

# TeamGym

# ABC for Floor

February 2024



European  
Gymnastics

# A coach's guide

**ABC for Floor** will guide you as a coach to get the basic knowledge about TeamGym floor, how a routine is built up and provide tips and ideas on how to choreograph your TeamGym floor program.

This presentation will help you to interpret the TeamGym Code of Points (CoP) and clarify different concepts.

The content refers to the TeamGym Code of Points 2022-2024, Revision A February 2024.

The Technical Committee for TeamGym would like to thank Anders Frisk (SWE) for the preparation of text, pictures and videos for the ABC for Floor. Updates after the first release is made by Heli Lemmetty and Bianca Franzoi (TeamGym TC).

Any questions or feedback can be submitted through the Contact Us page on European Gymnastics website <https://www.europeangymnastics.com/discipline/teamgym/contact>

# A coach's guide

The floor routine showcases the heart of TeamGym, with the team interaction and bond between gymnasts being vital to a strong performance.

On floor the whole team is performing together at the same time which really makes it the team apparatus of the sport.

Floor could also be considered the most complex apparatus since you (apart from all technical aspects) also have the music to correspond to, a lot of composition requirements and the need for gymnasts to perform the same elements at the same time with the same dynamic execution and expression.

# What is a TeamGym floor program?

In short one could explain the floor program as a “dancelike” routine where gymnastic and acrobatic elements are combined to instrumental music where the whole body is engaged in every movement. First, we would like to point out what the main requirements of a floor program are:

- Instrumental music
- Time limit of 2:15 to 2:45 minutes
- Choreography based on gymnastic elements where the whole body is engaged
- All movements and elements shall favour a dynamic execution where the movement phrases show continuity with a logical and natural fluency without unmotivated stops
- Difficulty elements that are distributed over the whole program
- A variation of different formations (shapes)
- Moving rhythmic sequence & Difficulty element in a moving sequence
- Movements in different planes
- Movements that are corresponding to the music

# What is a TeamGym floor program?

The requirements will be further clarified in the following three sections: Composition, Difficulty and a section for Music.

In addition, we will look at the requirements for Execution both in general and specifically for the difficulty elements as well as the choreographic requirements.

# The score

The score of a floor program is divided into three parts, Composition, Difficulty and Execution. The score in the three parts adds together to get the team's final score.

**C-score (Composition)** The Composition score is calculated from 8 requirements: \* Rhythmic sequence \* Difficulty element in moving sequence \* Formations (8 different, small formation, large formation, moving curved formation) \* Planes (sideways, backwards)

**D-score (Difficulty)** D-score stands for difficulty, and this is an “open code” meaning there is no roof on how much you can earn in difficulty. Not entirely true with no roof since you can **only** choose 10 different elements from the *table of difficulty* (Appendix A1) and the table has an upper limit. See the chapter about difficulty below to learn more about the different categories.

**E-score (Execution)** The E-score starts from **10.0** and is then deducted throughout the program and is summed up in the end. See the chapter about Execution below for more insights in what is being deducted.

# Composition

TeamGym – ABC for Floor

# Composition

As mentioned above the composition is composed of 8 requirements. As long as the gymnasts perform the elements as intended you will basically know in advance what score you will get.

The basic advice is; **make it easy for the judges to identify the different requirements!**

The following is a clarification of all the composition requirements of the Code of points (CoP Art 22).

However, this clarification is not replacing the Code of Points (CoP), so we strongly advise you to read it thoroughly.



# Composition – Rhythmic Sequence (RS)

**The Rhythmic Sequence** is a movement phrase where travelling movements are connected so that the team moves across the floor; either from side to side, back to front (or reversed) or diagonal.

Performing travelling movements means that gymnasts are moving all the time and there are no pauses in the sequence.

There must be continuous movement of the centre of gravity.

The team performs the same sequence (mirroring is allowed) at the same time in either one or two groups.

The sequence should also show a change of tempo in the movements.

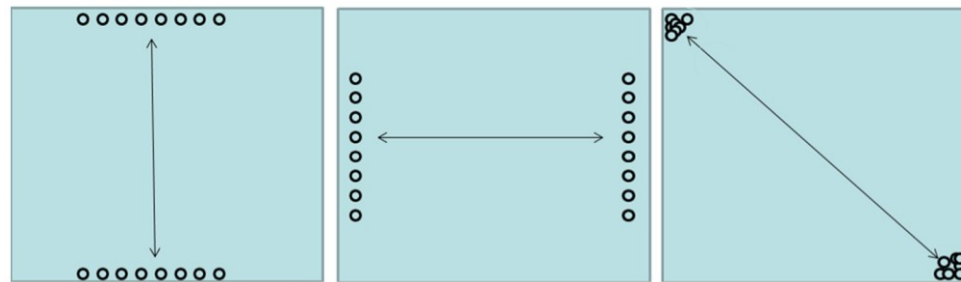
The sequence **can not** include any difficulty elements.

The key word here is that the sequence should **travel** across the floor area so active footwork should be shown, e.g.: the sequence should never stop but constantly be moving.

# Composition – Rhythmic Sequence (RS)

- Movements can come from different categories of elements/movements (see examples in movie clip).
- Movements have to be performed in other rhythmic patterns, then the basic pulse of the music. This to get the change of tempo.
- The starting and ending position should not be further than 3 meters from the floor edges and 5 meters from the corners if the sequence travels diagonal.

3 options of travelling, in one or two groups, changing formations allowed:



## Tips from the coach

See to that the gymnasts really starts and ends the RS within the limits in order to make it clear for the judges to identify the sequence.

# Composition – Rhythmic Sequence (RS)



## TRAVELLING MOVEMENTS

# Composition – Rhythmic Sequence (RS)

# Composition – Difficulty element in moving sequence (DS):

## Difficulty element in moving sequence (DS):

- One difficulty element (leap, hop or acrobatic element with take-off and landing on one foot)
- At least three (3) different moves before and three (3) different moves after the difficulty element
- Continuous passages of choreography
- The aim is to reduce the preparation time (standing still) that teams often use before actually performing the D elements

# Composition – Difficulty element in moving sequence (DS)

Example of DS A1013 (incl. CF):



# Composition – Planes:

Requirement of sequences of travelling movements where the whole team at the same time moves in two different planes:

- At least three (3) different movements where the **side** of the body is leading (frontal plane – door plane)
- At least three (3) different movements where the **back** of the body is leading (sagittal plane – wheel plane)
- *Sequences forward in the wheel plane **are not** included in the requirements of the composition but could be added as an additional travelling sequence. Also, this creates increased spatial awareness within the gymnasts.*

Turning (>45°) is not allowed during planes.

The keyword here is that the gymnasts must be moving within the same plane throughout the whole sequence. It is thus about what plane the gymnasts are moving in and not about what direction/front they are facing.

# Composition: Planes

## *Frontal plane – Door plane*

This plane is about width and height, and you can imagine that you are moving as a sliding door. The gymnast should feel that the side of the body is leading.



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Width

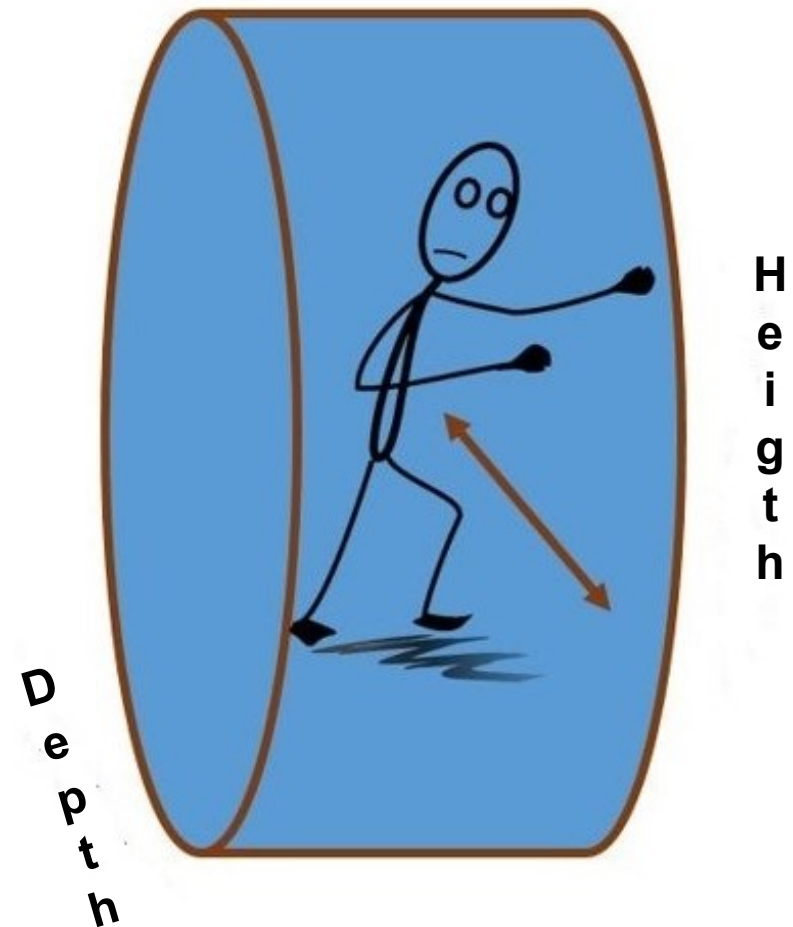


# Composition: Planes

## *Sagittal plane – Wheel plane*

This plane is about height and depth, and you can imagine that you are moving in the direction of a wheel. The CoP only requires a sequence where the back is leading.

