



Competitive Gymnastics Team Meet Procedures and Guidelines for Parents and Gymnasts

****The Stars & Stripes Philosophy on Competition****

Stars & Stripes sets a high priority on rewarding the effort and accomplishments of our gymnasts by providing them with an opportunity to participate in fantastic competitions. We attempt to attend competitions with other gymnastics clubs who share similar competitive philosophies and will provide Stars & Stripes gymnasts the opportunity to compete with the best of the best. We are a competitive gymnastics team. We measure our work and progress by going on the competition floor to compete. While winning is not the most important, trying to win is representing everything we strive for.

A Brief Description of Competitions:

- A.) **Competitions:** While the Junior Olympic Program offers a “fun meet season” for pre competitive levels 1 through 3, Stars & Stripes does not require gymnasts to make the commitment to competition until level 4, where USA Gymnastics sanctions full competitive meets. We feel it is more important to spend pre team years building basic foundations of gymnastics without having an emphasis on performing just yet. The compulsory years are where gymnasts will gain their competitive experience. At the compulsory ranks gymnasts are at the age and/or ability level where they are ready to handle the possible pressures of competing. The goal is to provide gymnasts with a foundation of strong physical and mental basics along with the ability to focus on performing which will help to enhance their competitiveness at the optional levels.

- B.) The competition season will usually begin with pre-season meets in October, November and/or December. The actual season begins in January, then ends with championships in April or May. All competitions are mandatory for competitive team gymnasts. Stars & Stripes attends approximately two out of state meets per season (not including national and regional championships for optional levels). Travel arrangements and costs are the responsibility of the parents.

- C.) Gymnasts will perform routines on all four events in competition. However if a gymnast is not prepared or did not complete appropriate assignments during training, with the gymnasts safety and best interest in mind, coaches may decide to have a gymnast forfeit competing, or they may be deleted to a specific event. Coaches will solely make this decision based on what is best for the gymnast. Sometimes the best solution is not always the easiest to handle. Gymnasts and parents will be expected to support the coaches' decision.

****Uniforms at Competition****

Gymnasts must arrive at the competition site wearing their long sleeve competitive leotard, warm up suit (jacket zipped), and have their hair already pulled back in the appropriate competition hairdo for their level. **Upon arrival to the competition site gymnasts must remove their street shoes and only wear their competition slip on sandals with solid white socks.** Coats or outerwear should also be removed and placed in the gym bag. Gymnasts must also have their gym bag with all necessary equipment. We know it is important for a competitive athlete to take pride in their appearance. We encourage gymnasts to look neat and be prepared, this results in a more confident, distraction free performance.

If a gymnast is not wearing her designated team leotard, she may not compete. If she is missing any single piece from her warm up attire, she may not participate in the march-in.

****Compulsory Level Gymnasts (4-6)****

Team Uniform:

- Long sleeve competitive leotard
- Jacket and pants
- Solid white socks with team slip on sandals
- Hair pulled back in a bun with matching navy blue team scrunchie (directions below). **If gymnasts do not have the matching team scrunchie, coaches may have extras at competition, your account will be charged \$6 after the competition.**
- Matching briefs and a sports bra may be worn when necessary, **but cannot show, it will result in a deduction.** Both items are sold in the pro show in a nude color. The briefs are meant to be warm above the belly button to maintain a high, no-show leg cut.

Directions for the Bun:

- Begin with a high pony tail (centered between the hairline at the forehead and the hairline at the neck). If the pony tail is too low, it will get in the way of skills, if it is too high it just looks silly. **All Bangs MUST be pulled back**, also make sure there are not any bumps, and pin back (with barrettes), hairspray or gel any fly-aways. **Barrettes must match the gymnast's hair color to ensure a neat, clean**

look.

- Either braid the pony tail in one or two very tight braids depending on thickness of the hair, or simply twist the hair very tightly (then hairspray and/or gel the twist).
- Once hair is braided or twisted, wrap the braid or braids or twisted pony tail around the base of the pony tail into a rounded, tight shape. The bun should be flat, not cone shaped and extremely tight. Place several bobby pins around the entire bun (several meaning at least 8-10 pins).
- Hairspray and or gel all around the bun for a slick, clean look. Everything must be tight to avoid hair distractions.
- Finally, place the matching scrunchie around the bun.

*It is very important that gymnasts' hair is tight and secure. We do not want gymnasts to be distracted by their hair falling out. All of their attention should be focused on performing. If your child's hair does come loose, the coaches will take care of the problem.

