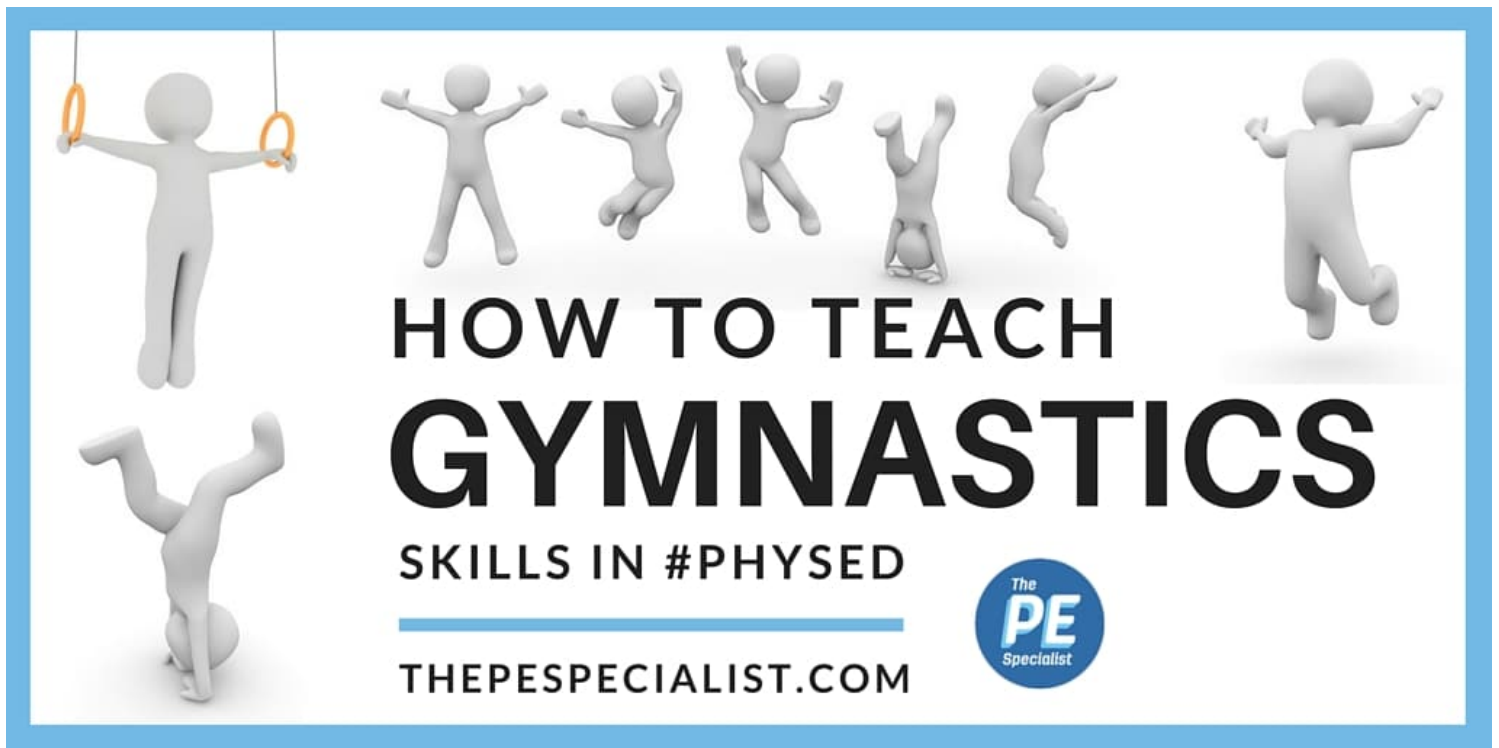




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How to Teach Gymnastics Skills in PE



So you're getting ready for your Gymnastics Unit and looking for some ideas?

You're wondering how to get the boys that are "too cool" to buy in to your unit?

You're wondering about safety and anxious that kids might get hurt while trying different movements?

ME TOO!

That's exactly how I felt when I was planning my first gymnastics unit.

I thought I would share how I teach gymnastics at my school to give you a few ideas as you plan your next unit.

