

A Guide to Child Safe Behaviours in Gymnastics



Gymnastics
Australia

Introduction

This guide has been developed for younger coaches, to help explain the Gymnastics Australia (GA) *Codes of Behaviour when Dealing with Children*, which can be found in full at Attachment K of the **Child Safe Policy**. However athletes and parents may also find this guide useful.

The general Codes of Behaviour and coaches and judges codes of ethics are also outlined in the **Member Protection Policy**.

Both the GA Child Safe and Member Protection Policies should be read in conjunction with each other and can be found on the **Gymnastics Australia website**.

In this guide you'll learn about Child Safe Behaviours - these are a set of rules for everyone in gymnastics that will help in preventing children from getting hurt.

It is really important for everyone involved in gymnastics to know what these rules are, how to follow them and that they apply to children*, vulnerable people and people with a disability.

*anyone under 18 year old



General behaviours

When working with children and young people it is important to understand your role and responsibilities



Do's

- » Treat all children equally regardless of gender, race, age or ability;
- » Promote safety, treat everyone with fairness and respect;
- » Make sure children in gymnastics are in a safe environment and are protected from external threats;
- » Conduct all activities and/or discussions with children in view of other people;
- » Make sure children participating in gymnastics behave appropriately toward one another.



Dont's

- » Do not be in a one-to-one unsupervised situation(s) with children
- » Do not accept any invitations to attend private social functions at the request of a child who has participated or is participating in gymnastics;
- » Do not seek unauthorised contact with children who are not family members outside gymnastics for example, babysitting;
- » Do not give gifts/presents to children within gymnastics (other than awards);
- » Do not develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism.



Transporting Children

Children are to be transported only in circumstances that are directly related to the delivery of gymnastics programs, events or services



Do's

- » Make sure transport is in direct relation to gymnastics services or activities (e.g. transport to/from events or classes);
- » Always seek written permission from the child's parent/guardian before travel;
- » Make sure travel is planned and everyone is aware of the details (e.g. route, time, stops, other people present)
- » Make sure the child sits in the back seat, appropriately secured.



Dont's

- » Do not transport children in gymnastics if not necessary;
- » Do not allow other unauthorised adults to travel with you (e.g. stopping to pick up a friend on the way to a competition you are taking some gymnasts to);
- » Do not make any unnecessary stops during the journey;
- » Do not be alone and unsupervised with a child.



Positive Guidance (Discipline) & Positive coaching techniques

Everyone must be fair, respectful and remember that everyone develops differently. Children need to be provided with clear directions and given the chance to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive manner.

Sometimes staff may be required to manage behaviour for the safety of the individual and everyone else participating in gymnastics.



Do's

- » Give children information about how to participate safely in gymnastics;
- » Encourage children to feel safe and to be safe and to have positive relationships and friendships with each other;
- » Encourage children to 'have a say';
- » Make sure that children participating in gymnastics know the rules;
- » Give positive reinforcement.



Dont's

- » Do not discipline a child with physical punishment;
- » Do not discipline a child by any form of treatment that could be degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.





Don't's

Do not engage in any sexual misconduct

Under no circumstances is any form of 'sexual behaviour' to occur between, with, or in the presence of, children participating in gymnastics. Engaging in sexual behaviour or explicit language while participating in our sport is prohibited even if the young persons involved may be above the legal age of consent.



Use of Language, appropriate tone of voice

Language and tone of voice used in the presence of Children should provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage or affirm them not be harmful to children – in this respect, avoid language that is:

- a) discriminatory, racist or sexist;
- b) derogatory, belittling or negative;
(e.g. calling a child a 'loser' or telling them they are 'too fat')
- c) intended to threaten or frighten;
- d) profane or sexual; and
- e) inappropriate



Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media



Do's

- » Keep your electronic devices safely in your bag during gymnastics classes and competitions;
- » 'Share' photos or posts from official gymnastics social media platforms, (e.g. club accounts) instead of posting directly from a personal account;
- » Always make sure electronic communications go directly to parent/guardian;
- » Communicate through official channels if social media is the only possible way to communicate (e.g. use the Club's official FB page not a personal account);
- » Follow guidelines/policy when using electronic communication;
- » Only use communication for professional purposes (e.g. advising that a scheduled event is canceled);
- » Monitor children's use of technology during gymnastics classes to make sure they do not access inappropriate information.



