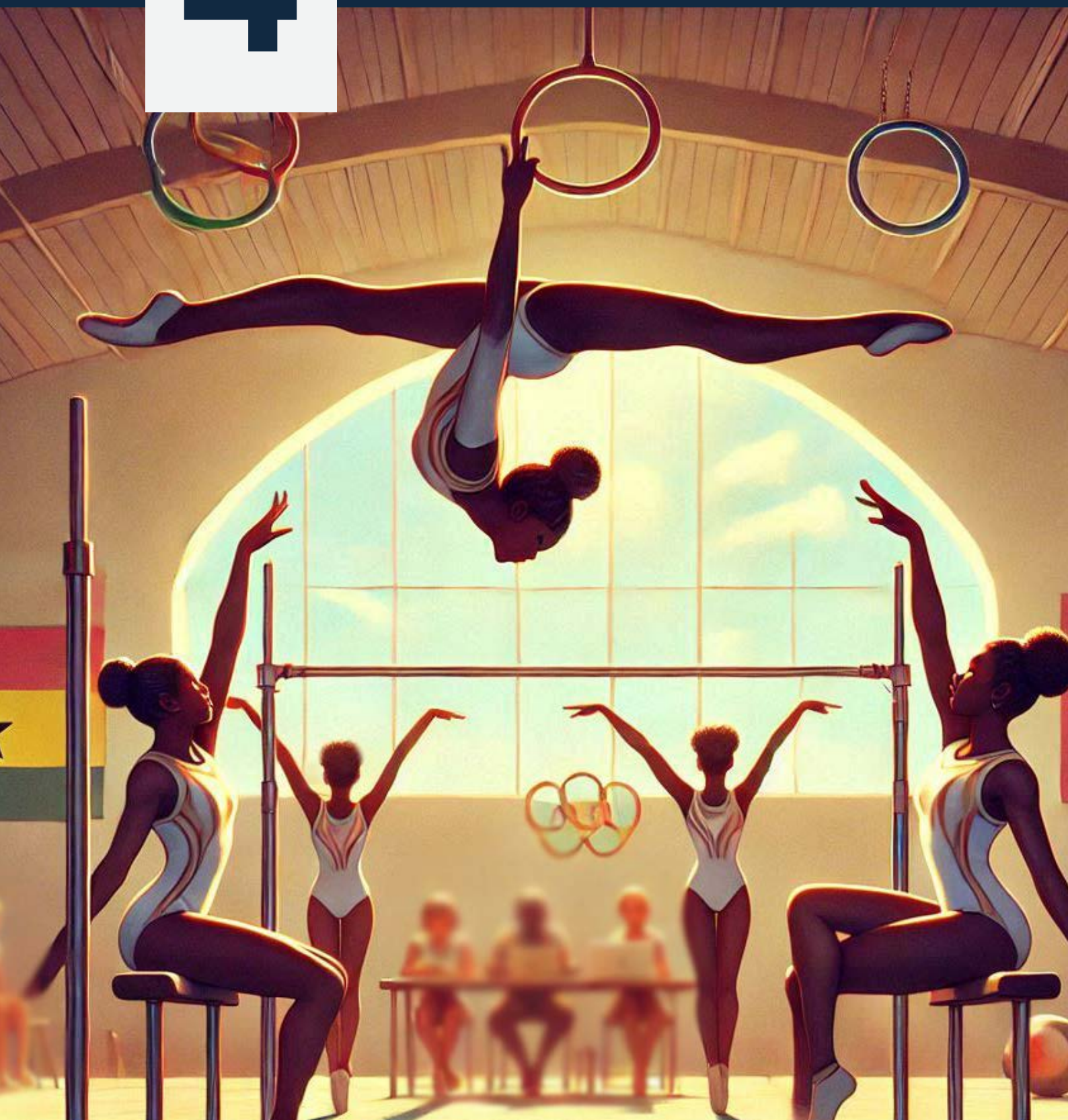


SECTION

4

GYMNASTICS



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

Gymnastics

INTRODUCTION

In this section, you will learn basic gymnastics activities to improve your skills and health-related fitness.