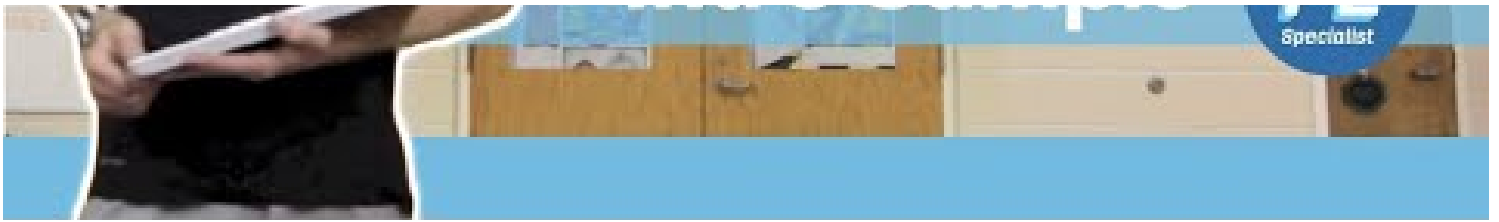
First off – I think it's really important to sell your kids on the importance of learning gymnastics, which is basically just body management. Throughout the unit your students will learn to control their bodies while moving in a ton of different ways. You can also throw in things like Parkour – which is form of body management that kids (especially boys) will resonate with.

I always talk to my kids about the fact that **the strength, flexibility and balance that you will gain from working on gymnastics skills will transfer easily to every other sport that you might want to pursue.**

So even if you're kids never take a gymnastics class, the skills will help them achieve success in other areas. It's really important to discuss this with your students so they will understand the "WHY" behind the instruction and realize that if they put in the effort, they will reap the benefits even if they never pursue gymnastics outside of school.

I usually begin with an overview of the unit, some rules via a Prezi and a quick gymnastics highlight video, you can see an example of a few excerpts from my unit intro below.





If you have a screen or projector and would like to use my Prezi for your Gymnastics unit, feel free to check it out [HERE](https://prezi.com/nv0sgdmqopkj/?token=425505ce7a3a6b1ba5ae9d6c5e18490b0a1d5d6b6985709eb3ff8c0a11cc2b6e&utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy). (https://prezi.com/nv0sgdmqopkj/?token=425505ce7a3a6b1ba5ae9d6c5e18490b0a1d5d6b6985709eb3ff8c0a11cc2b6e&utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy). Just create an account and copy it to your own account and you should be able to make changes as you want to fit your unit.

Sidenote: If you have a setup similar to mine with a screen/projector a good alternative if you don't have the ability to do an iPad mirror is using a laptop with a [bluetooth keyboard](https://www.amazon.com/Logitech-Wireless-Keyboard-Control-Touchpad/dp/B014EUQOGK) (<https://www.amazon.com/Logitech-Wireless-Keyboard-Control-Touchpad/dp/B014EUQOGK>) if you want mouse capabilities (like the one I'm using above) or a [Presenter/Clicker](https://amzn.to/2BYjBtD) (<https://amzn.to/2BYjBtD>) if you're just doing slides.

If you want to show a gymnastics video – the one below is one I was showing in my Unit Intro video above, it's a great example of both talented guys and girls and also has a nice teamwork and sportsmanship component to it.



I usually do a 3-4 week unit and focus on a couple of skill components during each lesson plan, modifying the content and difficulty for each grade level to keep it age appropriate and build on prior knowledge. FYI – I see my kids once a week for 50 minutes, so it's usually 3-4 total lessons.

See an example of what the breakdown would look like below:

Gymnastics Unit Overview

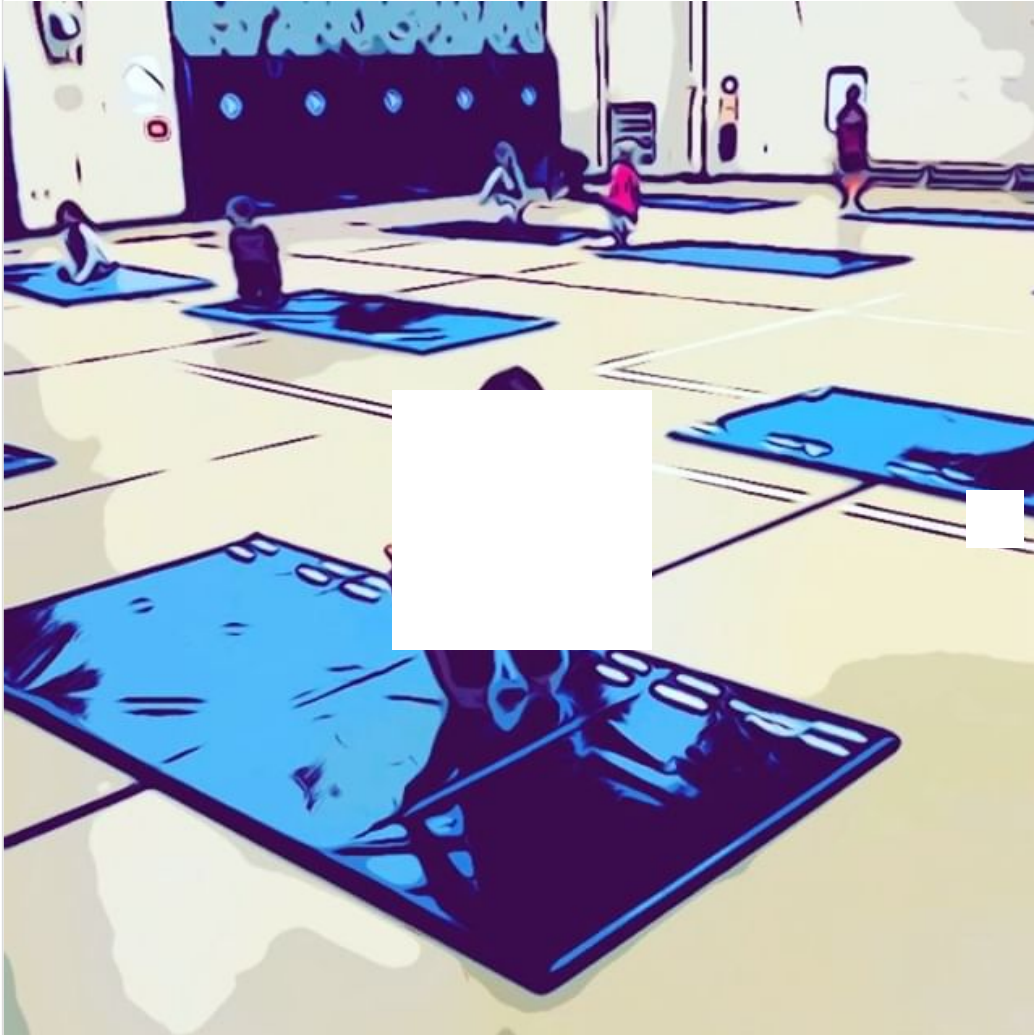
Week 1 – Traveling (1st Grade (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BquwJVSByP/>)) (3rd Grade (https://www.instagram.com/p/BqvI_KAhTQX/))

- Animal Travels
- Rolls
- Cartwheel/Roundoff
- Create Your Own Travels



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3rd grade gymnasts showing off their traveling skills today in week 1 of our gymnastics unit 🤸

.

Duck walk

Knee jump

Knee walk

Seal walk

Squat through

.

Shoulder roll (AKA safety roll)

Forward roll

Backward shoulder roll

And everyone's favorite ... Cartwheels 🤸 😊

.

Proud of these kiddos for staying focused and working hard 💪 (most of them anyway 😊)

#physicaleducation #physed #pegeeks #iteachpe #pe #peteacher #elempe

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Week 2 – Balancing & Jumping and Landing

- Review Travels
- Single Balances
 - Using my 25 Awesome Balancing Challenges E-Book Task Cards (<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq7xDcRB96q/>) and Poster or if you have a screen playing “This or That (<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq-FahfBOjw/>)“
- Partner Balances (2nd-5th)
 - Using PE Geek App or BalanceIt Task Cards
- Jumping and Landing
 - Jumping and landing on the mat and then off the equipment – Stick that Landing!
 - Jumping Tricks (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRF2RlhNxE/>) (2nd – 5th)
- Create a Sequence using previously learned skills (Travel, Balance, Jump)



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Clip from last weeks lesson on balancing and jumping and landing

·
3rd graders working on some jumping tricks 🤔

·
Focus - stick your landing by landing on your toes and bending your knees 🙌

·
#physicaleducation #physed #pegeeks #iteachpe #pe #peteacher #elempe

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You can download the poster below for free at the bottom of this page.

SINGLE BALANCES



HALFWAY
HANDSTAND



BROKEN
CANDLESTICK



SPLIT
STAND



THE PEG LEG



THE ANKLE
HOLD



PLANK



SIDE
PLANK



ELBOW
STAND



SUNSHINE



BRIDGE



TOE TOUCH



SITTING
TOE TOUCH



CRISS CROSS
APPLE SAUCE



WARRIOR



SIDWAYS
STRETCH



DAZZLER



LAZY
TOE TOUCH



TOE POINTER



SPLIT



AIR CHAIR



HANDSTAND



HEADSTAND



TRIPOD



CANDLESTICK



HANDSTAND
STRADDLE

Week 3 – Create A Routine

- Review Travels, Balances & Jumping and Landing
- Have students come up with a Sequence or Routine combining all the elements they have learned
- Perform the Sequence after giving students time to practice

During this week I have my older students write their routine down to help them think through it and also just to have a piece of evidence to show learning. You can see an example of the worksheet I use below – It's available in my Gymnastics Resource Pack.