Items to bring in gym bag for Compulsory Level Gymnasts:

- Grips and wrist bands (if needed)
- Athletic Tape
- Wet wipes or wet wash cloth in zip lock bag (to clean up after bars)
- Water Bottle (*water only*)
- Emergency snack or snack for after the competition (fruit, granola bar)
- Extra matching hair scrunchie
- Hairspray
- Extra bobby pins, barrettes and rubber bands

Attire for the Warm up Ceremony:

Gymnasts must wear their warm up suit (PANTS AND JACKET); the jacket must be zipped, along with their slip on sandals with white socks. **Gymnasts must wear their meet hairdo to the award ceremony.**

Optional Level Gymnasts (7-10)

Team Uniform:

- Long sleeve competitive leotard
- Jacket and pants
- Solid white socks with team slip on sandals
- Hair pulled back in a pony tail with matching team ribbon (directions below). **If gymnasts do not have the matching team ribbon, coaches will have extra at competition, however your account will be charged \$6 after the competition.**
- Matching briefs and a sport bra may be worn when necessary, **but cannot show, it will result in a deduction.** Both items are sold in the pro show in a nude color. The briefs are meant to be worn above the belly button to maintain a high, no-show leg cut.

***At competitions where the optional gymnasts warm up on every event first, which is called traditional format. Optional level gymnasts must wear their warm up leotard, and bring their long sleeve competition leotard to change into. The warm up can be very long using the traditional format. We want the gymnasts to be comfortable in their sleeveless leotard during the warm up, then have a fresh leotard to change into for the meet. THIS IS FOR OPTIONAL LEVEL ATHLETES ONLY.**

Directions for the Pony Tail (optional levels):

Optional level gymnasts have a few options with the pony tail. It does have to a higher pony tail, and it is important that the pony tail is secure with all fly-aways and bangs tightly secured away from the face. However, the hair in the pony tail can be curled, straight or natural as long as it looks clean and is not a distraction due to length of hair.

- Begin by pulling hair into a high pony tail at the top of the head (centered between the forward hairline and neck). If the pony tail is too low, it will get in the way of skills, if it is too high it could also be a distraction. All Bangs should be pulled back, also make sure there are not any bumps, and pin back (with barrettes), hairspray or gel any fly-aways. **Barrettes must match the gymnast's hair color to ensure a neat, clean look .**
- Finish the pony tail with style of gymnasts choice (curled, straight, natural), however it must not be a distraction
- Finish with the matching bow

*It is very important that gymnasts' hair is tight and secure. We do not want any gymnasts to be distracted by their hair falling out. All of their attention should be focused on performing.

Items to bring in gym bag for Optional Level Gymnasts:

- Grips and wrist bands
- Athletic Tape
- Wet wipes or wet wash cloth in zip lock bag (to clean up after bars)
- Copy of floor routine music
- Water Bottle (*water only*)
- Emergency snack or snack for after the competition (fruit, granola bar)
- Extra matching hair scrunchie
- Hairspray
- Extra bobby pins, barrettes and rubber bands

Attire for the Warm up Ceremony:

Gymnasts must wear their warm up suit (PANTS AND JACKET); the jacket must be zipped, along with slip on sandals with white socks. **Gymnasts must wear their meet hairdo to the award ceremony.**

****Proper Meet Preparation****

It is important that gymnasts and parents follow proper meet preparation procedures to avoid any unneeded stress before a meet. The following suggestions are made to ensure a positive competition experience. **Please understand that Stars & Stripes will not know the exact session schedule for each level until approximately 10 days before the competition weekend. We will get the information to families as promptly as possible. Days and times will be posted on the Stars & Stripes website ASAP. We ask that parents do not contact the meet host to find out session information.** Host gyms will usually post meet information on their website, however please follow the times provided by your coaches. Sometimes session schedules are posted (on the host site) listing open stretch and check in at the same time, however gymnasts must already be checked in to receive full stretching time, therefore they must arrive well BEFORE the designated open stretch time.

Competition Fees

Parents of competing gymnasts will be required to pay all entry fees prior to competition. Stars & Stripes is often times required to pay for a meet months in advance to reserve our spot. For families to better budget the financial burden of competitions, the fees for the entire competitive season will be evenly divided amongst 12 months (July 1st – June 1st); a \$250 nonrefundable meet fee deposit is due July 1st. The monthly meet fee will be due on the 1st of the month along with the monthly tuition. If a gymnast is sick, injured, or may not compete for any other reason, it is most likely NOT possible to obtain a refund of competition fees. Meet fees MUST be paid monthly from July through June even if your child decides to leave the competitive program.

Meet entry fees will include the cost for gymnasts and teams to participate in the competition along with coaches' compensation and travel expenses while instructing at the meet. **Travel expenses for gymnasts and their families will not be covered by meet entry fees.**

Session Assignments and Hotel Information

Session assignments and hotel information will be posted on the "competition schedule page" of the Stars & Stripes website. When you click on a particular competition, hotel and session information will be there when it is made available. Hotel reservations and costs are the responsibility of the parents. We ask that all team members stay at the host hotels so everyone is together.

