

WINDSOR GYMNASTICS ACADEMY TEAM HANDBOOK 2011-2012

OVERVIEW OF WINDSOR GYMNASTICS ACADEMY COMPETITION PROGRAM

Welcome and congratulations on joining the WINDSOR Gymnastics Team! We would like to help make this experience both a privilege and an honor to be part of our competitive family. We have three different competitive programs in our facility give to each family different options based on their preference of level of competition, financial commitment, and dedication.

Mission Statement and General Philosophy

At WGA we have a strong philosophy to develop and nurture well rounded gymnasts. Every child has the right to excel in her given talents. Our job is to assist our athletes in achieving their dreams realistically and to guide them to a better understanding of gymnastics and themselves. We believe that discipline in training will lead to discipline in all facets of life. The more consistent workouts are, the more consistent competitions will be. Competition (gymnastics meets) is a means of outside measurement and not the determination of failure or success. We expect our athletes to strive for excellence in everything they do, and we hope that gymnastics will continue to be a positive aspect in their life. We work to develop high self-esteem in a fun environment. Our competitive teams receive a strong physical, ethical, and moral foundation, along with many valuable qualities that will carry over to "life after gymnastics".

- Self Discipline
- Self Motivation
- Dedication
- Time Management
- Sportsmanship
- Nutrition
- Physical Fitness
- Respect
- Leadership
- Concentration
- Teamwork
- Friendships

GIRLS CARA COMPETITIVE PROGRAM

C.A.R.A. Philosophy

The C.A.R.A. program was created and designed to be a program with a strong recreational format for the non-ranked, non-sanctioned participant. Competition has its place in the program and all participants are encouraged to do their best, but it must be emphasized that this is of secondary importance. The development of skills and sportsmanship, while stressing participation for all and assuring each participant experiences some degree of success are the main goals of this program.

Goal and Objectives

1. To ensure the participation of all team members in league play.
2. To develop a strong sense of sportsmanship and fair play in each player.
3. To teach the basics of sports skills, as well as, meet/game play to the average participant.
4. To make participation on a C.A.R.A. team a fun and enjoyable experience for the players.
5. To ensure that recreation and its philosophy govern the coaching methods, attitude, and objectives of the coach and team.

Gymnastics: A competitive sport in which individuals perform optional or prescribed acrobatics, mostly on apparatus, in order to demonstrate strength, balance and body control.

C.A.R.A. Gymnastics Philosophy

In our C.A.R.A. Gymnastics League, we have strived the past few years to improve the quality of gymnastics. We have created different classifications of competition so that all gymnasts could know some measure of success, no matter what their skill level.

This recreational league is designed for the beginning, intermediate, and advanced gymnasts. The purpose of this league is twofold: it provides competitive gymnastic experience for the beginning gymnast who may not have the opportunity to compete at the high school level or with a private club; and secondly, it gives the intermediate and advanced gymnast an opportunity to progress to their full potential of gymnastics.

Windsor Gymnastics CARA Team

We added this program to allow more of our gymnasts the chance to compete with more of a recreational style. CARA gymnastics follows the same rules as high school, so if that is your daughter's goal to compete in high school this is a great fit. The recreational style of gymnastics is less demanding than that of USA Gymnastics. The CARA league requires us to keep our practices under 9 hours a week and to range from 6-8 hours a week. Our competition season starts in May and goes until the last weekend of July each year. Our gymnasts participate in 4 regular season meets where they have the opportunity to qualify to regionals and then to state. That leaves our season with a total of 6 meets. Windsor CARA gymnastics also wants to offer a more affordable option for those who need it. The monthly cost is less than USAG and the fees are kept as low as possible. We highly recommend all participants to compete but CARA does

not require each participant to compete all four events (Vault, Bars, Beam, and Floor). They can choose to not compete up to 3 events. If at any time, they do not feel ready to compete an event, they will not be forced to. At Windsor the CARA team will practice for 6 hours a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5-8pm.