If you see your students more than once a week and have more time to devote to the unit, this is a great time to integrate some technology and video your students routines and then watch them all as a class via a projector or TV. I wish I had enough time to do this because I think it would be an awesome learning experience to talk through the different routines as a class.



The worksheet is titled "Name _____ Class _____". It contains the following instructions:

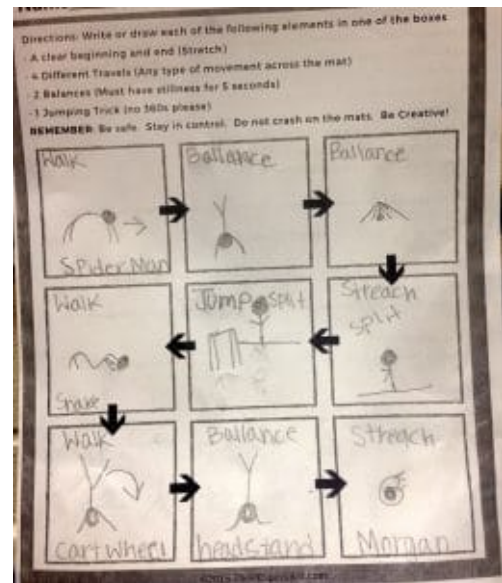
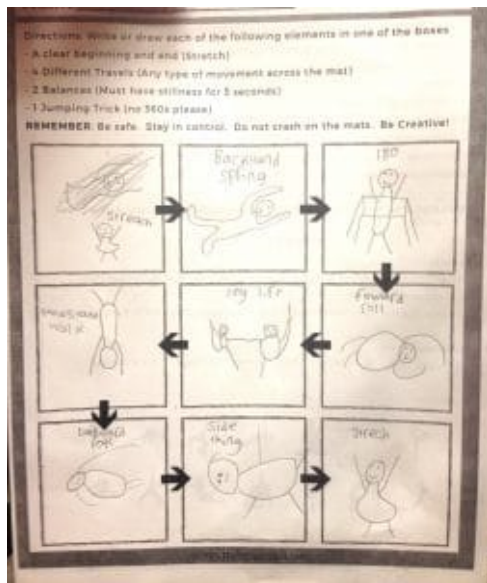
Directions: Write or draw each of the following elements in one of the boxes

- A clear beginning and end (stretch)
- 4 Different Travels (Any type of movement across the mat)
- 2 Balances (Must have stillness for 5 seconds)
- 1 Jumping Trick (no 260s please)

REMEMBER: Be safe. Stay in control. Do not crash on the mats. Be Creative!

The worksheet features a 3x3 grid of boxes for drawing or writing. Blue arrows indicate a sequence of movements: right, right, down, left, left, down, right, right, right.

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Week 4 – Gymnastics Stations

- Allow students to practice all the skills they've learned throughout the unit at different activity stations. All the below station signs are available in my Gymnastics Resource Pack.
 - **Station Ideas** (setup examples (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrXsEMABCPq/>))
 - Rolling
 - Animal Travels
 - Jumping and Landing
 - Balancing Challenges
 - Partner Balances
 - Balance Beams
 - Cartwheels/Roundoffs
 - Rope Climb
 - Rope Swing
 - Rock Wall
 - Exercise Station
 - Rings or Bars if you have them
 - Create a sequence

You can see the station sign holders that I used in the video below, if you want to check them out you can find them by [clicking here.](https://amzn.to/2S2Syas) (<https://amzn.to/2S2Syas>).



Note: The slips have vertical and horizontal orientations, so make sure to select the one you want... or get both if you

need both orientations.

