

THE ESSENTIAL LEVELS 1-2-3

MISSION

The mission of the Essential Elements Levels 1-2-3 program is to provide accessibility to boys' gymnastics through a structured program that can be easily implemented in a variety of environments and facility locations. The program is designed to be 'cost effective' and 'space efficient' for both the athlete and the program director. USA Gymnastics seeks to provide a program that can be implemented as a 'plug and play' package where boys' gymnastics programs may not currently exist or as an addition to an already established youth sports program. Our goal is to encourage fun and fitness through learning the fundamentals of boys' gymnastics. Although the Essential Elements Levels 1-2-3 program can be used at any age, it is designed primarily for pre-competitive age boys 4 to 10. USA Gymnastics believes that every boy should have an opportunity to 'play the game' and be part of the team even though they have not yet entered or may never enter competitive Junior Olympic competition.

RECOGNITION IS UNIVERSAL

This new and unique approach combines the

experience of learning the 'basics' of boys gymnastics with performance opportunities that include challenging yet motivating games on a daily basis.

The 'show and tell' opportunity is an important part of a child's learning environment for building confidence and self-esteem. The motivation provided by games and contests where the boys can interact with each other socially and learn from each other can also be an important process for building a team atmosphere and the feeling of belonging.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS ENVIRONMENT

As the name implies, there are some aspects to the environment that are essential but not necessarily in the traditional competitive equipment sense. The program seeks to identify uses for space that require minimal investment

in equipment and the utilization of equipment that facilities likely already have.

"Let's take what we have to work with. What can we learn with that?"

In other words, let's design a 'cost and space effective playground' and then build the curriculum of the program around that space. The space should also be modular and flexible so that it can be changed at will for the intended purpose. In this way we can blend the teaching of 'basic boys gymnastics' into any available environment.

An apparatus that is scaled down in size — a variety of simple mats and boxes and non-traditional items, such as ropes, ladders, trampoline-type surfaces — can all be blended into the design depending on the curriculum of the day.



ELEMENTS

3 PROGRAM

MOTIVATING BOYS

Boys love to challenge each other and themselves. They are competitive by nature and will make a game out of anything. A successful program should incorporate the learning of skills equally with the opportunity to play games and engage in contests. The Essential Elements Levels 1-2-3 program encourages the use of obstacle courses, races, strength contests and games that boys can use to challenge themselves as part of the regular curriculum. The freedom to play within an uninhibited yet safe environment and structure is in alignment with boys' generally more gregarious nature.

THE NATURE OF LEARNING

Learning is most effectively accomplished by exploration and repetition. Gymnastics is visual and experiential for most. The ability to see a classmate do something and then try to copy it is a direct process of acquisition by experience. Encouragement by an instructor in a safe learning environment only enhances this process. The instructor should present a positive attitude and leadership quality. The more repetition opportunity that is afforded, the more second nature the skill

becomes. Creating an optimal learning environment includes the elements of fun, fitness, social interaction, personal challenge and positive leadership. Many things can be successfully learned simply as a by-product of a motivational environment and cultivating the 'feeling of success.'

THE INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE

Think of yourself as a positive role model. You are not a 'coach' so much of gymnastic skill as you are supervisor, or maybe a 'referee' at times, on the playground. Of course, we want boys to be active and engaged at all times but with structured goals. While they have this freedom

to play, you must position yourself so that everyone is within your view and control visually. Your ability to intervene, direct and assist should be flexible but effective.

Curriculum should be planned in a progressive manner so that skill acquisition happens in the appropriate steps, as strength and flexibility are acquired. The Essential Elements Levels 1-2-3 Program will provide the templates and 'keys to success' for anyone who wants to become a leader in this program. It helps to arrange the curriculum in a way that promotes variety and activity in order to keep it interesting and fresh. Gone are the days when boys have to stand in line for the major-

continued ...

SAMPLE CATEGORIES FOR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS CURRICULUM:

CATEGORY 2: (SWINGS & HANGS – RINGS, P-BARS, LOW BAR)

(12 or more Essential Element groups in three different Tables with four boxes each)

Rings:

Vertical Hangs
Inverted Hangs
Swings
Dismounts

Low Bar:

Pullover
Casting
Hip Circles
Glides/Sole Circles
Kips/Jams
Long Hang Swings

P-Bars, Blocks, or Mat Stack:

Support Swings
Hanging Swings
Upper Arm Swings
Travels/Dismounts

SAMPLE CATEGORIES FOR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS CURRICULUM (CONTINUED):

CATEGORY 5: (GAMES, CONTESTS, COURSES-FLOOR & EQUIP.)