Compulsory Program:

There are two compulsory levels that the Windsor team enters at official CARA(Colorado Athletic Recreational Association) These levels are level 4 and 5. At these competitions the same routine will be performed by every gymnast on each event. Levels 4 and 5 are achievement levels; the gymnasts will be awarded by score achievement versus gymnast ranking. All levels will have a regionals and state competition and gymnasts must qualify by score. This score is set annually by CARA. The official compulsory season is May-August 1st.

Developmental levels 1, 2 & 3 were not designed with competition in mind. (In some states competition is offered at these levels.) All gymnasts must master the basic skills introduced at these levels in order to advance. A instructor must certify mastery of those skills.

Level 4 is the introductory level for gymnastics competition. Basic routines are competed on all four events. The gymnast must have reached her 7th birthday in order to participate. A Certified Skill Evaluator must verify that levels 1-3 have been completed.

Level 5 is the beginner level for competition. These routines are advanced level 4 routines. The gymnast must have reached her 7th birthday in order to participate. A Certified Skill Evaluator must verify that levels 1-4 have been completed.

Optional Levels allow gymnasts and coaches to build routines from scratch. Each gymnast in this level will have different music of floor and different routines from all other gymnasts. These routines build on the skills that they previously learned and continually increase in difficulty. Gymnasts must have a year of competition before they can be an optional.

TIME COMMITMENT

Competitive gymnastics is a year round commitment. Because of this, occasional small personal sacrifices will sometimes have to be made. This is not to say that gymnastics must consume your lifestyle or that family vacations are not allowed. Actually, they are encouraged. Our coaching staff realizes that family and academics must be priorities. Ultimately, we hope that our athletes learn to manage their time when other activities arise. We feel that the efficient use of a 3-4 hour workout is sufficient for any one day. We have been able to successfully compete with teams putting in twice that amount of time by utilizing the time well.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Gymnasts are expected to attend all scheduled practices. However, the coaching staff understands there will be occasional conflicts with practice times (school events, schoolwork, conferences, special events, family events, family vacations, and sickness). We simply request advanced notice when a gymnast will be late or absent from practice. In the case that multiple absences occur, the gymnast must make up those practices by scheduling private lessons with a team coach. This policy must be enforced because it is easy to fall behind and safety can become an issue, especially at an optional level. Our policy keeps the gymnast on track with their competitive goals by maintaining their skills, focus, strength and flexibility when unforeseen circumstances arise. The coaching staff will contact you to schedule private lessons if the need arises.

WORKOUT SCHEDULE

Workouts include flexibility, strength, and individual event rotations ranging in length from thirty minutes to one hour. Visualization of skills and routines will also be incorporated into practices. The

Please remember that the meet timetable actually begins the night before with a healthy meal and a good night's sleep. Windsor requirements for competitions:

Gymnasts must be prepared. See "Gym Bags"

Gymnasts are to remain with the team at ALL times.

Parents are not allowed to contact the gymnast once she has entered the competition area. You may talk to your child after the completion of the awards ceremony.

Gymnasts expressing negative behavior before or during the competition will be removed from the meet. ***This includes crying for any reason other than injury.***

Gymnasts are required to remain in full uniform for the awards ceremony.

Hair must be arranged away from the face and not interfere with movement or skills.

Gymnast must arrive at the competition site 15 minutes PRIOR to general stretch time.

If a gymnast is late, the coaches will decide if she will be allowed to compete.

Gymnasts should bring water and a small HEALTHY snack. (Fruits and vegetables are preferred.)

GYM BAGS

Team members must maintain their own "gym bag" which should include: grips*, wrist bands, wrist guards*, hand lotion, a full roll of athletic tape, emery board or callus shaver, extra hair ties, etc. Optional gymnasts must have two pairs of grips – a regular pair and spare pair that are already broken-in, and an extra copy of their floor music.

* only if gymnast uses these items at practice.

