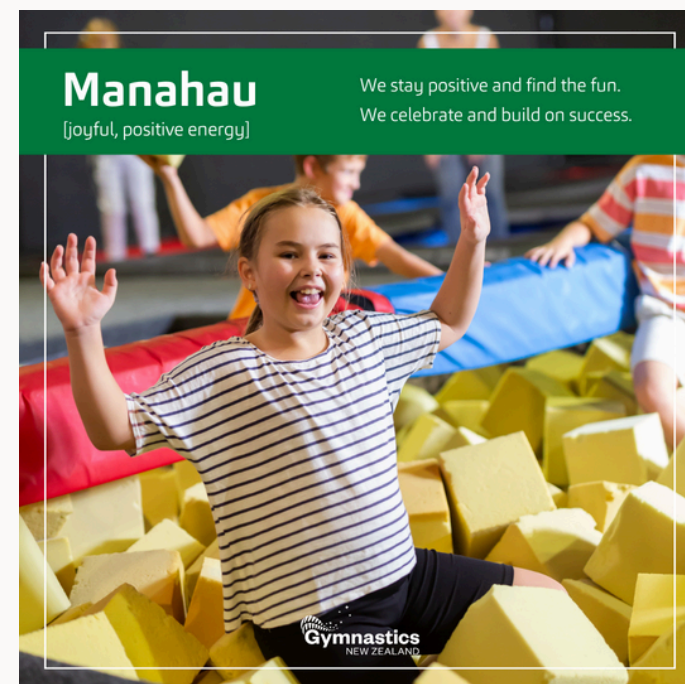
Manawanui - embodies our belief in courage, commitment, and resilience.

Change can be hard, and it may take time to bear fruit. This value reflects our commitment to embedding this work into our communities.

In essence, these values are not mere placeholders but the lifeblood of Gymnastics New Zealand's Training Guidelines. Through these values, we envision a future where every gymnast thrives, feels valued, and reaches their utmost potential.

Rangatiratanga - emphasizing action and leadership.

This value mirrors our dedication to being proactive and pioneering in our ideas. Our Training Guidelines are crafted with genuine engagement, transparency, and a commitment to improvement. It is this leadership value that has led us to establish clear training parameters.





# Approach

As the training guidelines aim to inform best practice in a New Zealand setting a collaborative approach was taken.

## Training Guidelines Working Group

Gymnastics NZ formed a training guidelines working group. This group was composed of club managers (from different sized clubs), coaches, judges, athletes, parents and code representatives alongside Gymnastics NZ education staff and a consultant from High Performance Sport New Zealand. The wide cross section of stakeholders enabled the working group to consider multiple training environments and athlete priorities.

The initial scope of the training guidelines includes gymnastics for all (GfA), men's artistic (MAG), women's artistic (WAG), and rhythmic (RG) gymnastics codes. Code specific information for aerobics, parkour, and trampoline will be included in the second edition.

## Resource Review

A literary review conducted by AUT was provided to the group for consideration and discussion. This review took in a cross section of available research into gymnastics training settings across the relevant codes. To supplement, the group also reviewed examples of gymnastic training guidelines from other countries, the Gymnastics NZ Performance Pathways Strategy (in development) alongside excellent work done in New Zealand club programmes.

## Athlete Development Model

A presentation of the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model (Coach Canada) was provided to the group to consider for use in setting the framework for the training guidelines. The model was adopted and adapted to form the Gymnastics NZ athlete stages.

The LTAD model also informed the Gymnastics NZ coach development framework bringing alignment between athlete and coach development.

## Consultation

Working group members collaborated to form the first draft of the training guidelines. The GfA, MAG, WAG, and RG technical committees were then invited to provide feedback. Performance level athlete representatives from each code were also invited to give feedback.

## Review

Following the development of the training guidelines, a consultant from High Performance Sport New Zealand then reviewed the guidelines to confirm they aligned with best practice.





# Considerations

There are many factors that make up a positive and effective training environment. The intention is for the training guidelines to be a resource that is added to over time. Our sport is evolving, and this resource will continue to evolve with it.

