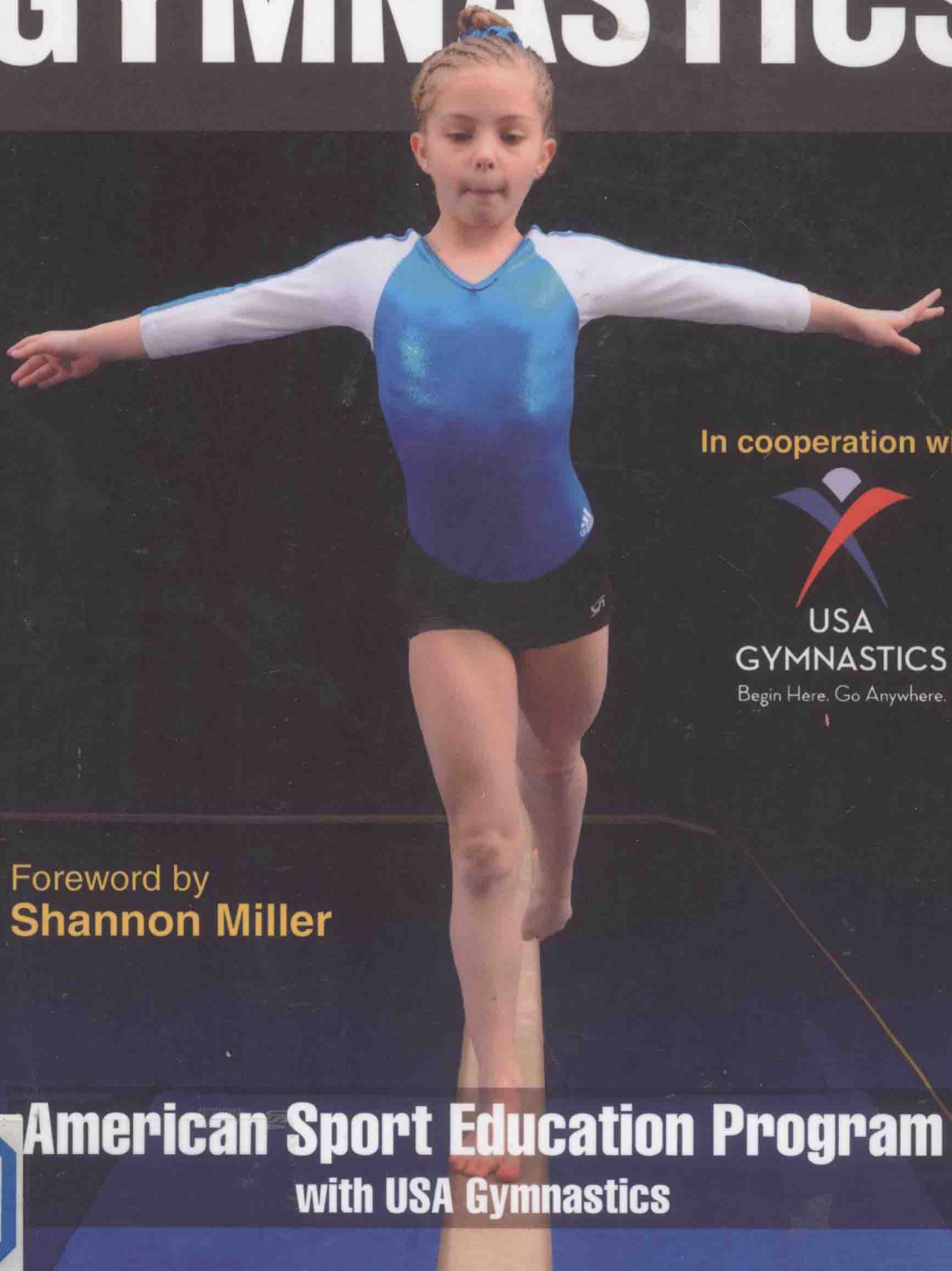


# Coaching Youth GYMNASTICS



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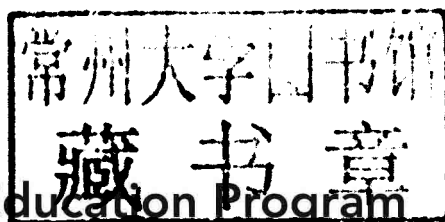
USA  
GYMNASTICS

Begin Here. Go Anywhere.

Foreword by  
**Shannon Miller**

**American Sport Education Program**  
with USA Gymnastics

# Coaching Youth Gymnastics



American Sport Education Program  
with USA Gymnastics



Human Kinetics

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*To anyone who has ever performed cartwheels, who once dreamed of performing cartwheels, or who appreciates and applauds all those who perform cartwheels.*

# Welcome to Coaching

**Coaching** young people is an exciting way to be involved in sport. But it isn't easy. Some coaches are overwhelmed by the responsibilities involved in helping athletes through their early sport experiences. And that's not surprising because coaching youngsters requires more than just showing up. It also involves preparing them physically and mentally to compete effectively, fairly, and safely in their sport and providing them with a positive role model.

