



# Gymnastics for Primary Schools



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## If you are reading this, you are probably a teacher or educator who wants to teach Gymnastics in your school but doesn't know where to start.

You may be thinking that you don't feel confident enough to demonstrate the gymnastics moves or you're not sure about safety for the children.

You may think that you don't know how to structure the lesson and deliver the correct gymnastics skills that are appropriate for the age and skill level of the children.

You may be worried about assessing Gymnastics and unsure of the criteria to use for assessment.

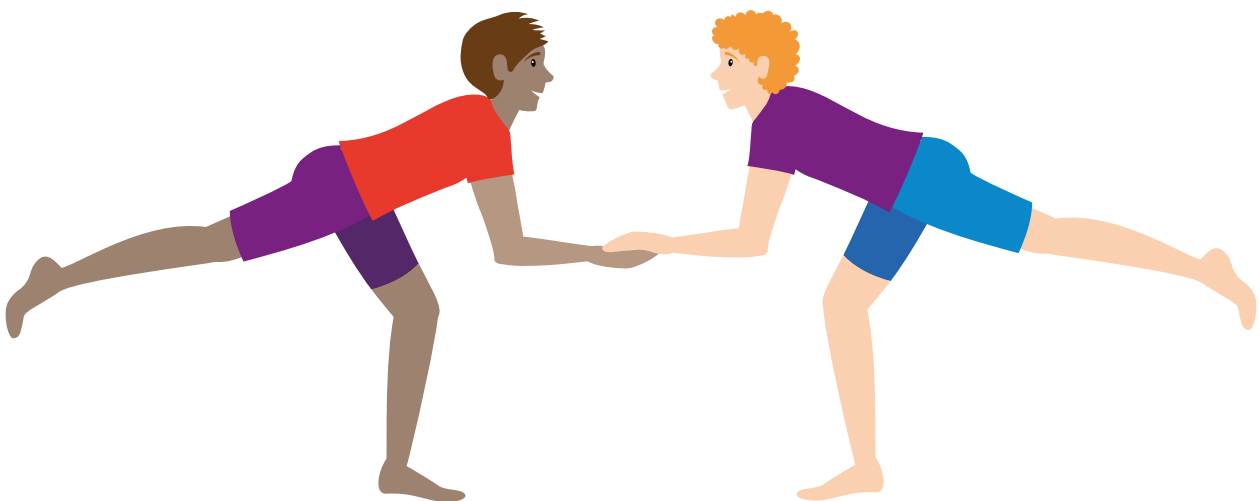
### So how can we solve your problems?

Teaching any kind of PE session including Gymnastics is easy and just by planning and preparing before the sessions and finding some good resources will reduce the workload immensely.

We believe in 4 Guiding Principles that shape how you plan and deliver any type of PE lesson:

- ✔ **START SIMPLE** - Start with the basic skills that the children need for the particular sport, game or discipline.
- ✔ **PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT** – Give the children lots of opportunities to practice the basic skills in lots of different ways.
- ✔ **SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL** – allow the children lots of time to use equipment in small groups, reduce waiting times and give everyone a chance to shine.
- ✔ **And finally, ...FUN FUN FUN!** Make sure each lesson is a fun and positive experience for everyone – teacher included!

Using these Guiding Principles will ensure that you don't get swept away by the lure of a full performance before the children can perform the basic skills and will eliminate a lot of the negative experiences that children (and adults!) have in PE.



## Our 7 steps approach

By using the 7 steps to teaching Gymnastics approach you will be able to give the kids a fun, safe and engaging Gymnastics session where they will learn the correct movements with good technique. The 7 areas to focus on are below, I have put them in an order to help you roll this out effectively.

### 1. Planning the lessons

**Why:** Having a toolbox of activities to choose from takes the worry and stress out of the session and ensures you have lots of activities to keep the children engaged.

You don't have to fit in all the activities, it just helps to have lots of ideas ready so that there is no down time where children are waiting or not given something to do, as that is when most problems with behaviour occur. As we know, keeping children active is better for their bodies and their brains so having them standing around or sitting down waiting is far from ideal.