Have you tried somersaulting before, what was the experience like? If you have tried it before then you have practiced some form of gymnastics.

Gymnastics is a sport that combines flexibility, balance, endurance, coordination, strength and agility. The movements involved in gymnastics contribute to the development of the arms, legs, shoulders, back, chest, and abdominal muscle groups.

Acrobatics skills such as jumps, flips, rolls and turns are performed by the participants.

At the end of this section, you will be able to

- Perform floor activities in gymnastics for improving skill and health-related fitness (forward roll, backward roll and handstand).

Key Ideas:

- **Gymnastics** is a sport that combines flexibility, balance, endurance, coordination, strength and agility.
- **Floor activities** in gymnastics consists of skills such as rolling, twisting and turning of the body.
- Examples include forward rolls, backward rolls, somersaults, handstands, cartwheels, round offs, front and back walkovers and handstand forward rolls.
- **A backward roll** is a rocking back movement of the body that starts from standing and squatting position tucking the head and rolling smoothly along the spine until coming back to a standing position.
- **A handstand** is a gymnastic posture where the body is inverted and balanced on the hands with the body held upright and vertical, supported solely by the hands and arms.

CONCEPT OF GYMNASTICS

The discipline of gymnastics blends strength, agility, coordination, balance, endurance, and flexibility. The exercises performed in gymnastics help to build muscle in the arms, legs, shoulders, back, chest, and abdomen.

Gymnastic skills are often performed with or without equipment. There are five main types of gymnastics: **artistic, rhythmic, trampoline, acrobatics and aerobics.**

Examples of Artistic and Rhythmic Gymnastics Activities Include:

1. Artistic Gymnastics

Fig. 4.1: Floor

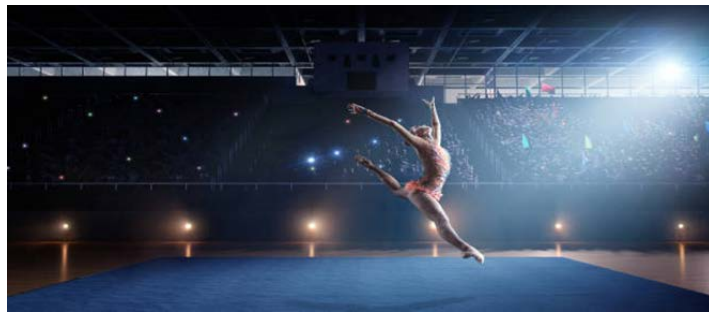


Fig. 4.2: Balance beam



Fig. 4.3: Uneven bars



Fig. 4.4: Vault



Fig. 4.5: Pommel horse



Fig. 4.6: High bar



Fig. 4.7: Parallel bars



Fig. 4.8: Rings



Women perform on the floor, balance beam, uneven bars and vault whilst men perform on the floor, vault, pommel horse, high bar, parallel bars and rings.

2. Rhythmic Gymnastics

Rhythmic gymnastics is performed on a floor with an apparatus such as a hoop, ball, clubs, ribbon and rope.

Fig. 4.9: Hoop



Fig. 4.10: Ball



Fig. 4.11: Clubs



Fig. 4.12: Ribbon



Fig. 4.13: Rope

Now it's your turn

For the purposes of these lessons, only floor activities will be covered. Floor activities in gymnastics are performed on the floor and consist of skills such as rolling, twisting and turning of the body. Examples include forward rolls, backward rolls, somersaults, handstands, cartwheels, round offs, front and back walkovers and handstand forward rolls.

The floor activities to be performed over the next three lessons are forward rolls, backward rolls and handstands. For safety these activities should be performed on a mat or foam.