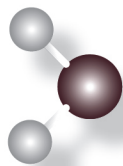
(12 or more Essential Element groups in three different Tables with four boxes each)

Circuits:	Relays:	Obstacles:	Fitness:	Tramp:	Games:
Floor Circuit	Speed relays	Floor course	Push-up game	Add-on 4	Ships & Sailor
Vault Circuit	Skill relays	Equipment	Stick contest	Add-on 6	Mat pushes
Bar Circuit	Slider races	Course	Rope climbs Challenges	Add-on 8	Soccer game

SAMPLE TYPICAL ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS CLASS (1 HOUR):

15 minutes	Category 1 (Warm-ups)
15 minutes	Category 2 or Category 3 (Alternate from week to week)
15 minutes	Category 4 (Runs, Jumps, Springs)
15 minutes	Category 5 (Games, Contests, Courses)

ity of the class waiting their turn! Each category has 12 or more Elements, each with four developmental boxes comprising Levels 1 & 2.



MIXING MOVEMENT PATTERNS INSTEAD OF EVENTS

How the instructor mixes the use of his boxes from day-to-day, class-to-class or week-to-week has a lot to do with not only providing the variety that keeps the class interesting but also adding to the cross-training of skills among the different events. For instance, Category 5 may entail strength contests or stick contests that relate to the skill curriculum in the other categories, or they may simply be games that are fun and add to the students agility and coordination. At the same time, Category 4, which is a staple of gymnastics, may alternate in different fashions from vault to trampoline to tumbling. In essence, there are an unlimited combination of options that

an instructor can utilize.



TEACH FOR LIFE

Above all, what is the point of doing gymnastics? For tens of thousands of boys who walked into a gym one day to give this challenging activity a try, it was certainly not to go to the Olympics. For most, it was not even to compete gymnastics! No matter where I go or what I do, when people ask me what I do and I tell them I am involved in gymnastics, they will almost always say, "I was in gymnastics!" They love to tell how they tried gymnastics in school or took classes from a coach. They always say it in a way that lets me know it had an impact on them in shaping them as a person. It is truly a special and personal experience that leaves a lasting impression. It made them feel confident that they could do these amazing things no matter what they were! They instantly have a bond with another person with this shared experience. Remember: You are not teaching the sport — you are

teaching life's lessons.

Every experience matters and every minute in class is helping to shape a human being who will someday tell someone else how great it was.

Teach for life! Make a connection and lend a smile to each person you come in contact with. Give them an opportunity to experience the 'feeling of success' the thrill of gymnastics has to offer. I often like to say, "If everyone could feel comfortable being upside down, the world would be a much friendlier place!" Your students may take their gymnastics experience in many different directions:

Level 3 (Pre-team programs) • Sports Cross-Fit programs • Trampoline Recreational Demo Team (In-House League or exhibition team • Tumbling Age Group Competition Level 4 • Sports Acrobatic programs • Cross-Training



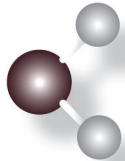
DIVERSITY OF PURPOSE

The Essential Elements Levels 1-2-3 boys program is intended to provide a foundation from which anyone can branch off into any direction. It is not intended to lead boys necessarily to competitive gymnastics — although it could. It is really intended to spark an interest and desire in the sport and position that boy to chose the path that is right for him.

This program can lead to any number of other activities such as trampoline or tumbling, sport acrobatics, cheerleading, cross-training for other sports, theatrical performance, general gymnastics or just for fun. In fact, I remember the best times growing up as going to Venice Beach to swing on the rings or bars and tumble on the sand in the summer just for fun. The purest

ELEMENTS ...CONTINUED

form of gymnastics is, of course the 'feeling of flying.' That feeling opens a lot of doors to the realm of possibility in a young person's mind. That is really the objective of the introductory gymnastics program: to spark the imagination to the possibilities of what the future might hold. Our job is simply to plant the seed and make it possible for more boys to experience the joys of the sport!



COMBINATION EVENT— GYMNASTICS TRIATHALON

- Perform a routine of six skills in a row on trampoline with at least one from each category
- Climb rope for time or distance

- Perform one vault on mat and one vault on box

LOW RINGS — PERFORMANCE ROUTINE TABLE

Perform six skills in a row with at least one from each category

- Gymnast may be spotted on any of the skills
- You can stand on the floor, mat or box in between skills, if necessary

- Gymnast may use low parallel bars hanging rings as part of his routine
- Finish the routine with the last skill from the dismount category
- Coach must spot the gymnast to lift him to the above-the-rings support
- Show presentation



Elements	Skill Element	Skill Element	Skill Element	Skill Element
Trampoline	Straight Bounces	Turns	Jumps	Bed skills
Rope Climb	Distance/feet	Speed/feet	Distance/no feet	Speed/no feet
Vaulting	Tuck on jump off	Forward roll box	Dive roll mat	Handstand

Elements	Skill Element	Skill Element	Skill Element	Skill Element
Swings	Turnover swing rear	Swing to Inverted hang	Swing to horizontal	*Swing to support
Support holds	Tucked "L" support	"L" support	Straight body support	*Shoulder stand
Hangs	Tucked "L" hang	"L" hang	Chin-hang	German hang
Dismounts	Skin-the-cat drop	Tuck flyaway	Pike flyaway	Presentation

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