There needs to be activities for a Warmup and Cool down and activities for the Main part of the session where the children will learn and practice the movements that are the main learning outcomes for the session.

**How:** Choose a topic from the Gymnastics repertoire and decide on the activities that are appropriate for the age of the children. The topics are:



You may choose Rolling as your topic and have Teddy Bear roll and Forward roll as your activities. Decide how you will demonstrate the movement and the technique required for these movements. You may have some flashcards or a video to show. You could demonstrate the movement yourself or get another child to model the movement.

**You can access great FREE RESOURCES from:**

**imoves** <https://youtu.be/e7EzEgKQssU>

**British Gymnastics** <https://www.british-gymnastics.org>

### 2. The Warmup

**Why:** The Warmup part of the session gets the children's bodies and minds ready for the session and prepares them for the activities ahead. Try to use activities in the Warmup that are similar to the activities in the Main part of the session. Also use activities from previous learning to recap.

**How:** An example of a Warmup for a session focussed on Travelling could be like this:

1. Demonstrate leading a partner around the room (one behind the other) while changing 'pathway' (direction) every 5 or 6 steps.

2. Encourage the leader to use their eyes to find space and to not touch anyone else while they are travelling. Say 'freeze' when you want children to stop. Swap over so both children have a go at being the leader.

### 3. The Main Activity

**Why:** In this part of the session the children will learn and practice the movements that are the main learning outcomes for the session. They can also put together sequences of movements that they have learned previously, practice the sequences and perform for other children in the class.

It is important not to squeeze too many activities into the session otherwise the children will not be able to remember the names of the movements and the correct technique that is required for each movement. It is better to learn fewer movements, practice them and explore them in different ways.

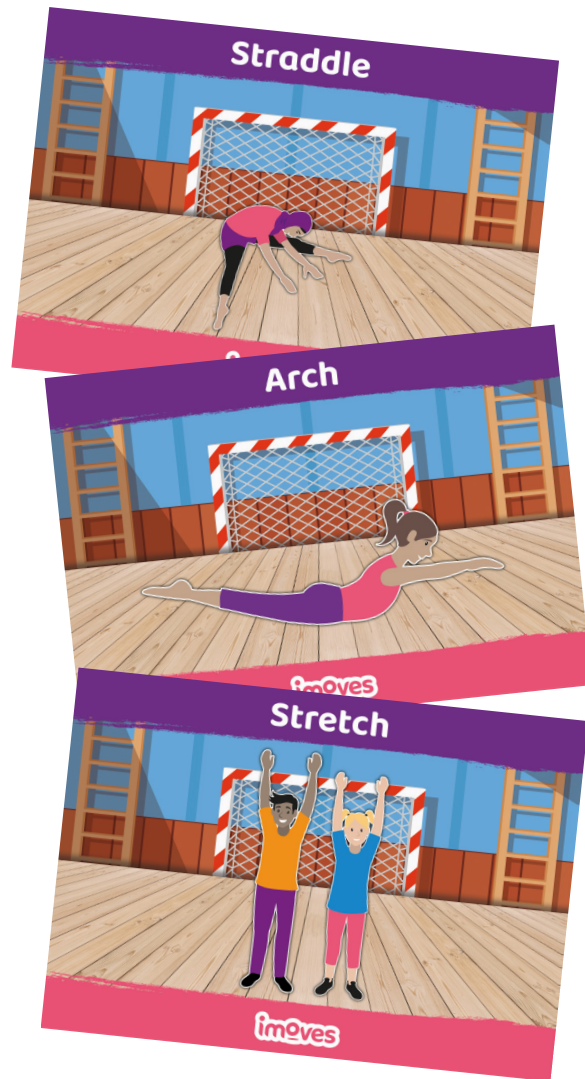
**How:** Use the activities that you have prepared in your toolbox and think of lots of different ways to practice them e.g. individual practice, choose children to demonstrate each activity before the rest of the class have a go, teach to a partner, work with a group and put the move into a formation, showcase individuals or groups who have got a good idea or who are working extra hard. The children could put the moves they have learned into a sequence with a theme and used a themed piece of music to work to.