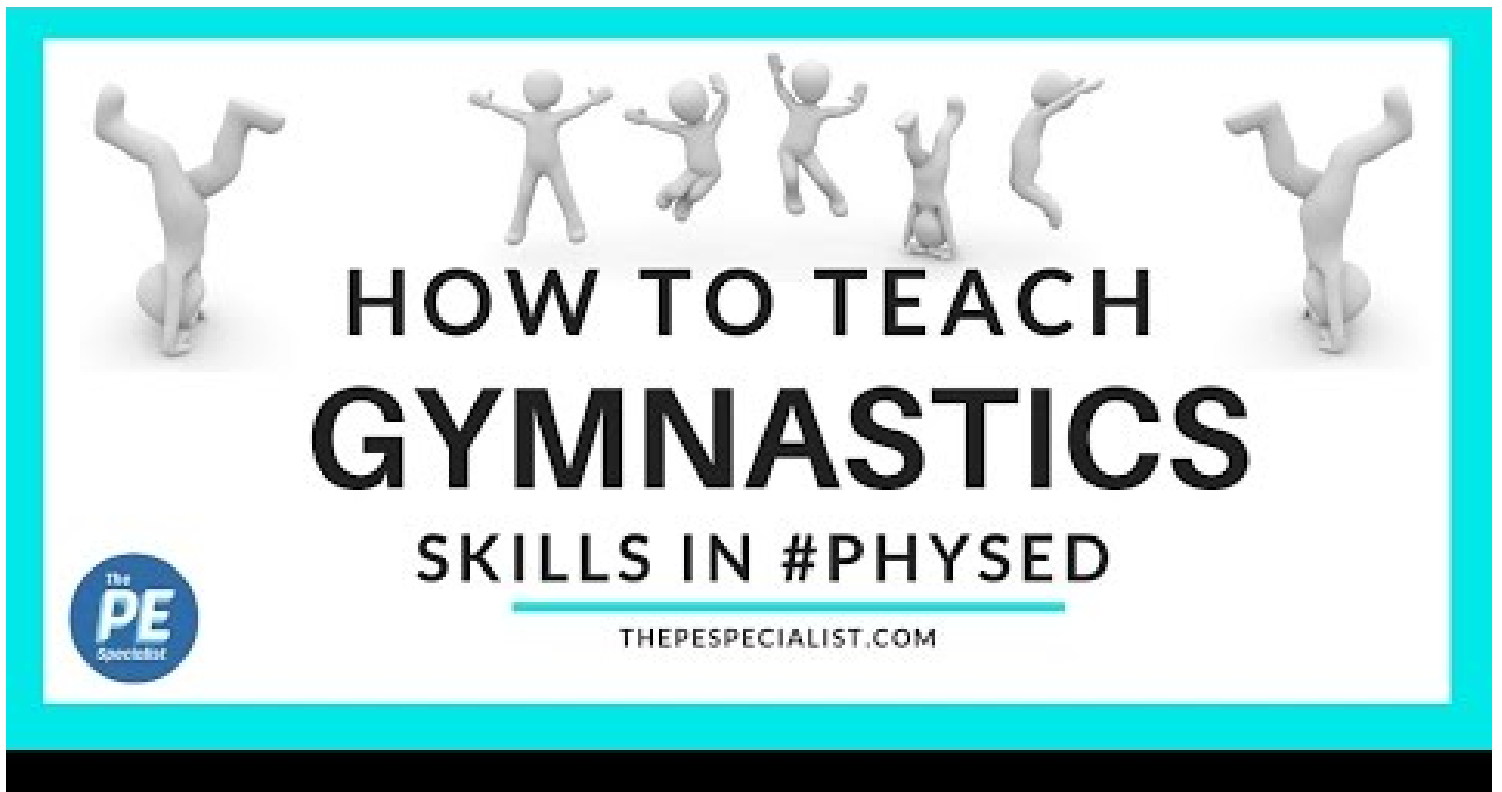
The Culminating Experience (Gymnastics Stations)

Taking a note from the Sport Education Model, I try to end each unit of instruction that I teach with a culminating experience for my students. I want them to look forward to it and remember it from year to year. Usually it's a super fun game, some type of tournament or a bunch of exciting activity stations.

The students get pretty pumped about the last week of our gymnastics unit when we do the activity stations because we have a small trampoline that they get to vault over equipment with and also get to jump off equipment, do the balance beams, rope swings and watch themselves perform different travels on the TV with an app called BAM video delay.

Kids are just like adults in that they really enjoy autonomy and working towards mastery (sidenote: if you want to learn more about what motivates us as humans check out the book Drive: by Dan Pink (<http://amzn.to/1J1N8mR>), it gave me some great perspective for teaching) Anyway – stations is a great way to give students that independent practice that they desire and need in order to work towards mastering a skill. Also, they are a great tool for teachers to use to free themselves up to give one-on-one feedback, and assess student skill and behavior either formally or informally. (here's a few examples of our stations in action (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrTRcVah-UK/>))

You can see an example of the way I have my Gymnastics stations setup below:



You can see a highlight video of our gymnastics stations that I created with iMovie below.