The training guidelines take into account the following areas of consideration

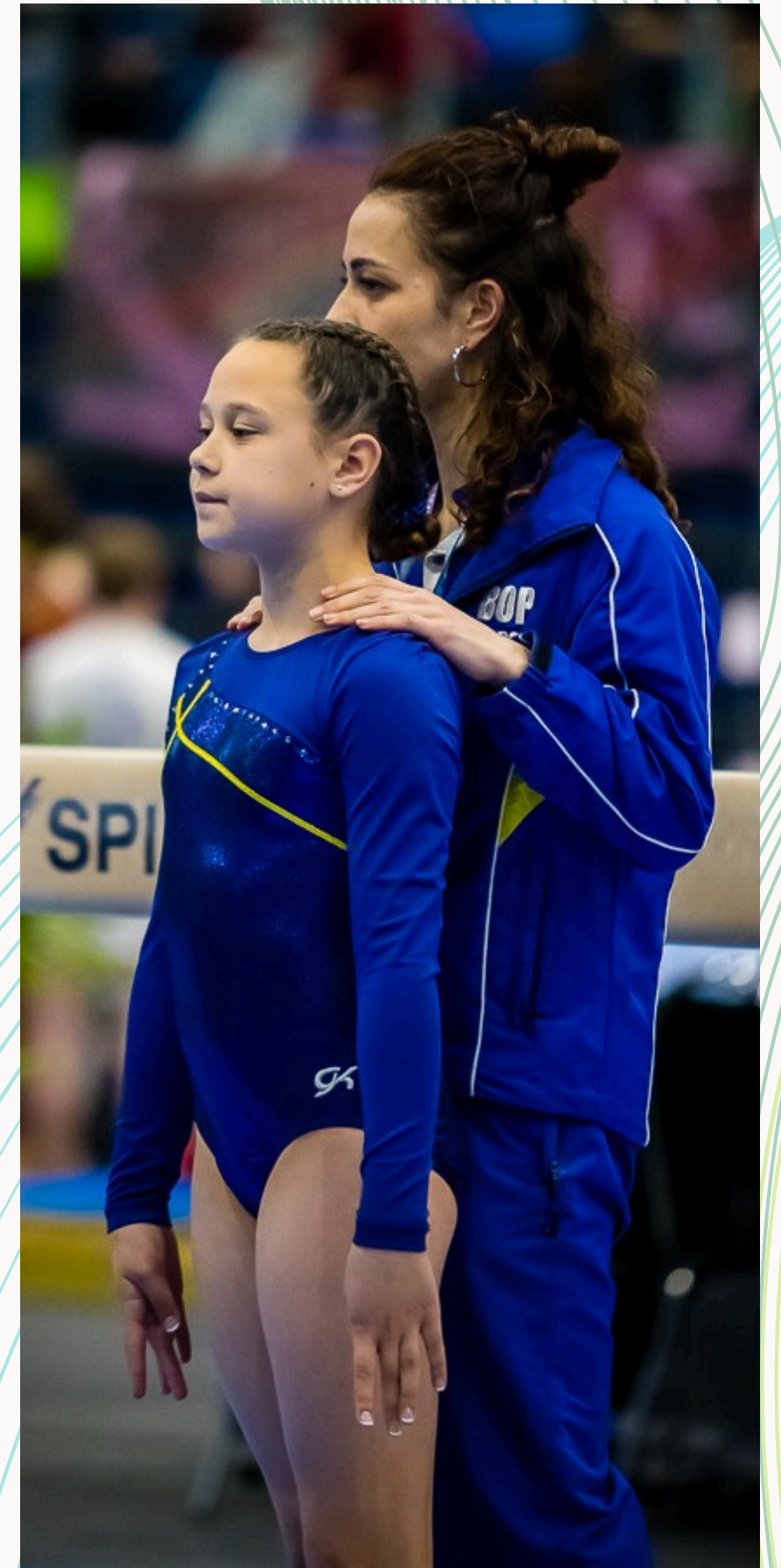
- the fundamental requirements of a gymnastics training session
- Balance is Better
- the New Zealand setting
- age considerations
- athlete stages
- providing choices
- later, steadier, longer!

## Balance is Better

In 2021, Gymnastics NZ signed a commitment to embed the Balance is Better philosophy into gymnastics in New Zealand. Since then, Gymnastics NZ has been working with gymnastics clubs, participants and parents to understand and celebrate what our community does that already aligns with the principles of Balance is Better, as well as develop and grow our sport to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all participants.

Competitive level gymnastics is highly technical, requiring gymnasts to perform many complex elements in their routines. This requires physical, mental and technical preparation, which takes time. Some of our gymnastic codes incorporate multiple disciplines / apparatus (Mens and Womens Artistic, Rhythmic). Each apparatus can place quite different demands on an athletes body; it's like multiple sports wrapped up in one! The more competitive the athlete, the more time is required to safely learn the skills required. While there are legitimate overtraining concerns in early specialisation sports like gymnastics, it is also important to recognise the potential safety considerations of undertraining.

The training guidelines provides a range of training hours that strike a balance between developmental considerations, pathway priorities and technical requirements for each code. It is the collective implementation of Balance is Better priorities that contribute to positive sporting experiences, and it is important for gymnasts to choose a pathway and program opportunity that aligns best with their motivations and ability.





## The New Zealand Setting

While New Zealand training environments have been informed and advanced by international training systems, it is also true to say the implementation of these hasn't always delivered positive outcomes. There are unique environmental factors in the New Zealand setting that mean a simple 'cut and paste' will not achieve the best result. Our club environments, programmes, schooling system, financial model, coaches, families, athletes, and our culture are all referenced in our training guidelines.

Alongside club input through the working group, below are links to the key New Zealand references for these training guidelines.

- [Shaping the Future of Gymnastics in Aotearoa](#)
- [Balance is Better](#)
- [Good Sports](#)
- [Gymnastics NZ Strategy](#)
- [High Performance Sport NZ strategy](#)





## Age Considerations

Gymnasts have different developmental needs at each age. These include physical, cognitive, social/emotional, and environmental and all impact an athlete's technical development. Below is a summarised list of some of the considerations coaches and clubs should be aware of for each age group.

	Physical	Cognitive	Social / Emotional	Environmental
<b>5-8 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to develop motor coordination</li> <li>• Mainly use large muscles - less control over small muscles</li> <li>• High energy levels, tire easily but recover quickly</li> <li>• Similar abilities between male and female</li> <li>• Impact of training hours (including other activities)</li> <li>• Sleep and recovery considerations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting to understand words - learn best by doing/exploring</li> <li>• More interested in process than outcome</li> <li>• Concept of competition is hard to understand</li> <li>• Easily distracted</li> <li>• Starting to understand others, can have different perspective</li> <li>• Naturally curious / imaginative</li> <li>• Lack spatial awareness and understanding of time</li> <li>• Can't differentiate between ability and effort.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning how to be friends, tend to be inclusive/accepting</li> <li>• Learning to cooperate, can be possessive</li> <li>• Motives for sport are to be with friends and have fun</li> <li>• Fairness = golden rule!</li> <li>• Need/seek approval</li> <li>• Sensitive to criticism, quickly frustrated</li> <li>• Like external rewards, praise</li> <li>• Haven't learned how to cope with failure, can be self critical</li> <li>• More family-centric week.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary school</li> <li>• First time training alongside much older athletes in club setting</li> <li>• Lots of afterschool activity opportunities - competing for time</li> <li>• Family activities more important</li> <li>• Potential impact of shared care arrangements / logistics</li> <li>• Local competitions.</li> </ul>
<b>9-12 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puberty - many females, some males</li> <li>• Growth spurts</li> <li>• Increased vulnerability to growth plate injuries</li> <li>• Skeletal system grows faster than muscular system so increased risk of injury</li> <li>• Coordination impacted by growth</li> <li>• Steady increase in motor skills, strength, balance, coordination - fine motor skills developing</li> <li>• Start to see maturation at different rates (individual / gender)</li> <li>• Growth has an impact on technical development e.g. timing or strength</li> <li>• Power slower to develop</li> <li>• Rapid loss of flexibility e.g. hamstring</li> <li>• Sleep and recovery considerations</li> <li>• Maintenance of healthy body weight.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vary greatly in cognitive abilities</li> <li>• Attention span starts to increase</li> <li>• Tend to assess things in black /white, right/wrong</li> <li>• Limited ability to think hypothetically and take multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Like to share thoughts/reactions; rapidly increasing vocabulary</li> <li>• Frontal lobe development - start to use reason / logic (slower in males)</li> <li>• Begin to differentiate between ability/effort</li> <li>• Growth period can bring about mental blocks due to required technical adaptation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to identify with peers, though still need/want coach guidance/support</li> <li>• Begin to question authority</li> <li>• Admire and imitate older people</li> <li>• Like consistent standards and fair consequences</li> <li>• Sense 'difference'/comparisons (including body awareness)</li> <li>• Female more socially mature</li> <li>• Like challenges. Dislike public failure.</li> <li>• Puberty, hormones = mood swings</li> <li>• Aware of a wider range of emotions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to intermediate school or college</li> <li>• Training multiple days / week impacting family timetables</li> <li>• Athletes day becomes more full, and travelling can have impact</li> <li>• Some athletes start navigating social media</li> <li>• Increased homework</li> <li>• Time management becoming more important</li> <li>• Increased financial and time commitment with fees, uniform, competition</li> <li>• Regional and national competitions.</li> </ul>



