

GYMNASTICS

1. Discuss:

Are you a born gymnast? Have you got the perfect build for gymnastics?
What common traits do all top gymnasts need?

2. Arrange the events into three groups:

ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS	ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS	RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS
Men's competition	Women's competition	

Clubs – vault – floor exercise – pommel horse – ball – ribbon – horizontal bar – hoop – balance beam – rings – uneven bars – parallel bars – rope

3. Read the text

ELITE GYMNASTS

Why Body Size is so Important

Gymnastics has moved over the last 25 years into an era characterised by athleticism, agility and small body size. Through the 1970's with Olga Korbet and Nadia Comanichi and into the 80's with Oksana Omilianchik and Mary-Lou Retton, contemporary gymnastics certainly witnessed the 'child champion'. Small and strong; the body shape these athletes had, gave them the opportunity to bring the complexity of women's gymnastics to a higher level.

Recently, the Federation of International Gymnastics raised the minimum age of senior women gymnasts from 15 to 16 years. The Federation recognised that young girls with small bodies often achieved higher levels of performance early in their careers and the higher minimum age was an attempt to reward girls who stay in the sport to physical maturity.

New Trends in Performance Judging

Moving into the new millennium, all available information indicates that the next gymnastic 'Code of Points' will concentrate on acrobatics. This will encourage the athletes with the acrobatic athletic structure currently being characterised by American Vanessa Atler - an athlete who is compact in body size, explosive and dynamic and performs complex acrobatics.

A new open ended judging criteria will start to be used and more difficult and complex routines will be rewarded with higher scores.

Selection of Athletes

Of all female sports, gymnastics has one of the most obvious trade-mark body images. Research suggests that female gymnastics is more dependent on genotype, with athletes already being of small body with short limbs, broad shoulders, and narrow hips. If body type is so important to successful performance in gymnastics, it seems logical to encourage girls with inappropriate body shapes into alternative sports in which they can have success.

Training and Body Growth

In order to achieve an internationally competitive level of gymnastic performance a great amount of training is necessary. The effect that this training has on the delicate balance of the developing body is difficult to measure. Girls who are identified as having the necessary potential to be included in an intensive gymnastic training often already have a smaller, stronger and leaner body than the average. Intense gymnastic training may result in a lower intensity of growth, delayed sexual maturation and altered rhythm of the stages of development. The often found delay in menarche is the consequence of: caloric deficit with exercise over time, critical body weight and altered hormonal levels.

A Match the expressions from the text with the words or phrases with similar meaning:

agility	to succeed in doing or having what you planned, usually after a lot of effort
to recognise	an arm or a leg
research	ability to move or think quickly and easily
inappropriate	to make sth. different
limb	a study of sth. to discover new facts
to achieve	wrong, non-standard, unsuitable
lean	a situation in which sth. happens later or more slowly than you expected
to alter	thin and looking physically fit
delay	to accept that sth. is true or important

B Answer these questions:

1. Why did the Federation raise the minimum age in senior competition?
2. What do the judges currently focus on?
3. What are the factors influencing gymnastic performance?
4. Is it fair to discourage girls and boys with unsuitable body shapes from gymnastics?
5. What are the results of intense gymnastic training? Are there any long-term consequences?