I create these videos periodically to share with our teachers, admin and parents so they know what we're doing in PE class. If you want to learn how to create something similar – check out [my iMovie Tutorial Here. \(https://www.thepespecialist.com/imovie/\)](https://www.thepespecialist.com/imovie/)



Don't have much equipment?

I realize that I have a lot of equipment, we are super blessed at my school and I have built on the program each year. If you don't have much equipment, don't sweat it, it takes time to build up a well stocked equipment closet, but you can always figure out ways to make it work, here's a few ideas.

- Approach your district about buying some equipment that can be shared and travel around to all the schools during each schools gymnastics unit
- Check out these mats (<https://amzn.to/2RlQZUT>) – great reviews at a good price
- Don't have a balance beam? Just use a simple 2 x 4 for a balance beam, or google "DIY Balance Beam" (<http://imgtfy.com/?q=diy+balance+beam>) for some ideas
- Modify and be creative – there's always a way to use what you have, just think like MacGyver
 - Use aerobic steps for jump boxes (<https://amzn.to/2Sz4CgG>)
 - Use poly spots to balance on
 - Use yoga mats instead of gymnastics mats
 - Think outside the box 😊

Got some money to spend?

If you just scored a big grant, found a sponsor, got funding approved by your admin or got some money from a fundraiser and are looking to build up some gymnastics equipment you can check out the links below for some ideas:

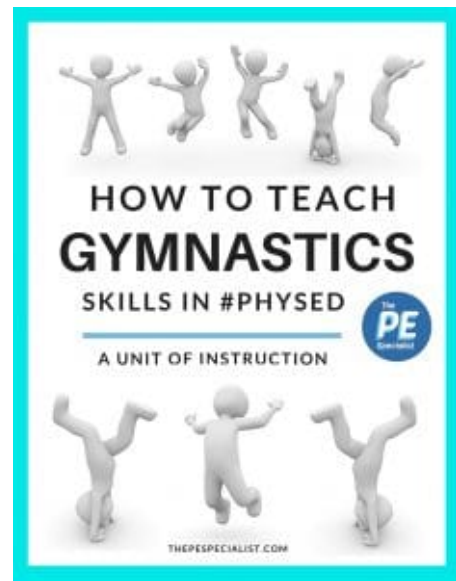
- **Trapezoid Mats:** <https://amzn.to/2rw8X8l> (<https://amzn.to/2rw8X8l>)
 - The specific mats I have were at my school when I got there, but they're the same size as the ones linked above – my kids love vaulting over them and using them as jump boxes or swinging between them on the rope swing. Super pricey though.
- **Jump Boxes:** <https://amzn.to/2PtrvQg> (<https://amzn.to/2PtrvQg>)
 - My school already had jump boxes when I got there, but the ones I have are very similar to the ones linked above – multiple heights for various age and skill levels and easily stackable for storage.
- **Gymnastics 4 x 8 Folding Mats** <http://amzn.to/2rHuI3D> (<http://amzn.to/2rHuI3D>)^{Privacy - Terms}

- NOTE: I don't have this mat – but man check out these reviews! I paid twice this price for my mats – next time I need some mats, these are the ones I'm ordering.
- **Cheese Wedge Mat (for rolling):** <https://amzn.to/2QpSodh> (<https://amzn.to/2QpSodh>)
 - I have the 60" x 15", but I'd recommend getting as big of a size as you can afford, I wish mine was bigger. Forward and backward rolls it's pretty good, but for log/pencil rolls the kids feet and hands hang off the edge.
- **Mini Trampoline** <http://amzn.to/2tOzcGw> (<http://amzn.to/2tOzcGw>)
 - Using a trampoline for your [gymnastics](https://www.thepespecialist.com/gymnastics) (<https://www.thepespecialist.com/gymnastics>) or [jump rope unit](https://www.thepespecialist.com/jumprope/) (<https://www.thepespecialist.com/jumprope/>) will get your kids pumped up, they love it. I set mine up as a station in front of [trapezoid mats](https://amzn.to/2rw8X8l) (<https://amzn.to/2rw8X8l>) and my kids love vaulting over them.
- **Rings:** <https://amzn.to/2QAszqU> (<https://amzn.to/2QAszqU>)
 - I have a few sets of these that I hang from the basketball goals or monkey bars in my gym. A cheap and portable way for kids to work on [modified pull-ups](https://www.instagram.com/p/BrVHmyth4lg/) (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrVHmyth4lg/>) or flex arm hang.
- **Gymnastics Mat Storage Cart:** <https://amzn.to/2ruvOwc> (<https://amzn.to/2ruvOwc>)
 - I liked this more than the PVC carts I've seen around – it's way more heavy duty and takes up less space than the other PVC carts (and it's cheaper). I recently [upgraded from using Old scooters to this cart](https://www.instagram.com/p/BrOrMcrhMM1/) (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrOrMcrhMM1/>) and am really happy with it.
- **Balance Benches from Laurentian**
 - These were a huge score that were already at my school when I got here. They offer flexible seating, fun balancing activities and can be flipped upside down to make a more narrow balance beam as well. They are super pricey, but they'll last forever. [Here's a link to the ones I have.](https://laurentianathletics.com/product/12-balance-bench-steel-leg/) (<https://laurentianathletics.com/product/12-balance-bench-steel-leg/>)