	Physical	Cognitive	Social / Emotional	Environmental
<b>13-16 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More growth spurts - clumsiness, potential for injury</li> <li>• Hormones affect body composition (and mood!)</li> <li>• Capable of training all energy systems</li> <li>• Maturity differences between genders (earlier for female)</li> <li>• Physical development - potential uneasiness around body image</li> <li>• Increased vulnerability to growth plate injuries</li> <li>• Growth has an impact on speed of technical development</li> <li>• Power begins to develop more rapidly after peak height velocity</li> <li>• Loss of flexibility remains a consideration. Eases as growth slows</li> <li>• Maintenance of healthy body weight</li> <li>• Sleep and recovery very important.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like to find own solutions</li> <li>• Have a sense of invincibility</li> <li>• Tend to be self-focused</li> <li>• Start to think hypothetically and take multiple perspectives</li> <li>• May lack understanding of their abilities / talents</li> <li>• Males slower frontal lobe development (ability to assess risk/ see into the future)</li> <li>• Growth period can bring about increased onset of mental blocks due to required technical adaptation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searching for personal (and athlete) identity</li> <li>• Peer groups very important, developing independence from parents</li> <li>• Seeking to understand/accept sexuality, beginning of more intimate relationships</li> <li>• Want responsibility and to be treated as an adult</li> <li>• Internally desire success, but influenced by external pressures to conform (cool to 'not try')</li> <li>• Vulnerable to negative criticism</li> <li>• Emotional expression - gender differences</li> <li>• For most, technology and social media is a big part of their world, and how they communicate</li> <li>• Due to time requirements the gymnastics community becomes 'life' in this stage. Positive and negative implications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to high school</li> <li>• Training multiple days / week significantly impacting family timetables</li> <li>• Increasing awareness and possible use of alcohol and drugs</li> <li>• Wider range of opportunities = time constraints and often attrition at this age due to commitment</li> <li>• Years 11,12,13 internal and external exams</li> <li>• Increased financial and time commitment</li> <li>• National and potentially international competitions/camps.</li> </ul>
<b>17+ years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puberty (still)</li> <li>• Most reach skeletal maturity</li> <li>• Males in particular continue to gain muscle strength/mass</li> <li>• Maintenance of healthy body weight important</li> <li>• Increased skill complexity can lead to increased risk of injury, specific preparation more critical</li> <li>• Sleep and recovery considerations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontal lobe continues to develop – fully developed in females by 20 yrs, males 25 yrs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong. Independent social needs/desires.</li> <li>• Status in peer group is important</li> <li>• Want to belong to a group, but be recognised as an individual</li> <li>• Likely to be involved in / exposed to alcohol use and risk taking activity</li> <li>• More stable emotions, but feelings of inferiority and inadequacy not uncommon</li> <li>• Feel pressure of multiple priorities</li> <li>• Hormone changes still - more for males</li> <li>• Intimate personal relationships become more impactful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are in transition/decision making stage - home, education, career, sport involvement</li> <li>• Learn to self manage and prioritise as they become independant from family life</li> <li>• Transport to and from uni / work potentially more independent (public transport)</li> <li>• Time constraints are real!</li> <li>• Financial - potentially paying for training, travelling to compete - looking for part time work possibly</li> <li>• National and international competitions / camps.</li> </ul>

Gymnastics NZ would like to acknowledge the contributions from Tri Star Gymnastics towards the above age considerations.

# Stage Considerations

Gymnastics NZ has formed gymnastics specific athlete stages. These stages align age considerations with gymnastic opportunities in our setting.

It should be noted that it is common in New Zealand for gymnasts of different ages to participate in the same gymnastic opportunities, so age considerations won't always line up with each stage description. It is also important to recognise that as gymnasts transition between the athlete stages they will have priorities that straddle multiple stages. Clubs and coaches are encouraged to overlay any gymnastics opportunities with age considerations so that our gymnasts have positive sporting experiences.

Our athlete stages align with the Gymnastics NZ coach development framework so coaches working at each stage are equipped with the skills needed to best support our gymnasts.