In order to enhance the gymnasts' awareness about the wheel plane it could be a good idea also to work in phrases where the front is leading. This way they will feel the contrast between backwards and forward.



# Composition: Planes

The sequences can be performed with intermediate steps.

The sequences do not have to be performed in a straight line but can be made for example in a curved pattern.

Important though that the gymnast keep the movements within the plane. The movement sequences in the different planes can also be included in the *Rhythmic Sequence*.

Acrobatic elements can **NOT** be used as parts of the sequences in planes.

# Composition: Planes



## SEQUENCES IN PLANES

# Composition: Formations

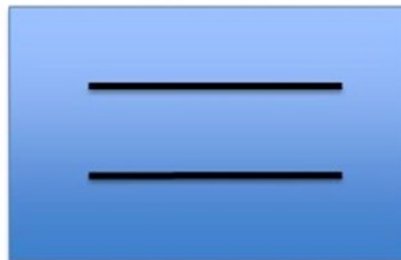
A formation is the *pattern* that the team is forming on the floor. There are three basic requirements: ***number of formations, shape of formations and size of formations.***

## ***1<sup>st</sup> Number of formations***

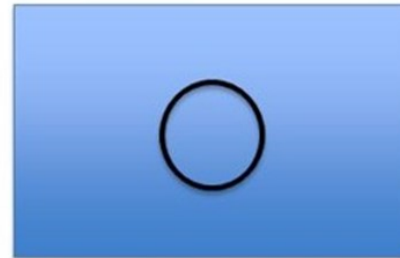
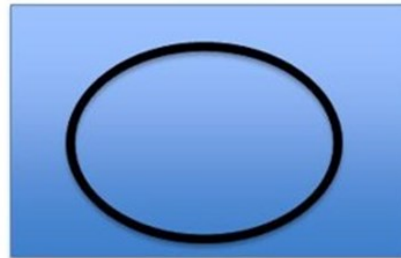
There must be at least **8** different formations during the program. What is then defined as a different formation? As stated above, the team has to show different patterns on the floor area. For example, a small circle and a large circle are the same pattern and will not be considered as different. The same will count if the gymnasts are standing in two straight lines and the lines just change positions on the floor area. It is still just two lines.

# Composition: Formations

Examples of formations that are considered the **same** shape/form

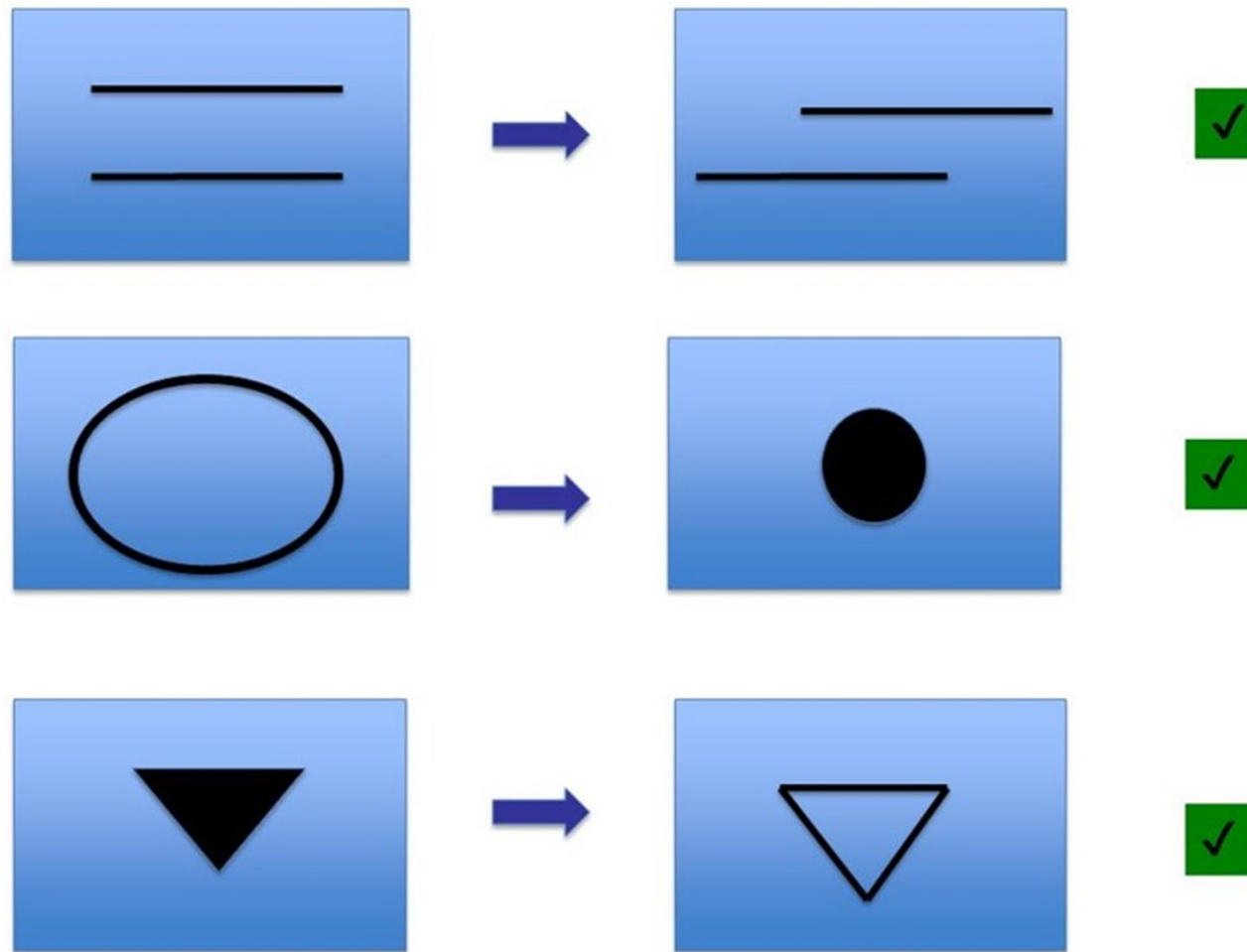


You may of course use these combinations of formations, but they are not counted as **different** formations.



# Composition: Formations

Examples of formations that are **not** considered the **same** shape/form



# Composition: Formations

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Shape of formations (e.g.: moving curved formation)*

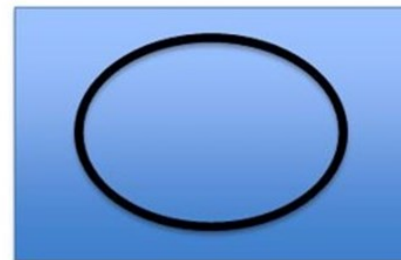
In the program there must be one formation that shows a **moving curved** pattern on the floor. In order to get a moving curved formation, there has to be at least four (4) gymnasts positioned in that formation following each other along the curved pattern.

A formation is counted as a moving curved formation if the path is clearly curved and contains at least **three** (3) elements.

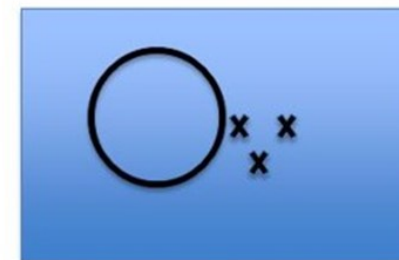
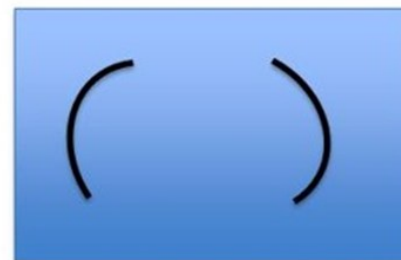
All gymnasts have to be engaged in a curved shape at the same time. The curved formation might appear when moving, even if the pattern on the tariff-form shows a more squared formation (see the animation).

# Composition: Formations

Examples of **curved** formations



Can be moving in a circle?!



All gymnasts needs to be Included in the curve.



# Composition: Formations

# Composition: Formations

## Tips from the coach

A good advice is to use different phrases of travelling movements in order to make the moving curve visible and clear.