This book will help you meet the challenges so you can experience the many rewards of coaching young gymnasts. You'll learn how to meet your responsibilities as a coach, communicate well, provide for safety, and teach gymnastics skills while keeping them fun. More than 175 skills are included throughout the text to help you with your practices. Sample practice and season plans are also provided to guide you throughout your season.

If you would like more information about this or other ASEP resources, please contact us at the following address:

**ASEP**

P.O. Box 5076

Champaign, IL 61825-5076

800-747-5698

[www.ASEP.com](http://www.ASEP.com)

# Welcome From USA Gymnastics

**Dear** coach, instructor, or teacher,

On behalf of USA Gymnastics, welcome to *Coaching Youth Gymnastics*. It is one of many resources available to you through the American Sport Education Program (ASEP) and USA Gymnastics. Whether you want to learn how to teach proper fundamental skills or how to communicate better, this book can guide you through your experience of coaching youth gymnastics. It is a must-read for novice as well as experienced gymnastics teachers. Continuing education is important to everyone's growth and development.

You will find activities and plenty of resources to aid you in your coaching journey. These coaching methods are based on our experiences in teaching the many coaches and instructors of USA Gymnastics. Well-established resources such as *Rookie Coaches Gymnastics Guide*, *Sequential Gymnastics*, *Gymnastics Risk Management: Safety Course Handbook*, and *The Women's Level 1-4 Development Book* were used for this project.

This book is a great resource full of ideas to get you through your gymnastics classes. It establishes the important basics that all gymnastics participants must master. You will find it easy to follow—an excellent introduction to coaching youth gymnastics. Between ASEP and USA Gymnastics, you will have access to a wealth of practical information on coaching and teaching.

Your participation as a teacher and coach will have a profound impact on the gymnasts you influence, both today and for many years to come. On behalf of the athletes, thank you for coaching youth gymnastics.

For USA Gymnastics,

Kathy Feldmann, vice president of member services

Loree Galimore, director of club services

Carisa Laughon, former director of educational services

## **USA Gymnastics**

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# Foreword

**Youth** gymnastics coaches and instructors are the backbone of the sport. The highly technical demands of performing each event and the rigorous physical conditioning to support performance require proper guidance from a capable mentor.

Knowledge of the sport and an ability to teach it are essential, but equally important are coaches' philosophy, communication skills, level of organization, concern for safety, and supportive demeanor. That's why I encourage you to read and apply the material in *Coaching Youth Gymnastics* to your work.

Like me, most gymnasts start at a very early age. Few will have the good fortune to compete and win medals at the world championships and Olympics, but that does not make their experience any less significant. Not only do gymnasts learn flexibility, strength, balance, and body awareness, but they also learn important life lessons such as goal setting, perseverance, and dedication. Young gymnasts need and deserve coaches who emphasize children's overall development as athletes and as people, not just how high they can climb in the competitive ranks.

Most observers might focus on my competitive successes, but I also had my share of setbacks and injuries. I faced those obstacles with a strong inner drive to excel and the support of my coaches and family.

I applaud USA Gymnastics for all of their coaching education efforts and recommend that you take advantage of every learning opportunity, starting with this book. Not only will you be better prepared to coach effectively, but the young gymnasts under your tutelage will have the great experience they seek and deserve in this incredible sport.

**Shannon Miller**

Seven-time Olympic medalist and nine-time world medalist  
United States' most decorated gymnast