Stage		What is this stage?	Who are these gymnasts?	Needs of these gymnasts.
<div>Active for Life</div> <div>Using the skills gained through gymnastics at any stage athletes may transition to an active, if not competitive involvement in gymnastics or other fitness / sporting activity.</div>	Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First gymnastics experience in structured and unstructured environments.</li><li>• Gymnasts explore and learn the fundamental basics.</li><li>• Focus is inclusive and developmentally appropriate activities.</li><li>• Becomes the basis for all sport.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gymnasts in non-codespecific general gymnastics class e.g., PlayGym,GymFun, adults.</li><li>• Partake in participation programmes e.g. Holiday programmes, school programmes, birthday parties.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop fundamental movement patterns and basic shapes, gross motor skills etc.</li><li>• Learn best by doing (often through play).</li><li>• Develop spatial awareness.</li><li>• Beginning to learn gymnastics terminology.</li><li>• Need and seek approval and like things to be fair.</li><li>• High energy levels. Tire easily but recover quickly.</li><li>• Motivation to participate is to have fun.</li></ul>
	Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gymnasts learn code specific skills in one (or more gymnastics codes).</li><li>• For some, it may be first experience of the sport.</li><li>• Structured programmes in Gym for All (GfA) or lower level competitive programmes.</li><li>• Gymnasts often do other sports.</li><li>• Gymnasts start competitions at local and regional level.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Code specific GfA gymnasts (lower levels).</li><li>• Code specific recreational classes or programmes e.g. TRA/RG/AER/ART, lower level GfA competitive or recreational competitions/testing or elementary competitive gymnasts (lower levels).</li><li>• Code specific lower-level pre-competitive classes, competition classes, programmes, and competitions at regional level.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beginning to complete code specific skills.</li><li>• Need more structured and skill-based fitness and conditioning programmes.</li><li>• Often a large variation in skill and cognition.</li><li>• May become more goal driven and have high aspirations.</li><li>• Similar physical abilities between male and females.</li><li>• May see fast periods of growth and often early puberty (females) which can lead to injury or lack of flexibility.</li><li>• Gymnasts participate for enjoyment, friendship, challenge, skill acquisition, and competition.</li></ul>



Stage	What is this stage?	Who are these gymnasts?	Needs of these gymnasts.
<b>Active for Life</b>  Using the skills gained through gymnastics at any stage athletes may transition to an active, if not competitive involvement in gymnastics or other fitness / sporting activity.	<b>Developing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermediate gymnastics programmes.</li> <li>Gymnastics is becoming the priority sport (could still do other sports).</li> <li>Gymnasts can compete at local, regional and commence competing at national level.</li> </ul>	Code specific recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically, aged 10+ in higher level GfA code specific programmes, attend GfA events e.g. GymClub Challenge</li> </ul> Junior competitive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically, aged 10+, participate in national competitive streams, attend endorsed events and some codes on the pathway to the the NZ Gymnastics Championships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing relevant technical skills for the specific code.</li> <li>Structured and skill-based fitness and conditioning programmes.</li> <li>Possibly experiencing mental blocks due to increased technical requirements</li> <li>Starting to go through puberty/fast growth -requires management including social and emotional interactions.</li> <li>More outside influences and costs come into play.</li> <li>Participate for challenge and to better self - change from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Fun and competition are also key drivers.</li> </ul>
	<b>Aspiring</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior competitive programmes.</li> <li>Gymnastics is the priority sport (may still do other sports).</li> <li>Enjoyment and competition are key drivers alongside performance, challenge, and improvement.</li> <li>Developing to perform.</li> </ul>	Senior competitive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically, aged 12+, participate in higher national levels, endorsed events and NZ Gymnastics Championships</li> <li>Transition to performance and high-performance.</li> <li>Beginning international athletes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured programmes with skill specific preparation required to master more complex skills.</li> <li>Developing mental and personal skills (fueling, sleep, pressure) to cope with a more competitive environment and life changes.</li> <li>Strive for more independence – to be treated as an adult.</li> <li>Going through or coming out of puberty - an understanding of how this impacts training. Transition through high school.</li> <li>High intrinsic motivation due to high time invested in the sport.</li> </ul>
	<b>Performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gymnastics is the priority sport.</li> <li>Training to perform at a high level and develop capabilities for increased performance outcomes.</li> </ul>	Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competing in the international stream within NZ, representing NZ or club at international events, could be on the pathway to high performance.</li> </ul> High performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often funded (or part funded) by HPSNZ, represents NZ at performance and pinnacle events and competes at world-class level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refinement of technical and tactical skills, maintaining mental and physical skills to compete at a high level.</li> <li>Training and support in athlete lifestyle (mental skills, strength development, organisation, fueling, dealing with pressure) - a larger 'team.'</li> <li>Long term and annual performance specific planning with athlete input.</li> <li>Large cost (financial/time) is often associated leading to greater external pressure.</li> <li>Transition to university through to work environments – more independent from family.</li> </ul>



# Providing Choices

Gymnastics NZ member clubs offer a wide range of opportunities, from participation through to performance across a variety of gymnastic codes. This means there is something for just about everyone. It also means the training guidelines for one gymnast can look different from those of another. It isn't a one size fits all approach. While the training guidelines do take into account the current programme opportunities available, these will evolve over time. The primary reference for our training guidelines are the athlete descriptions and pathway priorities for each pathway. Below is a summary of Gymnastics NZ Pathways.

	Gymnastics for All Pathways		Competitive Pathways	
	Participation	Social Competitive	National Competitive	Performance
Athlete description	Participation athletes are looking for opportunities to explore, develop and enjoy gymnastics movement.	Social Competitive athletes are looking to build their gymnastics abilities and enjoy participating in less formal sporting opportunities.	National Competitive Athletes are looking to extend their gymnastics abilities and enjoy participating in more structured competitive opportunities.	Performance Athletes have the ability and desire to achieve technical excellence and aspire to international representation / honours.
Pathway Priorities	The participation pathway is non-competitive in nature.  Programmes and events promote personal development and fun.	The social competitive pathway balances competitive and social considerations.  Programmes and events promote personal development and competitive fun.	The national competitive pathway provides formal competitive opportunities where competitive outcomes are increasingly the focus.  Programmes and events promote personal development, club, regional, national (and for some international) representation, and competitive fun.	The performance pathway provides opportunities for development towards international level competition.  Programmes and events promote development towards high level performance and competitive fun.
Opportunities	Club events Gym club festivals	Club events Novice Competitions Schools Gymnastics GymClub Challenge	Club events Local, regional events For eligible athletes national championships International Participation events	Club events Local, regional events National squads National Championships International performance events
Training commitment	Time commitment is low, and gymnastics is likely one of multiple sporting endeavours for these athletes.	Time commitment is medium, and gymnastics is likely one of several sporting endeavours for these athletes.	Time commitment is high, and gymnastics is likely the primary (but not necessarily only) sporting endeavour for these athletes.	Time commitment is very high, and gymnastics is likely the sole sporting endeavour for these athletes.



