



All about being a Squad Gymnast

Why my child?

First of all, being asked to be part of a squad is a privilege few children achieve. It is also a responsibility that we at EGA take very seriously. We currently have one squad women's artistic.

Children who are invited into an EGA Women's Artistic squad generally show certain attributes required for gymnastics, including:

1. Body type / shape
2. Attitude
3. Strength / flexibility
4. Confidence

We then spend some time assessing the most appropriate route for them. Our suggestions are always based upon what we consider to be best for your child and no matter what we suggest, they will become fitter, they will learn many essential life skills and they will develop friendships, which often last a lifetime – all of which are a recipe for a successful future.

What does being in an EGA squad mean?

When your child is first selected for a squad the emphasis is still very much on fun. However, your child will now be encouraged to challenge themselves and work on perfecting skills rather than simply achieving them.

Physical preparation (or conditioning) is a focus in every session and your child will be continually monitored to see how they adapt to the change in training.

This is an exciting time for gymnasts as they will begin to make new friendships and learn impressive new skills.

What happens next?

By assessing the attitude and overall development of your child, the coaches can then determine the correct route and in future months and years the hours, days and times of training will be adjusted to suit their personal development and competition level.

The work they undertake and the skills they learn are directly proportionate to their own development, attitude and work ethic. In short, the harder they work and the more they 'want it' the more they will achieve. The most important thing for us is that your child continues to enjoy gymnastics and develop new skills.

However, gymnastics is a sport that really does reward the amount of effort you put in and it is at this stage that the commitment of the child becomes more important, as does the support of their family and those closest to them.

What competitions do they do?

All squad gymnasts are expected to take part in our annual club championships and National Grading. Apart from that the competitions they are entered in will depend upon the grade or level that gymnasts are working at and your child's personal coach's plan for the year. Gymnasts are only ever entered for competition if they are ready and able to compete at their best.

What if they don't win?

Winning isn't everything. Our decisions regarding your child and their future direction are based only upon what will help them to progress in terms of learning new skills, improving execution and consistency – NOT on whether they are winning medals.

However, we will always aim to get the best out of your child and they will be trained hard and encouraged to challenge themselves – and to be the best that they can. To do this we need your complete support. If a parent contradicts a coach it can undermine the whole process.

Therefore, if you have any queries regarding our approach please seek clarification from your child's personal coach or attend a members' meeting. More details regarding meetings are available from reception.

So what does the future hold for my child?

There are so many factors to take into consideration and gymnastics is a complex and difficult sport so it is difficult to predict.

However, if you do gymnastics because you love it, you'll always be a winner, no matter what happens.

What we do know is that gymnastics offers a lot more than fun and fitness. In addition to all the more obvious benefits and success at competitions, gymnasts have the opportunity to go on to become coaches themselves and gain nationally recognised qualifications. Others use their gymnastics training to help them achieve in academia.

Above everything, you will get to see your child grow into a fit, healthy, happy and well balanced individual who is able to cope with the many pressures life presents them.

Squad Important Information

- Squad gymnasts must always wear an appropriate leotard. Leotards and other clothing can be purchased from the club shop or from online outlets.
- Competition leotards and tracksuits do not need to be purchased. Leotards are loaned out for each competition, at a small fee.
- No jewellery, including belly piercings, can be worn for training or competitions. There is a no tolerance rule regarding this and no fees can be refunded if children are excluded for this reason.
- Hair must be tied back securely and gymnasts should always be well presented.
- Gymnastics equipment (e.g. chalk, wristbands) can be purchased from the club shop.
- Gymnasts should attempt to attend every scheduled class and any absence should be conveyed to the club prior to the class start time.
- Gymnasts should always be on time, the warm up is an essential part of any session.
- Gymnasts should always bring a drink of water to training. Your child's body will work best when it is hydrated. We also have drinks for sale in the office.
- Ensure your child eats a balanced diet. The food they eat has a direct impact upon performance levels.
- Read the club's code of conduct and abide by the code at all times.
- Coaching time is precious so if you need to talk to a coach please do so before or after a training session.

Am I doing the right thing with my aspiring gymnast?

That's a question many parents are plagued with as their children progress through this fantastic sport. Everyone wants to support their child, but how much is enough? Here are some pointers from parents with many years' experience. We hope that they help.

Be involved

Help your child enjoy every aspect of the sport and feel part of the club. Get involved with helping at club events and be part of the club yourself so that your child can see that the club is important to you as well.

Support your child

But remember that the sport belongs to them. You are an observer and a supporter. As far as developing a gymnast goes, leave it there.

Support the coaches

Don't contradict your child's coach. The coaches are the experts – support their knowledge and experience. They will always do the best for your child; it's what they are here for.

Ask questions

But go through the proper channels. Approach your child's coach, the office or go along to a members' meeting. If your query is to do with Welfare then please request to see a club official or the Clubs Welfare Officers (details can be found in the complaints procedure document online/notice board)

Celebrate your child's victories

No matter how small the achievement may be. Recognise the difference between a child who may fall three times and win, and a child who performs their best ever routines but fails to win a medal. A good competitive environment teaches a child that medals and trophies are simply by-products of effort and commitment.

Learn your gymnast's goals

Gymnastics is a constant learning curve, no matter what the level. So understand what your child's goals are and it will help you to appreciate what they are experiencing, then applaud every goal achieved – and console them when times are tough.

Don't air your concerns in an open forum

Airing your grievances with other parents serves little constructive purpose. It places others in an uncomfortable position, sets a poor example to your child and affects the team atmosphere in the gym. Please raise any concerns with your child's coach or at arranged parents meetings.

Contribute to the discipline of the gym

Arrive on time, reinforce the need for respectful behaviour, never distract gymnasts or coaches during training, and report planned absences and support club rules and policies. If you don't consider these important it just sets the tone for your gymnast to follow suit – and that's the time to consider whether you are at the right club.

Be professional

You are also a representative of your child's club so when you are at a competition, remember this. Don't talk about other teams and gymnasts and NEVER approach an official, that's the coaches' job, not yours. If you have a concern please discuss it with your gymnast's coach, they will then deal with it as they see fit.

So there we have it, a snapshot of what it's like to be the parent of a squad gymnast. Be aware of the pitfalls of an over-excited squad parent, keep your perspective on a wonderful sport and remember ... whatever they do, if it's their very best, then that really should be good enough for you!