

Choosing the right gymnastics program for your child

Ages 4.5 - 6

Phantom Gymnastics offers many different programs to meet the needs of individual children. When you enroll your child into a class it is very important to understand your child's goals, your goals for your child and how each program can serve to help you meet those goals.

First and most importantly be sure to understand what your child wants from gymnastics and set your expectations in line with those of your child. Often, a parent wants their child to learn a lot of gymnastics skills, but the child just wants to have fun! This creates a real challenge for the coach and sets up a no win situation! It is equally challenging when a child wants to learn a lot of skills and is in a program that is not intended for that purpose.

To help you and your child understand goals and put them into alignment take a moment to think about your answers the following questions:

Has my child ever done gymnastics before?



No	Yes
----	-----

Is my child physically strong and flexible?



Not very	Yes
----------	-----

How much time does my child have to commit to gymnastics practices? How much time do I have?



Not much! 1 hr weekly	2 – 6 hours Per week
Maybe a class in summer	More as my child gets older
	class in summer mandatory

Does my child flip all over the house? Do cartwheels on the lawn, roll off the couch? Hang up side down on the couch? Jump on the bed? (you get the point!)



A little	Yes - more daily!
----------	-------------------

Is my child motivated to work at gymnastics skills? At conditioning and flexibility?



All fun	Shows willingness
---------	-------------------

Is my child competitive?



Not yet	Some - yes
---------	------------

With your answers, you should be able to read the descriptions below to have a better indication of the program to fit your child.



Recreational Gymnastics – Children come to gymnastics one time per week for an hour and 15 minutes. We keep the classes fun and teach basic skills. The objective is to have fun and become more physically active through basic gymnastics skill building. We help each child set goals and

work on skills at their level. Recreational gymnastics will not produce a polished gymnast!

With only 1.25 hours per week it is unrealistic to expect your child to accomplish much more than basic skills (unless the child has very natural strength, flexibility and talent) and some intermediate skills. These skills won't happen over night! It will take time. In addition to gymnastics skill building, you should also expect see your child having fun doing some socializing and enjoying gymnastics related games such as jump roping, parachutes, dancing/aerobic activities, especially in the 6- 8 year old range. What most people don't understand about gymnastics is how much work (time, conditioning, flexibility, dance) it takes to be an accomplished gymnast. You may see girls in the gym doing some really amazing skills, but keep in mind, those are probably team girls who are coming to practice anywhere from 9 – 14 hours per week and have probably been doing that for years! If you and your child want to acquire a higher level of gymnastics skills more quickly, you may want to consider another program.



Stars program - The stars are children who have participated in pre-school or kindergarten programs. The class is designed to teach gymnastics skills along with increasing strength and flexibility. We use fun activities to work on conditioning so that learning is still fun, but more deliberate than a recreation class. The stars will be in gymnastics class 1 time per week for 2 hours and for 4 hours in the summer (2 days, 2 hours). As the child progresses through this class, we begin to understand what direction may be appropriate. We look for talent level, progress, focus, ability to follow directions, willingness to work and learn new skills and desire to do gymnastics. This class is by invitation only. Over time girls from the class will be recommended for USAG team,

some for semi-competitive team and some for Prep-opt team. (Read on for descriptions of those programs.) There may also be situations where the gymnast wants to go to a recreational gymnastics class. Each outcome is perfectly okay! This is a program created to figure all of that out earlier rather than later! (Sad, but true....if a girl wants to really do competitive gymnastics and doesn't start at age 5 or 6, it gets really difficult!)



Semi-competitive team – This program is for girls who love gymnastics and want to build more than basic skills more quickly than a recreation program allows. These girls come 3+ hours per week and work on skills for all events. We have a beginner group and an intermediate group. The skills each girl learns may vary slightly depending on abilities and physical aptitude for the sport. The goal is to participate in small, informal "in-house" competitions. After they build some skills on all events, they will learn routines and compete 3 - 4 times per year. Girls in this program will work on some strength and conditioning skills as well as flexibility and form.



NEW Prep-opt Team - Phantom Prep-Op is an alternative optional team program at Phantom Gymnastics. It is a unique program that meets the needs of many gymnasts by providing a team atmosphere and a competitive experience without the commitment of time and finances required by the USAG J.O. Program. Girls who are a bit older (10+) and have had success in USAG level 4 - 8, or who are in high school gymnasts, or who are younger (7-9), have a real desire, but can't commit to USAG, may be interested in this program. There are 3 levels of prep -op: novice, intermediate and advanced. Gymnast will compete in prep-op meets outside of the gym, generally in MA, 4 – 6 times per year. Girls in this program are required to participate in at least 3 meets. We see a number of USAG gymnasts who are burnt out here, talented gymnasts who want to do other sports and young gymnasts who find USAG too hard.



USAG JO Team Gymnastics - Girls must be recommended for competitive gymnastics. The hours are long and the work is hard! But for some girls, it is just what they want! We start developmental at age 5 - 7. Pre-team is the next step after developmental. Upon mastery of USAG required skills, the gymnast will move to level 4 where they will get ready to compete. There is another document that we can provide to give more detail on this program. Goals and expectations will be covered there.