Demonstrate the activity using flashcards, videos or children modelling and when the children are watching demonstrations make it clear to the rest of the class 2 or 3 things which are expected from them in each activity.

When working in groups, try not to have more than 4 children in a group (to avoid waiting too long for their turn).

Encourage children to think about making their movements look good e.g. arms straight, head up etc.

When using equipment always spend a few minutes reminding children how to stay safe e.g. no jumping from the frame, only one person on a table/bench at one time.



### 4. The Cool Down

**Why:** Returning the body to its pre-exercise state during the cool down allows the heart rate to return to a more normal level, the breathing rate to slow down and the body temperature to lower. Adding in some mild stretching can reduce soreness in the muscles that have worked during the session. Even some relaxation and mindfulness can be done in the cool down with great benefits for over-stimulated children.

**How:** Slowing down the movements and reducing the range of movement will start the cool down process. An example of a cool down for a session focussed on Travelling could be like this:

**Children choose a level and travel around the room into spaces. Finish with everyone travelling slowly using a high level (on balls of their feet, arms high) to stretch through their body.**

## 5. Prepare the Space and Equipment

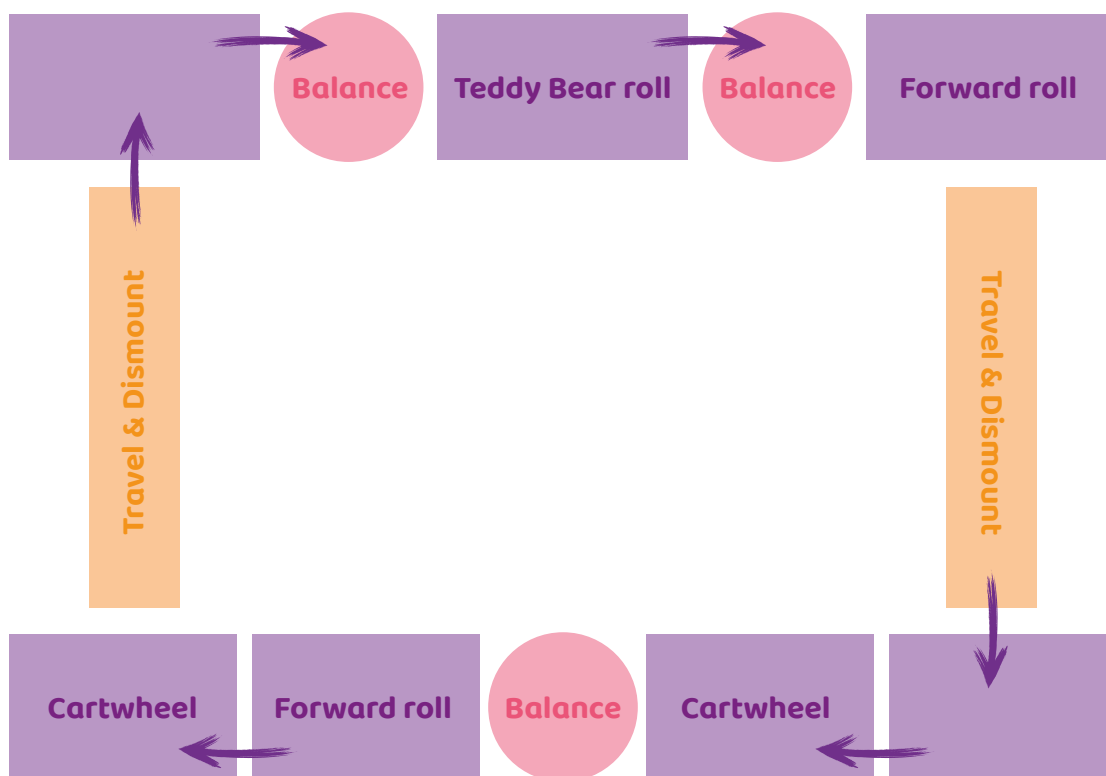
**Why:** In an ideal world there would always be lots of open space for the children to take part in activities and enough equipment for everyone, however this is often not the case. The space that is available at the time of your scheduled PE lesson may or may not be adequate for the types of activities you have planned and you may have to have a Plan B in place just in case. The children may have to share equipment or take it in turns to use pieces of equipment.