## Later, Steadier, Longer!

In competitive gymnastics, there is a growing and encouraging trend of gymnasts remaining competitive at a high level, for longer. There is also significant evidence that supports athletes who enjoy a wide variety of sporting activities at a younger age being better equipped for the challenges of performance level sport. The training guidelines

- Promote gymnasts starting later in formal competitive pathways and therefore enabling more sport sampling and a fun focus at a younger age.
- Promote steady progress over accelerated learning. A gradual increase in challenge (both in the training and competitive environments) will enable our gymnasts to adapt better and avoid some of the imbalances often created with an accelerated development approach. This approach also aligns better with NZ setting considerations e.g. educational system.
- Make a priority of retaining our gymnasts for longer. The training guidelines propose that formal talent identification for performance pathway athletes begins later recognising that it is possible, and potentially preferable, to develop our performance pathway athletes when they are older. Our intention with the guidelines is to scaffold their development to enable them to reach their potential as adults.





## A Gymnastics Training Session

Several gymnastics codes involve training on multiple apparatus. Each apparatus requires different technical and physical attributes to be able to perform safely and effectively. In competitive gymnastics this often results in training hours sitting higher than those of other sports. It is important to consider a few unique factors to a gymnastics training session.

- Because gymnastics involves the whole body a training session will often include a comprehensive warm up / physical preparation time. This can sometimes be up to 1/3 of the total training time. Warm ups involve running, light physical preparation / shaping, specific injury prevention exercises, flexibility, and fun.
- Artistic and rhythmic gymnastics involve multiple apparatus, each placing different demands on the gymnast's body. Typically, apparatus time is broken into 30–60-minute time increments with breaks in between (note rhythmic gymnasts may also train individual and group routines in one session).
- The tempo of a gymnastics training session has various intensities and it's not all high. Typically, when training on the apparatus athletes repeat the following pattern:
  - 30-60s high intensity (focused skill / routine preparation)
  - 30-60s moderate intensity (drills)
  - 1-3mins rest & preparation (waiting / preparing for next turn)
- The content of each training day across a week is typically periodised to facilitate a balance of loading and active recovery.
- Gymnastics training sessions nearly always involve specific strength and conditioning exercises. A strong body is a resilient one and this portion of a training session can vary depending on the season (typically 1/4 of total training time including warm up).
- Because gymnastics training sessions are long, it is important to provide sufficient breaks for recovery and fuel. Adequate rest and good nutrition contribute to high quality work outs.

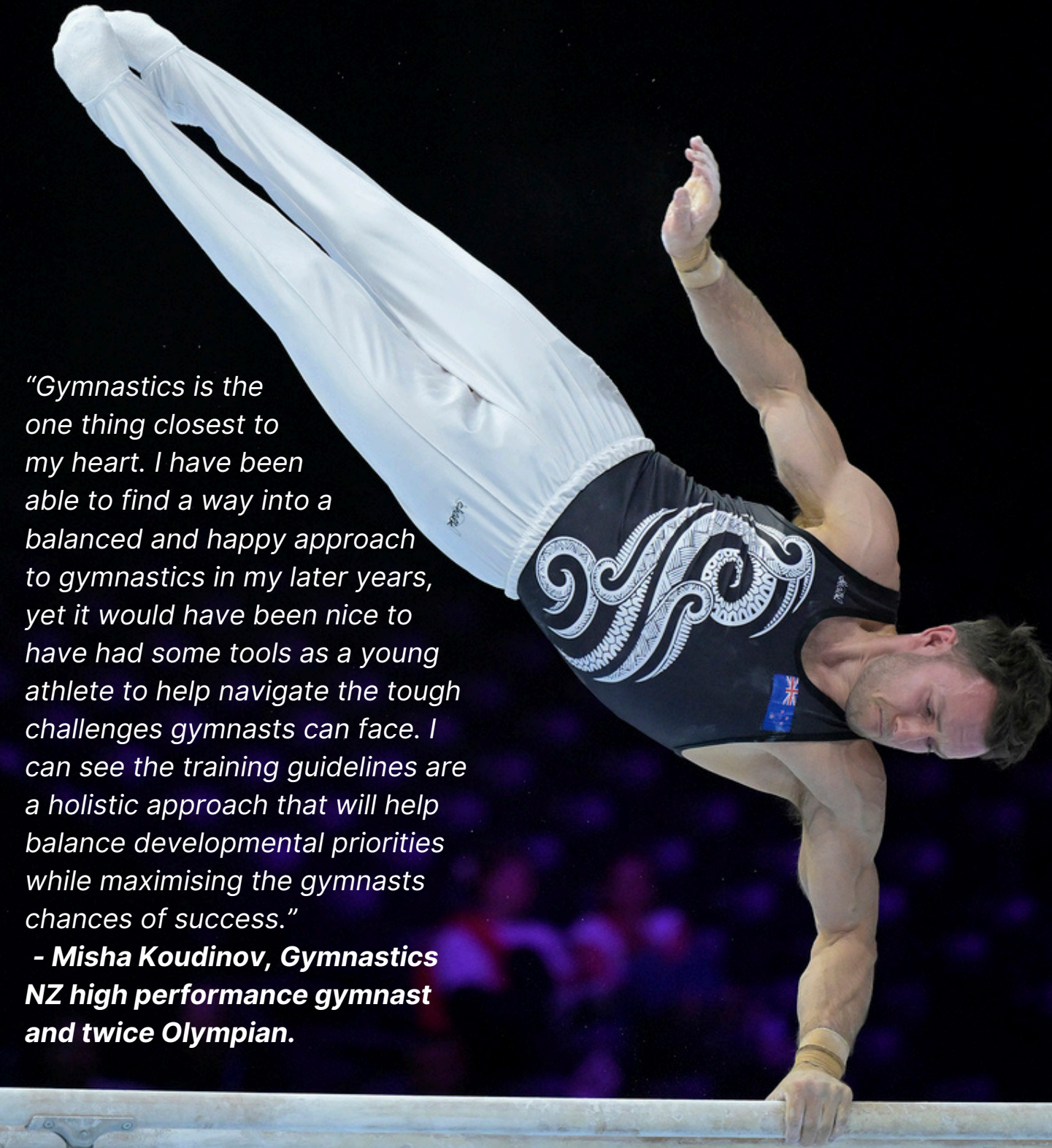
The goal is for gymnasts to train enough hours to safely and effectively enjoy the pathway programme they are in. It is important to monitor a gymnast's energy levels and enthusiasm. These are good indicators when the balance isn't quite right.





