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Supporting the Professional  
Learning of School Leaders  
and Teachers

# Oide Primary Wellbeing

## Gymnastics for All

A resource to support the  
teaching and learning of  
gymnastics

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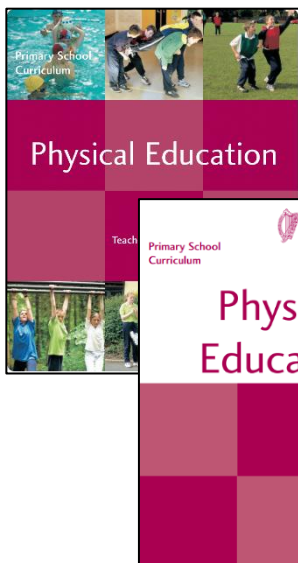
### Useful Gymnastics Websites

- Oide Primary PE - <https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/physical-education/professional-learning-materials/>
- Gymnastic Resources for the PE lesson - [www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/pe/strands/Gymnastics/](http://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/pe/strands/Gymnastics/)
- Physical Literacy resources - [www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/](http://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/)
- Disentangling Inclusion in Primary Physical Education - <https://www.dippe.lu/>
- Action for Life – Gymnastics Lessons - <https://irishheart.ie/schools/primary-schools/action-for-life/>

**Animal walk cards, gymnastics skills cards, rolling cards and sequencing cards can be downloaded from** <https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/physical-education/professional-learning-materials/>

## Overview of the PE curriculum

### Gymnastics Strand



*Gymnastics in physical education is concerned with the use of movement in a creative way in response to set tasks, both individually and with others. Children explore movement on the floor and when negotiating a variety of equipment. The gymnastics curriculum encourages children to participate in movement experiences that are open to personal interpretation, providing every child with the opportunity to experience success at a personal level, by engaging in challenging but realistically achievable tasks. As the children progress through a sequential programme they are encouraged to strive for more control over their movements and to respond to more complex tasks. They can be helped to enjoy and develop an appreciation of gymnastics while realising individual potential and limitations, thus enhancing overall development’.*

**NCCA, 1999 Primary School PE Curriculum, page 4.**



### Warm-ups

Warm-up activities are essential to prepare the body for the PE lesson. These warm-ups have a particular focus on the shapes and movements that will support the children to develop the body strength and conditioning needed to hold themselves in inverted positions and to develop gymnastic skills.

The **purpose** of **warmups** in gymnastics is to prepare the pupils for engaging in gymnastics specific skills. This is done through increasing the heart rate and blood flow and also getting the pupils used to relatable activities that will help the pupils when engaging in gymnastics activities.

The following are a selection of warm up activities suitable for use in a PE lesson.

### **Warm up to *Cardio Time Song* by Acrobatic Arts**

Movements include – Jumping Jacks, high knees, balancing on one leg, plank, hollow body, downward dog, rock n roll, crab hold, superman hold.

### **Head shoulders knees and toes**

Song starts in plank position for head shoulders knees and toes. Move onto back into hollow body position and touch eyes, ears mouth. Stay on back and v-sit to knees and toes twice.

### **The Bean Game**

Appoint one pupil to be a caller and they call out different kinds of beans and the children perform the actions:

- String Bean Stand tall and narrow (straight shape).
- Broad Bean Stand in a star shape.
- Jumping Bean Jump up and down.
- Kidney Bean Cross your legs and say: Oooh.
- Jellybean Wobble like jelly.
- Baked Bean – curl the body into a ball (tuck shape): Phew
- French Bean Say: Ooo la la

• If the caller says Runner Bean, everyone runs. The caller chases everyone. Whoever is tagged becomes the next caller.

### **Plank Roll Game**

In groups of four, begin in the plank position, lower to tummy. The last person runs back to the start as three pupils roll and make a plank again. Team race to target spot repeating this sequence.

### **Plank Tunnel Game**

Group pupils into small groups. The first pupil makes a plank. Next pupil crawls under the first and holds a plank position. The third pupil crawls under the first two and makes a plank position. The last pupil crawls under the first three planks and holds a plank at the end. Then it is time for the first pupil to crawl under again and hold another plank. The game continues until the group reaches a target.

