



Flexibility and Stretching Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines Junior Sport Stars' approach to flexibility and stretching within its gymnastics school. It ensures all flexibility training is safe, appropriate, and gymnast-centred, supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of participants. It aligns with the latest [British Gymnastics guidance](#) and [safeguarding best practices](#).

Key Principles

- All flexibility training must prioritise the physical and emotional safety of gymnasts.
- Flexibility training is proportionate, gymnast-centred and coach-led.
- Ballistic stretching (fast, bouncing movements) and PNF (Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation) techniques are discouraged except in rare, self-directed cases with high supervision.
- Stretching must be progressive and safe, with a focus on increasing range of motion without risk.

Types of Flexibility Training Used

Junior Sport Stars uses the following safe and recognised flexibility techniques:

1. Self-Directed

The gymnast stretches themselves using their own body weight or strength, uses equipment such as wall bars and blocks or platforms, or training aids such as resistance bands.

2. Adjustments to alignment

Verbally or manually directed adjustments to the alignment of the body during stretching activities are a critical aspect of coaching, to ensure the correct position is learnt and practised, and to reduce the risk of injury from poor technique.

3. Coach-facilitated

The coach applies appropriate force to stretch the gymnast manually – only coaches at level 2 or above are permitted to use this method. They will have completed the British Gymnastics recognised training on flexibility.

4. Peer-facilitated

The peer applies appropriate force to stretch the gymnast manually. Only coaches at level 2 or above are permitted to use this method. They will have completed the British Gymnastics recognised training on flexibility.

5. Ballistic

The gymnast uses a high degree of appropriate force at their end range of movement, therefore taking the gymnast past or outside of their range, with the aim of increasing the range of movement in the associated joints. It is characterised by forceful 'bouncing' type actions at the gymnast's end range of movement. Ballistic stretching should not be confused with dynamic stretching which though may look 'bouncy' at times, by comparison is performed with a high degree of control e.g., kicks, pike walks.

Level 3 (or equivalent) and coaches above this level are permitted to use ballistic stretching using only self-directed methods.

Coach Responsibilities

All flexibility activities must:

- Be supervised in an open environment by a qualified gymnastics coach with training in safe flexibility techniques.
- Include two-way communication with the gymnast.
- Be proportionate, progressive and achievable, taking into account the child's stage of development, ability, and training hours.
- Be pain-free — the gymnast must be able to reduce the intensity of a stretch or stop a stretch entirely, at any time, if they perceive it to cause more than mild discomfort.
- Include proper warm-up and cool-down routines.
- Be monitored and evaluated.

Manual guidance is minimal and used only when necessary, with the verbal consent of the child. Coaches must immediately stop an activity if a child shows discomfort or distress.

Child Welfare Considerations

Gymnast-Centred, Coach-Led Approach

- Coaches must plan and lead training based on their qualifications and duty of care.
- Gymnasts' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions must be actively sought and respected.
- Decisions should be collaborative, not imposed.

Two-Way Communication

- Coaches should foster open dialogue with gymnasts.
- Praise, encouragement, and appropriate challenge are key to a positive environment.

Respect for Maturation

- Training must be adapted to the gymnast's developmental stage.
- Avoiding pushing flexibility beyond safe limits, especially during growth spurts.

Psychological and Emotional Safety

- Coaches must not dismiss or undermine gymnasts' discomfort or concerns.
- Emotional safety is as important as physical safety.

Monitoring Discomfort

- Mild discomfort may be acceptable, but pain is not.
- Gymnasts must feel empowered to speak up if something feels wrong.

Physical Safety and Scope of Practice

Qualified Supervision

- Coaches must operate within their accredited syllabus and supervision level.
- Helpers and coaches-in-training must be directly supervised unless qualified.

Safe Stretching Methods

- Coach-facilitated and peer-facilitated stretching must follow strict guidelines.
- Ballistic stretching requires extra caution and is not suitable for all age groups.

Special Considerations for Vulnerable Groups

Preschool Gymnasts

- Training must be playful, gentle, and developmentally appropriate.
- No forced stretching or advanced techniques.

Gymnasts with a disability

- Individual needs must be assessed and respected.
- Coaches should seek specialist advice where needed.

Parental Communication

- Parents are informed about the importance of flexibility training and the methods used in class.
- Any concerns from parents or children are addressed promptly.
- Stretching practices are transparent and aligned with safeguarding policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or earlier if:

- British Gymnastics issues updated guidance
- Safeguarding concerns or incidents occur
- Feedback suggests improvements are needed

Approved by:

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Last Reviewed: July 2025