Dont's

- » Do not communicate privately with a child on social media (e.g. direct message, internet chat rooms, snapchat, instagram and E-mail communication);
- » Do not post photographs of children on personal social media accounts;
- » Do not upload/post still/moving images or audio recordings of Children without the prior authorisation of their parent or guardian;
- » Do not request children to keep the communication a secret from their parents or others;
- » Do not use electronic communication to promote unauthorised 'social' activity or to arrange unauthorised contact;
- » Do not use inappropriate language when communicating with a child;
- » Do not communicate anything that a reasonable observer could view as being of a sexual nature .



Photographs of Children



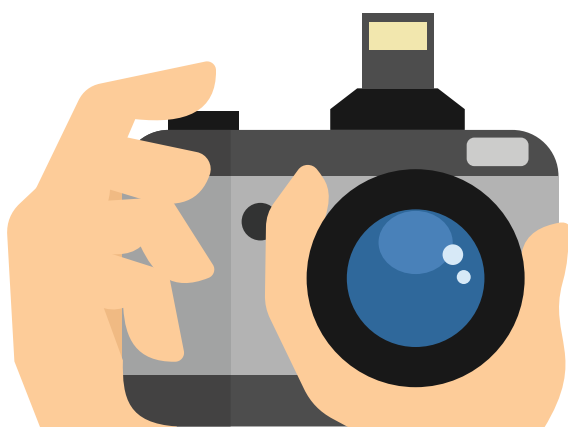
Do's

- » Only photograph children while involved in gymnastics and if they are appropriately dressed and posed;
- » Store images (digital or hard copy) in a way that prevents unauthorised access by others;
- » Make sure images (digital or hard copy) are destroyed or deleted as soon as they are no longer required;
- » Only photograph/video children with Club owned devices.

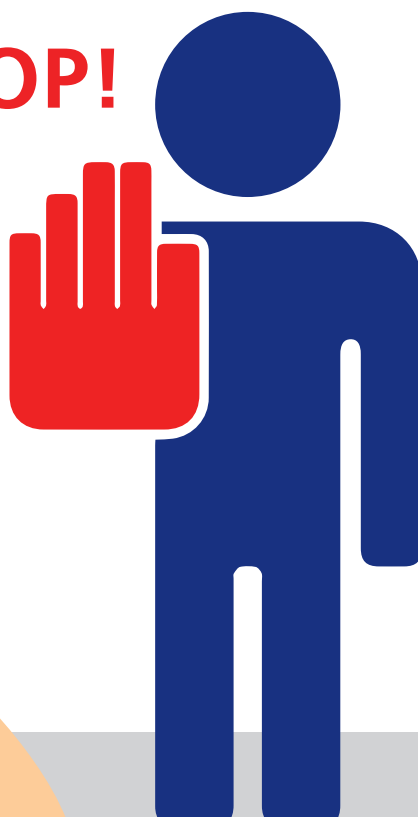


Don't's

- » Do not distribute images of children involved in gymnastics (including as an attachment to an email) to anyone outside your club other than the child photographed or their parent, without management knowledge and approval;
- » Do not take or store images of children involved in gymnastics on personal devices;
- » Do not post images on a website without parental knowledge and written permission, unless the images are presented in a way that de-identifies the child;



STOP!



Physical Contact with Children

Any physical contact with children must be appropriate to the delivery of gymnastics (e.g. fitting sporting equipment like grips or appropriately correcting technique) and must also be based on the needs of the child (e.g. assisting/comforting a distressed child) rather than on the needs of an adult



Do's

- » Seek a child's permission to spot or shape when demonstrating an activity;
- » Positively avoid and discourage children from hugs and or cuddles. Do this gently and without embarrassment or offence to the child (e.g. offer a high five as encouragement instead);
- » Respect and respond to signs that a child is uncomfortable with physical contact;
- » Try to avoid physical contact with a child unless absolutely necessary;
- » Always communicate with a child when physical contact may be necessary;
- » Try to use verbal directions rather than physical contact.



