

Northern Light Gymnastics Academy

Competition Handbook

Northern Lights Gymnastics Academy would like to welcome your family to our Competition Team. Through this team handbook, we hope to give you more insight into how our Competitive Team program operates and answer many of your questions. First, and foremost we want to provide a fantastic gymnastics experience, that is what this club is about. We are here for the athletes, many who have hopes and dreams of being the best they can be in life and in the sport of gymnastics. We are here to support them in that dream. To make that dream come alive the gymnast, parents, and coaches must function as a TEAM. After reading this manual, if you have any questions about the program, please ASK!

Program Structure

“What it Takes To Be...”

This is the basis for how we determine that your child is ready for the next level of competition. Not only do they need to perform skills well, but they need to be performed without hesitation. This helps ensure that your child is ready to safely compete at the next level. All final decisions will be made by the competition coaches. Some of the aspects that they will be looking at, as well as the skills, are the gymnast's desire, coachability, age, attendance, confidence level, courage, and potential for success at higher level. It is important that gymnasts have time to perfect their skills before competing them. If you do not feel satisfied where your gymnast is placed, please talk to your child's coach to find out why they were placed there. It is our intent that your child will be able to participate competitively, safely, and happily at the specific level that they are in.

Attendance

When you sign up for Competitive Gymnastics you are committing to the full season which runs from June through March. If your child decides to drop out before the season is over, you will be responsible for the remaining tuition fees. The team program does not offer make-up classes. Success and safety requires your gymnast to attend regular practice. At NLGA, we require each gymnast to attend 80% of their practices throughout the season. Please arrive on time. Warm-ups are essential to mental and physical preparedness for practice. If you need to come late/leave early, please notify the coach ahead of time. Gymnastics is a sport built from muscle memory acquired by repetition. For the safety of the gymnast, missing a significant amount of practice before a competition can result in being scratched from the meet and forfeiting the entry fee. Each gymnast is required to be at EVERY practice the WEEK of a meet. The coaches will let families know ahead of time if a practice will be canceled due to travel needs. We understand that kids get sick and will need to miss the occasional practice due to illness, this will not be counted as an absence.

Safety

Gymnastics is inherently a very dangerous sport. All parents must be fully aware of the risk involved in the sport of gymnastics. Speed, motion, height, flipping, and the difficulty of the skill put our athletes in potentially life-threatening situations on a daily basis. We at NLGA are very aware of the potential danger and will make every effort to achieve and maintain a safe environment for our athletes. We believe in strength, flexibility and progressions to keep our

athletes as safe as possible. If an injury happens to an athlete, it can be scary for all involved. We understand the importance of getting back in the gym as soon as possible, but we request that your athlete not attend practice until they are cleared to do some amount of training.

Training

In order to understand and appreciate what goes into the development of a competitive gymnast, one must understand exactly what it is we are trying to achieve during training. There are four fundamental areas of development, which need to be addressed during the training: Strength; Flexibility; Skills; Discipline.

Strength Development – As with all sports one objective of the training is to make the difficult look easy. This is much easier to accomplish if the athlete has the strength required to master the skills. In most cases, the stronger the better. This is certainly true of gymnastics. Sit-ups, pushups, pull-ups, running and so on are used to achieve this goal. While it may appear that the gymnasts simply repeats these basic exercises over and over again through the course of the year, in fact there are subtle and at times not so subtle variations in the performance of these exercises. Technique may be changed or improved, the number of repetitions change, resistance is altered, the range of motion is increased, and the athlete is continually challenged to complete his/her assignment.

Flexibility Development – Flexibility development is also critical to the long-term success of the gymnast. Superior flexibility adds to the aesthetic appeal of the performance, allows the athlete to master skills more easily, and plays a role in reducing the frequency and seriousness of injuries.

Skill Development – Skill development falls into two distinct, but related categories: Basics and New Skills. Basics are like the ABC's of gymnastics. The gymnast uses these ABC's to compose their gymnastics sequences and routines. If any of these basic building blocks is missing or defective, the entire performance is weakened. These basic skills, the building blocks of the sport, must be continually refined in order to permit the gymnast and his/her coaches to continually improve their performances. That is why we continually review and drill the basics.

Discipline – Just like strength, flexibility and skill development, discipline plays an integral role when training. Training requires discipline from both the coaches and athletes. The coaches must be constantly keeping all athletes focused and training hard in order to allow them to continually improve their performance. Gymnasts must also keep themselves disciplined by forcing themselves to train harder when they get discouraged and keep focused when they get excited. Without discipline, the strength, flexibility and skills do not come

FEES

Uniform Fees: All Team members will be required to purchase a Competition Leotard and a team warm-up. We will be changing leotards and warm-up styles approximately every 4 years.

