WESTPORT WESTON FAMILY YMCA



# COMPETITIVE GYMNASTICS

## HANDBOOK

EFFECTIVE AUGUST 2026

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# SECTION 1
# PROGRAM INFORMATION

Welcome to the Competitive Team.

Our Westport Weston Family YMCA (WWFY) program is designed to ensure the success of our gymnasts and gives our athletes opportunities to learn and grow, have fun and make friends in our state-of-the-art gymnastics center. Our aim is to develop the whole child and strive for excellence under the guidance of an experienced, expert, and engaged coaching team.

Our vision for youth sports at the WWFY is to empower gymnasts to grow to her fullest potential in spirit, mind, and body. Our YMCA program emphasizes attitudes that put winning in perspective, teaches new skills, provides a positive developmental experience, and improves physical fitness as key objectives. We emphasize striving for excellence and striving to win because those yield joy and fulfillment versus the pressure and anxiety that comes from having to be excellent and having to win. We model and teach our gymnasts to be winners in terms of mastery not just the scoreboard. We value and reward effort, not just good outcomes. And we are committed to using encouragement and positive reinforcement as our primary motivation model.

We are guided by the Y's core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility and expect that gymnasts, parents, and coaches will interact in a manner that reflects these values at practice and at competition.

This team handbook is designed to give parents and athletes an understanding of WWFY goals, expectations, and guidelines for the program.

**YMCA / USAG**

Our competitive team program operates under the rules and regulations of USA Gymnastics and YMCA's globally, with a primary focus on participation in YMCA events. USAG is the governing body and both organizations follow the same rules, structure, and levels for all competitions. USAG competitions exhibit the highest levels in gymnastics and WWFY's programming mirrors that model. WWFY gymnasts have opportunities to compete in USAG competitions as well.

**SAFETY**

Safety is our #1 priority. Our facility has up-to-date training aids and equipment to ensure athlete safety. WWFY takes every precaution to keep gymnasts safe by implementing safe training progressions. When learning new skills and during training, WWFY implements gymnastics-specific conditioning programs to help reduce the possibility of injury. Maintaining good health and participating in sound strength and flexibility regimens helps each gymnast's overall development.

**EXPECTATIONS OF ATHLETES**

- Arrive at the gym ready to participate with proper attire (leotard or leotard and bar shorts), hair pulled back, jewelry off, gum in the trash can.
- If grips are worn, we recommend having 2 pairs in case one breaks.
- If you are going to be late, or need to leave early for practice, please let a coach know ahead of time by email or at the time of arrival to training.
- Safety is our priority. No one is allowed on the equipment unsupervised. Gymnasts will be asked to leave the gym if this safety rule is not followed.
- Keep the cubby area clean and debris free.
- Be responsible for your own equipment – Tape, Leotard, Grips, etc.
- Cell phones are not allowed out in the gym – If you absolutely need to get in touch with your child during practice, please call the front desk and they will relay the message
- Gymnasts should do their best to attend all required practices and training sessions. Attendance is important to the gymnast's success, personal safety and success of the team.
- Gymnasts are expected to participate in all activities during practice, including team conditioning. If the gymnast needs to sit out or modify due to injury, a doctor's note must be provided.
- A doctor's note is also required to verify clearance to return to full activity after an injury.
- Always ask permission to leave the gym whether going to the restroom, getting a drink, or talking to parents. Coaches always need to know where the gymnast is.
- Always treat coaches, administrators and teammates with respect, be kind to those gymnasts younger than you. You are potential mentors.
- Gymnasts are encouraged to only concern themselves with things that they can control. A positive attitude, effort, patience, and a commitment to safety tops that list. Having an open mind and heart and being willing to try what the coaches are asking of the athlete is very important, as is staying motivated. Gymnastics requires strong-minded, determined attitudes to overcome all the failed attempts before finally landing a skill. Trust the process. Trust your coaches. Be patient. It requires hours upon hours in the gym in order maintain, progress, and reach success. Fear is normal. The gymnast is encouraged to speak to their coach if she is afraid. Your coaches are here to help you succeed!
- Bullying of any kind including the gym environment and on social media will not be tolerated and can lead to dismissal from our team program.

## EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

We expect and require all parents to support and respect all gym policies.

