

Fantastic Gymnastics

Have you ever watched someone swing high on a bar or try to stand up tall on a balance beam? That person is called a gymnast, and the sport is called gymnastics. Gymnastics is a sport that takes a lot of hard work.

There are different kinds of gymnastics. Two very common kinds are artistic gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics. Both men and women compete in artistic gymnastics, but only women compete in rhythmic gymnastics.

Artistic gymnasts do their routines on special equipment. Balance beams, parallel bars, uneven parallel bars, and rings are all examples of this equipment. Artistic gymnasts also do floor exercises. During floor exercises, gymnasts leap and spin. They may stop at times, as if they're taking a **rest**. But then they'll run across the floor and do an exciting flip!

Rhythmic gymnasts combine gymnastics with dance. They do their exercises with music playing in the background, like dancers do. Rhythmic gymnasts use equipment such as balls, hoops, and ribbons. A rhythmic gymnast may twirl the ribbon in a circular **motion**. The twirling matches the music. Rhythmic gymnasts **bend** their bodies in ways that other people cannot bend. They can make their bodies into shapes. It is very beautiful to watch.

Gymnasts are so amazing to watch because they are very strong. They are also very good at focusing. Some artistic gymnasts must use their arm and leg **muscles** to swing their bodies onto high bars. Others must use their balance to do jumps and spins on a beam that is not even one foot wide—even smaller than the size of a ruler!

To become a gymnast, you need to practice a lot. Many professional gymnasts started practicing when they were as young as three years old! This practice will help to make you strong and keep you focused. The more you practice, the better gymnast you will be!

One great thing about gymnastics is that anyone can try it. If you think you would have fun leaping and doing flips, gymnastics might be the sport for you!

COMPREHENSION Which words tell about movement in gymnastics?
Why do gymnasts have to be strong?



Animal Games

Deer lived in the forest. Each day, he walked and skipped and munched on nuts. But something was missing. Deer spent every day all by himself. He felt lonely. Deer wanted a friend to play with.

One morning, Deer heard leaves rustling in front of him. Suddenly Chipmunk burst through the pile of leaves, with Squirrel running right behind. Chipmunk and Squirrel stopped when they saw Deer.

"What are you doing?" asked Deer.

Chipmunk explained that they were playing a game called chase. One animal would run and the other animal would **race** after him and try to catch him.

"Ooh, that sounds like fun!" said Deer.

"It is fun," Squirrel said. "Would you like to play?"

Deer nodded his head and joined in a game of chase with Chipmunk and Squirrel. Deer liked running through the forest, chasing the other animals. His four feet pounded the ground as he tried to catch them.

The three animals quickly became good friends. They played other games, too. Chipmunk taught Deer how to play hide-and-seek. When Chipmunk hid, she **curled** up in a ball, her head touching her tail. It was very hard to find her. Then Chipmunk got up and **sneaked** behind Deer. She was so quiet, Deer didn't hear her. Chipmunk ran to the goal. She was safe.

Squirrel taught Deer how to play tag. Deer liked running in this game, too. He was very good at **escaping** from Squirrel. Deer would always run away before Squirrel could tag him.

Then Deer taught Chipmunk and Squirrel a new game. It was called follow-the-leader. Deer would walk and skip and munch on nuts. Chipmunk and Squirrel had to do everything that Deer did.

Deer was happy. Now he had two new friends to play with!

COMPREHENSION How do the animals move as they play the games?
Why is Deer happy after he meets Chipmunk and Squirrel?