Meet Fees: We do not know the meet fees until they open registration. We will do our best to inform you of the fees before we register your athlete. We do require a meet pre registration checklist be filled out at the beginning of the season so we can make sure all athletes will be registered for the meets they want to attend. If you decide that you can't attend or would like to

attend a particular meet and registration is still open we can make the change. If registration has closed we can not. Which means we cannot get a refund on meets registered for and not attended.

Coaches fees:The Parents of the gymnasts competing at the specific meet will cover the coaches fees. The coaches will be paid mileage using the IRS mileage rate and will be reimbursed for lodging for any meet outside of 200 miles. Any meet outside of 200 miles will use a flat rate of \$150.00 .

Fundraisers:We will try to do a few fundraisers throughout the year to help offset some of the costs of being in competition. If you and your child participates in these, they will be credited the amount they raised. So the more they raise, the more they get. Again you have the option to not participate in the fundraisers. We are always looking for new fundraiser ideas so if you know of something please let us know.

TEAM PROGRAM POLICIES

Expectations of Athletes

The way you act in the gym is a reflection of your respect for yourself, for teammates, and only the highest standard of behavior will be acceptable. The following actions show respect and are expected of a NLGA Team member.

1. You are expected to work hard and do your best.
2. Arrive at the gym ready to participate with proper attire (Girls – Leotard, shorts or athletic pants are allowed; Boys shorts of gymnastics pants and form fitting shirt), hair pulled back, jewelry off, gum in the trash can and ready to go!
3. Practice will begin promptly at designated times and gymnasts must be ready to perform at that time.
4. Treat other gymnasts with respect, be kind to those gymnasts younger than you, and do not think to hold yourself out as better than other gymnasts. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses and if you have not found them yet, you WILL.
5. Only concern yourself with things that YOU can control, which are YOUR ATTITUDE, YOUR EFFORT....YOUR GYMNASTICS!!
6. Maintain a positive attitude when facing fears and frustrations. Gymnastics is the most demanding and difficult of all sports. All gymnasts suffer setbacks, frustration, fear and defeat. Expect these things, learn from them, face them and overcome them!
7. Always act in a way that shows respect for you and for the gym. There is no place in our gym for displays of anger or disgust, talking back to coaches or other adults, or crying!

8. Be honest; cheating is the ugliest form of disrespect. It shows disrespect to your coaches, your parents, and most importantly to yourself.
9. Show respect for your safety and to the demands of your coaches by staying off the equipment without the specific permission and supervision of a coach.
10. Always wait inside the facility for your ride. Gymnasts are not to wait outside for pick-up following practice.

Meet attendance

Each athlete is required to attend 5 meets plus the state meet each season. The five closest meets, usually Minot, Mandan, Bismarck, and Dickinson, will be mandatory meets. The meets farther away will be optional: Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown and Watford City. Every athlete will be given a checklist of the meets and dates as soon as we receive them. The checklists are to be filled out as soon as possible. Meet registration usually opens in October and they fill up fast. If the checklist is not returned or is not completely filled out by the required date, the athlete will not be registered for those meets. Once registration is closed we can not make any changes to it. Once your athlete is registered for a meet they will be charged for the meet. If they do not attend they will still be charged, we are not able to get refunds. We will let you know the amount of the fees for each meet as soon as they are posted by the meet director.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The rules and policies, which govern the gymnasts and their parents, have been outlined here and in other sections of the Handbook. In the event that there is an ongoing pattern of disruption or there are major rule infractions, it may become necessary to impose some disciplinary action in an attempt to improve the situation. The list and the procedures noted below are not intended to be all-inclusive. They are presented as an expression of our beliefs as to what disciplinary actions are necessary and appropriate. We will treat all of our gymnasts and gym parents as individuals and will seek to impose the most effective disciplinary actions based on each unique set of circumstances.

Examples of Disciplinary Actions:

- 1) The gymnast may not be permitted to rotate with his/her group at the designated time.
- 2) The gymnast may be asked to sit and watch.
- 3) The gymnast may be asked to leave the gym and go home early.
- 4) The coach may request a meeting with the parent.
- 5) The gymnast may be suspended from the team for one or more days or may be scratched from a competition. Please note that if the gymnast is suspended from a competition due to poor attendance, a poor work ethic or negative attitude (or for any other reason) the entry fee is nonrefundable.
- 6) The gymnast may be asked to leave the program if we cannot get her to conform her behavior to the expectations of the team, coach, or the gym.
- 7) Bullying of any kind is not tolerated at NLGA.