- Our coaching staff are trained professionals with many years of experience. Please respect all decisions made both in the gym and the competition arena.
- A gymnast's parents are to their success and peace of mind. Tuition and fees must be paid on time and a commitment to transport your gymnast to and from workouts and competitions must be made. In addition, and equally important, parents must help instill work ethic, values and provide emotional support for the gymnast to be successful.
- Please do not talk to your gymnast during practice, including if your gymnast is on break. It is important for the gymnasts to stay focused and with their group. If you need to get a message to your gymnast during practice, please talk to the front desk staff and they will relay the message.
- Parents are not permitted on the gym floor and must refrain from coaching or commenting during any training session. If your child is not paying attention, it is the coach's job to manage the athlete.
- We encourage you to watch your gymnasts practice a few times a month to see their progress and work ethic. It is also important to let your gymnast practice without you present to allow them to completely focus on the instruction from their coach.
- We are committed to open and regular communications with parents. We email all important team information and use a "Parents' Corner" google doc that is regularly updated.
- Parents are expected to abide by the Y's four core values (caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility). Rude, belittling, or negative comments about coaches, parents, and other gymnasts are always inappropriate and will not be tolerated. If you have a problem or concern, please speak to the coach.
- Be encouraging and positive to your child. Be careful of comparisons because each child is an individual with different talents and capabilities.
- Please be on time to pick your gymnast up after practice. A late fee may be assessed for continued late pickups.
- Please familiarize yourself and your gymnast with the Team Handbook. It is important that the parent and gymnast understand the rules and policies of the competition team.
- If you have any questions regarding the gym or your gymnast, please contact the gym via work phone, work email or in person.

## TRAINING CONTENT

There are multiple factors in the development of a competitive gymnast we will address in training daily. Strength, Flexibility, Skills and Discipline.

## PAYMENT POLICIES & FEES

Each gymnast is committed to the team for one competitive season. The season begins in September and ends in June. Fees are charged monthly from September–May, with the first 5 months including a $100 deposit for meet fees. Enrollment in our program is for the entire competitive season.

| FACTORS | |
|---|---|
| **Strength Development** | **As with all sports one objective of the training is to make the difficult look easy. This is much easier to accomplish when the athlete has the strength required to master the skills. Strength training can also help reduce injuries. Strength skills at the beginning of compulsory levels focuses on building strong foundations as the gymnast advances. Sit-ups, push-ups, pull-ups, and running are used to achieve this goal. Through the course of the year the athlete is challenged to grow by completing the many variations to these exercises, including adjustments to technique, the number of repetitions, alterations to resistance, varying the range of motion and more.** |
| **Flexibility Development** | **Flexibility development is 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** | **Discipline is required from both coaches and athletes. The coaches must constantly keep all athletes focused and training hard in order for them to continually improve their performance. Gymnasts must also challenge themselves to train harder when they get discouraged and stay focused when they get excited. Discipline ties together strength, flexibility, and functional skills.** |

| LEVELS | |
|---|---|
| Compulsory (Levels 2 to 5) | **All gymnasts will have the same routines as designated by USAG. These gymnasts compete in local competitions both YMCA and USAG and will have the opportunity to qualify to State, Regional, and National Competitions.** |
| Optional (Levels 6 to 10) | **Each gymnast will have a choreographed routine on 4 events. The coaching staff will assist with the athlete and choreographer on music selection and floor routine content. The gymnast is responsible for fees charged by the choreographer as well as the music. Gymnast will compete in local competitions both YMCA and USA Gymnastics level meets and will have the opportunity to qualify to State, Regional, and National Competitions.** |

# SECTION 2
# POLICIES & FEES

### MEET FEES

The Gymnastics Program Manager will keep track of your gymnast's meet fee account. Each gymnast has a beginning balance of $600, charged in the first 6 months of team payments. For each meet entered the fee will be deducted from the gymnast's account. At the end of the season the gymnast will be sent an invoice of the breakdown and will be charged for the balance or a credit will be put onto the account if not all of the balance is used.

### WITHDRAWAL POLICY

While your team commitment is for the full school year, we understand that circumstances can arise. Withdrawals due to personal reasons, injury, etc. will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Team fees already paid will not be refunded, though payment plans will be cancelled and any unused meet fees will be returned.

### REFUNDS

Tuition pays for your child's spot on the team regardless of attendance. There will be no refunds given for gym closings including holidays and inclement weather.

### MAKE-UP POLICY

Your tuition pays for a team spot, regardless of attendance. Tthe Head Coach may offer make-ups when doing so does not jeopardize the safety or integrity of the team. There will be no make-ups for cancellations due to meets. Make-ups may be offered for inclement weather closings. All holiday closings are factored into the monthly tuition and make-ups for these breaks will not be scheduled.

### UNIFORM FEE

All Team members will be required to purchase a competition leotard, gym bag and warm-up suit. This fee is due within their first month of team for the competitive season. We will be charging leotards, bag, and warm-up style approximately every 3-4 years.