SAFETY

Windsor makes it a priority to teach each gymnast proper movement and placement of mats. Safety falls, trampoline safety and general gym safety are taught and practiced on a regular basis.

INJURY POLICY

Unfortunately, injuries are a part of any competitive sport. Everyone on our team staff maintains current Safety Certifications thru USAG. Our number one goal is to teach good gymnastics in the safest environment possible. However, injuries will happen anytime a person involves motion, speed, height, and body parts. If your gymnast becomes injured, the coaching staff needs to be kept informed on the rehabilitation process. It is necessary that the coaching staff speak with the physician and/or physical therapist regarding the injury to help ensure a quick recovery.

Injured gymnasts are required to continue attending all scheduled practices. It is necessary for competitive athletes to continue their strength, flexibility, and visualization training. This allows them to return to event training immediately after the injury is healed thus minimizing the training recovery period. There are exceptions to this policy; depending on the severity of the injury. The coaching staff will determine these exceptions after consulting with the gymnast's physician.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

Most injuries that occur in gymnastics will simply require an ice pack. If this is the case, the gymnast will ice the injured area for 15-20 minutes, and the coach will then evaluate the injury. The gymnast may be able to continue with her training at that time, or she may be asked to work on strength and flexibility for the duration of practice. The parents will be notified of the injury at the end of practice. If the injury requires emergency care, the parents will be called immediately. The paramedics will be called only when necessary. Coaches will process an incident report, and follow up with the parents regarding the injury. All team coaches are USAG Safety Certified. *During competitions parents will be asked to the competition floor ONLY if an injury is severe and requires immediate medical attention.*

Monthly tuition rates will not be altered due to injury if the gymnast plans to remain on the team after the injury is rehabilitated.

TEAM COMMUNICATIONS

We have an open communications policy between gymnasts, parents and coaches. If any concerns or questions should arise, please contact a member of our coaching staff immediately. We are happy to listen to you and do our best to help. However, be considerate of coaches' schedules; you may have to notify the front office and set up a time to speak with a coach. Every team member has a "mailbox" (file folder). It is important that your gymnast checks her mailbox **daily**, as this is the major source of communication between you and Windsor Gymnastics Academy. Information will also be posted on the lobby bulletin board under Team News.

Team coaches hold a team parent meeting in August to answer questions and give updated information. It is **mandatory** that one parent from each family attend this meeting. We're certain questions will arise after you read the Team Parent/Gymnast Handbook. Please take advantage of our open communications policy. The coaching staff is here to help you and your daughter have a positive experience, so please help us by communicating!

BEING a WINDSOR COMPETITIVE GYMNAST

CONGRATULATIONS!! You made the Team!

You have already worked hard to become a member of the gymnastics Team. However, you will find that team requires even more effort physically, mentally and emotionally. Sometimes practices will be very frustrating. You may be unable to do a skill that you've been working very hard to do. Be patient with yourself. Work on a smaller part of the skill or try visualizing. It takes many failures and many, many hours to learn to be a fine gymnast. You may be afraid to try a new skill. Your coach is there to help you work to overcome your fear. There are exercises to build your strength and flexibility. Oftentimes strength, flexibility and visualization will be assigned as homework. These exercises are not always fun, but are essential for good gymnastics.

You are a member of a team. You must always put forth your best effort and encourage other members of your team to do so as well. If someone learns a new skill be excited for them and show your excitement by saying things like, "That's great!" Cooperation with the coaching staff and respect for the facility, equipment and other gymnastics classes is mandatory at all times.

Windsor Team Gymnast's Responsibilities:

- Attend practices regularly and on time.
- Dress properly – hair pulled back appropriately, leotard ONLY, no tights or shorts.
- Listen carefully to your coach, and ask questions if you don't understand.
- Put 100% effort into everything you do.
- Be polite and respectful at all times.
- Display good sportsmanship at all times.
- Dream high, anything is possible.
- Smile and have fun, a positive attitude is a must.