# Composition: Formations

## *3<sup>rd</sup> Size of formations*

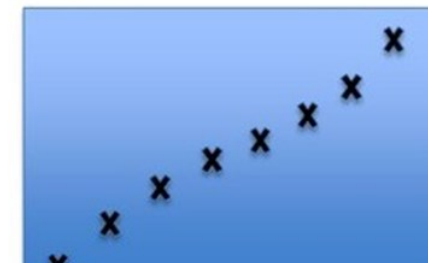
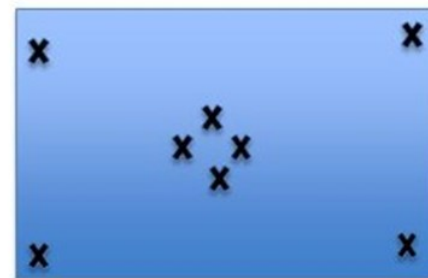
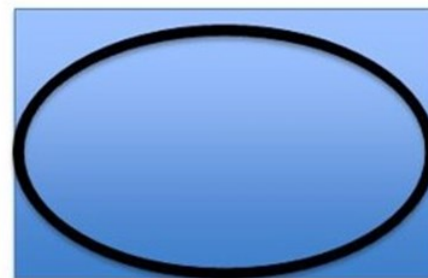
The size of the formations must vary, where one has to be small and one large.

**In the small sized formation:** the gymnasts must be positioned within an area of four by four metres (4 m x 4 m).

**Large sized formation:** the requirement says that the team has to cover the floor area from *back to front and from side to side*. A limit of **one (1) metre** from each edge is allowed so that the gymnast does not have to be fully out on the carpet. The formation should be seen as **one** formation and not several different small ones spread out over the floor area. All gymnasts must together form one shape where every gymnast is spaced so that no gymnast or group of gymnasts are isolated.

# Composition: Formations

Examples of **large** formations



# Difficulty

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## Difficulty - What defines the difficulty value of a floor routine?

To get the difficulty value you turn to the table of difficulty (Appendix A1) and choose suitable difficulty elements for the floor program. There are five categories of difficulties to choose from and then one must be performed in the DS and 3 must be performed after 1:30 min.

To get the value you count the highest valued of:

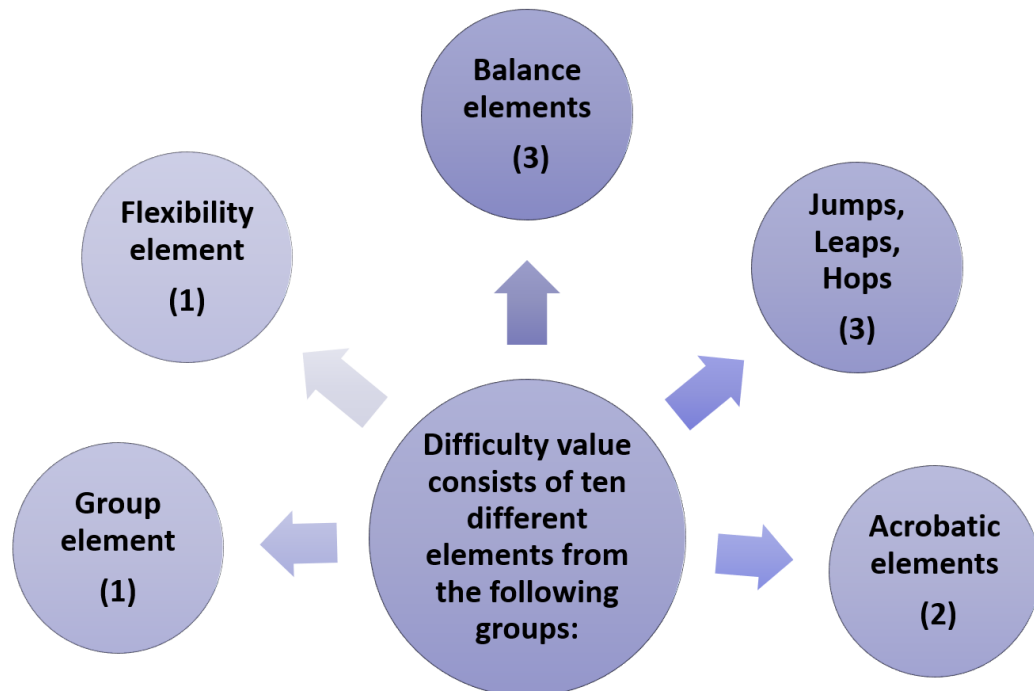
3 different **balances** (one must be a handstand)

3 different **jumps/leaps/hops**

2 different **acrobatic elements**

1 **group element**

1 **flexibility element**



## Difficulty - What defines the difficulty value of a floor routine?

The chosen difficulties must have **different codes numbers** from the table in Appendix A1. All gymnasts must perform the same difficulty at the same time and there should not be more than **three** steps (walking or running) to prepare for the difficulty element (a chassé is not considered a step) are allowed right before any difficulty element or series of linked difficulty elements, according to the choreography.

The only exception is the element performed in the DS (only one step is allowed before the difficulty element).

# Difficulty – Balance elements

The category of balances are divided in three different element-groups:

- **Dynamic balances** – pirouettes and power-elements. E.g.: balances in motion
- **Standing balances** – standing on one leg with the free leg in a certain form/position. Need to be in stillness for at least two seconds.
- **Hand supportive balances** – where the weight is placed on hands (exceptions: HB201 and HB601). Need to be in stillness for at least two seconds.

The three (3) balances has to be chosen as such:

- One handstand HB1001
- One standing balance
- One optional balance



# Difficulty – Dynamic balances: Pirouettes

To get the difficulty value the rotation, measured by the hip, has to be fulfilled and there should be no jumping. A pirouette starts when the free leg and the heel are lifted from the ground and is finished when:

- The rotation is over **or**
- The heel of the supporting leg is touching the floor **or**
- The free leg is touching the floor

All gymnasts must start to perform the turn facing the same direction even though mirroring is allowed (e.g.: the gymnasts may turn on different legs as long as they are performing the same type of pirouette). There is a possibility to perform the pirouettes in different groups (at least three gymnasts) but all groups must start to perform the turn facing the same direction.

**A forward pirouette** is when you turn in the same direction (towards) as the supporting leg.

**A backwards pirouette** is when you turn in the opposite direction (away from) as the supporting leg.

# Difficulty – Dynamic balances: Pirouettes



## EXAMPLES OF FORWARD PIROUETTES

# Difficulty – Dynamic balances: Pirouettes



PIROUETTES  
BACKWARDS

# Difficulty – Dynamic balances: Power elements

Definition of power element:

There must be a controlled movement with dynamic strength. The starting and ending positions must be clearly visible. Movement must be controlled and performed without a pause.

Handstand as a starting or ending position in power elements must have straight legs together and arms and hip straight.

# Difficulty – Dynamic balances: Power elements

Example:



# Difficulty – Standing balances

Definition: There must be a recognised shape where the whole body is held in a static position for at least **two** (2) seconds without any additional movement.

# Difficulty – Hand supportive balances

Definition of balance elements: There must be a recognised shape where the whole body is held in a static position for at least **two** (2) seconds without any additional movement.

In the **handstand** HB1001, which is **mandatory**, the gymnast must have the legs in the same position above hip level. The alignment of the body must though be straight and no additional movement either in legs, trunk or walking.

The placement of legs in HB1001 is optional for the team but must be equal to or above hip level.

In the straddle pike and pike sitting balances, where the legs are lifted over the horizontal level, there must be no leaning on the arms. Both hands must be placed at the side of the body, close to the hips.

# Difficulty – Hand supportive balances



# Difficulty - Jumps

Definition: A recognised shape (position) must be formed in the air during a jump or a leap or a hop. The shape during the flight, twists and landing position define the level of the difficulty of the element. Jumps are divided in to three categories:

- **Jumps** – take-off from two feet and land on one or two feet or in front laying support
- **Leaps** – take-off from one foot and land on the other foot or both feet or in front laying support
- **Hops** – take-off from one foot and land on the same foot

In the floor program there must be **three** different jumps. One could be performed inside the DS (leap or hop).

In jumps with twists all gymnasts must start the jump facing the same direction, according to the choreography. (Valid only in jumps, not in leaps and hops).

# Difficulty - Jumps

# Difficulty – Acrobatic elements

All acrobatic elements must comply with norms of TeamGym. The table of difficulty states what elements to choose from.

Acrobatic elements (e.g.: saltos) are often performed combined with for example a cartwheel or a round off.

In the floor program there must be two acrobatic elements **from two different rows** in Appendix A1. One acrobatic element can be performed inside the DS (take off and landing from one leg).

## Tips from the coach

When adding the difficulties to the tariff form, remember that only ten elements will be counted so if you have for example two saltos with a roundoff as take-off **do not** add the roundoff as one of the difficulty elements.

The first two acrobatic elements written on the tariff sheet will count, so only write the saltos.

# Difficulty – Acrobatic elements



## EXAMPLES OF ACROBATIC ELEMENTS

# Difficulty – Group elements

In the Group Element, all gymnasts must take part and play an active role in either a visible lift off the floor or a throw (e.g.: lift, being lifted, throw and/or catch or being thrown) which can be done together with the whole team or in groups of at least three (3) gymnasts.

The elements must be performed at the same time. Different groups must perform Group Elements with the same code number, but the elements do not need to look the same.

2 types of group elements:

- Lift
- Throw

Lift means that the group must get at least one of the gymnasts totally off the floor by the active support of fellow gymnasts.

One Group Element from Appendix A1 (marked on the tariff form) is required.