## Animal walks

Animal walk movements are support and locomotor movements on two, three or four body parts. The **purpose of Animal Walks** is to develop coordination, bodily awareness and upper body strength. This is necessary for the development of gymnastics skills. Pupils can practice these animal walks in fun and enjoyable ways in the PE lesson which will assist them to develop the strength, coordination and mobility required to participate in the Gymnastics PE lesson.

When exploring the activities please consider how these activities could be modified to provide further opportunities to practice a variety of animal walks.

# DONKEY KICK





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TEACHING POINTS

1. Move into downward dog pose and push weight onto hands
2. Jump two feet towards the bottom and then land both feet on the ground and repeat

Focus eyes on the space in between the hands

🎯

FURTHER CHALLENGE

Complete a number of donkey kicks in a row

In pairs, pupils mirror each other when completing the donkey kick

Relay Race: Group pupils in small groups and sequence a number of donkey kicks in a row to participate in a relay race

👤👤

KEEP MOVING

Peer Observation: One partner does the donkey kick while the other partner names one thing they are doing well and one way they can improve

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See [www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/strands/Gymnastics](http://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/strands/Gymnastics) for supplementary resources

Figure 1: Sample of Animal Walk Teaching Resource Card



## Games to develop Animal Walks

One way to practice animal walk games in a fun and enjoyable way in the PE lesson is through animal walk games.

Animal walk games can be played competitively or cooperatively which can enhance the sense of enjoyment and engagement whilst still developing the animal walks.

The following are suitable games to extend animal walk activities.

### Seal Game

This is a relay game. Pupils pretend to be a seal and pull themselves along the ground using their arms only to a ball at the end. The ball is placed inside a hoop. They nudge the ball with their nose, pushing it out of a hoop. The pupils stand, retrieves the ball and returns it to the hoop. Pupils run back to their team.

### Over Under Around Game

Pupils in pairs sit back-to-back. Teacher calls out a sequence. Pupils A holds a balance. Pupil B travels under, over or around Pupils A based on the sequence called out by the teacher.

Sequence examples “Under, over, under, over” “Under over around” “Over, around, over”

Balances can include plank, superman, tabletop hold, bear hold.

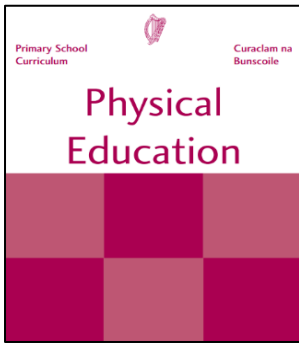
The pupils who are traveling can choose from jumping, crawling, stepping or animal movements to travel.

Pairs sit back-to-back when the sequence is completed.

### Animal walk with beanbags relay

In small groups, one pupil at a time balances a bean bag on their back and race to a target. Pupils turn over at target makes a crab and balances the bean bag on stomach. Child crab walks back to their team.

## Gymnastics Skills



*‘The Gymnastics strand contains activities which refer to the teaching of specific skills. A specific skill is a set move which, to be performed correctly, requires a good body line, for example a headstand or handstand. Whereas all aspects of gymnastics must be planned with an emphasis on the state of readiness of the child, this applies particularly to the teaching of specific skills. To be able to perform these with a degree of success, the child needs to be strong and supple and be able to create tension throughout the body. The*

*teacher should only teach these skills when the child is proficient in the introductory exercises. However, this does not mean that skills are an end in themselves: they are a basis from which purposeful and creative gymnastics can develop’.*

### NCCA, 1999 PE Teacher Guidelines, page 9

Proficiency in introductory gymnastics exercises requires pupils to have a level of coordination, balance, agility, body tension and coordination.

**Balance** is the ability to move your body in space while performing static movements.

**Coordination** is the ability to use several body parts simultaneously to complete a task.

**Agility** is the ability to transition between several positions efficiently and quickly.

**Body Tension** in gymnastics is the tightening of core body muscles in order to achieve a quality

The resources include;

- Gymnastics skills teaching cards.
- Gymnastics skills in action videos

**HEADSTAND PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES**

1. Make the tabletop position - stack on all fours. Make Angry cat pose, then touch the head on the floor.
2. Move the head and hands into a tripod position. Head and hands in tripod, walk the feet closer to the knees & touch the elbows.
3. Try a teddy bear balance with two legs on elbows.

When pupil is balanced with the hips above the head, balance with one leg on one elbow.

