

Top Ten Commandments for Gymnastics Parents

Suggested by: USA-Gymnastics National TOPS Parent Seminar

1. **Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on the child**
Remember that gymnastics is your child's activity and she will progress at her own speed. It can never be a positive thing when a parent is forcing a child to do a sport that she does not want to do. The best part about gymnastics is that it does not matter whether you finish first or last, rather the wonderful lessons each girl will learn as she strives to do her best.
2. **Thou shalt be supportive no matter what**
There is only one question to ask your child, "**Did you have fun?**" If meets and practice are not fun, your daughter should not be forced to practice.
3. **Thou shalt not coach your child**
You have taken your child to a professional coach; do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your role is to support, love and hug your daughter no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or skill selection, that is not your area. This will not only serve to confuse your child, but also to prevent that gymnast/coach bond from forming.
4. **Thou shalt only have positive things to say at competitions**
If you are going to attend a gymnastics meet you should cheer and applaud but never criticize your daughter or her coach.
5. **Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears**
It is normal human reaction for a child to be scared when attempting new skills or competing. Do not yell or belittle your daughter, just assure her that her coach would not have her attempt the skill or put her in the competition if she was not ready for it.
6. **Thou shalt not criticize the judges**
There is much more to judging than you think, and each judge has had to pass a test to do what he/she does. There are many routine requirements that the general spectator is completely unaware of that certainly have a factor on the final score. No one is perfect, but it is without question that they know more than you.
7. **Honor thy child's coach**
The bond between the coach and gymnast is a special one and one that contributes to your child's success as well as enjoyment. Do not criticize her coach (especially) in her presence because it will only add to the many distractions she must already deal with during her gymnastics training and performance.
8. **Thou shalt not jump from club to club**
The floor exercise carpet always seems bluer at another gym. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. A successful gymnastics experience is the result of the relationship established between teammates, parents and coaches while utilizing communication through the good times and the bad.
9. **Thou shalt have goals besides winning**
Encourage your daughter to do her best. Giving an honest effort no matter what the outcome is much more important than winning.
10. **Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian**
There are 75,367 athletes participating in competitive gymnastics. There are only 6 spots available for the Olympic Team every 4 years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in 50,244. You can understand how difficult it is to become an Olympian because the odds are you have never been one yourself even though you, as a child, probably wanted to be. Gymnastics is much more than the Olympics! Chances are your daughter's coach was not an Olympian, but still received enough out of gymnastics that they want to pass their love for the sport onto others. Gymnastics teaches so many virtues, while building self-esteem, life long friendships and much more. Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medals they many have won. Gymnastics builds good people, and you should be happy your child wants to participate.