Note: The rotation or twist during **the lift** is measured from ground to ground. The rotation or twist during **the throw** is measured during the free flight phase.

# Difficulty – Group elements



# Difficulty – Flexibility elements

One Flexibility Element from Appendix A1 is required. It has to be marked in the tariff form.  
Additional Flexibility Elements can be performed as long as they are not marked on the tariff form.  
The whole team must perform the same flexibility element, which they perform at the same time according to the choreography.  
In the flexibility element, the position must be shown clearly but it does not have to stay still.

# Difficulty – Flexibility elements

Example of Flexibility elements: F1003, F802B





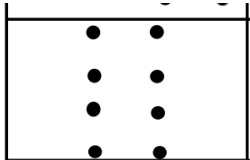

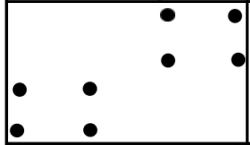

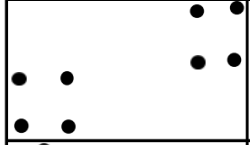

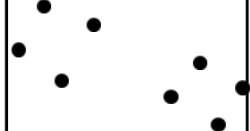

# Difficulty Distribution:

Difficulty elements must be spread evenly in the floor program

At least three difficulty elements must be performed after 1 minute 30 seconds (started after 1 minute and 30 seconds). Based on experience, the recommendation is to have a  $\pm 5$  second margin since different sound systems might play the music in different tempo.

If three different difficulty elements are not performed after the time limit, the team will lose the value of those elements (even if the performance would be perfect) that are performed before the time limit. This difficulty distribution deduction concerns only the three last D-elements.

The time of 1 minute 30 seconds must be marked on the tariff form with a horizontal straight line and letters DD.

	J601		
	DD DB802		LF
	DS J1029		
	A409		

# Execution

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# Execution

The execution deductions are divided into **two** parts: the **summarised execution deductions** and **additional execution deductions**. There is also a **bonus** included in execution where the team can be rewarded an extra 0.1 if the performance is presented in an excellent way.

In the sections below we will go through the different demands for the performance.

# Execution – Time limit

- Timekeeping starts with the music and stops when the last movement has been fully performed
- The limit is between 2:15 and 2:45 minutes
- Based on experience, the recommendation is to have a  $\pm 5$  second margin since different sound systems might play the music in different tempo.

# Execution – Music

## *Instrumental*

The choice of music is optional but has to be instrumental. You are allowed to use music where a human voice is heard, as long as there is no words spoken or sung. This means that humming, whistling and other ways to use your voice without forming any words are allowed.

Other aspects of music such as; what kind of music to use and basic music theory will be handled later in this document.

# Execution – Performance

If the choreographic requirements are decided beforehand, the performance part of the execution is all about what the gymnasts are doing in real time. We will start this section dealing with what good technique is.

## **What is good technique in a TeamGym floor program?**

Good technique is when the gymnast uses just the right amount of energy/force and speed in performing the different movement/elements/difficulties.

Though in the floor program this is quite a complex question and has to be divided into different parts; the *difficulty elements*, *working as a team* and all the *other (the dance) elements/movements*.

# Execution – Performance: Technique

## Technique in difficulty elements

Overall, the technique in the difficulty elements should comply with the norms of gymnastics e.g.: good posture, clear positions, height (in jumps and acrobatic elements), flexibility and strength.

For some difficulty elements there are specific requirements, these are specified in the table of difficulty in Appendix A1.

There can also be differences in the demands between execution and difficulty for example, in a straddle jump the legs must be in horizontal, but to achieve the difficulty value the leg-separation of  $135^\circ$  and the  $90^\circ$  angle in the hip must be fulfilled.

# Execution – Performance: Working as a team

**TeamGym** is about working as a team and the floor program is really the *centrepiece* in this aim. There are several execution requirements that handle this.

## ***Precision in formations***

There are requirements about different kinds of formations throughout the program. In order for the judges to see the different shapes of the formations it is important that the gymnasts are correctly placed. The hardest part when it comes to formations is changing from one formation to another.

### **Tips from the coach**

Here the *secret* is that if the gymnasts are aware of the path, they are travelling along from one formation to the next then it is going to be much easier for them.



# Execution – Performance: Working as a team

## *Synchronisation*

One of the biggest charms with a TeamGym floor program is to experience the team as one. One way of accomplishing this is to work in unison and to be fully synchronised. You are absolutely allowed to work in canon, in different groups and even to do completely different movements but the unspoken rule is that synchronised teamwork is preferred. However, doing different movements and working in different time can be effective to highlight the program.

### **Tips from the coach**

Remember that the gymnasts experience music and timing differently. Some need counting, some needs sound-effects and some just listen to the music. See to that you provide all ways in order for the gymnasts to be synchronised.

# Execution – Performance: Working as a team

## *Uniformity in execution*

All movements (if the choreography doesn't say anything else) should be performed in the same way. That means that arms and legs should be in the same position and following the same movement patterns, curves in the torso should be performed in an identical way, that difficulty elements are performed with the same technique. The overall effect should make the team appear as one.

### **Tips from the coach**

When you have a floor program in a specific style, use that dance genre in the everyday training in order for the gymnasts to get the *same* movement patterns.

# Execution – Performance: Working as a team



EXAMPLE OF WHEN DEDUCTION CAN BE  
MADE FOR  
**UNIFORMITY**

# Execution – Performance: Transitions

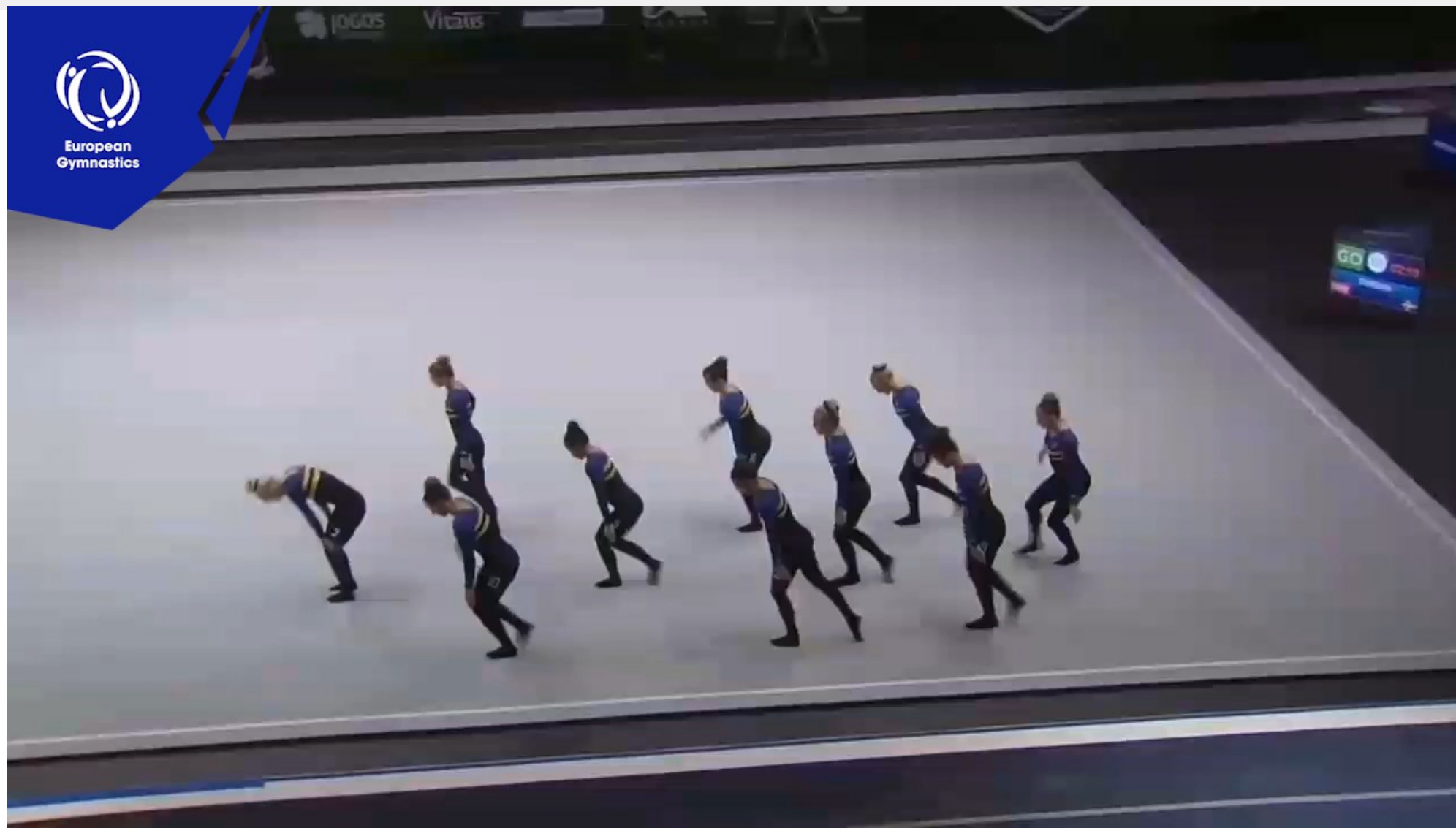
Changing gymnasts' positions from one formation to another is called a transition. Also preparing to perform the group element can be counted as a transition.