FORWARD ROLL

The forward roll is an activity performed by squatting, tucking in the head and rolling over the body in a forward's circle on the floor and standing up at the end of the activity. This movement is performed by squatting in front of a mat with feet together and hands placed on the mat/foam in front with elbows bent and fingers pointing straight forward.

**Fig. 4.14:** Movement from start to finish

Activity 4.1

1. Artistic or Rhythmic? Classify the gymnastics activities above into the correct category.

Artistic	Rhythmic

2. Perform a forward roll

- a. Watch a video of a forward roll being performed. Use this to help you in performing your own forward roll.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA7D4XEnj2s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMlxHIC3yLQ>
- [How to do a Forward Roll \(Beginner Gymnastics Tutorial\) | MihranTV \(youtube.com\)](#)

- Start in a standing position:** Stand with your feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, and your weight balanced evenly on the balls of your feet.
- Squat down:** Bend your knees and hips to squat down, keeping your back straight and chest upright.
- Place your hands on the floor:** Reach your arms forward and place your hands on the floor about shoulder-width apart, in front of your feet.
- Tuck your chin:** Tuck your chin towards your chest, rounding your upper back.
- Initiate the roll:** Push through your hands to transfer your weight onto your upper back, allowing your body to roll forward in a smooth, controlled motion.
- Extend your legs:** As you roll forward, extend your legs straight up towards the ceiling, keeping them together.
- Land on your feet:** Once your weight shifts completely over your shoulders, allow your feet to come down to the floor, landing on the balls of your feet.
- Stand up:** Press through your hands and straighten your legs to return to a standing position.

- b. Demonstrate the proper body positions to perform a forward roll. Ask a colleague to video this for you.
- c. Perform a forward roll with support from a partner. Ask a colleague to video this for you. Use your videos to track your progress.

Top tip: Remember to go slowly and focus on maintaining a tight, rounded body position throughout the roll. It may take some practice to get comfortable with the movement. Start by practicing on a soft surface, like a mat, until you build up the necessary strength and coordination.

- d. With your partner, review your video. Note any areas to focus on in the box below.

Areas to focus on before performing a forward roll without support are:

- e. Perform a forward roll without support.

BACKWARD ROLL

The backward roll is a rocking back movement of the body by placing hands on the shoulders with the palms facing upwards and rolling in one motion by bringing the feet over the head and lifting the hips and pressing the hands into the mat/foam, finishing in the standing position. This movement is performed by standing with back straight and with knees and thighs together and parallel to the floor. The hands are held just above the shoulders with the palms facing upwards. The performer squats or crouches down and slowly leans back until the back touches the mat/foam. The legs swing backwards over the head and as the feet touch the floor, the hands push off the floor to get up and are then raised above the head to finish the activity.

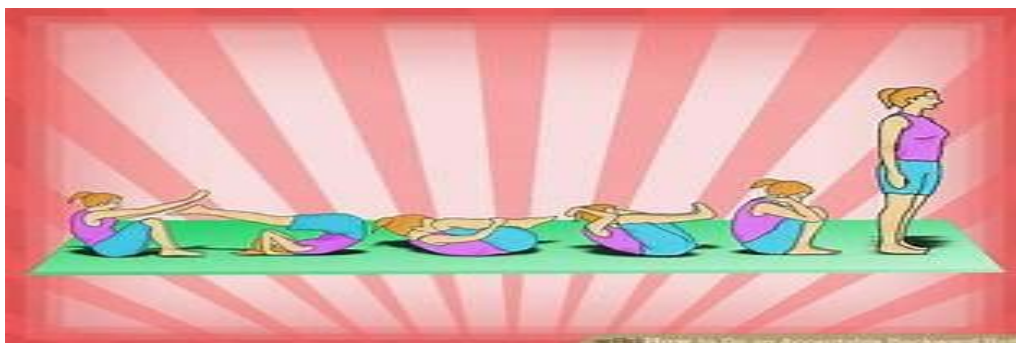


Fig. 4.15: Movement from start to finish



Step 1: Stand up



Step 2: Crouch down/Sauat



Step 3: Start to roll



Step 4: Join your legs



Step 5: Swing legs the overhead



Step 6: Sit up



Step 6: Stand up to finish.