Things you can do to speed your progress:

- Set realistic, progressive short and long-term goals.
- Find reward in hard work.
- Use your coach's constructive criticism to better your gymnastics and TRUST what he/she says.
- Refuse to be frustrated, work through it. Rebound back from setbacks and defeat, apply yourself.
- Have mental courage. You may be nervous about a skill, but stay calm and work through the fear.
- Continuously work to increase flexibility and strength in all joints and muscles. Even at home!

Nutritional Guidelines

Team members are expected to maintain good nutritional habits. Proper nutrition is necessary to keep bodies fueled for tough workouts. You may bring a small HEALTHY snack to practice in case you need to refuel. As parents, you need only to monitor the types of foods that your athlete consumes. It does not in any way mean a stringent diet. A meet is much less physically demanding than a practice, so no special energy foods are necessary (such as carb loading).

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

Whether in the classroom or in the gym the best environment for learning is a disciplined one.

1st Offense - The problem will be discussed with the gymnast; she may be asked to sit out for a period of time.

2nd Offense - The parents will be made aware of the situation.

3rd Offense - A conference will be scheduled with the gymnast, parent, and coach. A suitable solution will be determined and enforced.

Any continued offenses may result in the gymnast being removed from the team program.

PARENT OBLIGATIONS

First and foremost, decide whether or not this program is for you and your child by asking the following questions:

Can she handle an accelerated pace?

Can you handle the commitment?

Can she handle the initial increase in training time? In some cases it can double.

Can she handle the discipline, commitment and conditioning?

Is gymnastics what **she** wants to do?

Can you trust your child's athletic growth and development to the members of the Gymnastics coaching staff?

Can you afford it financially?

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Warning signs that indicate the parent needs to re-evaluate their actions and involvement:
The needs to observe every practice.

Learning about technique and applying it through personal coaching of your gymnast

Comparing your child and their progress to other gymnasts on her team or other teams.

Expressing negativity towards the gym, its coaches, and/or its facilities

Video taping every meet and requiring your child to review it at home with you

Incorrect

You beat Susie, all right!

Did you do your "____ (skill)" today?

If you win (or stick) , I'll give you . . .

That judge never liked you.

Point your toes, be tight, stick your routines!

Correct

You beat your highest score!

How was practice?

Do your best!

You'll do better next time.

Have fun! You can do it!

To become the essential link in the Training Triangle of Coach/Gymnast/Parent, your trust in the coaching staff is paramount. Gymnasts need encouragement from their parents; they get enough constructive criticism from their coaches. When it seems that progress is not being made, a supportive hug after practice is the best thing a parent can do.

Encouragement is great; however, please refrain from pressuring your child. Simple things like watching too much practice translates to pressure on your gymnast. You must truly believe that Windsor Gymnastics Academy coaches have your daughter's best interests in mind. Find out about your gymnast's progress periodically -- not after every practice. For a full discussion of your gymnast's progress, feel free to make an appointment with your child's principle coach.

Advise coaches on extremely adverse situations or stresses the gymnast may be undergoing outside the gym. This information helps us adjust our coaching when needed.

Should problems or frustrations arise with coaching decisions, your gymnast's progress, gym policies or gym staff, open communication is essential. We would much rather bring the problems to the surface immediately and work through them through the Coach/Gymnast/Parent partnership than allow them to create a negative environment for all involved.

Meet Conduct for Parents

No one can prepare you for your daughter's first competitive gymnastics experience. Each one of you has a unique relationship with your child. We rely on you to create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere prior to, during, and after the meet. Because we, as coaches, know what we want each gymnast to concentrate on, we do not want conflicting messages coming up when they are competing. We like the athletes to have a clear conscious and subconscious mind. This allows us to focus their thoughts where they are needed with no interference. Again, if you feel we are missing something important, please feel free to discuss the matter with the coaching staff. However, a meet is not the appropriate venue. Please schedule an appointment after the meet to discuss suggestions or concerns.