Hold the teddy bear balance for 5 seconds. Move to a wall for safety.

Practice in teddy bear balance, lifting one knee up to tuck and alternate.

Neck warm up - comfort the neck gently by moving the head from side to side. Gently stretch the head up and down.

Start on knees, make tripod, flex the feet and stack. Start on knees, make tripod, flex the feet, stack, lift alternate legs.

Observe pupils closely and make corrections each step of the way. Pupils should press on hands to prevent falling over.

See [www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/strands/Gymnastics](http://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/strands/Gymnastics) for supplementary resources

**HEADSTAND**

1. Press hands on the mat with spider fingers, make a tripod of the hands and head. Stack hips in line with head with rounded back. Ensure pupil maintains focus on feet.
2. Tuck legs.
3. Raise to a straight position.

Start every headstand practice with preliminary activities. Use of the wall is a helpful support for any stage of completing a headstand. Observe pupils closely and make corrections each step of the way. Pupils should press on hands to prevent falling over.

Diamond - from a straight head stand, bend both legs so only the toes are touching, and legs form a diamond shape. Lightning bolt - from a diamond headstand, straighten one leg to show a lightning bolt.

See [www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/strands/Gymnastics](http://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/strands/Gymnastics) for supplementary resources

Figure 2: Sample of Gymnastics Skills Teaching Resource Card




## Rolling

Rolling is an important element of the Gymnastics strand of the PE curriculum. The following skills cards were developed to support you in safely teaching a wide variety of rolling techniques and progressions within gymnastics at all class levels

<https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Gymnastics-Roll-Cards.pdf>

### Forward Roll





**Teaching Points**

- Stand with your feet together. Bend your knees and place the palms of your hands on the mat flat and open (fingers spread out) with the fingers pointing forward.
- Lift your hips and bottom.
- Tuck your chin into your knees.
- Push up and forward from the feet.
- Roll like a ball onto the shoulders and upper back. Continue to roll to arrive on to the feet.
- Stretch arms upwards and forwards to achieve the final position.

**Safety Points**

- The pupil's head should be tucked in and should not touch the mat.
- To help maintain the tucked neck ask the pupil to hold a beanbag under their chin during the roll.
- Ensure pupils have mastered all of the other rolls before beginning to practise the forward roll.


Gymnastics Skills Cards for Physical Education


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To view a video of each roll please visit <https://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primarygymrolling/>

## Station Teaching

The purpose of **Station teaching** is to provide pupils with further opportunities to explore and develop gymnastic skills and provide opportunities to collaborate in pairs or small groups for short periods of time.

These autonomous activities can be motivating for the pupils while also providing teachers with an opportunity to work with a small group. This enables the teacher to provide individual or small group support for the teaching and learning of specific gymnastic skills while the rest of the class engage in relevant gymnastic activities.

A suitable station teaching resource, 'The Fun Gym Circuit', can be found at <https://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/primary/pe/strands/Gymnastics/>. This resource, which can be used as a pupil resource, includes opportunities to explore a range of Gymnastics skills such as balancing, animal walks, shapes, jumps, travelling and rolls.

### THE FUN GYM CIRCUIT

**Instructions:**

- Four children per station (two working and two resting) with teacher based at a particular skill station.
- Set up the circuit ensuring that activities working similar muscle groups or movement skills are not placed one after another.
- The children follow the instructions and work at the station for 20 seconds. On signal, swap over.
- Once each child in the group has completed 20 seconds of an activity the groups move on one station.
- Repeat until circuit is complete.
- One complete circuit should take around 15 minutes to complete.

**Activity stations:**

- Circle arm walk
- N-S-E-W jumping
- Donkey kick
- Perimeter travelling on foot
- Caterpillar walk
- Hula hoop relay
- Rummy jumps
- Balancing on small body parts
- Basic jumps
- Basic rolls
- Travelling on hands and feet
- Balancing on large body parts

THE FUN GYM CIRCUIT • CIARA DELANEY

Figure 3: Sample of Station Teaching Card



## Creation of Gymnastics Sequences

The **purpose of sequencing in gymnastics** is to provide an opportunity to consolidate and refine learning in the Gymnastics lesson over time. The creation of sequences in small groups is a useful cooperative activity which promotes pupils' autonomy and voice. As pupils become more familiar with the creation of gymnastics sequences, encourage pupils to design their own gymnastics sequences to showcase a theme or retell a story.

