



Glossary of Gymnastics Terms

This glossary explains some of the key terms you may hear as your child progresses through Recreational or Competitive gymnastics at Valleys Gymnastics Academy (VGA).

ABC (Annette Brown Classic) – A structured competition pathway organised by Welsh Gymnastics. Gymnasts compete over 4 apparatus and at one of 4 levels. After Tin level, girls may progress to Zinc which is held once per year the autumn. ABC training groups and competitions are by invite only and typically take place 2-3 times per year.

Chalk - Used on hands (and sometimes feet) to improve grip and reduce slipping on apparatus. It can be purchased in a block or powder form. There is no difference aside from individual preference.

Classic Challenge – This is the level of competition above ABC and involves several levels: Zinc, Copper, Bronze, Silver, Gold.

Chalk - Used on hands (and sometimes feet) to improve grip and reduce slipping on apparatus. It can be purchased in a block or powder form. There is no difference aside from individual preference.

Competition Attire – In competition, teams / clubs of gymnasts are required to wear matching ‘uniform’ – if they do not, a penalty may be applied to the score of the team / individual. The uniform may be different for different levels across the club, so parents / carers need to access specific information from a coach / competition invite letter.

Competitive Gymnastics – Structured training leading to competitions (local, regional and national, e.g. ABC, Classic Challenge, Grades). There are many different competitions, and entry is by invite (by email) only.

Conditioning – Strength and flexibility training to support gymnastics. Without strength, flexibility and appropriate physical preparation, gymnasts will find skill development very difficult. E.g. with a weak core, gymnasts may be unable to stand from a forward roll; without leg strength / tightness, body tightness and the ability to rebound, gymnasts will tumble very slowly and be unable to achieve many skills. Conditioning also helps in terms of injury prevention. Also, see S&C).

Development Group – A group focusing on building strong foundations for gymnastics, particularly focusing on strength, flexibility and body tension, as well as basic skills.

Drill / ‘prep’ – A practice exercise that helps develop a skill safely – you will see lots of these in sessions.

FIG – This stands for ‘Federation Internationale de Gymnastique,’ recently rebranded as World Gymnastics. It is the global governing body for gymnastics, and it governs and regulates our sport at the highest level (with these rules being filtered down) and runs international events at the top level.

Flexi Schedule – At VGA (and St Tydfils) we can offer flexible attendance in the school holidays. This means that recreational gymnasts can pick up replacement / additional classes at no extra cost. Information on this is sent out prior to each school holiday.

Grades - British Gymnastics assessments showing skill development, run as a competition format usually once per year. Specific skills and routines have to be performed so they can be very demanding and are only suited to a handful of gymnasts. If this is something your child will be involved in then the coaches will inform you. These assessments run like a competition, but the gymnasts also perform a ‘Range and Conditioning (girls)’ or ‘PPP (boys)’ routine, designed to test strength, flexibility and control.

Judging (scoring) at competitions – Judging is very complex and those undertaking this role have undertaken several qualifications. When a gymnast performs, each skill needs to achieve a certain performance level to be credited. In addition, judges may deduct 0.1, 0.3 or 0.5 for small, medium or large errors. One single skill is usually subject to several deductions. For example, for a tuck jump being performed on beam a judge may deduct up to 0.3 for lack of height, up to 0.3 for clarity of shape and then landing deductions (wobbles), which range from 0.1 for a small wobble to 1.0 for a fall from the apparatus. When a routine is performed on beam or floor, additional penalties related to artistry and sureness of performance are also applied and these can easily be up to 0.8 of a mark. Rules vary across competitions, depending on the level of the gymnasts.

#ItsMyJourney - Every gymnast develops at their own pace, has their own ups and downs and their own journey in the sport (and beyond). This is an ethos championed and encouraged by VGA.

MAG (Men’s Artistic Gymnastics) – Incorporating the 6 pieces of apparatus (floor, pommel, p-bars, vault, rings, high bar) plus PPP for MAG grades competitions.

Recreational Gymnastics – Gymnastics for fun, fitness, and confidence - leading to regional recreational competitions such as Gymspire and Prelims (run by Welsh Gymnastics). VGA also offer in-house club competitions for its recreational members, and we encourage as many children as possible to attend.

Recreational Assessment Programme – Structured training for young gymnasts aged approx. 5-7, to assess for ability to progress to competitive groups. Gymnasts with natural strength, flexibility, coordination and coachability may be selected for this Programme. Specific trials are held 1-2 times per year.

Rise Gymnastics - British Gymnastics Awards for recreational gymnastics. Gymnasts cover the work as part of their sessions and can be assessed in the school holidays if you wish. The sessions will be promoted as part of the Holiday Programme and are entirely optional.

S&C (strength and conditioning) – This is very similar to conditioning but at VGA is delivered by external providers from Cardiff Met. Some gymnasts will have opportunities to work with the practitioners. However, all coaches learn from the practitioners through workshops and clinics and use the knowledge / work in their sessions so all gymnasts benefit. This type of conditioning is more generic – giving children and young people additional transferrable, foundation movement skills.

Skill – A specific movement (e.g. cartwheel, handstand, straddle over vault, upstart)

Support / spotting - Coach physically provides aid to help a gymnast safely learn a skill. Coaches may use apparatus stations / drills instead of providing support - or may use a range of methods.

Team Gym – A team-based discipline where gymnasts compete in teams of 6-12 on vault, floor and trampette. To increase accessibility, ‘micro team’ events are run, where teams comprise 3-5 members.

#TheVGAWay - Positive, safe, participant-focussed and supportive coaching focused on progress – ‘the way we do things’ at VGA.

WAG (Women’s Artistic Gymnastics) – Incorporating the 4 pieces of apparatus (vault, bars, beam and floor) plus range and conditioning when it comes to WAG grades competitions.