Notes: The first three items on the above list are fairly common and we will not generally communicate these disciplinary actions to the parent of the gymnast. The development of the coach/gymnast relationship is paramount. We cannot and will not run to the parents every time we have a problem. We will attempt to build our own relationships with our athletes. Those relationships are built on time shared, ups and downs that are part of all important ventures. The downs include discipline problems and we will attempt to solve them within the framework of building a relationship. The fourth item on the list, requesting a conference, signifies a need to work outside the coach and athlete relationship. In this instance we need your help to overcome a challenge that is too much for us to accomplish on our own. It does not necessarily mean that we are confronted with a serious problem. It only means that we need your help. The final two items on the list are reserved for the most serious violations of our rules and policies. They are seldom used. They are reserved primarily for times when there is an ongoing problem with disruption and disrespect within the gym that has proven resistant to improvement. We will not let the bad attitude of one gymnast to bring down the spirit and work ethic of an entire group

Meet Etiquette for Gymnasts

1. Arrive at the competition site 15 minutes before open stretch time.
2. Find his/her coach as soon as she arrives.
3. Remain on the competition floor at all times during the competition.
4. The gymnast must have proper attire on including NLGA Team competition leotard and warm-ups.
5. It is the gymnasts' responsibility to make sure that they have what they need for the competition(water, shorts, braces, snacks, and grips).
6. All gymnasts' hair should be very neat. If makeup is worn, it should be worn in moderation. No jewelry permitted except for very small stud earrings. No nail polish or toenail polish permitted.
7. Behavior of NLGA Team gymnasts should always be one that they and their coaches will be proud of. Gossip and negative talk are unacceptable.
8. There is no place for crying and uncontrolled emotions during gymnastics meets.
9. Be courteous, respectful, and polite to all meet officials, hosts and hostesses, competitors, and coaches.
10. Remain seated at all times when not performing. Stay with the team the entire competition. Once the gymnast has entered the competition area there should be no contact between the gymnast and their parents.
11. Cheer for all members of the NLGA Team. Stay for awards dressed in your NLGA warm-ups. As a participating athlete you **MUST** stay for all awards and to accept any presented to you with courtesy and gratitude. Remember that you are not just

representing yourself, you are acting as a representative of NLGA as well. If the gymnast does not win an award there is no place for crying. We need our gymnasts to have good sportsmanship in winning and defeat.

12. Gymnasts are allowed to put a small healthy snack and a drink in their bag for competition. (Please be sure to store the drink in a different pocket than grips)

Parents Obligation For Meets

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the gymnast is on time to the competition.

1. Arrive at the competition site 15 minutes before open stretch time.
2. Find his/her coach as soon as she arrives
3. Under competition rules, the only adults allowed in the competitive area are judges, those helping run the competition, and coaches. Parents are not allowed in the competition area, it is the policy of the meet hosts.
4. Please do not contact or talk to your gymnast or the coaches once they are on the competitive floor. This is a distraction to the gymnast and the coaches. If a gymnast has a crisis during the meet and starts crying she will be sent to the restrooms to compose herself. If she cannot do so in a timely manner we will then ask you to step in either to remove her/him from the meet or get her/him to compose themselves.
- 5.
6. Please do not coach your gymnast in the gym or at meets, this is the coaches' job.
7. As you watch your gymnast try to focus on improvement in skills, do not compare scores to other gymnasts.
8. Cheer for all members of the NLGA Team and feel free to cheer for fine performances by the gymnasts of other teams. Please show respect for all competitors: you never know whose parents are sitting near you.
9. Take responsibility for promoting the NLGA reputation. Never make negative comments about other gyms, coaches, gymnasts, or judges. As an NLGA Team parent you also represent us and your behavior will reflect on our whole family

10. Under no circumstances is a parent ever to approach a judge or meet official before, during, or after a competition to comment on, complain about, or even ask about a score.
11. Be positive at all times!! It may require extra work sometimes, but your attitude will determine your child's attitude and their success both in gymnastics and in life. If you have concerns or comments about the meet, see your gymnast's coach after his or her next practice or email the gym.
12. Every gymnast must come prepared for the competition. Girls: Competition leotard, warm-up, bag, grips, hair pulled back, no nail polish, no jewelry.
13. If your gymnast gets injured at a competition, please stay in the stands. The coach will signal for you if you are needed.
14. No Flash Photography is permitted during a meet. The sudden flash of light could cause a gymnast to be injured. Please check your camera in advance.

What to Expect at a Meet

Admission for parents

Whenever possible, we do try to include the admission costs of the meet when we hand out the competition schedule.

Check in for gymnasts

Your child will typically check in at a table near the admission area. There they will give the attendant their name and what gym they are with.

How long to expect the meet to run

Please allow four to five hours from the start of open stretch to the end of the award ceremony. Typically, competitions do not take this long, but we cannot guarantee a certain amount of time. Teams will stretch, warm-up and compete. Awards follow after every athlete is finished competing in that session.