### 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 disciplinary action in an attempt to improve the situation. We will treat all of our gymnasts and parents as individuals and will seek the most effective disciplinary actions based on each unique set of circumstances.

### INJURIES

In case of a minor injury during practice, we will administer first aid and will also communicate to you what happened during practice. If an injury is sustained during a competition, please wait for your coach to give some indication that you should come onto the competitive floor. In most cases you will not be invited onto the floor because the injury will be relatively minor and the coach will take care of it. If the injury is categorized as an emergency medical injury, these steps will be followed:

**If a gymnast is injured and is unable to participate in practices, a medical note needs to be presented notifying coaches of the injury. Upon return of the gymnast, a doctor's note, indicating that the gymnast is allowed to return to full practice, must be received prior to the gymnast return.**

**CARE OF AN INJURY**

Remember the acronym **R.I.C.E.D.** Apply ice for 20 minutes at a time 3-4 times a day for 48 hours after the injury. The application of ice in this manner can cut the healing time for minor injuries in half. Please do not wrap the injured extremity in an ACE bandage for practice. The ACE bandage should only be used in applying compression to the injury.

**R** = Rest the injured body part

**I** = Apply Ice

**C** = Apply Compression

**E** = Elevate the injured extremity above heart level

**D** = Diagnosis

# SECTION 3
# COMPETITIONS

- A tentative meet schedule is available in September each year. Competition season runs approximately from December through June.
- Emails will be sent out with deadlines asking about availability to attend a meet. After this deadline, meet fees are non-refundable and no changes or additions to meet entries can be made. When given a date for a meet (or weekend) the gymnast needs to keep that whole weekend open until the schedule is announced (sometimes this does not happen until a week or two before the actual competition).
- Gymnasts are divided into sessions throughout the weekend based on level and age. A typical session runs for 3-4 hours. The gymnast must attend the session she is assigned to.
- WWFY coaches will determine if the gymnast is ready to compete at the end of November. Readiness and safety will be taken into consideration.
- If a gymnast does not attend any practices in the week leading up to a meet, due to illness, injury, or vacation, they are not eligible to compete in that meet due to safety concerns.
- Gymnasts are to arrive at the 10-15 min prior to their stretch time. Stretch time is for the gymnasts to check in, parents to pay admission, use the restroom, familiarize themselves with the venue, and find seating. Gymnasts should find their team and sit together. Make sure to be dressed, have hair done, and be ready to go at this time.
- Gymnasts must stay with the team through the end of the awards ceremony unless the athlete has told the coaches ahead of time that they need to leave early. This displays good sportsmanship and respect for the team and others.
- The athlete's bag should contain tape/pre wrap, band aids, water bottle, hair ties/clips, hair spray, brush/comb, grips (if necessary), and a snack. Optional levels should carry two pairs of grips (just in case) and a spare copy of their floor music. DO NOT use your team bag as a suitcase if you are staying overnight. Everything in your bag needs to be easily accessible during a meet.
- If the gymnast wakes up sick, is stuck in traffic, gets lost, etc., while heading to a meet, please text the Gymnastics Program Manager. All non-meet communication (except in cases of immediate emergency or last minute messages about private lessons) should be done through email or the Y phone number! This includes anything having to do with registration, practice concerns, etc.
- **NO** flash photography is allowed during warmups or competition.
- The parents' place is in the audience. It is against regulations for a parent to come out onto the gym floor for any reason (besides serious injury) during a competition as the team could be disqualified.
- If a parent needs to give something to their gymnast or if it is vitally important that the parent communicate with their child, please get the attention of the coach. We ask that you please be mindful of not interfering with the performing or coaching responsibilities during a meet.
- At competitions, parents and gymnasts are asked not to publicly question the officials' judgement or motives. If there are ever any scoring questions, please direct them to the coach.

The required mobility scores for moving to the next level are the **MINIMUM** requirements to move up the following season. Just because your daughter has achieved the required score twice, does not necessarily mean that they are ready. Level progression in competitive gymnastics cannot be compared to moving a grade in school. Many gymnasts need to repeat one or more levels to continue being SAFE and SUCCESSFUL. This is never a punishment and does not mean the gymnast is not doing well. The coaches give individual consideration to every gymnast based on a complete mastery of current skills, potential for success in the next level's skills, and work ethic during practice to determine level placement for competitions.

