



GYMNAST TO COACH RATIOS

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INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed by the Independent Gymnastics Affiliation (IGA) to establish safe, consistent, and insurable practices in the coaching and supervision of gymnasts across all affiliated clubs. It is designed to ensure compliance with legal and insurance standards, protect participants and staff, and foster a safe and effective learning environment for all disciplines of gymnastics and trampolining.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- Define appropriate supervision ratios for all IGA-endorsed activities.
- Ensure qualifications and competence standards for all coaches.
- Align with requirements outlined in public, employer, and personal liability insurance policies.
- Maintain the highest possible standard of safety and welfare for all participants.
- Encourage consistency across clubs and training venues.



SCOPE

This policy applies to all sessions, venues, personnel, and activities conducted under the IGA framework. It covers:

- All affiliated gymnastics clubs and providers.
- All disciplines under IGA.
- All coaches, assistant coaches, apprentices, and volunteers.
- All class types, including recreational, competitive, parent-assisted, and holiday camps.

The guidance within is relevant to indoor and outdoor sessions, temporary venues, permanent facilities, and events held off-site.

LEGAL & INSURANCE COMPLIANCE

IGA member clubs and personnel are subject to various legislative and insurance obligations that govern safe coaching practice:

- Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 require clubs to carry appropriate cover for employees and volunteers.
- Sportscover Public & Products Liability Insurance requires compliance with coaching qualifications and safeguarding procedures.
- Aviva Personal Accident Insurance only applies when clubs follow IGA-sanctioned safety measures, including ratios and spotter use.

Failure to adhere to these standards may result in a voided insurance policy, leaving the club or coach personally liable. Compliance is therefore a legal, financial, and moral imperative.

DEFINITIONS

To ensure clarity, this policy uses the following definitions:

- **Lead Coach:** A coach qualified to Level 2 or higher in the discipline being delivered, with responsibility for planning and leading sessions.
- **Assistant Coach:** A Level 1 coach who assists in session delivery but must be under the direct supervision of a Lead Coach.
- **Volunteer:** A non-qualified individual assisting with set-up, registration, or non-coaching roles.
- **Participant:** Any individual engaging in a gymnastics session, whether recreational or competitive.
- **Session:** A structured period of instruction or practice supervised by a coach or coaching team.



GENERAL SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Proper supervision is a non-negotiable element of delivering gymnastics activities safely. A supervised environment minimises risk, allows for immediate intervention in the event of an incident, and ensures a positive learning atmosphere. At all times, a minimum of two responsible adults should be present during classes to safeguard participants and reduce the risk of allegations or incidents occurring without witness.

The Lead Coach must have a clear line of sight and access to all participants under their care. If the class is spread across multiple areas or stations, additional coaches or assistants must be deployed to maintain adequate supervision. Coaches should maintain focus solely on the class and must not be distracted by mobile phones, administrative tasks, or unrelated conversations during active sessions. Volunteers or non-coaching staff can be present to support logistics, but they cannot be counted within coaching ratios.

In situations where mixed age groups or ability levels are present, additional planning and coach allocation is required to ensure that each subgroup receives appropriate supervision and guidance. This approach ensures consistency, safety, and the overall effectiveness of the session.

RATIO STANDARDS BY ACTIVITY TYPE

Appropriate coach-to-participant ratios are essential to manage risk, maintain control, and deliver quality instruction. Ratios should reflect the complexity of the activity, the developmental level of the participants, and the environment in which it is delivered.

a) Independent Child Gymnastics Classes:

- The standard ratio is 1:8 (one qualified coach per eight gymnasts).
- This may be increased up to 1:16 only if an appropriately qualified Assistant Coach is present and under the direct supervision of the Lead Coach.
- Where more than 16 participants are present, an additional Lead Coach must be appointed.

b) Parent/Guardian-Assisted Classes:

- A maximum of 1:20 is permitted when each child is directly accompanied by a responsible adult.
- These classes often involve preschool-aged children and rely on adult involvement for basic support, reducing risk but requiring careful monitoring from the coach.



c) **General Gymnastics (excluding Trampolining):**

- The absolute upper limit is 1:16 per coach.
- No more than 8 gymnasts per apparatus or station to ensure safe practice and prevent overcrowding.
- With a qualified assistant, this can expand to a combined supervision ratio of 1 lead + 1 assistant for 24 participants, providing direct oversight remains effective.