# Code Guidelines

All of our gymnastics codes are different and there are developmental considerations that are unique to each code. This first set of code guidelines prioritise training hours, training sessions and code specific considerations. These are aligned with athlete stage priorities. As time progresses the intention is to add further detail to assist clubs and coaches in structuring their training programmes and positively developing their gymnasts.

A male gymnast is performing a handstand on a horizontal bar. He is wearing a black singlet with a large white Maori-style tattoo on the back and white trousers. His legs are extended upwards in a straight line, and his arms are supporting his weight on the bar. The background is dark with some blurred lights.

*"Gymnastics is the one thing closest to my heart. I have been able to find a way into a balanced and happy approach to gymnastics in my later years, yet it would have been nice to have had some tools as a young athlete to help navigate the tough challenges gymnasts can face. I can see the training guidelines are a holistic approach that will help balance developmental priorities while maximising the gymnasts chances of success."*

**- Misha Koudinov, Gymnastics NZ high performance gymnast and twice Olympian.**



# Men’s Artistic Gymnastics

An explanation of our MAG programme pathway can be found in our [MAG whānau guide](#).

National Competitive Pathway				Performance Pathway				Stage	Considerations
Age	Level	Hours / Week	Sessions/ Week	Age	Level	Hours / Week	Sessions/ Week		
4								Foundation	Fundamental movement patterns, learning about key gymnastics shapes / body positions, exposure to a wide range of movements and apparatus.
5								Emerging	Building foundational / basic movements specific to each apparatus. Priority is to embed correct shapes and physical abilities for efficient movement. This is a good stage to prioritise key flexibility milestones.
6									
7+	level 1	3-5 hrs	1-2					Developing	Due to high growth during the developing stage technical development is varied. Building consistency and quality with basic movement patterns remains the priority. Development toward higher level skills is encouraged in line with physical capabilities, and should primarily occur in the training setting.
8+	level 2	5-7.5 hrs	2-3						
9+	level 3	5-9 hrs	2-3						
10+	level 4	9-12 hrs	3-4						
11+	level 5	9-14 hrs	3-4					Aspiring	As growth slows training toward higher value strength and power elements can occur. Athletes are able to increasingly introduce complex elements to the competition setting. Preparation towards long terms skill acquisition is encouraged. Apparatus strengths are easier to identify and should be prioritised with programming. Inconsistency in performance is common in this stage as technical, physical and cognitive considerations are still developing.
12+	level 6	12-16 hrs	3-4	12-13	U14	14-18 hrs	4-5		
13+									
14+	level 7	12-16 hrs	3-4	14-15	U16	16-20 hrs	4-5		
15+								Performance	Slow acquisition of highly complex skills is the priority at this stage. There is generally little change to the overall structure of an athletes routine except for adjustments to meet COP changes. Focus of training is increasingly on skill refinement and international competition preparation. Athletes may choose individual event pathway at this point to improve performance outcomes and/or to balance sport and life priorities.
16+	level 8	14-18 hrs	4-5	16-18	junior	18-22 hrs	5-6		
17+									
18+	level 9+	16-20 hrs	4-5	18-20	open	20-24 hrs	6-7		
				21+	open	24+ hrs	6-9		



## Men's Artistic Gymnastics Notes

- Gymnasts should progress to the next level at their own pace taking into consideration physical, psychological, social/emotional and technical development. factors.
- It is important to note that gymnasts will continue to develop technically even if they remain in the same level for more than one year. It is often beneficial to reduce technical complexity and allow more time for quality movement to develop.
- The minimum age of 7 for entering the competitive pathway will be compulsory from 2026 (age turning in year of competition).
- There are no maximum ages for competitive levels except for performance pathway U16 and junior international.
- High growth periods often impact technical development. These guidelines model repeating levels during this period (but this remains at the coach/club's discretion).
- Hours are based on an all around athlete. Athletes specialising in fewer than 6 apparatus could safely train less than recommended hours.
- Some national competitive pathway athletes who have the ability to compete in the performance pathway may prefer to transfer across later than 14 years old.
- U14 division tbc.
- Performance pathway athletes may benefit from additional supplementary training on top of recommended hours e.g. weights-based strength and conditioning, specific injury prevention / rehabilitation, recovery training.
- Energy and enthusiasm are good indicators that the training balance is right ... keep checking in with your gymnasts.

# Women’s Artistic Gymnastics

An explanation of our WAG programme pathway can be found in our [WAG whānau guide](#).