Dont's

- » Do not, under any circumstances, have contact with a child that involves any intimate part of a child's body (e.g. genitals, bottom or breast area);
- » Do not allow inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with a child (e.g. massage, kisses, hugs, tickling and wrestling games, adjusting a leotard, sitting on a child to assist with sit ups/stretching);
- » Do not put yourself in situations that could result in close physical contact with a child;
- » Do not inflict corporal punishment (e.g. physical discipline, smacking, long runs in hot weather, no water breaks, excessive exercise or time out etc.);
- » Do not have physical contact with a child that would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation.



Spotting and Manual Support

Supporting and 'shaping' the gymnast is an essential part of coaching gymnastics in that it helps the gymnast to understand shapes, movement patterns and complex skills, and it also reduces the risk of injury due to a fall or error in performance



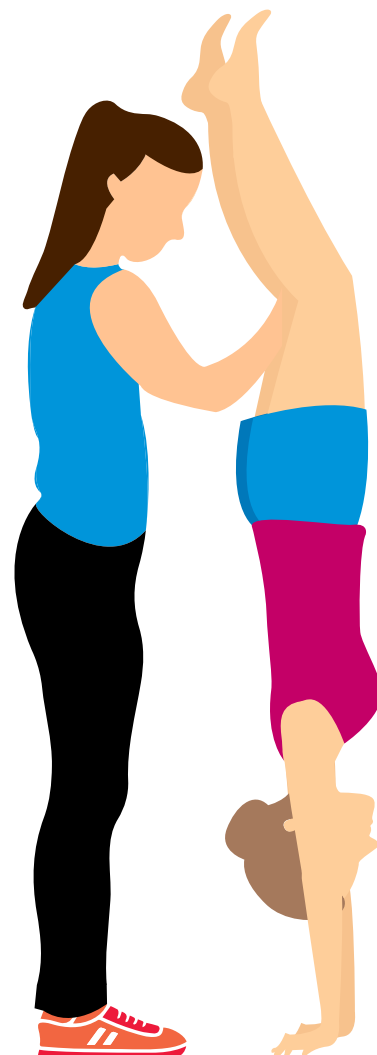
Do's

- » Always put the immediate safety of the child above any other concerns (e.g. if a child is going to fall and catching them might result in contact with a sensitive body part you must still catch them);
- » Be alert to the possibility of performance errors or anxiety, which may increase the risk of injury;
- » Acknowledge through an apology any incidents of non-intentional physical contact with a sensitive body part (e.g. genitals, bottom or breast area) with the gymnast and senior staff.



Dont's

- » Do not 'over handle' children or use support when it is unnecessary.



Massaging



Do's

- » Encourage children to do their own soft tissue day to day maintenance, and pre and post-event management using a foam roller, tennis ball or spiky ball;
- » Make sure massage for specific conditions, or recovery from injury, is dealt with by a qualified soft tissue therapist, who has the knowledge to treat these conditions safely and effectively;
- » Encourage parents to be present when children are being massaged/treated by a professional.



Dont's

- » Do not engage in any form of massage with children;
- » Do not encourage children to become dependent on you for their soft tissue maintenance.



Flexibility/Stretching Exercises



Do's

- » Select slow, progressive and prolonged stretching exercises, within the “comfort zone”, rather than stretches that require excessive force;
- » Be sensitive to how the exercise might be perceived by the parents and children;
- » Use stretching techniques that do not require or minimise physical contact;
- » Consider children partnering with each other to stretch where appropriate;
- » Be aware of hand placement when touching a gymnast.



Dont's

- » Do not use exercises that place the coaches and gymnast's body in “close proximity” and might be seen as unnecessary by the parent or observer;
- » Do not sit on or straddle a gymnast to encourage flexibility.