**How:** Make sure you have a large, clear space available that will be safe for the number of children in your class. If the children are working mainly standing or on their feet, it is not necessary to have mats. However, if they are putting their body on the floor then mats are essential, even if they are only thin, exercise mats. Crash mats are needed only when children are jumping off of equipment, doing assisted jumps using springboards or trampolines or dismounting from equipment such as beam or bars.

If you are planning to use small equipment such as ribbons, hoops or balls try to have 1 per child or at the very least 1 between 2 children. If the children have to share, make sure that the child without the equipment is practicing the move and not standing still, waiting for the equipment.

If you are using large equipment such as bench or beam, it is very easy to have the children waiting in a line for their turn. However, if you make a circuit around the room then the children are more active and practicing more movements and not having to wait around for so long.

**An example of a circuit could be like this:**



The children perform a different move on each mat, beam and hoop. They must wait until the child has moved off the area in front of them before they step on to it. There might be a short waiting time in each area.

The teacher or the children select several different moves to perform as they move around the circuit. When they are able to perform more moves with control and precision, they could all choose their own moves for the circuit.

## 6. Assessing Gymnastics

**Why:** A lot of teachers feel that Gymnastics assessment is difficult, but it needn't be. Although the ideal would be to assess every lesson, we understand a mix of lack of time and lack of confidence in how to assess Gymnastics can lead to it not happening at all!

Rather than assessing every lesson, we believe through a mixture of the right questions in each lesson (Formative assessment) to support ongoing student learning and an assessment at the beginning and end of the topic (summative assessment) is enough for high quality assessment to be undertaken.

### Hot tip - Questioning

Questioning is a key tool in formative assessment and can be used to check for knowledge and understanding; and to also invite open discussion around the topic. It is important as it involves providing pupils with constructive feedback, diagnosing future learning needs, describing students' progress, and determining their strengths and weaknesses. Make sure you have some questions laid out in your lesson plan.

Exactly how you would ask questions in every other subject area!

**How:** You could create a very simple checklist for the children to assess themselves. The criteria on the checklist would be very basic as in this example:

Tick	
	I can copy some basic gymnastics moves
	I can perform basic gymnastics moves with control and good technique
	I can use basic moves to create a short sequence
	I can work well with a partner or small group
	I can make suggestions on how to improve my performance

The children use age appropriate language to answer the questions such as, for younger children as simple as yes or no; for older children this can be broken down into beginning, developing and mastery using language such as; 'doing it some of the time'; 'doing it most of the time'; and 'doing it all the time'.

These can then be collated into a class level record so you can see how the whole class has progressed over the topic and ultimately year.

## 7. Get Useful Resources

**Why:** Using great visual tools to show the children the movements will really enhance the learning experience for them and take some of the pressure off the teacher.

**How:** You can access great FREE RESOURCES from:

**imoves** <https://imoves.com/>

**imoves YouTube** <https://youtu.be/e7EzEgKQssU>

**British Gymnastics** <https://www.british-gymnastics.org>



## A Final Thought

After reading this I hope you're thinking "I can do this!"

You may feel less worried about delivering Gymnastics to your children and feel more confident with the structure and content of the lesson.

There are lots of high quality support out there and I've signposted you to some which you can use straight away without fuss.

As always, if you need any help (or would like someone to bounce ideas off) I'm here, so please get in touch at [imogen@imoves.com](mailto:imogen@imoves.com)

Best wishes,  
Imogen

PS. If you haven't already, create your [imoves.com](https://imoves.com) free for life account to give you everything you need to start teaching Gymnastics in your school.