All transitions must be fluent, made as a part of the program by doing gymnastics, e.g.: that the gymnasts are not simply walking or running to find the new formation and that the execution of the movements are not being compromised just because the gymnast has to find the new formation.

There are two categories of deductions that are being made:

- Quality of transitions (*included in Dynamic Execution*)
- Easy access

# Execution – Performance: Transitions



# Execution – Performance: Transitions

## *1<sup>st</sup> Quality of transitions (included in Dynamic Execution)*

In short one could say that the transitions should be “invisible”. The change between formations must form a natural part of the program. As stated above there must be gymnastic and/or rhythmic qualities and that means that the whole body, not only arms, is engaged in every movement.

### **Tips from the coach**

Use travelling elements of the choreography in order to change formation as well as the techniques of mirroring, doing different movements and move in different directions.

# Execution – Performance: Transitions

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Easy access*

The gymnasts should not be forced to lengthen or shorten their movements just in order to get to the new formation. Never let the execution be compromised just because of transition between two formations!

### **Tips from the coach**

If for example the gymnasts are doing a combination of leaps and you have two gymnasts with different heights standing beside each other, you can't ask of them to perform the same length. Better then to let the new formation be formed by where they end up after the combination.

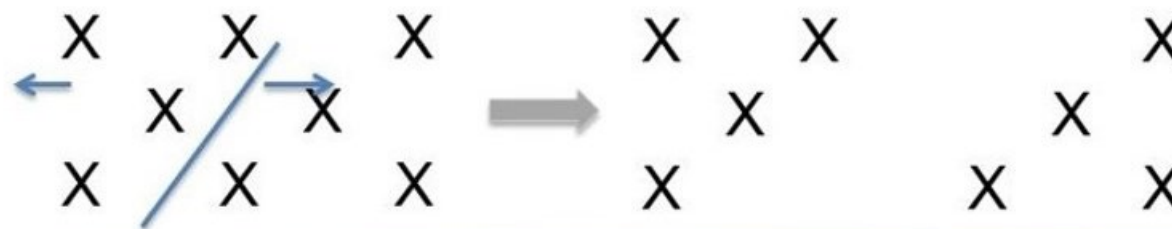
# Execution – Performance: Transitions

Examples of different ways  
of changing formations

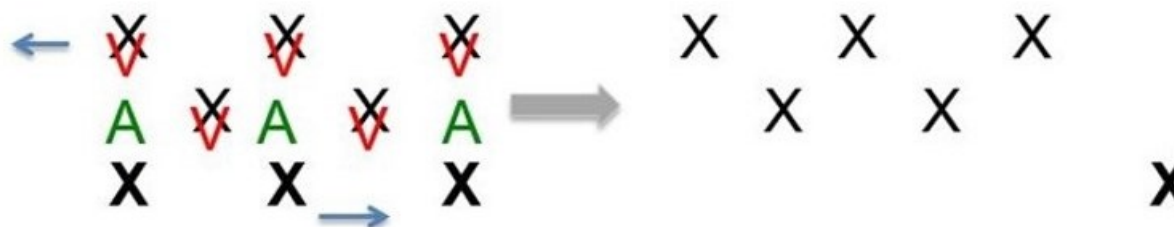
Movements in different directions



Going the “other way”



Mirroring





# Execution – Performance: Transitions

Examples of different ways  
of changing formations

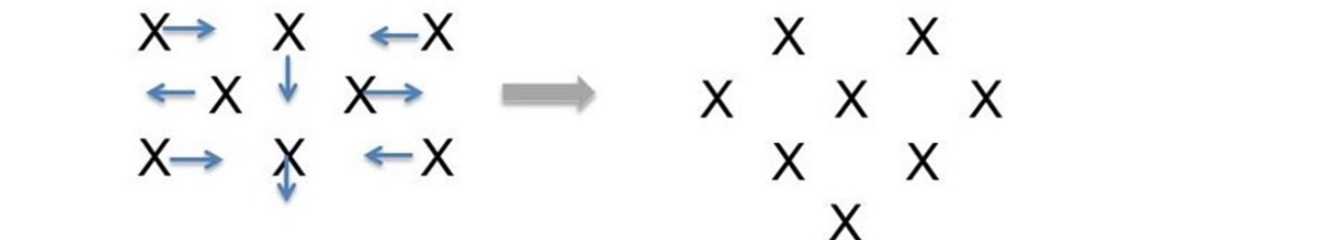
Performing different movements



Movements in a curve



Different directions

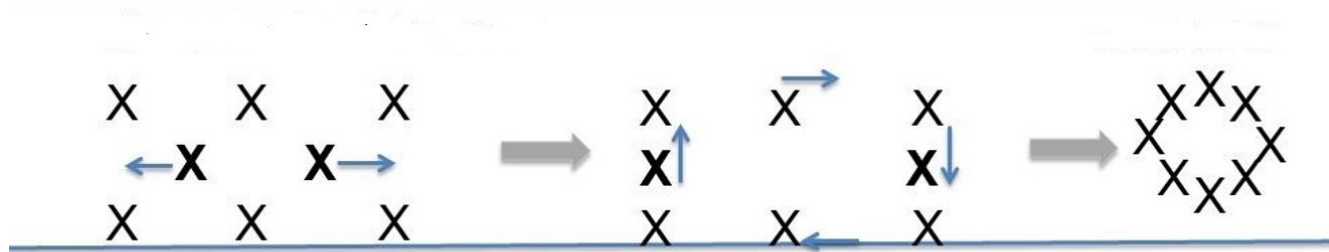


# Execution – Performance: Transitions

Examples of different ways  
of changing formations

Different length of the movements

... to a curve



# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

## Requirements of all the elements/movements

The following requirements will of course affect the teamwork as well and one should strive for the same execution within the team.

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

## *Dynamic execution*

This requirement is one of the most significant for a floor program in TeamGym. That is the demand of the whole body being active in **every** movement, meaning the movement of the torso (e.g.: the spine), so called total body-movements .

In this category of movements, we find: curves (bendings), spirals (turns of the spine), contractions, body-waves, swing-movements (pendulums) and all combination of those.

If the spine is active in every movement, then isolated arm and leg movement will be reduced, it will be easier to connect all the movements together in order to get the fluency in the movement phrases and with that no purposeless stops in between the phrases.

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

## *Dynamic execution*

For this the gymnasts must be aware of gravity, how it is influencing the body, and rhythm in order to get changes in the dynamics of the movements .

Dynamic execution also requires the gymnasts to connect movements and movement phrases together. Therefore, as one movement ends, the next one should follow creating a fluency of movement / movement phrases.

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements



## EXAMPLES OF TOTAL BODYMOVEMENTS

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements



## DYNAMIC EXECUTION

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

## ***Amplitude and extension***

All movement/movement-phrases should be performed with its' full *range of movement*. For example, if the feet are supposed to be pointed then they should be fully stretched. It may be easier to spot in the big movements if the amplitude is insufficient but equally important that the small movements are performed with the same awareness and *range of motion*.

### **Tips from the coach**

Active foot-work is essential in training the gymnasts. Also, the awareness of the *personal space* and the *zones* that we will discuss further in the material.



# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

# AMPLITUDE

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

## ***Balance and controlled execution***

As in all types of gymnastics we want the gymnasts to express safety and confidence while moving. This concerns of course all execution requirements but maybe in particular this demand. In balances we want the gymnasts to be still. In pirouettes, on balance and with a controlled finish. And of course we don't want them to fall.

### **Tips from the coach**

One thing that might help the gymnasts is if they are *grounded* in the floor. If they really feel that they are using the floor and creating force from there, it's easier for them to be controlled in their execution.

# Execution – Performance: Additional execution deductions

- Wrong number of gymnasts
- Fall
- Line violations (*stepping out of the floor-area*)
- *Movement not corresponding to music*
- *Missing Dynamic execution*

## Movements not corresponding to the music

This requirement is about using the full picture of the music and not only as a metronome. We use the expression “see what you hear and hear what you see”, meaning that the movements should enhance the dynamics of the music. For more guidance in how to use the music see the separate section about music.

### **Tips from the coach**

Make sure the music you choose suits your gymnasts both concerning style and maturity. Style, meaning that they are taught within the specific movements that are corresponding with the style. Maturity, e.g.: that they are able to fill the music with the movements.

# Execution – Performance: Requirements of all elements

## *Execution bonus – Perfectly performed*

The goal is to create the awareness of the gymnasts so that they *feel* what they are doing, that they are communicating the program. When you reach this point the next step could be to aim for the execution bonus, that is when the program is performed with excellence. This can be rewarded for parts of the program or the whole program.

### **Tips from the coach**

By using metaphors and imagery you can enhance the awareness of the gymnasts and with that start closing in towards perfection.

# Music

TeamGym – ABC for Floor

# Music

The music is one of the most important components in floor and in this chapter, we will discuss some important aspects.