Thanks for checking out the blog, I hope it was helpful. If you have some ideas for upgrading a gymnastics unit or have any questions – leave a comment in the comment section.

If you're looking for some resources to take your upgrade your next Gymnastics unit, consider purchasing my Gymnastics Resource Pack – I've put ALOT of hard work into it, and I think it would be a super valuable resource for your program. You can see the details below.

Gymnastics Resource Pack



- **4 Week Unit of Instruction**

- This 22 page document is straight from my clipboard to yours. My refined, tried and tested lessons aligned to SHAPE America's Grade Level Outcomes and the National PE Standards. It's detailed and packed with ideas and value to help you plan your next unit.
- **Based on once a week PE, but can easily be modified to fit your specific situation**

- **25 Awesome Balance Challenges E-Book**

- My first E-book, inspired by the PE Geeks Partner Balancing Series.
- 25 Single Balance Task Cards that can be printed or projected on a screen to give your students a visual to try and replicate when working on balancing.

- All task cards are color coded into 3 different difficulty levels for easy sorting and teaching with differentiation to all skill levels.
- **25 Awesome Balancing Challenges Poster**
 - Digital copy of all 25 balances on one page to be printed poster size for your gym wall
- **Create Your Own Routine Student Worksheet**
 - A printable worksheet that guides your students in creating their own routine.
 - It's a great student portfolio piece and also comes with rubric if you want to use it as an assessment
- **Gymnastics Station Signs**
 - 14 printable station signs to allow your students the freedom to work on their gymnastics skills independently while you give feedback and assess student skills.

ACTIVITY IDEA FOR THE GYMNASTICS RESOURCE PACK

THANKS AGAIN FOR THAT GYMNASTICS STUFF, ITS GREAT!



Woody Paschal

I USED THE BALANCING CHALLENGES TODAY WITH K AND 1, AND IT WAS A BLAST. I SET THEM UP IN STATIONS ON MATS, AND IN FRONT OF EACH MAT I HAD A DIFFERENT GREEN (EASY), YELLOW (MEDIUM), AND RED (HARD) BALANCE. EACH ROUND I HAD A STUDENT THAT HAD BEEN SHOWING GOOD BEHAVIOR COME UP AND SPIN A PINWHEEL I CREATED WITH RED, YELLOW, AND GREEN ON IT, AND WHICHEVER COLOR IT LANDED ON, THE KIDS DID THAT COLOR BALANCE WHICH WAS AT THE MAT THEY WERE CURRENTLY AT.

THEY SWITCHED MATS AFTER TURN SO THEY GOT A CHANCE TO DO ALOT OF DIFFERENT BALANCES. THE KIDS REALLY ENJOYED IT, AND I HAD A BLAST TEACHING IT.

***NOTE: The entire Gymnastics Resource Pack and tons of other resources are available for free download within the membership section. ([Show Me How to Become a Member \(https://www.thepespecialist.com/info/\)](https://www.thepespecialist.com/info/))**

\$25.00 – Purchase Gymnastics Resource Pack

Want a freebie? You can download my 25 single balances poster below for free below.

Free – Download 25 Balances Poster

The Follow the Leader Gymnastics Pack

If you have a screen in your teaching space you also might be interested in the Follow the Leader Gymnastics Pack!

I created the follow the leader pack for my gymnastics unit to help provide visuals of the different tricks, travels and movements to my students throughout our unit (it's a similar idea to the [jump rope follow the leader pack](https://www.thepespecialist.com/pevideo/) (<https://www.thepespecialist.com/pevideo/>)).