Practice During a Meet Weekend

Depending on the session schedules of the *entire team*, practice during a competition weekend may or may not be held. Please expect practice times to change or be canceled during a meet weekend. **This may apply to your child even if their**

particular level does NOT have a meet. Please understand that we are not made aware of session schedules until approximately 10 days before the competition, practice changes WILL be made at the last minute. We will notify parents of practice changes by e mail and post the changes on the team calendar on the Stars & Stripes website. These practice changes/cancelations are already calculated into monthly tuition.

Adequate Sleep the night before a meet

- Gymnasts must get to sleep at a decent hour even if they don't have any early morning session. It is recommended that gymnasts are in bed no later than 10:00 pm the night before a competition.
- It is encouraged that hotel arrangements be made for early morning sessions at meet locations longer than a 45-60 minute drive. It is difficult for gymnasts to compete after sitting in the car for a long period of time, especially early in the morning. It will also help avoid the stress of being late due to traffic or getting lost. **Gymnasts must get accustomed to sleeping in hotel rooms; it is a part of the sport.**

Preparation for Travel Meets

- It is advised that gymnasts arrive the day before their competition session for all travel meets if possible. Long trips the day of competition are not advised, and it is helpful for gymnasts to get accustomed to their surroundings. This will also help to avoid the stress of traffic, construction or getting lost.
- Parents should do a practice run from the hotel to the meet (the night before) when unfamiliar with a location to avoid getting lost, stuck in traffic, and/or construction. This will also help to determine how long the trip will take.
- Allow gymnasts to arrive at the competition site early (before their session) to get comfortable with their surroundings. This will give gymnasts proper time to mentally prepare. Arriving at least 15 minutes early is recommended.

Fueling the Body for Competition:

- Gymnasts must always have a nutrition meal before competing. The meal should be low in sugar. A gymnast must NEVER skip breakfast before a morning session.
- Between the warm up, competition and awards, the meet can be very long. Please provide a small snack in your gymnast's bag for emergency. This may include a granola bar, fruit, etc. NO CANDY.
- Many meets offer concessions. Gymnasts should not consume any snacks at the venue until after they compete and finish the award ceremony. (Please save the "Maui Wowi" for a treat after the competition).

****Competition Expectations: Athletes****

- A.) Look great! Gymnasts must be well groomed. We prefer all Stars & Stripes athletes to be very uniform. The gymnast's hair must be pulled back and away from face with the matching team scrunchie. Minimal make-up is allowed. **Fingernail polish will result in a deduction. Earrings are permitted, however they must be a single stud on a post.**
- B.) Be early! Gymnasts must arrive to every competition at least 15 minutes prior to the designated check in, and/or open stretch time. This will allow us to mentally prepare as a team for the day's events. Also, arriving early allows for a team meeting and a warm up. The team will warm up together. Any athlete arriving late may risk being scratched from the competition, with her safety in mind.
- C.) Gymnasts are expected to arrive at every competition wearing their leotard and competitive warm-ups (unless otherwise notified). Matching briefs and a sport bra may be worn when necessary, **but cannot show.**

If a gymnast is not wearing her designated team leotard, she may not compete. If she is missing any single piece from her warm up attire, she may not participate in the march-in.

- D.) Gymnasts must meet with coaches and team immediately upon arrival at a competition.
- E.) Gymnasts must remain in the area designated for gymnasts throughout the duration of the warm up and the competition. Once the gymnast has stepped into the competition area, she may not leave without permission from her coaches. **Gymnasts should not have any contact with parents during competition.** We want gymnasts to remain focused, it is a distraction and not necessary for gymnasts to speak with their parents during the meet even in the event that they leave the competition area for a bathroom break, drink, etc.
- F.) It is not necessary for gymnasts to keep track of their event scores, all around scores, or placement during competitions. The athlete's attention should be centered on her performance and the performance of her teammates, not her scores or current standings. **Please do NOT make your child aware of her placements during or after the meet, save the excitement for the award ceremony.**
- G.) Gymnasts are expected to be poised and gracious regardless of their performance, score and/or placement. Poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated. Every gymnast will have a poor performance, score, and/or placement regardless of her ability and/or work ethic. It is easy to win, but

it takes a true athlete to graciously handle defeat. It is an excellent life lesson and experience to learn and grow from.