Once your gymnast has entered the competitive area, you will no longer communicate with your athlete until the meet is completely over. Gymnasts will not, for any reason, be allowed to leave their group to converse with parents during a meet. Parents are not allowed on the meet floor.

It is not the parents' responsibility to discuss judging and scoring during competitions. Under NO circumstances are the parents or gymnast to converse with the judges. All parents and gymnasts are representatives of gymnastics and are expected to do so in a friendly and polite manner that promotes good sportsmanship on every level.

A parent's number one job is to be their athletes biggest fan at all times. On the road to a final goal there are great practices, good practices, bad practices and m0great meets, good meets, and bad meets. Remember that attainment of personal victory is preceded by many failures. How do you think your athlete will feel after a fall on the beam if she looks up to see you shaking your head or frowning? The smallest things can affect their

confidence level for the rest of the meet. Ask yourself, "How do I perform when I'm feeling very self-conscious versus filled with confidence?"

Every bad practice or meet is just as important as a good/great practice or meet. They are all steps towards a final goal. They are all learning experiences. Please be your child's biggest fan!

The Journey is the most important goal, not the destination!

Gymnastics is a sport different from all others

Gymnastics 101 (Competition)

Women's gymnastics competitions involve performances on four events: vault, uneven bars, balance beam, and floor exercise.

The athletes compete either compulsory or optional exercises. Compulsory routines are developed for the entire United States by the national governing body (USA Gymnastics).

The compulsory routines are created with varying levels of difficulty that develop skills progressively. Optional routines are choreographed (i.e., put together) by the coach and the gymnast. These routines are unique to each gymnast.

Gymnasts may start competing in level 4 and go up to level 10. Levels 4, 5 and 6 are compulsory and levels 8, 9, and 10 are optional levels. Level 7 is an optional level with certain compulsory skills required on each event.

Warm Up

The competition will begin with a "warm up." During the pre-competition "warm up" the gymnasts begin by stretching and then move to the events for skill and routine rehearsal. Each athlete or team is given strict time limits to warm up on each event so that everyone gets an equal amount of time to use the equipment.

Following the warm up the athletes will assemble at some designated place. They will then "march-in" and each team will be announced. The judges are also introduced. (This is a long-standing gymnastics tradition.) The National Anthem will be played prior to every meet.

Following the march-in the gymnasts will disperse to their first competition event. At each event prior to competing they will stop to pay homage to the judges. After acknowledging the judges the optional level gymnasts will normally warm up yet again. Yes, it is exhausting. One reason practices have to be so long and tough is to condition the gymnast to survive the warm up period in a typical meet. This second warm up period is called the "30 second touch."

Time to compete

After all the marching, touching, and rehearsing, it is now competition time. Parents Will quickly determine that during the 4-5 hours they will typically spend watching a gymnastics meet, their child will actually compete a total of 3 minutes.

Vaulting consists of a run of about 70'-80' followed by a jump to a small wooden and springing device called a "spring board" (what else?), and a diving flight to an apparatus, held up on metal posts (called a "horse" or "table"). The gymnast lands on his

or her hands on the horse, usually somewhere around a handstand, and pushes off, performs some movement, and then lands on his/her feet. Vaulting requires extreme quickness, a fast run, a hard push from the horse, some cool flips and stuff in the air, and a landing that is "stuck"

The Uneven Bars ("bars") consist of two wood-coated, fiberglass rails held up by steel posts at different heights. Routines consist of 10-14 skills performed in a series. The gymnasts should show large swing skills, lots of handstands, a release and re-catch of the bars, some sort of somersaulting or twisting skill, and a dismount to the floor.

The Balance Beam ("beam") is an apparatus made of steel and padding that is 16' long, 4" wide, and held approx. 4' high. The gymnast will show a variety of skills (including dance and tumbling) that are combined to form a routine. That lasts from 70-90 seconds. Doing all that stuff on a surface 4" wide is difficult. Staying on the beam is important.