Change Room/Bathroom Arrangements



Do's

- » Ensure all gymnasts arrive wearing their leotards if there are no private/safe change room facilities;
- » Provide safe and private changing room facilities where possible;
- » Ensure that there is appropriate supervision at all times where the changing/toilet facility is accessible by adults;
- » Knock or announce yourself and wait for approval before entering change rooms;
- » Parents should have at least one other adult with you when you are in a change room with children;
- » Ensure there is adequate supervision in 'public' change rooms;
- » Implement a 'buddy system' in the absence of the availability of a parent or guardian to accompany a child to the bathroom (e.g. children can nominate 2 or more 'buddies' of a similar age and gender who can go with them).



Dont's

- » Do not get changed or undressed in front of children. Adults must make every effort to get changed in an individual closed cubicle;
- » Do not be alone and unsupervised with a child in a change room area;
- » Do not isolate yourself with a child from others in the change room (e.g. take them into a cubicle with you);
- » Do not enter a change room of the opposite sex;
- » Do not allow mobile phones to be used in changing rooms;
- » Do not use bathroom facilities at the same time as a child. Where possible adults should have separate change room and bathroom facilities;
- » Do not allow parents into changing rooms unless a child requires physical help getting changed (e.g. young children or children with disabilities)



Personal Care

Personal care (e.g. assistance in dressing, toileting etc.) required when a child is at gymnastics must only be carried out by parents, carers or legal guardians.



Overnight Stays

Staff must not stay overnight with a child who participates in gymnastics services unless it is in direct relation to the service delivery of gymnastics (e.g. competitions) and is with the prior signed/written authorisation of the parent/guardian



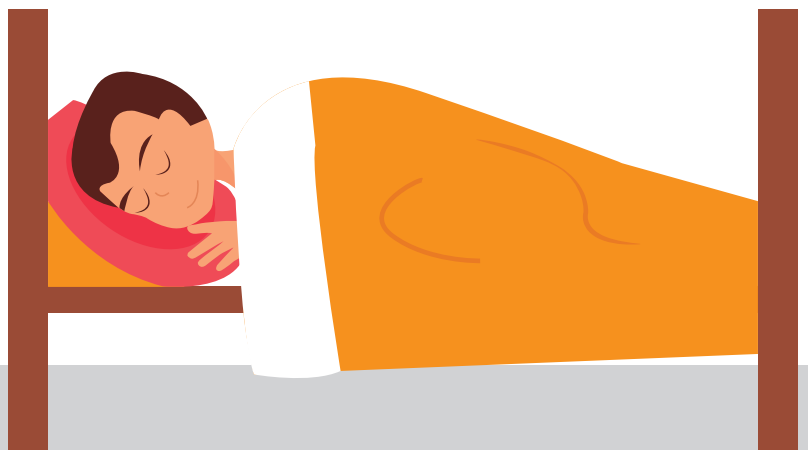
Do's

- » Make sure behaviour during an overnight stay is consistent with the practices and behaviour expected during delivery of gymnastic programs, services or events at all other times;
- » Providing children with privacy when bathing and dressing;
- » Observing appropriate dress standards when children are present – such as no exposure to adult nudity;
- » Respect the rights of children to contact their parents, or others, at any time, but especially if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed during the stay;
- » Respect parents expecting that their children can, if they wish, make contact;
- » Ensure children only share hotel rooms or bedrooms with children of the same gender (all children should be consulted on their sleeping arrangements).



Dont's

- » Do not allow adults to enter the child's room or spend time in a child's room (except in an emergency). If an individual adult presence is required, there should always be more than one child in the room with the adult;
- » Do not allow adults to share a room/bed with a child other than their own child;
- » Do not remove a child's clothing unless you have their permission and have at least one other adult with you;
- » Do not leave children under the supervision or protection of unauthorised persons such as hotel staff or friends;
- » Do not allow sleeping arrangements that may compromise the safety of children
- » Do not allow children to be exposed to explicit material, for example, through movies, television, the internet or magazine.