# Music – Basic musical theory

The meaning is not that we as coaches should be musicians but when using music as a tool, we need to know some of the basic structures of music (Glemne et al. 2011). This in order to help us create the programme, as well as getting the gymnasts together as a team.

If we have the basic knowledge of the structure of the music, it will be easier *choreographing the routine*.



# Music – Basic musical theory

## *Tempo*

The tempo is the overall *speed* of a piece of music. Measured in *Beats per Minute* (BPM).

The beat also called the *pulse* is a regular rhythmic pattern of the music.

### **Tips from the coach**

It is important to identify the tempo in order to know what pulse you should make your changes of tempo (in the movements) towards (demand in the Rhythmic sequence).

# Music – Basic musical theory

## ***Measurement***

Measurement is the period of a musical piece that covers a complete cycle of the time signature. Goes from one emphasized element to the next equally emphasized element. The number of beats of the pulse within that range will give the signature of the music and is called *a bar*. The most common measurement is 4/4-measure which means that there are four beats of the pulse from one emphasized element to the next, in 3/4 there are three beats and so on.

# Music – Basic musical theory

## Tips from the coach

In identifying the measurement of the music, you have the basic tools in how to count in order to get the gymnasts synchronised. It is also important that the movements follow the measurement of the music especially if you are using for example a 3-measurement ( $3/4$ ,  $6/8$ ) so you are not counting to four when the music is based on three or six.

# Music – Basic musical theory

## *Rhythm*

The rhythm is the way to organise the different sounds in time, the length of the different notes and the changes between accented and unaccented elements.

### **Tips from the coach**

If one identifies all the different *layers* of different rhythms in the music, there is a lot to hold on to concerning *choreographing the music* instead of just follow the basic pulse and measurement.

# Music – Basic musical theory

## ***Accents***

To emphasize certain parts of the music.

## **Regular**

Regular recurring patterns/structures of the music. Can be the beat of the drums, the baseline or other rhythmical structures.

## **Temporary**

Non-regular patterns in the music. When a temporary structure of the music occurs to enhance or emphasize a certain part of the music. Could be a *crash*, a *boom* etc.

# Music – Basic musical theory

## Tips from the coach

Together with finding the layers of the rhythms of the music the accents are one of the more helpful tools in choreographing the music. The music is rarely *non-dynamic* and by finding all the accents (especially the regular ones) the choreography will not be either. Consider leaving the temporary accents until the very end of the choreographic as a tool to enhance and create variations of the choreography.

# Music – Basic musical theory

## ***Phrases***

Phrases are a natural division of the flow of the music, independent of the measurement (bars). Can be how the melody *travels* over the beat and measure. Compare to sentences in the spoken language.

### **Tips from the coach**

Instead of counting to the pulse let the gymnasts find the connection between the movement-phrases and the phrases (e.g.: the melody) in the music.

# Music – Adapting the music

## *To the gymnasts*

It really doesn't matter how well you choreograph a floor program if the music doesn't correspond to the level of maturity and awareness of the gymnasts. A big symphonic/epic soundtrack might not be the best choice for a team of youth gymnasts if they are supposed to express the music through movements.

## **Tips from the coach**

Be aware of that younger (or less experienced) gymnasts have a smaller range of movement so just because they aren't so coordinated, they don't need slower music. In slower music they will finish the movement earlier and will be waiting in to start the next movement phrase (e.g.: unmotivated pauses). The younger ones also have shorter arms and shorter legs so they perform the movements faster e.g.: choose a bit more up-tempo music.



# Music – Adapting the music

## *To the style/genre of choreography*

The headline might be a bit misleading since it's hard to decide what influences what: the music influencing the style of dance or vice versa. This is mentioned because you could have a hard time if you have trained the gymnasts to express movement through music for a specific style of dance (e.g.: modern - contemporary) and then choose a different genre for the floor program.

### **Tips from the coach**

When working on a floor program, hold dance classes in the same style as the actual program.

# Music – Choice of music

## Choice of music

The only requirement is that it should be instrumental (or at least without any sung or spoken language) and be between 2:15 and 2:45 minutes long. Otherwise it's optional what kind of music to use. As mentioned above the most important thing with the choice of music is that it is adapted for the gymnast's level of maturity and skills.

Sure, there have been (and probably always will be) different trends, but the CoP gives us quite a lot of freedom. We recommend you find music that is suitable for the genre of movement as well as for the gymnasts that you as the coach want to create.

# Music – Choice of music

## *Searching for music*

There are a lot of platforms/media players for searching for music; YouTube, Spotify, iTunes etc. and one of the best things is that you, when searching, will get tips on other songs/composers/artists to continue the search.

It is quite time-consuming to search for music but the more music you browse through the more material you will have to choose from.

# Music – Choice of music

When searching for the “right” music for your team you can use the following checklist:

- Do you like the music? – Trivial question perhaps but consider hearing the song a couple of hundred times
- Will it suite the gymnasts?
  - According to their maturity in movement/coordination
  - According to their ability to express the music in movement
  - Will they like it? – It is important for you as a coach to be the one to decide even if the gymnasts can be involved in the process, especially when they are getting a bit older
- Is the pulse, measurement, rhythm and accents easy identified?
- Is it corresponding with the style of dance that you are training?

# Music – Choice of music

Suggestions of genres/words for music search: Instrumental, Soundtrack, TV-themes, Karaoke, World music, Jazz, Technolounge, Specific instruments (for ex. Drums) etc.

*Movie-music is a great treasure when searching for music to floor program. Be a bit attentive though that this kind of music can be a bit illusive when it comes to measurement (can even change during the piece). It has also a tendency to become big and symphonic which means that there is a lot of dynamic to live up to.*

*Karaoke versions have a tendency of being quite limited in the sound-picture and can sound a bit flat.*

# Music – Choice of music

## Tips from the coach

Take a day off (preferable when the weather is bad) and browse through a lot of music. Create a playlist of *potential songs for the program* and gather a lot of different pieces of music. This can be a first step and then listen through the playlist and categorize in sub-lists and so on. When it's time for you to create a new program then you sit down and go through the different playlists analysing the music a bit deeper (see checklist below).

# Music – Choice of music

To analyse the music:

- When listening, what images, feelings and types of movement do you see/get?
  - To get an overall feeling of the music, especially to decide if the music suits the gymnasts.
- Is the basic pulse easy to identify?
  - For the gymnasts to feel it
  - The first tool for changes of tempo
- Can you identify the measurement?
  - So you can count in order to get the gymnasts synchronised.
  - So the movements/elements “fit in” the music

# Music – Choice of music

- Can you identify the different regular accents?
  - Great tool for choreographing the music
  - Great tool for identifying the dynamics of the music
- Identify the temporary accents
  - This can be done after you've finished choreographing. If you start here the risk is that the periods in between cool effects will be empty.
  - This is a great tool for enhancing the choreography



# Music – Choice of music

This might seem to be a lot of work, but it is so important that the music is right for the program. When decided for one (or perhaps several) piece/pieces of music you either go to the store and buy the cd or you buy it online, so you have the original file.

Do not try to use YouTube-clips (or similar) because the quality of the sound-picture will be poor.

# Music – Choice of music

## *Mixing the music?*

The question mark in the head indicates that there are several ways of looking at mixing the music. You do not have to mix between different pieces of music; you can use one single piece. It might be that you need to mix within the song to get the right length.

The most common (?!) way though, is to use two or even more pieces of music in a program. When doing so we think it is important that the different music *match* together so that the sound-picture shows wholeness instead of totally different parts. This is kind of subjective and there is no deduction for using sharp contrasts in music but nevertheless worth considering.

# Music – Choice of music

## Tips from the coach

When mixing within one piece of music it can be done by just *copy-paste* in the same audio track but when adding several different pieces together a recommended method is to crossfade the pieces between two separate audio tracks.

# Music – How to choreograph according to the music

This will be discussed a little bit deeper in the chapter about how to choreograph, but from a musical perspective here are some advice:

- Try not to get *caught* in just counting (e.g.: 1-8) since the movement-phrases have a tendency then to be *silent* and *empty* in the end. We want the phrases to connect throughout the whole program.
- Learn the music *by heart*. Then you can let the music lead you into the movements.
- You don't have to start from the top (if choreographing with the music as a base). Start where you feel inspiration.

# Music – How to choreograph according to the music

- Don't be afraid to leave parts un-choreographed, fill the gaps later.
- Use the regular accents and the different layers of rhythm as guidance when enhancing the music with movements. Then you are using the dynamics within the music and will have many things for free considering the demand of dynamics of execution
- Try to catch the feeling (images) of the music in the movements, find the character and express that through movements

# Music – How to choreograph according to the music

## Tips from the coach

If you suddenly realise that the gymnasts have *grown out* of the music or that the movement-material have grown because of the gymnast's enhanced skills, or if it just doesn't feel right, don't be afraid to change the music.

You don't have to waste the whole program and start over, see what happens if you just change the music.