Pack a snack and water in their gym bag

Many times during a meet we do have periods of waiting. At this time, we will allow the kids to have a quick snack and drink break. Please pack healthy items and snacks that they will not spill all over. **Water is preferred!**

Wait period between competition and awards

After each gymnast on your child's team has finished competing, we will then release your child to you. Awards sometimes are held in the gym where the competition was held, and sometimes in a separate area or building. Please be prepared to have some kind of a wait during this time.

No flash photography

- At **ALL** meets flash photography is absolutely prohibited! When flashes go off it can cause distraction to a gymnast and could cause them to lose concentration and possibly hurt themselves.

No **LIGHTS** are permitted to be on while video taping.

What “Stretch” and “Report” or “Check-In” means, and when to arrive

- When you receive your time schedule for the meet, it may have a “report” or “Check In” time and a “stretch time”. Report time is when you should have your child at the meet and checked in. Stretch time is when the team is permitted to go onto the floor and begin our stretching and warm-ups. We always start this as as soon as the meet director allows us to, so if your child is not there, they will miss out on having time to warm-up properly and receive certain instruction.

Meet schedules

- We receive meet schedules approximately 2-4 weeks prior to the event. As soon as we do receive these, we will send out emails and your child will receive a copy at practice.

Hair, Nails, Earrings, Underwear, Bras,

- Hair should be neatly pulled back and sprayed down. Bangs should not be hanging in the face or around the eyes and should be clipped back. .
- All nail polish must be removed from fingers and toes.
- One stud earring is allowed in each ear, no other jewelry is permitted.
- Temporary tattoos must be removed. Permanent tattoos must be covered.
- Shorts are permitted, they must be purchased through the gym.
- Underwear may be worn, but it must be skin colored if the athlete is not wearing shorts. We can order those through GK. (A deduction is applied by the judges for gymnasts' whose underwear is showing)
- Bras must be skin colored, competition type. Those can also be ordered from GK.

Meet formats

All meets have different competition formats that are followed, based on the size of the event and the location. The different formats are as follows: Traditional, Modified Traditional, Capitol Cup, and Modified Capitol Cup.

Traditional format: Gymnasts will warm up all the events, introductions will happen and then gymnasts will compete in all the events.

Modified Traditional format: One set of equipment is set up in the competition gym at each event. Gymnastics warm up one event, then compete that event, and then rotate to the next event where they continue the same process.

Capitol Cup format (very rare): Gymnasts will warm up 1 event in a different gym (the warm up gym), then the gymnasts will enter the competition gym and compete in that one event. Then they will return to the warm up gym again and repeat the process until all 4 events are completed.

Modified Capitol Cup format (Most common): Two sets of equipment are set up in the competition gym at every event. Gymnasts will warm up one event and then compete in that event. Then they will move on to the next event and this process is repeated until all events are completed.

Awards

Awards follow the completion of the session your child competes in. Please be prepared to have a wait after the competition ends. The meet directors do their best to start awards as quickly as possible following the competition. We will make an effort to have a coach present during each level's awards ceremony. Sometimes this is not possible when we are limited in coaching or have gymnasts competing in multiple gyms. We ask that the gymnasts sit together as a team, behave in an appropriate manner using good sportsmanship towards other gymnasts and teams. The gymnasts need to go up for his/her awards dressed professionally in their team warm-ups. Awards are typically broken up into age categories per level. Each meet is different in how they place gymnasts.

QUICK GUIDE TO PREPARE FOR GYMNASTICS MEETS

Gymnastic meets are an exciting and sometimes stressful time for all involved including parents. Following a few simple rules of thumb will enable the competition season to run smoother.

1. It is important that your gymnast gets plenty of rest the night before a meet.
2. They should also have a small nutritious meal at least 45 minutes prior to the competition.
3. Please have an idea of where the meet is located and allow plenty of time for travel. Rushing stresses out you and your gymnasts.

4. Have your gymnast dressed with their leo and warm ups on with hair done, ready to perform at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the meet. A gymnastics competition usually runs 3-5 hours.

Add: Reminder no parents or spectators on the comp floor during a competition

We will not be questioning the judges scores during a meet unless it is the start value of a routine. Remember gymnastics is scored on the judges opinion(whether we agree or not) of what they see.

The athletes are to stay with their group until the competition is over. Remember the coaches are not babysitters, we will not run around after your child. If it is a continual problem they will have to scratch from the next competition.

It is the athletes responsibility to remember a water bottle and grips and anything else needed. If he or she forgets to grab something he or she will compete without it.

Once all athletes have finished competing and the competition is over your child will be released to the parents. The athletes need to sit together during awards and need to stay together until the award ceremony is over. When possible the coaches will stay with them.