Ratios should be reviewed if behavioural or medical needs demand closer supervision, or if the session includes complex or high-risk apparatus.

QUALIFICATIONS, SUPERVISION & DUTIES OF COACHES

Ensuring that coaches possess the appropriate qualifications and work within their level of training is crucial to participant safety and programme credibility. All IGA-affiliated clubs must adhere strictly to the following standards:

- Lead Coaches must hold **a minimum of a Level 2 qualification** in the specific gymnastics discipline they are leading. This qualification ensures the coach is competent in both the technical execution of skills and session planning.
- Assistant Coaches must hold at **least a Level 1 qualification** and must work under the direct and visible supervision of a Lead Coach at all times. Assistants must not be left alone with participants or lead sessions independently.
- All coaches, regardless of level, must:
 - Be up to date with safeguarding and first aid certifications as specified by IGA.
 - Hold an enhanced DBS certificate, updated every three years (16 and above).
 - Must hold an IGA recognised coaching qualification.

Additionally, Level 2 coaches who are managing a centre and/or running the business and overseeing the building operations must be at least 18 years of age. While Assistant Coaches may be aged 14 and above, individuals undertaking leadership and operational responsibilities must demonstrate the maturity and legal status necessary for those roles. In addition to qualifications,



PARTICIPANT SAFETY & WELFARE

IGA places paramount importance on the physical and emotional wellbeing of all participants. Every club must create and maintain an environment where children and adults alike feel safe, respected, and supported. To do this, clubs are required to:

- Appoint a Welfare Officer who has completed relevant safeguarding training.
- Display safeguarding contact details visibly within venues.
- Ensure all staff are aware of procedures for identifying and reporting concerns.

Physical safety must be maintained through warm-ups, progressional coaching, appropriate use of equipment, and regular rest periods. Emotional safety should be safeguarded through respectful communication, encouragement, and proactive intervention if bullying, exclusion, or emotional distress

RISK ASSESSMENT & OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Risk assessment is a core operational requirement of delivering gymnastics safely. Each club must conduct and document risk assessments before all sessions, especially when introducing new activities, venues, or equipment.

Key areas to assess include:

- Floor and equipment safety (e.g., uneven surfaces, damaged mats).
- Environmental factors (e.g., lighting, ventilation, fire exits).
- Group composition (e.g., age mix, behavioural concerns).
- Staff coverage and qualifications.

All risk assessments must be recorded and updated regularly. Clubs should develop a culture where coaches conduct continuous, dynamic assessments throughout the session. Any changes to staffing, participant numbers, or equipment must trigger a reassessment.

TRAMPOLINE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Trampolining carries a higher risk profile than many other gymnastics disciplines and therefore demands additional safety protocols.

- Only coaches with a Level 2 qualification in trampolining may lead trampoline sessions.
- A minimum of one trained spotter must be positioned at each trampoline corner during use.



- A maximum of eight participants per trampoline may be present in the rotation, with only one person on the trampoline at any given time.
- Participants must wear non-slip socks or trampoline-specific footwear to reduce injury risk.
- Coaches must ensure participants understand and demonstrate safe mounting, bouncing, and dismounting techniques before engaging in free practice.

Spotters must be alert, attentive, and correctly positioned at all times. Sessions should include structured warm-up, progressive skill teaching, and adequate rest intervals.

INFLATABLES & LEISURE PLAY

In respect of Inflatable and Leisure Play Equipment, strict safety protocols must be adhered to at all times to reduce risk and maintain insurance compliance. Clubs using inflatable devices must ensure:

- Any inflatable device is fully secured to the ground during use with appropriate anchoring systems such as stakes or sandbags.
- Inflatable equipment is fully supervised by a responsible adult at all times while in use.
- All inflatable and leisure play equipment is maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, including but not limited to weight limits, operational guidelines, and weather conditions.
- All users must remove footwear before accessing the inflatable equipment to prevent injury and damage.
- No food or drink is allowed on or near the inflatable equipment.

Additional guidance:

- Equipment must be maintained and operated in accordance with Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Guidance Note PM76 and Entertainment Sheet No 7 – Inflatable Bouncing Devices.
- Inflatables situated on licensed premises must be operated in a fenced-off, glass-free area.
- Inflatable devices must be deflated and securely stored when not in use or when supervision cannot be guaranteed.
- Where adult participation is permitted, adults and children must not use the equipment simultaneously to avoid serious injury.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in invalidated insurance coverage and disciplinary action from IGA.