National Competitive Pathway				Performance Pathway				Stage	Considerations
Age	STEP	Hours / Week	Sessions / Week	Age	Category	Hours / Week	Sessions / Week		
4								Foundation	Fundamental movement patterns, learning about key gymnastics shapes / body positions, exposure to a wide range of movements and apparatus.
5								Emerging	Building foundational / basic movements specific to each apparatus. Priority is to embed correct shapes and physical abilities for efficient movement. Introduction to artistry and movement to music. Introduction to competition setting (more formal).
6									
7+	STEP 1	3-5 hrs	2-3						
8+	STEP 2	4-7.5 hrs	2-3						
9+	STEP 3	6-9 hrs	2-3					Developing	Due to high growth during the developing stage technical development is varied. Building consistency and quality with basic movement patterns remains the priority. Development toward higher level skills is encouraged in line with physical capabilities, but should primarily occur in the training setting. Artistic expression is beginning to develop.
10+	STEP 4	9-12 hrs	3-4						
11+	STEP 5	9-14 hrs	3-4						
12+	STEP 6	10.5-16 hrs	3-4					Aspiring	As growth slows capacity for strength and power increases. Athletes are able to increasingly introduce complex elements to the competition setting. Training towards long terms skill acquisition is encouraged. Artistic expression becomes more individualised. Inconsistency in performance is common in this stage as technical, physical and cognitive considerations are still developing.
14+	STEP 7	12-16 hrs	3-4						
15+				14-15	junior international	18-22 hrs	5-6		
16+	STEP 8	14-18 hrs	4-5						
17+	STEP 9	14-18 hrs	4-5	16-18	senior international	20-24 hrs	6-7		
18+	STEP 10	16-20 hrs	4-5					Performance	Slow acquisition of highly complex skills is the priority at this stage. There is generally little change to the overall structure of an athletes routine with the focus increasingly on skill refinement for consistency and quality. Artistic expression highly individualised.
				19+		24+ hrs	6-9		



## Women's Artistic Gymnastics Notes

- Gymnasts should progress to the next STEP / Level at their own pace taking into consideration physical, psychological, social/emotional and technical development factors.
- It is important to note that gymnasts will continue to develop technically even if they remain in the same Step / level for more than one year. It is often beneficial to reduce technical complexity and allow more time for quality movement to develop.
- The minimum age of 7 for entering the competitive pathway will be compulsory from 2026 (age turning in year of competition).
- There are no maximum ages for competitive levels except for performance pathway junior international.
- High growth periods often impact technical development. These guidelines model repeating steps during this period (but it remains at the coach/club's discretion).
- Hours are based on an all around athlete. Athletes specialising in fewer than 4 apparatus could train less than recommended hours.
- Some national competitive pathway athletes who have the ability to compete in the performance pathway may prefer to transfer across later than 13 years old.
- Performance pathway athletes may benefit from additional supplementary training on top of recommended hours e.g. weights-based strength and conditioning, specific injury prevention / rehabilitation, recovery training, artistry.
- Energy and enthusiasm are good indicators that the training balance is right ... keep checking in with your gymnasts.

# Rhythmic Gymnastics

An explanation of our RG programme pathway can be found in our [RG whānau guide](#).

National Competitive Pathway				Performance Pathway				Stage	Considerations
Age	Level	Hours / Week	Sessions / Week	Age	Stage	Hours / Week	Sessions / Week		
4								Foundation	Fundamental movement patterns, gymnastics shapes, exposure to wide range of movements.
5								Emerging	Shaping for performance gymnastics, gymnastics movement specific physical abilities e.g. cartwheel, basic movement patterns for performance gymnastics e.g. basic body movements - pivots and leaps, and apparatus handling. Introduction to artistry and specific movement to music. Introducing the linkage of elements into the sequences of connected movements of the body incorporated with body handling.
6									
7	Level 3	2-4 hrs	1-2						
8	Level 4	2-4 hrs	1-2					Developing	Building consistency and excellence with basic movement patterns to maximise efficiency and scoring potential (both difficulty and execution). Begin early development toward higher level skills in training setting while competition content remains largely basics focussed.
9	Level 5	4-7 hrs	2-3	10 and under	Level 5	8-12 hrs	3-4		
10	Level 6	6-9 hrs	2-3	11 and under	Level 6				
11	Level 7	6-10 hrs	2-3	12 and under	Level 7	10-14 hrs	3-4		
12	Level 8	9-12 hrs	3-4	13 and under	Level 8				
13								Aspiring	At this age range there is a huge variety in physical development with athletes which impacts skill acquisition. Slow introduction of higher level technical elements to competition setting. Developed all basic body and apparatus skills, at this level getting into complexity of handling and higher level of body difficulties and apparatus difficulties.
14	Level 9	12-16 hrs	3-4	14-15	junior international	14-20 hrs	4-5		
15									
16	Level 10	14-18 hrs	3-5	16-18	senior international	16-22 hrs	4-5		
17									
18								Performance	Slow addition of highly complex / value skills to routines concentrating on consistency and performance. Individualised monitored plan for gymnasts on national squad.
19				19+		22-24+ hrs	6-7		



## Rhythmic Gymnastics Notes

- Gymnasts should progress to the next level at their own pace taking into consideration physical, psychological, social/emotional and technical development factors.
- It is important to note that gymnasts will continue to develop technically even if they remain in the same level for more than one year. It is often beneficial to reduce technical complexity and allow more time for quality movement to develop.
- The minimum age of 7 for entering the competitive pathway will be compulsory from 2026 (age turning in year of competition).
- There are no maximum ages for competitive divisions except for FIG junior.
- Technical development is not always linear and sometimes repeating a level is the best approach. These guidelines model repeating levels where there has typically been a need for more time (but this remains at the coach/club's discretion).
- Gymnasts who undertake individual as well as group may require some extra time, but should where possible fit into the overall training hours / sessions.
- Hours are based on an athlete competing all apparatus. Athletes specialising in fewer apparatus could train less than recommended hours.
- Performance pathway athletes may benefit from additional supplementary training on top of recommended hours e.g. weights-based strength and conditioning, specific injury prevention / rehabilitation, recovery training, artistry.
- Energy and enthusiasm are good indicators that the training balance is right ... keep checking in with your gymnasts.

# Gymnastics for All

An explanation of our GfA programme pathway can be found on the [GfA page](#).