This printable resource provides opportunities for pupils to create and showcase Gymnastic sequences. The resources comprise of a Gymnastic sequencing card and a variety of gymnastics movement cards. In small groups, pupils will choose a Gymnastics sequencing card and will then match gymnastic movement cards to it. In small groups they will then create and show case a sequence. When completed they will choose a new Gymnastics sequencing card or create their own gymnastics sequence.

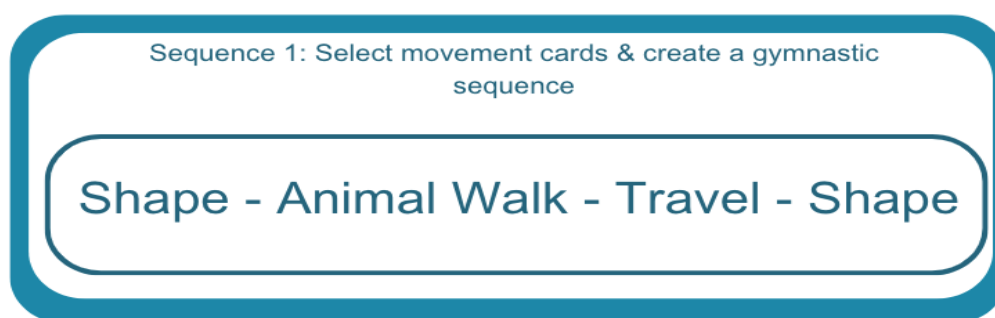


Figure 4: Sample of Gymnastic Sequencing Card

## Assessment in the Gymnastics lesson

**Self-Assessment:** Pupils can use goal setting to identify their progress to date and then plan how they can take responsibility for their learning in the gymnastics lesson and how they can further develop their gymnastic skills. See individual goal setting resources available on [www.scoilnet.ie/index.php?id=2544](http://www.scoilnet.ie/index.php?id=2544).

**Peer Observation:** Pupils observe their partner as they perform each gymnastic skill and provide suitable feedback. This is also a suitable opportunity to integrate the use of Digital Technologies in the PE lesson, in small groups, pupils can record each other performing gymnastic skills and provide suitable feedback.

**Teacher Observation:** Teachers observe pupils' performance of preliminary activities and when they feel pupils are ready and have had plenty of practice of being in an inverted position, they can then move on to further develop the skill. Observe pupils as they complete each gymnastic skill observing one teaching point at a time.

**Teacher designed tasks and tests:** The use of sequencing tasks provides the teacher with an opportunity to observe pupils as they perform their sequences.

### Useful vocabulary in the Gymnastics lesson

The Gymnastics lesson provides an opportunity to introduce and practice subject specific vocabulary in real contexts. Below is a list of some useful terms for the Gymnastics lesson. Consider what further vocabulary can be used during gymnastics lessons.

Posture	Coordination	Refine
Tension	Agility	Flex
Stack	Balance	Tripod
Inversion	Core	Frame

### Pupil Voice in the Gymnastics lesson

Listening and responding to pupils’ voices is central to the quality of immediate experiences as well as influencing continued participation in the PE lesson and including gymnastics lesson. Using Pupil voice strategies in physical education lessons can help amplify children’s voices through Providing a sense of autonomy, sharing their perspectives, and directing and taking responsibility for their learning. The following are a selection of strategies that work towards developing pupil autonomy and voice in the PE lesson.

#### Teacher Communication



#### Autonomy & Choice in PE lesson

**Autonomy and Choice in the PE Lesson**  
Autonomy and choice need to be carefully structured and guided by the teacher to support curricular objectives and progressive development.

- Choice of playing area:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the size or location of the playing area."
- Choice of music:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Autonomy over how to practice:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Choice of movement:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Level of challenge:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Choice of activity:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Autonomy over time:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Choice of equipment:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Competitive or collaborative?** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Goal setting:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."
- Self-paced progression:** "I think it's great if you would like to change the music or location of the playing area."

#### Goal Setting & Self-Assessment

**GOAL SETTING**

Name:

### Inclusion in the Gymnastics lesson

#### Move Well Move Often Inclusive Resource

Pages 68 – 72 of this inclusive resource provides practical gymnastics activities for pupils with SEN to engage with.

