

Rhythmic Gymnastics



Rhythmic Gymnastics (RG) is a complex sport; it requires body and apparatus skills, dance, and great flexibility. These elements must be combined together into a one minute routine for SO competitions.

The vast majority of SO participants execute very simple skills with an apparatus, have slow displacements on the floor using small range of motions for upper and lower body, and have difficulty with leaps and balance. Most RG programs practice once a week, and a lot of this limited preparation time is spent on general skills and routine rehearsals for competitions. Body and apparatus skills, flexibility and floor movements are in general below basic skill level, which is not surprising considering the many different skills and abilities involved in RG.

It is very difficult if not impossible to learn every apparatus, dance, body skills, leaps, turns and have RG flexibility using one session per week. Acquiring basic skills for all these elements requires a 20-hour program for each one of them and extra home training for flexibility. Trying to learn everything at the same time with few supervised training sessions is why SO RG is at such low level.

Changing Expectations in Special Olympics

Generic rhythmic gymnastics is characterized by flexible body movements with graceful dance steps and is beautiful to watch. Moving skills on the floor such as correct walking, running, leaping, jumping, and hopping should be acquired first followed by non-moving skills such as bending, stretching, turning and swinging. Apparatus can then be added as SO athletes achieve the aesthetic movements fundamental to RG.

Basic RG skills are listed in the RG basic skill section (next page). These sheets can be used as a guide, and when all skills are marked “yes”, athletes are ready for intermediate skills.

The order used in the basic sheets is presented to help SO athletes acquire moving and non-moving skills first because in the vast majority of our observations, all available time was spent on learning apparatus and routine with little time left for body skills development. As a result, many SO athletes have learned some RG apparatus elements but lack body skills to go with them. Finally, moving skills are important for healthy living and will contribute to aerobic and strength development.

Guidelines for using the skill sheet for RG

1. Moving skills are first introduced with walking, when correct walking is acquired, running is then started.
2. Follow each step of the skill sheets (one at a time) until all basic skills are acquired. Progress will be directly related to the amount of focused practice time.

Rhythmic Gymnastics Basic Skills

Basic Skill: Moving	YES	NO	Comments
Sub Skills			
Walking (pointed toes/length)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Running (head up)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Leaping (with flexibility)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jumping (light landing)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Skipping (smooth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Basic Skill: Dance and Ballet	YES	NO	Comments
Sub Skills			
Ballet feet position (1-5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ballet hand position (1-5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dance steps (Coaches' choice)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Basic Skill: Flexibility and Balance	YES	NO	Comments
Sub Skills			
Bending (forward/backward)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
360° turn (control/balance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Split	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
One leg stand (90°)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Basic Skill: Ribbon	YES	NO	Comments
Sub Skills			
30 sec. without stopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Spirals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Release	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Skill Breakdown: Examples of elements to focus on during practice

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 1. Moving skills: | Walking | - Pointed toes - Head up - Arm swing |
| | Running | - Head up eyes forward |
| | Leaping | - Reach- Arm swing |
| | Jumping | - Jump up and touch as high as possible |
| | | - Light landing |
| | Hopping | - Stay on toes - Reach up - Light landing |
| | Sliding | - Sideway motion |
| | Skipping | - Stay on toes - Smooth motion |
| 2. Non-Moving skills | Bending – swaying – Swinging – Turning – Stretching | |
| | – Twisting – All with balance and flexibility | |
| 3. Apparatus | Hoop – ball – Ribbon – Rope - Clubs | |
| 4. Dance skills | Steps – Ballet | |
| 5. Flexibility | Upper body – Core – Lower body - | |

The majority of skills presented can be practiced at home. SO sessions should be structured so athletes can have specific exercises to practice on their own, many of these skills will require many hours of training and repetitions for acquisition.

Rhythmic Gymnastics Example: Focused Basic Skills Session (1 hour)

Example “Walking, Running, Leaping” session (no apparatus)
(20’ = 20 minutes)

20’ Warm up and stretching



10’ Walking (**Remember to use correct demonstrations and video, slow down demonstrations when introducing a new skill, and use hands to guide movements when necessary.**)

Changing Expectations in Special Olympics

- Body alignment exercises
- Arm and toes focus
- Head and eyes direction
-

10' Running

- Body alignment
- Knee bend
- Arm and toes
- Head and eyes
-

10' Leaps

- Arm swing
- Reach
- Landings

5' Cool down

Don't worry about perfect movement; just do as many correct movements as possible. Over time, with repetitions and better strength and flexibility, these skills will improve.

Conclusion:

Rhythmic Gymnastics is a graceful and difficult sport to acquire. Although athletes must use apparatus to compete at SO games, RG incorporate so many more elements to be successful. Many of the top SO contenders have basic apparatus skills but distinguish themselves with beautiful body movements with amplitude. Using the skill sheet is an excellent way to learn basic RG skills and encourage athletes to practice more often. Many RG basic skills can easily be practiced at home and the more time spent on focused training, the better each SO athlete will become. SO athletes must be able to move gracefully with correct body position and develop basic moving and non-moving skills to capture the beauty and difficulty of this sport.

Lesson Plan
Basic Skill Acquisition Program
(weekly or monthly)

Sport _____ Athlete Name: _____

Program Expectations

1- Weekly Practice (attend all practices)

Day (S) _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What the group is working on”:

2- Club Fit 100% attendance (Including Functional Testing exercises)

Day _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What you need to concentrate on”:

3- Basic Skill Development Homework (4 times per week - 1 hour per day)

Skill _____

“Individual Home Practice Objectives”