

## CHAPTER IV

# Principles of Teaching Applicable to Gymnastics and Tumbling

General psychological principles relative to teaching procedures will not be discussed here. Reference, however will be made to particular teaching principles that are pertinent to gymnastics and tumbling.

### *Qualifications of the Teacher of Gymnastics and Tumbling*

The teacher of gymnastics and tumbling should be able to apply all of the psychological principles of teaching, of which motivation is outstanding. In addition, he should be equipped with:

1. An adequate understanding of the physical and psychological development that is possible through gymnastics and tumbling.
2. A knowledge of the proper gymnastic and tumbling nomenclature.
3. A knowledge of progressively arranged strength-building exercises.
4. The ability to demonstrate various stunts.
5. The ability to detect and correct errors promptly.
6. The ability to maintain firm discipline and to hold the interest of the individual.
7. An awareness of the importance of safety procedures.
8. A sense of the need of economy of time. Every second of the class period should be used to advantage.
9. An appreciation of good form and precise movement.
10. Methods of providing for individual differences. The superior performer should not be required to repeat work if he is ready for advancement.
11. Methods of grading the achievement of the individual. If a grade scale is set up, it should challenge every member of the class.
12. Methods by which problem-solving is encouraged, i.e., thinking through the execution of a stunt.

### *Squad Leader System*

Gymnastics may be taught effectively on a rotating-squad plan. There should be about eight or ten individuals in a squad. Advanced squad members should have been given additional instruction which enables them to act as leaders of a squad. A large class thus can be handled in stations. Each will alternate from the hang to the support activities as he proceeds with his squad from station to station.

### *The Whole-Parts Method of Learning*

The parts method should be used in introducing a new stunt. But the whole stunt, consisting of its many parts, should be demonstrated and described briefly

for the benefit of the individual before he is permitted to make any attempt to master the selected part assigned to him. The learning of the kip on the high bar is a good example of this principle. A challenge is created with the presentation of the whole stunt and the performer becomes eager to learn the numerous, progressively arranged parts that make up a difficult whole. Complete mastery of the whole stunt should follow with relative ease if the stunt is properly presented.

#### ***Progression from the Simple to the Complex***

Lesson plans should proceed progressively from the simple to the complex. Progressive lead-up activities should be given which contain elements identical with the desired end. Relatively complicated coordinations are part of almost all gymnastic feats, and in order that they may be learned correctly they should be broken down into parts and learned separately. Slowed down movements (slow motion) in which the learner, with assistance, actually experiences the kinesthetic or muscle feel of the trick to be learned, is most helpful.

#### ***The Success-Failure Relationship Is Important***

Participants should not be allowed to practice too long without some success. It seems best, then, to teach moderately easy lead-ups, as previously mentioned, and in addition to provide an individual mat area (even though small) for each one or two performers. Thus, the inevitable mistakes may be made without attracting undue group attention.

#### ***Motivation Is Increased Through Exhibitions and Competition***

Motivation through competition and exhibition stimulates interest in gymnastics and tumbling, and provides added interest to the participants.

#### ***Building Separate Stunts into Routines***

The competent performer should be encouraged to create routines that have continuity and unity instead of learning the set routines of the instructor.

#### ***Program Should Be Varied but not Superficial***

Types of activity and their difficulty should be varied to obtain well-balanced development and to maintain interest. However, it is equally important to do enough different tricks of the same type to contribute to the desired ends.

Facilities, space, time, number in class and experience of the instructor will decide the selection of material.

#### ***Working in Pairs for Safety and Quicker Learning***

Partner assistance in learning involves one person as a spotter who supports, guards and lends physical aid to the performer with a view to quicker learning and the relatively assured safety of the performer. Spotting technique must be taught as well as performance technique.

Spotting experience is as valuable as practice experience since the spotter must

be on the alert constantly. Each student should have repeated opportunities to serve both as performer and as spotter. For all but a few of the more dangerous of the elementary tricks, hand spotting without belts or ropes is most effective and a time saver.

### *Suggested Class Procedure*

1. Muster.
2. First day—general explanation of class administration and of the activities to be taught:
  - a. Acquaint class with apparatus.
  - b. Acquaint class with safety procedures.
  - c. Impress class with need of safety measures.
  - d. Give short, comparatively light workout, in order to minimize unduly severe aftereffects of dizziness and stiffness.
3. Warmup before each day's class:
  - a. Limbering routine.
  - b. Ropes and cargo net.
  - c. Rolls (forward and backward) and dives.
  - d. On the apparatus, warmup with some of the stunts that have been presented before.
4. Work in squads in sports program. Rotate squads to different apparatus so that they may work on the hang position and then proceed to the support position. In this way they will use different muscle groups.
5. Instructional work should be on a squad leader basis until they have developed enough strength to work independently and with safety. Emphasis should be given to the need of strengthening the grasps, triceps and abdominal muscles.
6. The class should be assembled in a semi-circular formation on the deck for the introduction of each new stunt.
7. In presenting a new stunt it should be described and demonstrated simultaneously. If the instructor cannot do the stunt, it may be executed by an outstanding student. Talk as little as possible. Teach in a positive manner wherever possible.
8. The class should try the stunt. Give as much individual guidance as possible. Encourage the better performers to help those less efficient.
9. If mistakes are being made, call the group together and make the necessary corrections.
10. Those who are able to execute a stunt in proper form should have it checked for achievement.
11. The better performers should either help others in the class, or work on more advanced tricks.
12. The instruction should be individualized as much as possible. Each one should be encouraged to strive progressively according to his potentialities. The opportunity for individual advancement is lost if the instructor uses the formal method which requires everybody to do the same thing.

A grade scale should encourage the learner to attain his utmost. Skills such as the handspring, and the handbalance should be taught, which the performer will want to practice in his spare time.
13. Frequent short practice periods are much more effective in learning new skills than prolonged periods of practice.

14. If apparatus has to be put away at the close of the period, students should line up for dismissal. Everybody should help to clear the deck. In stacking the mats, place them in pairs with the tops always together—the top is the smoother of the two surfaces; the bottom usually is dotted with tassels. The working surface on top should be kept clean.

In summary, a beginning gymnast may be stimulated to enthusiastic participation in the activity by:

1. The sincere cooperation of competent gymnastic teachers.
2. The use of safe adequate facilities and proper equipment.
3. The feeling of a prestige that accompanies the mastering of a stunt.
4. The presentation of motivating challenges or goals.
5. The desire of the performer to stretch to the utmost of his capacity.
6. The inclination of a "try-try again" spirit.
7. The freedom from injury.
8. The fosterage of courage and of initiative.
9. The correct guidance in the wise use of his time.
10. Capitalize upon the competitive element whenever possible.