Score requirements for mobility:

- Level 3 -> 4 – 34.0 twice
- Level 4 -> 5 – 34.0 twice
- Level 5 -> 6 – 32.0 twice
- Level 6 -> 7 -> 8 – 34.0 twice
- Level 8 -> 9 – 34.0 twice

Gymnasts are encouraged to participate in all competitions throughout the season. They are also required to compete in a minimum of two competitions before any championship competitions. Each championship in YMCA is qualified to by attaining the required score at a previous meet. The championships get bigger as the season progresses. The gymnasts are competing as individuals as well as a team. Please make it a priority to attend all of these meets. (Nationals is at the end of June and often requires a plane ride and hotel stay of multiple days, this is not required, but a wonderful experience for the girls if you choose to attend).

**QUALIFYING SCORES FOR CHAMPIONSHIPS:**

- Leagues – 30.0
- States – 31.0
- Regionals – (qualifying scores must be achieved twice for Regionals)
    - Level 3 – 33.0
    - Level 4 – 32.0
    - Level 5 and above – 31.0
- Nationals
    - Level 3 and 4 – 32.0
    - Level 5 and above – 31.0

**UNDERSTANDING THE USAG DEVELOPMENTAL GYMNASTICS PROGRAM**

The athletes compete in either compulsory or optional exercises. The compulsory routines are developed with varying levels of difficulty so the athletes use the compulsories to develop their skills progressively. Optional routines are choreographed (put together) by the gymnast and the coach. Optional routines are usually unique to each particular gymnast while compulsories are performed by all gymnasts in much the same manner. Scoring for compulsories and optionals is similar except that the gymnast must follow a prescribed sequence of skills in compulsories. Some basic rules on judging and scores (which is sometimes objective): Judges begin with a score of 10.0 and each element has a value based on difficulty. If an element is completed, minor deductions can be taken for specific errors or faults. For example: a flexed foot or bent knee is up to .3 off, a fall is .5 and a missed skill is double the points that skill is worth.

There are 11 levels to the USAG Women's (DEP) Program. Levels 1 is a noncompetitive level and incorporated into our classes. The girls start with competing at Level 2 or 3 and can go up to Level 10. Levels 3, 4, and 5 are compulsory levels. Levels 6 and above are optional levels. The Elite Level is for athletes beyond Level 10.

The first competitive level is Level 2. It consists entirely of compulsory routines. Compulsory routines are a pre-choreographed series of skills that each competitor must perform. Once again, they are made up of core skills needed for each event, built on the skills from a previous level. The philosophy of these routines is for the athletes to practice toward perfection of these basics. The athletes are arranged in age groups at competitions. Level 2 and 3 does not use the vault table for their vaults, perform their uneven bars routine only on the low bar, and only use part of the floor area for their floor exercise. Levels 4 and 5 are also a compulsory only level of competition. Each level builds on the skills of the previous level and likewise is judged with higher expectations. The USAG structure is based on a progressive "step by step" building of physical, emotional and psychological skills.Proficiency of all aspects of the gymnast at each level is expected and required to ensure a safe smooth movement through the levels.

Levels 6-8: The gymnasts have required skill types that can be put together in an optional routine. Optional competition consists of each gymnast performing her own routines for each event. The Federation of International Gymnastics (FIG) produces the optional rules every 4 years in conjunction with the Olympics. This book (Code of Points) dictates what each routine must contain (composition), the value of what is done (difficulty), and how to evaluate how well it is done (execution).

Level 9 and beyond: Level 9's difficulty requirements and expectations are accordingly more difficult than at level 8. Reaching Level 9 is a significant achievement for a gymnast. Level 10 is considered a Pre-Elite Level and for the truly dedicated and motivated gymnast. Elite is the last level of competition. Like Level 10, it is for the truly dedicated athletes. The Elite level is broken up into 2 categories, NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL. Children and Jr. National Elites compete in skill testing and optional routines. Jr. International and Sr. International compete optional only. It is from the INTERNATIONAL rank that our Olympic and World Championship teams are chosen.

# SECTION 4
# COMMUNICATIONS

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

The WWFY strives to keep an open line of communication and to make sure our families are up to date with all pertinent information pertaining to our program. All WWFY families should have a current email on file as we send out tuition payment reminders, important information, and upcoming deadlines. If you are not receiving our emails, please contact our Gymnastics Program Manager at once. Other important places to check the team bulletin board, the Parent Corner, and our social media sites.

If you have a question or concern about an issue in training or competition, please contact Gymnastics Program Manager, Megan Willett. A meeting will be set up to discuss the situation if necessary.

- Contact Information:
  - Byron Knox, Director of Gymnastics, bknox@westporty.org, (203) 226-8981 ext. 130
  - Megan Willett, Gymnastics Program Manager, mwillett@westporty.org, (203) 226-8981 ext. 132
  - Parents' Corner: WWFY Team Parents' Corner
  - Website: Gymnastics - Westport Weston Family YMCA (westporty.org)
  - Instagram: Instagram