Activity 4.2

1. Perform a Backward Roll

a. Watch a video of a backward roll being performed. Use this to help you in performing your own backward roll.

- <https://youtu.be/SPOjUhjRFrk?si=9E0h2G3FJ6z1zuz9>
- <https://youtu.be/EPICP3wCOuI?si=Fwssa1DOa8oEs7Kt>

i. Start in a standing position: Stand with your feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, and your weight balanced evenly on the balls of your feet.

ii. Squat down: Bend your knees and hips to squat down, keeping your back straight and chest upright.

- iii. Sit back on your heels:** Shift your weight back onto your heels, bringing your butt towards the floor.
- iv. Tuck your chin:** As you sit back, tuck your chin towards your chest, rounding your upper back.
- v. Initiate the roll:** Reach your arms back behind your head, keeping them straight, and use your momentum to roll backwards onto the upper back area, just below the shoulders.
- vi. Extend your legs:** As you roll back, extend your legs straight up towards the ceiling, keeping them together.
- vii. Land on your feet:** Allow your feet to come down to the floor, landing on the balls of your feet.
- viii. Stand up:** Press through your hands and straighten your legs to return to a standing position.

- b. Demonstrate the proper body positions to perform a backward roll. Ask a colleague to video this for you.
- c. Perform a backward roll with support from a partner. Ask a colleague to video this for you. Use your videos to track your progress.

Top tip: Remember to go slowly and focus on maintaining a tight, rounded body position throughout the roll. It may take some practice to get comfortable with the movement, especially the initial sitting back and rounding of the upper back. Start by practicing on a soft surface, like a mat, until you build up the necessary strength and coordination.

- d. With your partner, review your video. Note any areas to focus on in the box below.

Areas to focus on before performing a backward roll without support are:

- e. Perform a backward roll without support.

HANDSTAND

The handstand is a fundamental body position in gymnastics, where the gymnast or the individual performing the activity supports the entire body upside down, balancing it on the hands and arms with the body held straight and vertical. There are different ways to get into a handstand, but gymnasts almost always enter the position with a kick-up.

A kick-up refers to the technique used to transition the body from a standing position to a handstand or inverted position. It involves kicking one leg upwards while simultaneously using the other leg to push off the ground, generating energy to lift the body into the desired position.

A short step is taken forward and the back leg swung up behind to shift the body weight from the feet to the hands. Once there, both legs are brought tight together, and the fingers and the heels of the hands are used to maintain balance.



