

## Gym for Tots

*Welcome to the Gym for Tots program! The following are guidelines to make your child's gymnastics experience an enjoyable and successful one.*

### Arrival

We suggest you arrive 10 minutes before your class begins. In our lobby you will find books, paper, and crayons for your child's enjoyment. All children and adults must remove their shoes before entering the gym. Once your child is inside our state-of-the-art gym, it is perfectly normal for your child to want to run and climb rather than join our circle time, a specific circuit or activity. If this is the case, it's alright to allow your child to wander and explore, but make sure you are at your child's side at all times to ensure their safety. Soon you can encourage your child to rejoin their group or activity. You are welcome to ask the teachers for their assistance.

### In the Gym

Allow your child to decide which set of challenges they wish to work on. They are likely to work longer and benefit more from the activity in which they express a natural interest. Learning to master a specific task is a favorite toddler pastime. Allow your child to repeat a skill over and over again. There is no wrong or right way to use a piece of equipment as long as the child is safe. Let your child be creative and follow their lead. **Cell phone use is prohibited in the gym. We do allow for a few photos to be taken during the class time, but please only photograph your child. If coaches feel cell phone use is becoming a safety concern we will prohibit them entirely.**

### Traffic Jams

These do occur on the equipment. Stay close by to help your child figure out a way to maneuver. Please help your child avoid the frustrations that lead to physical responses by ensuring a safe distance between children. They need your help for this.

### Spotting

There are two different ways to spot your child, the "active" and the "safety" spot.

The aim of the "active spot" is to guide your child's movement so they develop an awareness of their body and establish the movement patterns necessary for skill learning. While active spotting, do not hold their hands so that the arms are lifted higher than their shoulders. The best spot to support is the pelvis, by placing one open hand flat across their pelvis and one on the lower back. This way your child is free to move and develop an awareness of the pelvis as the center of gravity.

The "safety spot" is used when your child has successfully acquired the skill on their own. Be close at hand and ready for action, but wait as long as is safe before offering physical assistance. The moment you touch your child their weight will shift; their sense of center and balance will move to where you have touched them and away from their own center of gravity. As a guide, allow your child to take the lead and initiate movement.

### **Dealing with Fear**

If your child stiffens and/or resists an exercise, you may respond in one of these ways:

1. Skip to the next area
2. Allow them to watch a classmate perform the skill
3. Model the skill yourself or ask your teacher to demonstrate
4. Allow them to try it with the teacher
5. Never force a child to perform

Try again the following week and keep in mind that there are different types of learners. Some children learn by watching or by listening and others by moving.

### **Language Usage**

Reinforce verbally what your child is doing and where they are in space. They will learn the name of the particular skill they are learning and the most important directional terms. For example, up/down, under/over, before/after, etc... Encourage the child by using full sentences, instead of repeating the word "sit, sit, sit..." try saying, "Let's sit on the green mat."

In addition to the overall body control, strength, and balance your child is acquiring in the gym class, building self-confidence is one of the most important aspects of the class. Allow your child to explore all of the movement possibilities, and share their excitement with them as they stand on top of a platform and survey the world from newfound heights.

### **A typical class routine includes the following:**

#### **Welcome/Exploration Time**

Class begins with a group activity in the center of the gym, students can choose to participate or take the time to acclimate to the gym and explore the space.

#### **Trampoline Time**

Our second activity is a warmup for class. On the trampoline, students will enjoy jumping and singing with teachers and grownups. Students will also learn different gymnastics positions and beginner stretches.

#### **Obstacle Course Time**

Children will have a blast climbing, rolling, balancing, and swinging throughout our obstacle courses. Our course will change every two weeks and each week will progressively advance to help children master gross motor skills. Each week we focus on a theme, for example: Under & Over, Gymnastics Positions, Hop-Skip-Jump, etc. Each week the obstacle course will include balance beams, bars, rings, and different gymnastics mats.

#### **Circle Time & Turn Time**

During Circle Time we focus on working together as group, through different songs, musical instruments, and sports equipment. During Turn Time, we focus on sports such as basketball, soccer, and hockey, and each student gets the opportunity to take an individual turn in front of classmates.

#### **Bubble Time & Goodbye**

Each week, the class will conclude with BUBBLES!! During bubble time, students are introduced to different musical instruments like hand drums, maracas, guiros and bells. Finally, we finish by holding hands together and singing our Goodbye Song!