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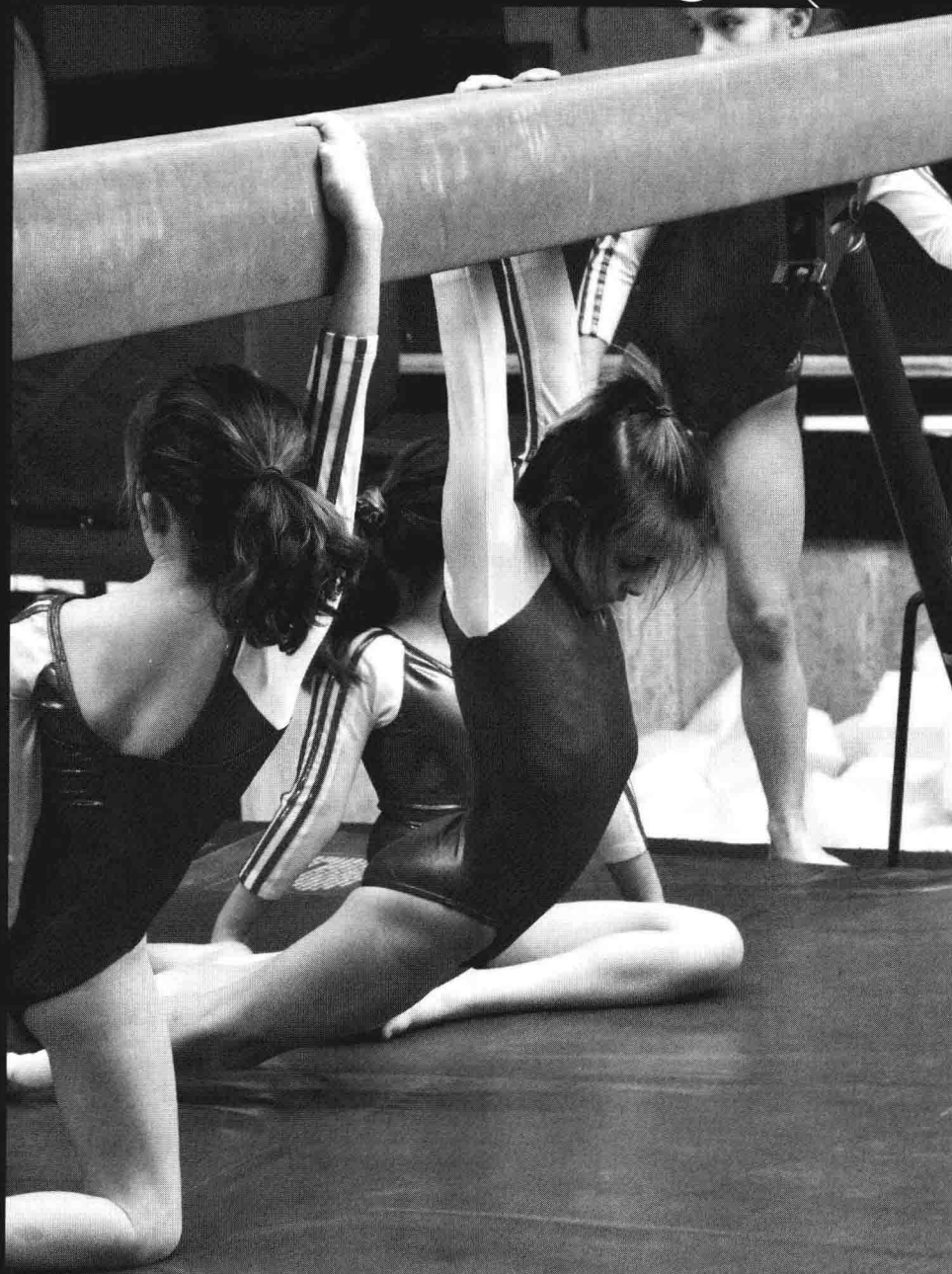
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# Stepping Into Coaching

1



COACHING



**In** the sport of gymnastics, the titles of *coach* and *instructor* are typically used to mean different things. Instructors generally teach students who participate in gymnastics at a preschool or recreational level, while coaches instruct, guide, and prepare athletes for gymnastics competition. Yet the basic task of both gymnastics coaches and instructors is to teach and help gymnasts learn. So although the term *coach* is used most frequently throughout this book, much of the material can apply to both coaches and instructors.

If you are like most gymnastics coaches, you have probably been recruited from the ranks of former gymnasts, gymnastics enthusiasts, coaches of similar sports, or even parents. Like many rookie and veteran coaches, you probably have had little formal instruction on coaching. But when the call from the local gymnastics club went out for coaches, you answered because you like children and enjoy gymnastics and perhaps because you want to be involved in a worthwhile activity.

Your initial coaching assignment may be difficult. You may not know everything there is to know about gymnastics or about how to work with children. *Coaching Youth Gymnastics* presents the basics of coaching gymnastics effectively. To start, we look at your responsibilities and what's involved in being a coach. We also examine five tools for being an effective coach.

## Your Responsibilities as a Coach

Coaching at any level involves much more than just teaching a cartwheel or spotting a back salto. Coaching involves accepting the tremendous responsibility you face when parents put their children in your care. As a gymnastics coach, you'll be called on to do the following:

### 1. Provide a safe physical environment.

Participating in gymnastics involves inherent risks. As a coach you're responsible for minimizing risk, and one way to do this is to conduct regular inspections of facilities, apparatus, and equipment used for practice and competition (see "Sample Facility Inspection Form" on page 241 of the appendix). Providing a safe physical environment also includes offering proper supervision and instruction, educating the gymnasts regarding safety policies (see "Coaches' Safety Checklist" on page 236 of the appendix), removing or preventing known hazards, ensuring access to first aid supplies, and having an emergency action plan in place (see page 37 of chapter 4 for more information).

### 2. Communicate in a positive way.

As you already know, you have a lot to communicate. You'll communicate not only with your athletes and their parents but also with fellow coaches, officials, administrators, and others. Communicate in a positive way that demonstrates you have the best interests of the gymnasts at heart (see chapter 2 for more information).