Participation (all codes)		Social Competitive									Stage	Considerations
Foundation/ Introductory Programmes		Artistic			Rhythmic			Trampoline / Tumbling				
Age	Hours / Week	Level	Hours / Week	Days / Week	Level	Hours / Week	Days / Week	Level	Hours / Week	Days / Week		
5-8	1-2 hrs										Foundation	Fundamental movement patterns, gymnastics shapes, exposure to wide range of movements
9-12	1-3 hrs											
13-16	2-4 hrs	level 1	1-3 hrs	1-2	level 1	1-3 hrs	1-2	level 1-3	1-2 hrs	1-2	Emerging	Shaping for skill development and performance, gymnastics movement specific physical abilities e.g. handstand, basic movement patterns for sport specific skills gymnastics e.g. circle up on bars, somersaults on trampoline, body and apparatus movements for rhythmic skills.
		level 2	1.5-4 hrs	1-2	level 2	1.5-4 hrs	1-2	level 4-6	2-4 hrs	1-2		
16+	2-5 hrs	level 3	2-5 hrs	1-2	level 3	3-6 hrs	1-2					
		level 4	3-6 hrs	2								
		level 5	3-6 hrs	2	level 4	3-6 hrs	2	level 7-10	4-6 hrs	2-3	Developing	Continue building skill development. Physical preparation (strength and conditioning) needs to increase to ensure athletes can safely learn skills. More opportunity for individualised routines and artistic expression.
		level 6	6-9 hrs	2-3	level 5	4-9 hrs	2-3					
		level 7	6-9 hrs	2-3								
		level 8-9*	6-10.5	3								
<b>Notes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* To be developed.</li><li>Ages are not relevant for social competitive pathway as athletes may join programme opportunities at any age.</li></ul>											Aspiring	The aspiring stage does not describe GfA athletes.
											Performance	The performance stage does not describe GfA athletes.



# Integration of the Training Guidelines

The success of the training guidelines will be directly impacted by their integration into club programmes across New Zealand. To support this the following approach will be taken.

## Next Steps

1. The training guidelines will be widely communicated to the community through various platforms including made readily available on the Gymnastics NZ website.
2. Gymnastics NZ will provide question and answer opportunities for specific groups e.g. club administrators, codes, performance pathway coaches.
3. Trampoline and aerobics code training guidelines are currently being developed.
4. It will be the expectation of Gymnastics NZ that affiliated clubs align their programme training hours with the training guidelines from 2025 onward.
5. Minimum age requirements for the competitive pathways will be enforced from 2026 onward. This allows clubs time to align their programme selections with the new age requirements.

## Moving Forward

1. Code guidelines will be included in all code whānau guides.
2. The guidelines will be reviewed annually in line with best practice and community feedback.
3. Gymnastics NZ will actively support clubs in implementing the guidelines through the relationship manager network.

A female gymnast with dark hair in a bun, wearing a white leotard with black and silver patterns, is performing a balance beam routine. She is standing on the beam with her arms raised in a graceful pose. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators in a stadium.

*"I have learned throughout my gymnastics career that balance really is better. In my case, balance between gymnastics, academics, whānau time, cultural engagement and work, have allowed me to enjoy the sport whilst maintaining perspective and striving for my performance goals. I support the idea that athletes can compete in our sport for longer."*

**- Courtney McGregor,  
Gymnastics NZ high  
performance gymnast  
and Olympian.**



# Supplementary Considerations

## **Are the guidelines compulsory?**

The training guidelines are not strictly compulsory. They have been created to help clubs and coaches design and deliver athlete-centred programmes for Kiwi gymnasts.

While they are not intended to be overly prescriptive, they will provide the framework for discussions with programmes that operate significantly outside the parameters suggested.

## **Are minimum ages compulsory to start competitive pathways?**

Yes. Athletes must be 5 years old to enter the social competitive pathway – and they must be turning 7 years old that year to enter the national competitive pathway (from 2026).

## **Will the minimum age of 9 for GymClub Challenge and National Championships change?**

No. In 2025 there will be a competition framework review which may impact age eligibility for these events.

## **What do children do before 7 years old if they can't start in the national competitive pathway?**

All 5-6 year olds will benefit from the foundational programmes and events available in the GfA pathway. Gymnastics NZ is working to develop social competitive programmes that align more closely with national competitive programmes. These will provide a good transition to national competitive content and 'soft' introduction to the competition setting. Clubs may also wish to offer pre-competitive programmes.

## **Does an athlete's age have to line up with the division of competition?**

No. The intention of aligning age to divisions is to promote the guidelines consideration of later, steadier, longer. Where age categories (e.g. FIG junior) are not stated, coaches and clubs can choose the best fit for their athletes. Some athletes may enter a division at an older age or repeat divisions. The ages aligned to each division are a guide which align stage considerations with technical requirements for each category.

## **What is social competitive gymnastics?**

Social competitive is a term that Sport New Zealand uses in its sport pathways framework to define athletes who want to develop their skills and also remain in a less formal, highly social setting.

Gymnastics NZ has adopted this term and identified the social competitive space as a key area for development to better provide meaningful opportunities for more athletes.





### **What about athletes who participate in multiple gymnastic codes?**

Athletes in the participation and social competitive pathways could safely train the hours advised in multiple codes.

Athletes in the national competitive pathway who are competing in multiple gymnastic codes should not try to train the total hours of each code. Cross training benefits gained from participating in multiple codes mean the amount of training for each code can be reduced. As a guide, an athlete's total training time should be aligned with the code with the highest hours for their division.

Generally, the requirements of performance pathway training restrict involvement in a second gymnastic code.

The goal is to provide positive experiences for athletes. Managing load is important.

### **Do the guidelines take into consideration other sports?**

The reduced training hours for participation and social competitive pathways assume involvement in other sports.

National competitive training hours allow increased space for other sport involvement but assume gymnastics is the priority sport.

Performance pathway training hours assume gymnastics is the only sport for these athletes. Monitoring enthusiasm / engagement and physical health for all athletes are important guides to assessing if the balance is right.

### **Will our top athletes fall behind on the international stage as a result of these changes?**

It is true that development for New Zealand performance athletes will likely look different to those of some other countries. It is also true that accelerated development has seen high attrition rates in many of our competitive codes, and this has an impact on our ability to produce and retain performance level athletes. Unfortunately, many of our most promising athletes have left the sport at a very young age.

Our new approach recognises that the environmental demands Kiwi athletes face are different to other countries and proposes a new timeline to achieving their potential.

### **What about trampoline and aerobics?**

Training guidelines for these two codes are under development and will be released in 2025.

