

Supporting the inclusion of children and young people with visual impairment

Top Access Tips: Gymnastics

General tips

- ◆ Give child opportunity to orientate themselves and to gain a mental map of the position of apparatus. Provide a tactile map of the gym equipment layout
- ◆ If working in or through apparatus space, allow child time to examine it for dimension, height, and angle of entry or exit
- ◆ Give time for the child to hand explore the surface of the apparatus
- ◆ Let them stand next to it to work out its height in relation to their own body
- ◆ Let them work out its length, sit on it, kneel on it before, standing on it with your support
- ◆ Allow the child to place an open hand on your shoulder for support, this may be better than gripping your hand
- ◆ Support the child under the elbow's when 'walking' through the activity or in the early stages of learning a new routine
- ◆ Encourage a wide movement vocabulary in floor work before introducing large pieces of apparatus
- ◆ Large crash mats are a safer setting for a child to experiment with new body management or spatial tasks
- ◆ Teach safe landing from an early stage using a variety of levels and from different apparatus in a well padded area
- ◆ Provide opportunity for the child to practice safe landing prior to the main lesson, offer verbal reinforcement throughout
- ◆ Encourage barefoot work, it reinforces good balance and poise
- ◆ A sighted child would mentally rehearse a movement task before executing it, a gymnast with sight impairment requires time to mentally "forward chain" their movement plan.
- ◆ Give time to explore the equipment, to walk through the activity, to experiment with more than one way to answer the action task.
- ◆ Every movement task will need to be sequentially learnt and approaches to apparatus need support from the teacher in 'back and forward' chaining to help the child judge distance, speed, timing and body position change
- ◆ The gymnast needs to scan and pace the mat area to appreciate the size of the floor area available to work in
- ◆ Give verbal commentary on speed and when to start a round off or a tumble sequence in order to stay within the designated floor area

Setting targets

Set achievable and realistic goals and encourage the child to achieve them to a high standard. This will help to boost the child's confidence and sense of achievement.