Fig. 4.16: Steps In to achieve effective hand standing

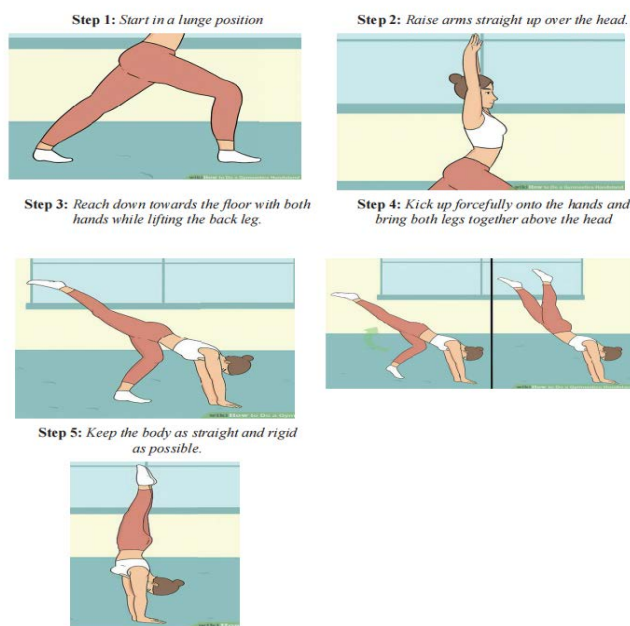


Fig. 4.17: Steps In to achieve effective hand standing

Activity 4.3

1. Perform a handstand
 - a. Watch a video of a handstand being performed. Use this to help you in performing your own handstand.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzGzDMzTUQE>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EvtMQFIPUQ>
- i. Warm up:** Perform some light dynamic stretches to warm up your shoulders, core, and legs. This will help prepare your body for the handstand.
 - ii. Find a wall:** Position yourself facing a sturdy wall. This will help you learn the handstand with support at first.
 - iii. Get into the kicking position:** Stand about 6-12 inches away from the wall. Shift your weight onto one leg and raise the other leg up behind you, keeping it straight.
 - iv. Kick up:** Engage your core and kick your raised leg up towards the ceiling, simultaneously pressing your hands into the floor to lift your hips up and over. Try to get your legs stacked vertically over your shoulders.
 - v. Balance:** Once in the handstand position, engage your core and leg muscles to maintain balance. Distribute your weight evenly between your hands.
 - vi. Control your descent:** When ready to come down, slowly lower one leg at a time, keeping your core braced. Try to avoid just falling out of the handstand.
 - vii. Repeat:** Practice kicking up into the handstand position, aiming to hold it for longer each time. You can also try to kick up without using the wall for support.
- b. Demonstrate the proper body positions to perform a handstand. Ask a colleague to video this for you.
 - c. Perform a handstand against a wall or with support from a partner. Ask a colleague to video this for you. Use your videos to track your progress.
 - **Top tips:** Keep your body in a straight line from your heels to your head.
 - Look between your hands to help maintain balance.
 - Start close to the wall and gradually increase the distance as you improve.
 - Use a spotter or cushions/mats for safety when first learning.
 - Be patient and consistent with your practice. Handstands take time to master.
 - d. With your partner, review your video. Note any areas to focus on in the box below.

Areas to focus on before performing a handstand without support are:

- e. Perform a handstand without support.

Review Questions

Review Questions 4.1

1. Describe the concept of gymnastics.

The concept of gymnastics is:

2. Describe the proper body positions to perform a forward roll.

The body positions to perform a forward roll are:

3. Perform two complete forward rolls.

In groups, perform your forward rolls with and without the support of your friends. Ask friends to assess and comment on your forward rolls.

Review Questions 4.2

1. Describe the proper body positions to perform a backward roll.

The body positions to perform a backward roll are:

2. Perform two complete backward rolls.

In groups, perform your backward rolls with and without the support of your friends. Ask friends to assess and comment on your backward rolls.

Review Questions 4.3

1. Describe the key steps involved performing a handstand.

The key steps involved in performing a handstand are:

2. Describe the body positions to perform a handstand.

The body positions to perform a handstand are:

3. Perform a handstand with or without support.

In groups, perform your handstand with and without the support of your friends. Ask friends to assess and comment on your handstand.

Extended Reading

- Any approved physical education and health book by NaCCA
- Any useful supplementary material, especially the internet

References

1. Bruce, A. F. (2024). Gymnastics. <https://www.britannica.com/sports/gymnastics>
2. Gymnastics. New York: Association Press. p. 17. ISBN 9780809617043.
3. Leonard, F. E. (1923). A Guide to the History of Physical Education. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and New York, New York: Lea & Febiger. pp. 232–233
4. Solly, M. (2020). Magazine Smithsonian - A History of Gymnastics, From Ancient Greece to Tokyo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Ghana Education
Service (GES)



List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Dr. Edward Ansah	UCC, Cape Coast
Samuel Richard Marcourt	Wesley College, Kumasi
Isaac Twene	Techiman, MEO
Charlotte Hottor	Methodist Girls, Mamfe