

How to Photograph Gymnastics

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Capturing gymnastics in action is challenge photographers can master.

Gymnastics is a competitive and artistic sport that makes for dramatic photo opportunities. With more than 5 million participants training and competing in over 4,000 gyms throughout the country, there are certain to be many opportunities for [family](#) and friends to photograph gymnastics competitions. Unfortunately, with the fast-paced action of gymnastics competition and the challenging photography opportunities, it takes careful preparation and the proper equipment to get good results.

Instructions

Difficulty: Moderate

Equipment Needs

- Shoot your gymnastics photos with a digital SLR camera body that features a low-light sensor. Cameras with APS-C sized sensors are ideal for providing extra telephoto reach.
- Choose the proper lens depending on how close you can get to the action. Telephoto zoom lenses with a range of 70 - 200 mm are ideal and provide the flexibility for both close and far shots. Because you will need to use very fast shutter speeds, it is important to use a fast lens, that is, one having a maximum aperture of at least f/2.8. Because of the fast shutter speed that you'll be using, image stabilization in the lens is not critically important.
- Learn how to use your camera's low light shooting capability as it is unlikely that you'll be allowed to use flash photography.

Things You'll Need:

- Digital SLR camera
- Fast telephoto zoom lens
- Permission from gym owners

Instructions

- Set your camera to the highest ISO setting that allows for clean, noise-free photographs. On simpler cameras, this will probably be ISO 800. High end professional and "prosumer" cameras may allow for clean shooting at ISO speeds of 3,200, 6,400 or higher. The higher ISO will allow for faster shutter speeds.

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- 2 Set your camera to aperture priority and dial in the lowest possible f-stop number for your lens. Remember that lower f-stop numbers reflect wider-open lens apertures and allow more of the available light to reach your camera's sensor. With this setting, if your shutter speed is not 1/500 second or faster, you'll need to go back and select a higher ISO setting.
- 3 Select the multiple exposure mode that will allow your camera to take a series of fast-paced photographs. It is unlikely that you will be able to time a single shutter release with the peak of action and the multiple exposure mode will help ensure that you capture a great action shot.
- 4 Shoot from a position at floor level. Shooting from a low level will accentuate the perception of height when the gymnast executes tumbling and leaping movements during the floor exercise and when performing on the vault.
- 5 Capture the dramatic release movements and dismounts on the uneven parallel bars and the graceful poses and jumps executed on the balance beam. These two events are best photographed from the side of the apparatus. Again, shooting from a low position on the floor will increase the appearance of height as the gymnast performs these movements.

References

[USA Gymnastics; Gymnastics Demographics](#)

[Photo.net; Sports Photography](#)

Photo Credit

gymnast competing on pommel image by Galina Barskaya from [Fotolia.com](#)



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