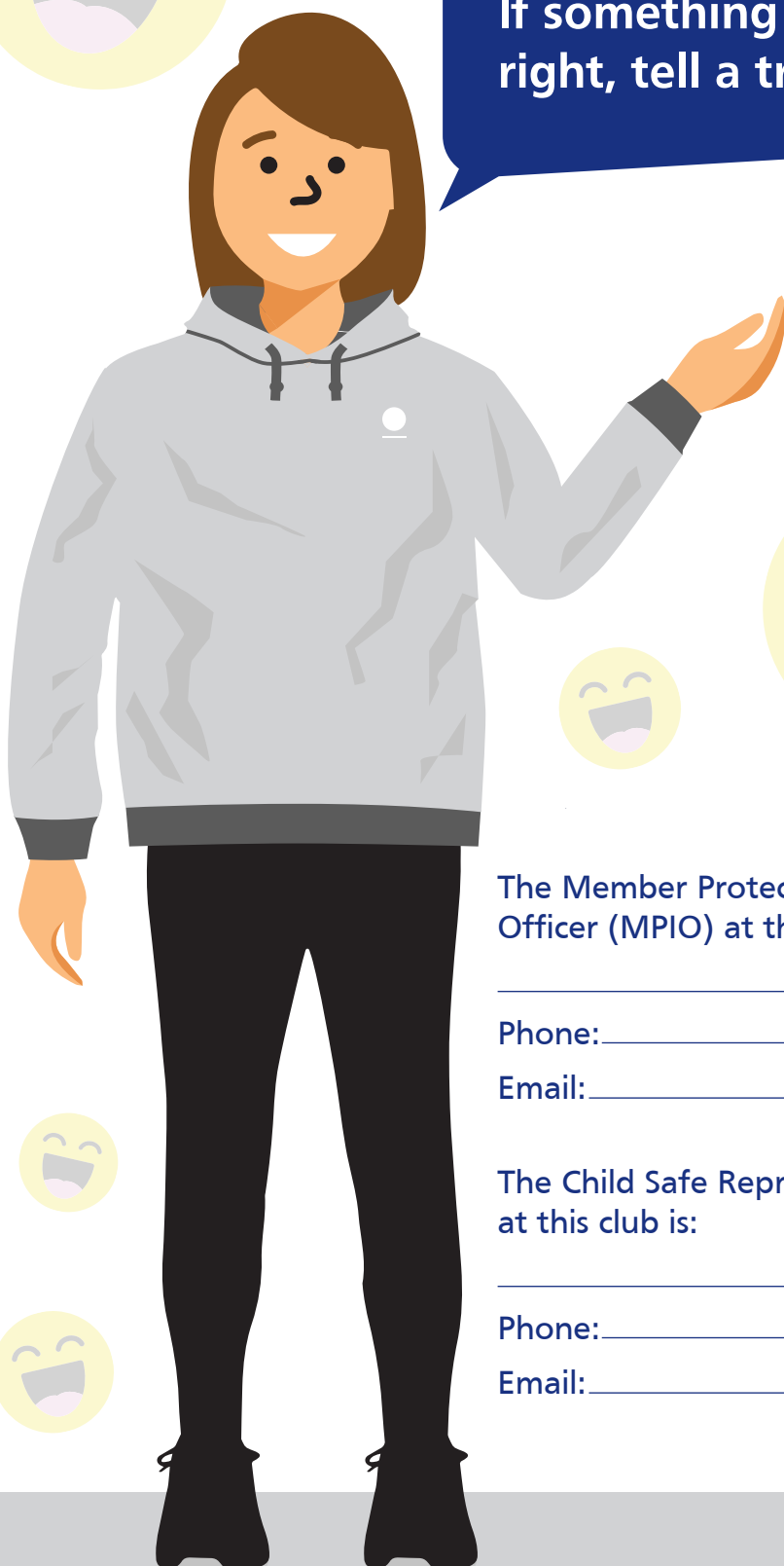




We all have the right to feel safe and be safe



If something doesn't feel right, tell a trusted adult



The Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) at this club is:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

The Child Safe Representative (CSR) at this club is:

Phone: _____

Email: _____