# Choreography

TeamGym – ABC for Floor

# Choreography

This is a field that is not all easy to explain in writing, how to put different movements together in order to create a choreography. The best way of learning this is to attend different courses and to just *try for yourself*. Some basic components will be discussed here though and to help us we use a modified version of Rudolf Laban's (1879-1958) movement analyses called BESS (Ravn, 2005). BESS stands for *Body, Effort, Shape* and *Space* and these components will be presented below.

## Why Laban and the BESS-concept?

For us that have been involved in TeamGym for some time we have discovered that the BESS-concept correlates well with the CoP.



# Choreography

With this theoretical framework we get a vocabulary to use in describing what we see in movements, to put words on the feeling of the movement and to help us understand the different components of the CoP and to relate that to the choreography of a floor program.

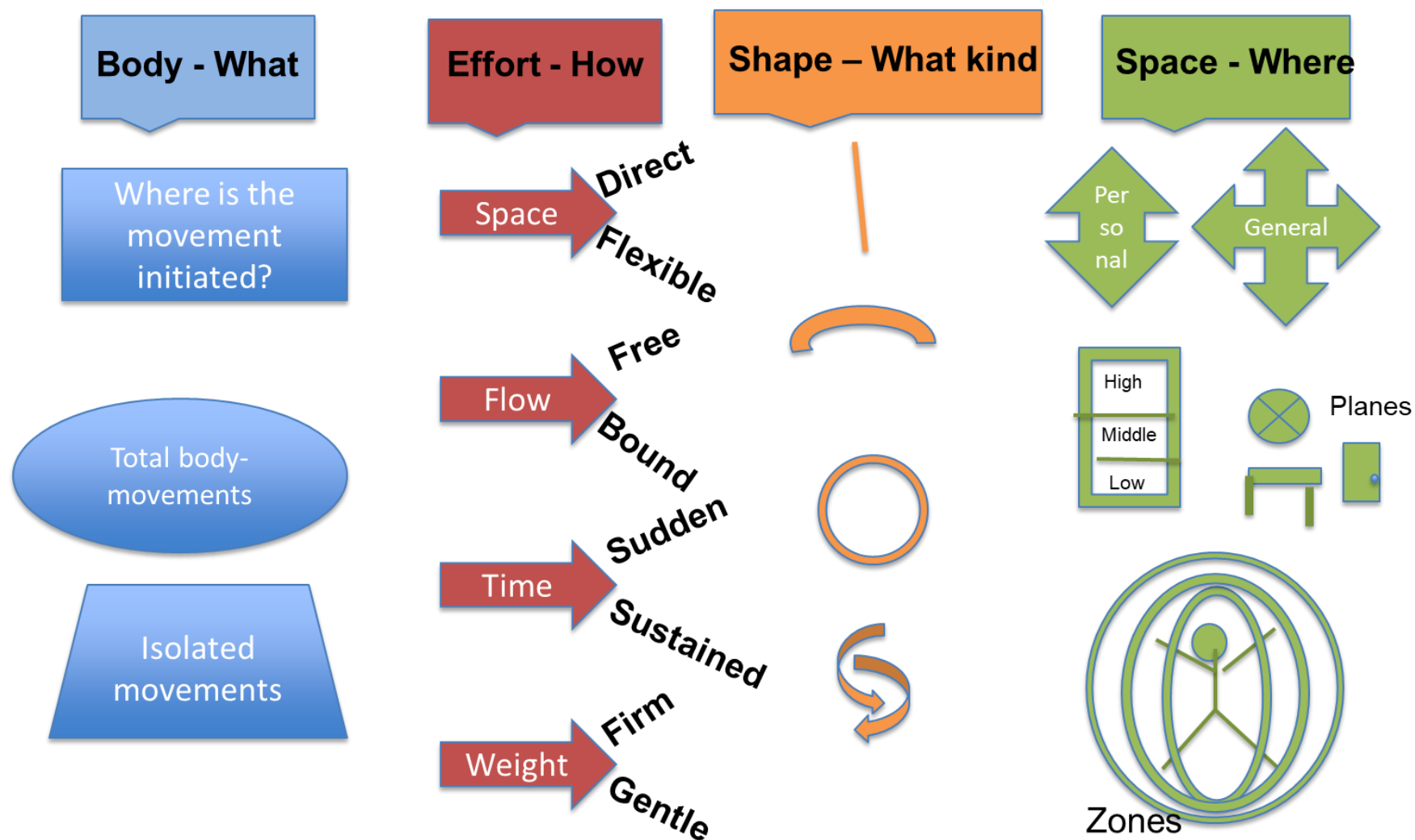
Laban's theories about analysing movement, including Laban-notation and choreutics (see for ex: Laban & Ullman 2011; Newlove & Dalby 2004) ) are very complex why we have limited us to the BESS-concept as presented and interpreted in Ravn (2005).

# Choreography – BESS-concept

The concept (framework) is based on four aspects:

- 1) *Body*
- 2) *Effort*
- 3) *Shape*
- 4) *Space*

# Choreography – BESS-concept



# Choreography – BESS-concept

## ***Body***

- The body's possibility to move
- Total or isolated movements
- Where is the movement initiated?

This first aspect is about the body's *possibility to move*; what kinds of movement are there in the body? Very simple we could talk about three basic movements of the body: *to bend, to stretch* and *to twist* and it is by combining these three basic movements we get the richness of our movement-vocabulary.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

This aspect is also about how much of the body that are integrated in the movement; we talk about *total movements* or *isolated movements*. This has been mentioned before in the chapter about dynamics that the CoP states that the whole body should be active in every movement, which means that total movements are to prefer when choreographing a floor program. Isolated arm and leg movement will actually result in a deduction so the torso should be active to combine these movements together.

Within this aspect we also investigate where the movement is *initiated* in the body; if it starts centrally (e.g. in the movement-centre) or if it starts distally (for example in one hand) and where the movement continues from there. Again, if the movement starts within the centre of the body it is going to be easier for the gymnasts to engage the whole body.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## ***Effort***

The *dynamic expression* of the movement

Divided into four sub-aspects:

- 1) *Space*
- 2) *Time*
- 3) *Flow*
- 4) *Weight/Force*

The effort-aspect is more or less about how the movement/movements are being executed. This means that it is about the gymnasts awareness about the movement and if you put that in to the team-work that all gymnasts should have the same awareness.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Space

- Direct movements - the movement takes the most economical (straight)way from point A to point B
- Flexible movements – the movement travels in a more curved path which costs more in energy

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Time

- Sudden movements – The movement happens suddenly
- Sustained movements – The movement are more ongoing

### **Tips from the coach**

Both the space and time factors are important tools to be aware of when working on the synchronisation of the team.



# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Flow

- Free flow – The movement has a natural stop (for example a leap)
- Bound flow – The movement can stop at any time

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Weight/Force

*Firm* – The movement is performed with a lot of weight (e.g.: towards gravity)

*Gentle* – The movement is performed with less weight (e.g.: resisting gravity)

The aspect of effort is quite complex but if we as coaches are aware of the effect that the execution of every movement has then we can transfer this to our gymnasts.

### Tips from the coach

In order to create a uniform execution and an awareness of the dynamics of the movements use metaphors, imagery, sounds and other way to guide your gymnast.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## *Shape*

- The plastic shape of the body
- The traces in space that the movement leaves

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Shape of the body

There are four basic shapes of the body: *the stick* (straight), *the wall* (a big), *the ball* (a round and/or small) and *the spiral* (twisted).

If we (and the gymnasts) are aware of what shape the body is in it is going to be easier to get them synchronised and uniform in the execution. Also relates to where in space (see below) the movement is being performed.

## Tips from the coach

If the gymnast have an image that they for example are drawing a sun you will have easier to get them to follow the same traces in space.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Traces

Also here there are four basic traces the movement makes: *the line* (straight), *the curve*, *the circle* and *the spiral*.

Movement leaves traces in space when being performed both in the personal space (see below) as well as in the general space (see below) and by recognising what kind of trace the movement is suppose to follow or what path the movement (sequence) follows on the floor it too will hold the gymnasts to be uniform and synchronised. Also by identifying what path they are travelling along the floor it will be easier for them to go from one formation to another (see transitions under composition).

### **Tips from the coach**

Especially when it comes to moving in a curve it will be easier for the gymnasts to keep the curve if they know the path in the floor.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## *Space*

- Personal and General space
- Levels
- Fronts
- Zones
- Planes

The aspect of space is about the physical space, the actual space where the movement takes place.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Personal room

It is also called the kinesphere (Laban & Ullman 2011, p.10). This is the space you have around yourself, as far as you can reach without changing your supporting area.

## Tips from the coach

If the gymnasts know where and how in the personal room, the movement is supposed to be performed then you have the most important tool in getting the team into uniformity.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## General room

It is the space outside the kinesphere, the floor area, the relations between the gymnasts, the four walls of the room etc. Important to be aware of one's own personal space in the general space, especially when it comes to working in formations.



# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Levels

Laban talked about three levels: *high, middle* and *low*.

