

Competition Structure

Men's Artistic Gymnastics Competitions

Typically, the MAG competition schedule will have FIG & Voluntary competitions February-July with the occasional exception, and Club & Elite Grades (Setwork) competitions late August - early November. The Grades competitions are specific to year of birth and are only for those Aged U14 (as of the 1st of January). Once your son is over the age of 14, he will no longer compete Setwork routines and the sole focus will be on Voluntary competitions. Unlike Women's Artistic, the men's programme does not have out of age competitions.

When it comes to competition, **trust your coach!** By all means, feel free to ask why your son is doing the grade or level that they are, but remember the coach has experience here, and is seeing things in the gym that you don't or can't see. The pathways in gymnastics are flexible and allow for gymnasts to move around them at a pace that suits their development. The route they start on may not be the route they continue on, and coaches want to give them their best shot at a long and successful career.

After the Olympics, the Code of Points is reviewed and update by the FIG. Following this, British Gymnastics / Regions / Counties will review and update the rules for Grades / Levels / County competitions. They may also make some minor changes every year and clarify the rules.

Competitions will be held at:

County Level	Hertfordshire
Regional Level	East Region of Herts, Beds, Cambs, Essex, Norfolk & Suffolk
National Level	UK wide as part of your Club or Representing your Region

Gymnasts may also go to 'Invitationals' which are privately organised competitions which do not qualify to any Regional or National competitions. These are great for experience and for learning to have fun competing with a bit less pressure.

How It Fits Together - Grades, Voluntaries and Invitationals

The Grades begin competitively at Level 1 (U9) and progress year on year up to Level 6 (U14) - though often there are competitions available for O6/U8 gymnasts as 'Pre-Level 1' competitors. A gymnast may begin by competing in the Club Grades at Level 1, and then move to compete in the more challenging Elite Grades for the following year (at Level 2) or vice-versa.

For Voluntary competitions the age groups are a combination of 2 birth years, determined by the age of your son on the 1st January - U10, U12, U14, U16, U18, Senior, with very few exceptions.

Feel free to ask your coaches for clarification if you are unsure about your child's grade route, and what they think their long term plan will be. However, do think carefully about how you phrase such questions in front of your son. If possible, a 1:1 conversation between you and the coach is a great first step, to make sure if your son has questions you are a united front, and if he asks questions at home you have the answers.

Children worry about their parents' opinion more than you may realise. Any sniff of the idea that mum or dad are disappointed that they aren't doing the same grade as their team-mates can manifest as massive insecurities, so positivity and celebrating any achievements at all is incredibly key when discussing this!

Just remember - for 80-90% of children their age, what your son can do would be absolutely impossible, both physically and mentally. Sometimes they need reminding just how much they have achieved to be competing this demanding sport.

Club & Elite Grades

The main competition focus for the Club & Elite grades will be to place competitively at the Regional Setwork Qualifier competition in Ipswich every September. A good placing at the Regional competition will earn them the opportunity to compete for the East (regional) Team at the National Finals in November.

Grades competitions consist of 7 routines: Floor, Mushroom/Pommel Horse, Rings, Vault/Vault-Prep, Parallel Bars, High Bar (Chalky or Gloves & Loops) & the Physical Preparation Programme. At grades competitions the maximum score for each routine is always 10.

Voluntary

The Voluntary competition focus for U12 gymnasts will be the English (or other Home Nation) & possibly the British Championships in Spring time. We aim to gain competition experience and compete simple, stylish routines on a big stage.

This will set a good foundation for future success at the higher Level Voluntary competitions (U14 and beyond). This includes the English/Scottish/Welsh/Irish & the British Championships where we will aim for top 8 Apparatus placings on their strongest events as well as competitive All-Around scores (the total combined score for all 6 Routines).

Voluntary routines are constructed around requirements on each piece as per the F.I.G. rulebook. This is the same rulebook that the seniors use when competing at F.I.G. events including the Olympic games, though the skill selection for the seniors will be very different to that of younger athletes.

Element Group Requirements (EGR's) are the foundation of a routine. These are the 'family' of skills that a gymnast must fulfil during the routine. Each EGR is worth 0.5 up to a maximum of 2.0 marks for all 4 fully fulfilled EGR's on each apparatus - excluding Vault. The gymnast's dismount, best 7 skills & any connection bonuses are combined to give a total Start Value which is added to the judges execution score (minus any penalties) to give a final score. If the gymnast fails to complete 5 skills (including the dismount) at u12, or 7 skills (including the dismount) at u14 or above then they will incur a large penalty from the judges for short routine.

Routines

Routines can be constructed according to each individual's strengths to find the highest value skills that the gymnast can perform consistently with a high level of mastery (incurring the minimum amount of execution deductions and/or penalties).

The key is to remember that where they can, coaches construct your son's routine based on what they can do safely and cleanly. The most important thing you can bear in mind as a parent is that gymnastics is also judged on execution as well as difficulty, and coaches weigh up each skill against how it will be judged. They will often ask for the opinions of other members of the coaching team or qualified judges.

It is important the gymnast performs a suitable number of repetitions of each skill - with correct technique before these are put into competition routines or progressed to the next step. A great foundation is essential for more challenging skills which we hope to perform in the future.

As ever, it is our philosophy that if you have questions about your son's competition routines to speak to your coach. Communication is key, and we can't always anticipate what you may be confused about. Letting resentment build up and letting yourself think the worst is never the solution to a productive relationship.

Website Links

Marriotts Gymnastics Club
Herts Gymnastics Association (HGA)
East Region (EGCA)
British Gymnastics (BG)

www.marriottsgymnastics.com
www.hertscountygymnastics.com
www.british-gymnastics.org/east
www.british-gymnastics.org