- H.) Gymnasts are expected to show encouragement and support for all teammates at all times.
- I.) **Only coaches are allowed to approach a judge or the meet head table.** At no time should an athlete or parent approach a meet official. This is a USA Gymnastics rule.
- J.) Be courteous, respectful, and polite to all meet officials, hosts and hostesses, competitors and coaches.
- K.) Stay with the team until the competition and awards are over, and the athletes have been dismissed by the coaches. Once the gymnast enters the competition area, there should be no contact between the gymnast and her parents unless there is an emergency.
- L.) All gymnasts must stay for awards dressed in the Stars & Stripes warm ups (JACKET AND PANTS), jackets zipped, with team sandals and white socks, with their hair in the meet “hairdo.” Every competition has a formal system for presenting awards. As participating athletes, gymnasts have an obligation to stay for all individual and team awards. Stand to accept any presented to you with courtesy and gratitude. It is customary to accept awards with a smile and congratulate other competitors. Remember you are representing yourself and Stars & Stripes Gymnastics Academy.

****Team Travel Policies****

- A.) Team members must maintain good conduct, etiquette, and discipline at all times when representing Stars & Stripes Gymnastics Academy and their team.
- B.) We will try to schedule our events to miss as little school as possible. Gymnasts should try to make up schoolwork in advance, or bring it with them.
- C.) **Parents will be responsible for their child’s transportation to and from a competition.** Most meets within the region will be within driving distance. At the optional levels it may be required to attend at least one flight meet per season besides possible championships. It may not be possible for parents to attend, however proper arrangements will be made.

- D.) **Early Morning Sessions:** It is not mandatory, but it is encouraged that gymnasts stay over night in a hotel when there is an early morning session that is at least 45-60 minutes away.

****Responsibilities of Parents at Competitions****

Coaches, Athletes and parents are all a part of the Stars & Stripes Team. We encourage all of our parents to attend every competition. Having a strong cheering section can do wonders for the team's motivation and is something we can all be proud of!

- A.) Promote Stars & Stripes in every way you feel is appropriate: T-shirts, banners and cheers. We request that parents refrain from speaking negatively about other clubs, athletes, coaches and judges.
- B.) Under USAG rules, the only adults allowed in the competitive areas are judges, those helping run the competition, and USAG profession members (coaches). Parents are NOT permitted on the competition floor.
- C.) Under no circumstances is a parent or gymnast 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.
- D.) Please do not contact or talk to your gymnast once she is on the competitive floor. We ask all of our gymnasts to focus all of their attention and energy on the competition and we want as little distraction as possible. Please do not try to contact your child when they are taking a bathroom or drink break.
- E.) We work very hard during the time leading up to a meet to keep our athletes positive and focused on their tasks. We ask that you refrain from speaking about their gymnastics (in detail) the day of the meet. Please offer your support, whatever the outcome.
- F.) If you have any questions about your child's performance, scores, placements, etc, they should be directed to the coach, *but at an appropriate time*. **please refrain from speaking with your child's coach at the meet.** These types of conversations should take place in private with a phone call, e mail, and/or scheduled meeting. Your child should only see and hear positive, supportive interactions between her parents and the coach. Any type of questioning in front of the child could diminish the child's trust in her coach.
- G.) Support your gymnast, the coaches and the program regardless of your child's performance, score and/or placement. Please understand that your child will have poor performances at meets regardless of her effort, ability,

preparation, work ethic, and coaching. She may also have a great performance and a poor score and/or lowered placement. It is important that parents expect these moments and help their children use them as learning experiences and character building opportunities.

- H.) Parents are always encouraged to attend competitions. However, there may be times when you will be unable to attend. If you are not attending a meet, but your athlete is, be sure to take care of the following details:
- 1.) Name and phone number of the facility in which the competition is being held.
 - 2.) Communicate clearly with your child about who is going to be responsible for her (including travel to and from the meet).
 - 3.) Notify coaches of who your child will be arriving and leaving with.
 - 4.) Provide your child with an emergency number to use in case she needs to call home, and you are not there.
 - 5.) Arrange for her to call home if the meet runs late.
 - 6.) Send enough money with her for meals, snacks, phone calls, etc.
- I.) In many instances we register every gymnast for every competition. We often send the meet entries and fees several months in advance to assure our spot in the meet. If your child becomes ill or injured, or is otherwise unable to compete, we will attempt to get a refund sent to us. However, it is up to the hosting club whether or not to refund entry fees after the “pull out” deadline.
- J.) In case of injury during warm up or competition, please wait for your child’s coach to give you some indication that you should come down to the competition area. In most cases, you will not be invited onto the floor because the injury will be relatively minor and the coach and/or trainer will take care of it. Your daughter will continue the competition and she will need to maintain her focus. With the exception of minor bumps and bruises, the coach will relay any pertinent information to the parent regarding injuries.
- K.) During the award ceremony placement and score mistakes may be made. Or it is possible that the incorrect score was flashed during competition. Parents must not approach the award announcer or presenter. The coach will take care of any mix-ups.