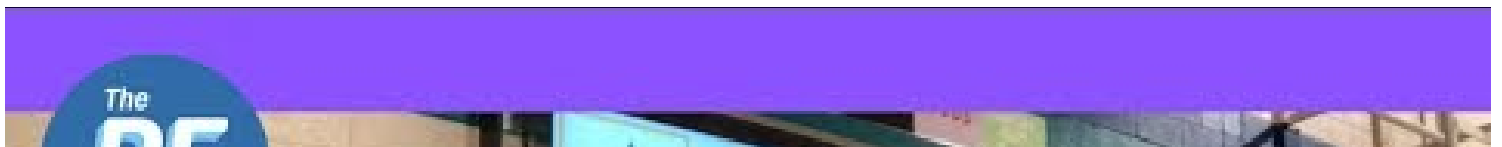
This is an AWESOME resource for any teacher that has a screen in their teaching space. The Follow the Leader pack includes Animated GIFS and remade powerpoint slideshows for each week of the unit. It also includes some awesome follow the leader balancing challenges and some bonus printable as well.

You can check out a few examples of how I use it below.

This or That

This or that is a fun activity I do with my students during Week 2 when we are going over Balancing and Jumping and Landing. It's a way to compare and contrast different balances and discuss what makes different balances harder or easier.

Check out the video below for an example of the activity





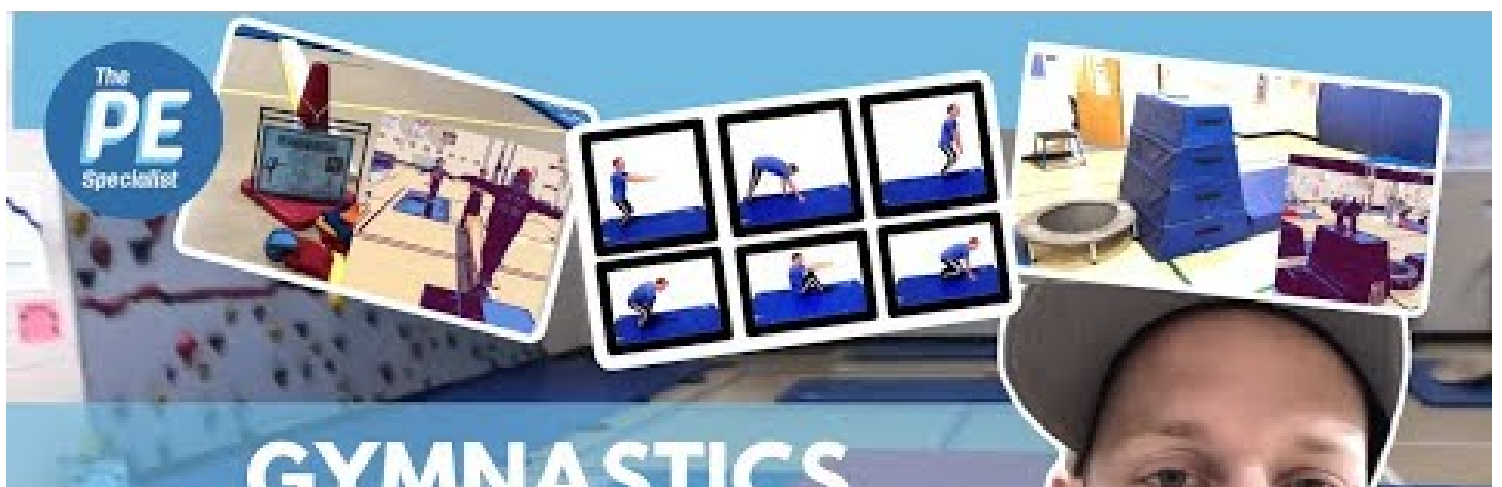
Animated GIFs For Station Activities

I also used the animated GIF Summary slides to place at the different stations around the room during our station activities week.

You could use iPads or Chromebooks if they're available to provide a looping example of what to do at each station.

I really found this helped students understand what to do and made expectations and instructions much more clear at each station.

Check out a walkthrough of the stations and animated GIFS below:





Walkthrough of the Gymnastics Follow the Leader Pack

You can check out the video below for a walkthrough of the whole resource

If you'd like to purchase the Follow the Leader Pack you can click the link below to head over to our Teachers Pay Teachers Page to purchase it (or if you're a member you can login and download it in the Membership Area).

Check Out the Gymnastics Follow the Leader Pack
(<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Gymnastics-Follow-the-Leader-Animated-GIF-Slideshows-and-Videos-4376160>)

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