SOFT PLAY CENTRES CONDITIONS

These are mandatory conditions of the insurance that clubs must meet. Failure to comply could lead to claim rejection or reduction:

Play Centre Conditions:

- No food or drink shall be allowed on soft play equipment.
- All persons must remove their footwear prior to use to protect surfaces and participants.
- All inflatable equipment must be supervised by the hirer, an employee, or an appointed person over 18 years of age at all times.
- No persons shall participate whilst under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any other intoxicating substance.
- Clubs must ensure that an employee qualified in first aid is present on the premises whenever open for business.
- All equipment must be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Daily inspections of equipment and premises must be undertaken and documented, with records securely kept.
- Clubs must undertake an Independent Annual Inspection by RoSPA. Any maintenance work identified must be carried out as soon as practicable, with remedial actions fully documented, including dates and outcomes.
- There must be a clearly segregated area for children under 3 years of age, separated from older children to ensure safety.
- A fully documented daily cleaning procedure must be in place, including provision for immediate cleaning of spillages or contamination.

Strict adherence to these conditions is critical to maintaining insurance validity and ensuring a safe environment for all users.



VENUE & EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The physical environment in which gymnastics takes place plays a vital role in safety and effectiveness. Clubs must ensure that venues are clean, fit for purpose, and adequately maintained. This includes:

- Sufficient floor space to accommodate expected numbers without overcrowding.
- Secure storage for unused equipment to avoid trip hazards.
- Availability of first aid kits, defibrillators, and emergency access routes.
- Equipment checks conducted before each session to identify any faults or wear.

All apparatus must meet IGA safety standards. Coaches must also be trained in the correct assembly, use, and storage of each item. Clubs should maintain an equipment log detailing inspection dates and repairs.

MONITORING, EVALUTATION AND CONTINUOS IMPROVEMENT

Maintaining high standards of safety and instruction is an ongoing process. Clubs are expected to adopt a proactive approach to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this policy. Senior coaches or club managers should:

- Conduct regular observations of sessions to assess whether coach-to-participant ratios and safety practices are being upheld.
- Schedule formal internal audits of compliance with this policy on a quarterly basis.
- Encourage feedback from coaches, parents, and participants to identify areas for improvement.
- Record and review all incidents and near misses as part of a lessons-learned process.

IGA may also conduct random spot checks or request evidence of compliance, including training records, risk assessments, and staff rosters. Clubs are encouraged to demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement rather than compliance for compliance's sake.



INCIDENT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

Despite best efforts, incidents can occur. An effective response process ensures issues are dealt with promptly and with appropriate accountability.

All clubs must:

- Maintain an accident log to record all injuries, near misses, and medical issues.
- Ensure that serious injuries (e.g., those requiring hospitalisation or emergency services) are reported to IGA within 24 hours.
- Complete and retain incident forms for review and submission when required.
- Have an emergency action plan (EAP) in place that all staff are familiar with, including evacuation procedures and access to first aid.

Clubs should also offer post-incident support to affected individuals and review risk management practices following each incident to reduce recurrence.

COMPLIANCE, SANCTIONS & ENFORCEMENT

This policy forms part of the core operational standards for all IGA-affiliated clubs. Non-compliance can expose participants and clubs to significant harm, both physical and legal. IGA reserves the right to:

- Issue formal warnings to clubs or individuals in breach of this policy.
- Suspend insurance cover for sessions that are knowingly conducted outside these guidelines.
- Suspend or revoke affiliation status in cases of repeated or serious breaches.
- Withhold permission for clubs to participate in IGA-endorsed competitions, events, or training courses.

All clubs are encouraged to seek clarification or support from IGA if they are uncertain about any element of the policy.

POLICY REVIEW & CHANGE MANAGEMENT

To remain relevant and effective, this policy will be reviewed annually by the IGA Governance Board or sooner if prompted by:

- Changes in national legislation or insurance requirements.
- Recommendations following serious incidents or safeguarding reviews.
- Feedback from clubs or key stakeholders.

All revisions will be communicated in writing to affiliated clubs within seven days of approval. Clubs will be given a grace period, where necessary, to implement changes.