Different levels; *lying, sitting, standing* and *jumping*, are used to give the program a larger range for the use of space and providing variations.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Fronts

Laban used the bearing of the compass in describing to what front movements are being performed. In the CoP, this aspect is called directions and are mentioned as *forward*, *backwards*, *right* and *left*, where forward is the direction/front towards the judges.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Zones

The kinesphere is divided into three zones: *near*, *mid*, and *far* zone. In the near zone the movement could be imagined as a thin fabric touching the skin e.g.: movements very close to the body. The expression (feeling) of moving in the *near* zone is usually a bit introvert and shy. The *mid* zone is situated in the middle of the personal room and the expression here may become a bit “sloppy” since the arms for example are not fully stretched.

The *far* reach is then the zone where one tries to reach as far as possible in your personal room without shifting weight. Movements in the *far* zone are often seen as strong and extrovert. Awareness of the zones can be a tool in interpreting the music so that the movements correspond with expression of the music since the expression shifts as mentioned in the explanation above.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Tips from the coach

Awareness of in what zone the movement takes place is also a tool in working with the *amplitude* of the movement. Here can also imagery and metaphors be of help, for example if the gymnasts pictures themselves being Spiderman shooting cobweb from his wrists the movement will surely end up in the *far* zone and be of its' full amplitude.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

## Planes

- Frontal/vertical plane – Door plane
- Horizontal plane – Table plane
- Sagittal plane – Wheel plane

The three-dimensional space is called planes and Laban used the more figurative expressions door, table and wheel when describing these. They have (or at least two of them) been discussed above in the chapter about composition. In the *door plane* the movements are performed with *height and width*; imagine moving along a sliding door. Movements in *table plane* are *wide and deep* as if you are “trapped” in the middle of a table.

# Choreography – BESS-concept

When moving in the *wheel plane* the front or back of the body is leading and one can imagine running in a “hamster-wheel”. The movements are thus high and deep in space.

In short one can say that Body, Shape and Space are *more* choreographic aspects since they are about *what* the body is doing in *what kind* of shape and *where* in space the body is moving. Whereas Effort is about *how* the body is moving.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

*“You learn by choreographing, by experimenting, by creating little bits and pieces and fragments of dances and dance phrases, by playing with the materials of the craft over and over again...”*

(Bloom & Chaplin 1989, p. 3)

# Choreography – Putting movements together

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the craft of choreographing is nothing you learn by reading about it you have to try as suggested in the quotation above. In this part I will try to give some guidelines in the process of choreographing.

You can use them to *explore* your movement-vocabulary, to explore the craft of putting movements together and with that giving you the *experience* to choreograph a whole floor program. Remember that it is gymnastics and not dance we are creating for and you have the CoP as a guide.

Since you are creating for a group, “simplicity is a must” (Humphrey 1987, p. 94) and in TeamGym it becomes even more relevant since you have the demand of uniformity and synchronisation.



# Choreography – Putting movements together

## *Building phrases*

A movement phrase is the smallest and simplest unit of form. Even the shortest phrase has a beginning, middle and an end (Bloom & Chaplin 1982). Two movement connected together can be seen as a phrase.

A movement phrase is to a choreography what a sentence is to the spoken or written language. What then makes a phrase to become choreography is that you connect several phrases together building sequences then connecting sequences together to longer sections. And bit-by-bit you create wholeness.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

## How to build phrases then?

There are several ways of going towards this process. For example, Doris Humphrey, one of the pioneers in choreographic theory, says that building a phrase is like designing shapes of the body in time (1987). So in giving the body different shapes one can piece by piece build a phrase.

Since one of the requirements of the floor program is to have fluency in the movements it is important though to find natural connections between the movements/shapes and here the knowledge of the aspects of *Body* and *Shape* (as in traces) become so important. If you know where a movement starts you also know where it stops and there you have the connecting point to the next movement/shape.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

**How do I get the movements or shapes that are supposed to be linked together?**

- Use movements you already know in your body
- Use movements that your gymnasts have in their bodies
- Try new movements through exploratory work (improvise around the aspects of the BESS-concept)
- Try to explore “everyday-movements” or maybe the movement-pattern of another sport
- What kind of inspiration do you get from the music? If you have music with firm and heavy dynamics what do your body want to do? Let the music guide you

# Choreography – Putting movements together

**How do I get the movements or shapes that are supposed to be linked together?**

- Try working with pictures and images
- Explore movements from a specific theme, for example anger, water or animals
- Use inspiration from dances you know or have seen
- Build a statue of a body (use a colleague or a gymnast), build another one and connect the two and so on

# Choreography – Putting movements together

- The sequences in planes give you a good start to build a phrase. Connect three movements travelling sideways and you have both a phrase to build from and the demand for travelling in the door plane.
- Connect travelling movements (for examples the ones in the film-clip) and then you have the first demand for the Moving Rhythmic Sequence.
- Connect two difficulty elements and you will both have started a phrase.
- Connect with the phrase above and you have a longer phrase.
- Use the CoP

# Choreography – Putting movements together

As discussed above, two movement/shapes connected together is a phrase. By connecting these two movements to a couple of more you have a longer phrase and by connecting that phrase to another phrase the row of movements/shapes will turn into sequences of movements and so on.

If you are not working with the music, try not to count when performing the phrases/sequences, this could otherwise hinder you when building the phrases into the music.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

## Tips from the coach

In the beginning of the choreographic process, do not value the movements. E.g.: do not say to yourself: “this is an ugly movement” or “this is not a regular gymnastic movement” or “my gymnasts will not be able to do this”. If you do that you will restrict yourself in your creativity. Concerning the gymnasts performing the movements (and maybe especially the younger ones), they will (usually) transform the movements into their own bodies and make it work.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

## What to do next?

So, now you have a lot of movement phrases/sequences. When you proceed there are some “check-points” you need to attend to:

- If you haven’t already, it’s time to build the movement phrases into the music. Let the music give you the timing of the movement (see the remark above concerning counting)
- Use the tools mentioned in the music-chapter when choreographing the music
- Are all the requirements of the composition fulfilled? That is the requirements that are linked to the movement phrases (planes, RS and movements corresponding to the music) If not, what is missing? Use the CoP and/or BESS for guidance



# Choreography – Putting movements together

Are the difficulty elements built-in the movement material? If not? Try to find natural transitions where you can add a difficulty element:

- In a sequence where you are on the floor maybe a supporting balance can be included.
- In a sequence with a lot of flow can a leap be added?
- Can you get some inspiration from the music? E.g.: if the music is going “forward” maybe an acrobatic element or a combination of leaps would be suitable?

# Choreography – Putting movements together

Placing the gymnasts in formations and towards different directions

- Where to start?
- Where will the next movement sequence travel in space? Can a change in formation take place?
- What movement sequences are suitable for transitions between formations?
- Where should the RS start? Do I need to travel to this starting position?
- Where can a moving curved formation be suitable to add?
- Where are the gymnasts placed so I can add the *Group element*?

# Choreography – Putting movements together

Are the movements total body movements or are they isolated arm and/or leg movements?

- Even though this is an execution requirement, analyse the movements so that you see the possibility of the entire body being engaged in the movement.
- If you discover a lot of isolated arm and/or leg movements try to add total body movements (see the film under dynamic execution) or
- Try to get the movement to be initiated in the centre of the body or
- Engage the awareness of the torso.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

## **Tips from the coach**

Do not wait to teach your gymnasts until you have all the movement material. They will learn more easily if they get small pieces at a time.

# Choreography – Putting movements together

In the chapter of choreography, the starting point has been putting movements together and with that building movement phrases which have become longer sequences. Of course, you can start with the music or even with the formations, but the main issue in this chapter has been about getting tools in creating the building stones (the phrases) of the choreography. There are no wrong ways to approach creating a floor program, you just have to find *your* way in doing so. If you are interested in reading more about choreography, I can recommend Bloom & Chaplin (1989) and Humphrey (1987). Both books also include exercises both in choreography as well as improvisation.

*Maybe starting with the music is to prefer when you start exploring the craft of choreographing a floor program but can also be an obstacle since it is easy to get “stuck” in the form of the music.*

# Summing up

Hopefully, when you have reached this far of the material you feel encouraged to start to explore *your* way in becoming (or evolving as) a floor coach in TeamGym. Sure it is a complex event within an already complex sport but I assure you, it is worth it. It is the optimal way of both being a gymnastic coach and also getting the opportunity to enhance and nurture your creative side.

# Summing up

The training in floor consists of different parts:

Building up for the difficulty elements in a methodical way

- Strength training
- Flexibility training
- Coordination

Building a movement vocabulary

- The gymnast's own vocabulary
- The coach's vocabulary
- This can be done in a playful manner and using a lot of exploratory work
- Will also give the gymnasts an advantage in learning movement material

# Summing up

- Creating the floor program
- Training the floor program
  - For the gymnasts to learn the movements
  - Learning to perform the movements in formations
  - Getting the gymnasts synchronized and in uniformity
  - Enhancing the movement so that the movements are made with dynamics, amplitude and balanced execution.
  - Getting the team ready for competition



# Summing up

The wholeness really shows the complexity of the apparatus, so it is not just to practise the actual program. The material may seem complex, so I recommend you attend a coaching course in TeamGym Floor.

The material will come to life and become much clearer when moving around a floor area.

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# Thank you