Floor Exercise ("floor") is performed on a 40' X 40' platform that is supported by springs and covered by a layer of wood, foam and carpet. It takes approximately 1,600 springs to support the floor. Floor routines must include a combination of tumbling and dance elements that are performed to music.

Judging/Scoring

Judges evaluate these routines based on rules developed by the "FIG" which is a French acronym for International Gymnastics Federation. The FIG publishes a new set of rules every four years following the Olympic Games. Even though there are very specific rules for judging, gymnastics is an art form and it left up to interpretation. This is why there is more than one judge at each event.

Gymnastics is an interesting sport where the officials can outnumber the gymnasts. Judges must study, practice judging, be tested and pass for each level of gymnastics before they may judge it at a meet. Judges write down everything that happens during the routine (both good and bad) using shorthand.

The score for each routine begins at a 10.00 and "deductions" are taken for each error made during the performance.

The judges will often "conference" following the first routine of the competition to make sure that they are deducting for the same things. This first score, or "base score", sets the tone for the entire meet. Each subsequent routine will be judged to be either higher or lower than this base score. The judge's job is to see that the best routines receive the highest scores. This is difficult to do. The judge's will conference every time their scores are too far apart. Together they will make a revised judgment about the routine.

There will be times when the coaches do not agree with the score given. However, in most cases the coaches will do nothing about the "incorrect" score. This is because the judges score the routines too high as often as they get them too low. Since a coach would not ask a judge to lower a gymnast's score when it is too high, it is not right to ask them to raise it when it is too low. Also, remember that the scores are all relative and are compared to the base score. You will sometimes find that a score you thought was too low ends up placing very well in the ranking of gymnasts at the end of the meet. There are times, though, when a score is *really* too low. This is particularly troublesome when the

meet is important. In this case there is still little the coach can do, though the coach can "inquire".

If a parent should ever think his/her own judgments are more accurate than that of the judges and the coaches, that parent is encouraged to become a gymnastics official. Anyone can take the classes, study the materials, and test to become a certified gymnastics official (judge). Our sport is always in need of talented officials who can correctly score and rank over hundreds of routines.

A Brief Description of the Competitions

Qualifier or Qualifying Meets: Any regular season meet, in which achievement of a set score qualifies a gymnast to compete in a subsequent competition (usually states, Regionals, or Nationals). The CARA Gymnastics board determine the qualifying score and the designated meets prior to the start of the competition season.

Regional and State Championships: Regionals are determined by score at a regular season meet. The gymnast must qualify once in order to go to Regionals. At Regionals the gymnast must place in the top 6 to qualify to State.

WINDSOR GYMNASTICS TEAM COMMITMENT

I have read and understand the team rules and the responsibility descriptions for coach / gymnast / parent. I feel that this sport has many benefits to offer my family, my child, and myself by choosing WINDSOR GYMNASTICS ACADEMY. I feel that my child's goals can be reached in this program.

I make a commitment to fulfill my roles to the best of my ability and to support this program in my words and actions. If I have a disagreement or problem with the staff or program, I will contact the gym first to attempt to resolve the situation. If at any time I feel that this is no longer the best program for my child, I will notify WGA and stop her training at this gym.

I also understand and agree that if at any time my actions or words become detrimental to this program, I will be asked to remove my child from the program and find another gym. I understand that if my child participates in the team program and this agreement is not signed and returned, it is implied that participant and my family agrees to all rules and responsibilities, including financial responsibility for participation.

PARENT SIGNATURE DATE

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I have read the WINDSOR GYMNASTICS Team Parent/Gymnast Handbook for coach/gymnast/parent. I understand the rules and responsibilities as they apply to me. I am making a commitment to do my best to fulfill my responsibilities as a WINDSOR GYMNASTICS Team member. I also make a commitment to compete.

GYMNAST SIGNATURE DATE

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PARENT COPY

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