

Blazers: How to know if your student is ready

Currently Girls Only

Blazers is designed for athletes 3-6 years of age who demonstrate gymnastics potential in the pre-k and rec classes. These classes are designed to push these students at a faster rate in order to get them onto team, without sacrificing fun in the process. The vast majority of blazers will naturally come from the pre-k program.

Athletes that are under the age of 8 and are already in the Jungle class will move into the Junior Pre-Team Group rather than the regular Pre-Team groups.

1. Things to Ask Yourself

a. Does your student display any fear in common skills?

- i. Example: being scared while inverted during a handstand or pullover

b. Does your student perform skills with little or no assistance from you?

- i. Example: your student kicks up into a near vertical handstand by themselves
- ii. Ideal students typically like doing things solo versus with assistance

c. Does your student display consistency with their skills?

- i. Example: Your student does a very well executed cartwheel with a cartwheel block 3 times in a row

d. Does your student pick up skills quickly?

- i. How do they handle/respond when they don't learn a skill quickly?
 - 1. Do they cry if they get frustrated?
 - 2. Do they stop trying/give up?
- ii. Do they demonstrate a willingness to push to acquire the skill?
- iii. Do they get upset when you ask them to do something new or a new skill?
 - 1. These questions demonstrate both mental and emotional maturity in your students

e. Does your student listen well? (ie more mature for their age)

- i. Do you have to repeat directions to them more than once? Are they often being warned to behave? Is it rare to sit them out?

f. Does your student understand form/staying tight?

- i. Example: When you ask them to point their toes while doing a handstand, your student points their toes
- ii. Form does not have to be perfect, but being able to understand how to do it is important

2. Skills we look for by event

a. Bars

- i. Fears and nervousness on bars is completely normal. Look for students who either are not scared or show that they work through the fear to attain the skills.

1. Pullover

- a. This does not have to be done solo, but the closer they are, the better

2. Forward Roll from Support

- a. Ideally done with little to no assistance

3. Hanging Tuck Hold

- a. If they can hold it for 1-2 times their age, this is very good

4. Chin Hold

- a. If they can hold it for 1-2 times their age, this is very good

5. Casting

- a. Do they understand the movement? Can they do 2-3 casts by themselves?

6. Back Hip Circle

- a. This does not have to be done solo, but the closer they are, the better

b. Vault

- i. The jump to the springboard is very important. Most pre-k kids will struggle due to coordination and height.

1. Technically Correct Jump onto Springboard

- a. Your student must be able to jump from 1 foot to 2 feet onto the springboard
 - i. If coming from Pre-K (ages 3 & 4): Mini/Junior Springboard is completely acceptable
 - ii. If coming from Rec (5+ Arctic/Ocean): Standard Size Springboard only (junior springboard is not acceptable)

2. Straight Jump onto Mat Stack

- a. Should be able to do solo, regardless of age

3. Dive Roll onto Mat Stack

- a. This does not have to be done solo, but the closer they are, the better

4. Standing Handstand Flatback on 8" mat

- a. This does not have to be done solo, but the closer they are, the better
 - i. If coming from Pre-K
 - 1. Do they need much assistance kicking into the handstand?
 - 2. Do they get scared falling over?
 - ii. If coming from Rec
 - 1. They should be able to do this solo (does not have to be perfect form wise, but appreciated)

c. Beam

- i. Both Pre-K and Rec students will try to purposefully fall off the beam (obviously a no no).

1. Walks

a. Forward

- i. No assistance, aiming for Relevé (tippy toes)

b. Backward

- i. Pre-K = ideally little to no assistance
- ii. Rec = no assistance

c. Sideways

- i. Aiming for no assistance
- ii. Rec = Aiming for Relevé

2. Forward Kicks

- a. Pre-K = Ideally can keep legs straight or as close to straight as possible
- b. Rec = should be able to keep legs straight and toes pointed

3. Ice Cream Scoops (Dip Walks)

- a. Pre-K = should be able to do solo
- b. Rec = should have good form while doing solo

4. Bunny Hops

- a. Pre-K: Feet should ideally leave the beam, but not required to.
- b. Rec = Feet should be in 5th position (dominant foot slightly in front of non-dominant foot)
 - i. Feet should leave the beam through the hop

5. T Lever/Arabesque

- a. Pre-K: demonstrates ability to balance on 1 leg with arms either by ears or out to side
 - i. Goal is little to no assistance
- b. Rec: should be able to do on low beam with no assistance

6. Side Handstand*

- a. Rec Only; does not have to be performed on the high beam
- b. Ideally no spot on floor, little assistance on low beam

d. Floor

- i. Floor should focus on the various positions such as lunge, as well as skill development.

1. Lunge Position

- a. Both pre-k and rec should know how to do a correct lunge position
 - i. Dominant leg in front
 - 1. dominant leg should be comfortably bent
 - 2. dominant foot should be pointing forwards
 - ii. Back leg should be straight
 - 1. Back foot should be turned out to roughly 45°
 - iii. Arms up (covering ears)
 - 1. Arms should be straight
 - 2. Palms should be turned inward
- b. Pre-K = does not have to do the lunge perfectly
 - i. However, they should be able to have arms up and their front leg bent
- c. Rec = Should be able to do a technically correct lunge position

2. Forward Roll (on cheese mat)

- a. No assistance

3. Backward Roll (on cheese mat)

- a. Pre-K: Ideally no assistance
- b. Rec: no assistance

4. Cartwheel

- a. does not have to be on the floor (can use cartwheel block or panel mat)
 - i. Ideally looking for 2 separate hand placements, feet starting to kick over the top and landing one foot at a time facing the correct direction
- b. Rec = goal is kicking over the top on the floor

5. Lunge to Lunge Handstand

- a. Pre-K: should be able to start in a lunge, kick to roughly 45°, and land back in a rough lunge (doesn't have to be perfect, but showing effort to finish the same way they started)

- b. Rec: does not have to be perfect, but looking for minimum 45° and landing in a rough lunge

6. Handstand against Wall

- a. Student should be able to walk feet up wall for a handstand hold against the wall
 - i. Pre-K: should be able to hold for roughly 3-5 seconds solo
 - ii. Rec: should be able to hold for 5-10 seconds solo

7. Jump ½ Turn

- a. Pre-K and Rec should be able to Jump 180° on the floor.
 - i. You can always challenge them with bouncing into a half turn on a trampoline/tumble trak

e. Tumble Trak/Trampoline

- i. Just like pre-k and all other recreational programs, trampoline/tumble trak development is incredibly important and beneficial.

1. Straight Jump

2. Tuck Jump

- a. Pre-K = doesn't have to be perfect form wise, but should be able to demonstrate clear capacity to do the jump
- b. Rec = Should have legs together

3. Straddle Jump

- a. Pre-K = doesn't have to be perfect form wise, but should be able to do all in one (no apart-togethers)
- b. Rec = ideally should have straight legs

4. Ski Jumps

- a. Both Pre-K and Rec should be able to do

5. Seat Drop*

- a. This should only be done on the trampoline
- b. Both Pre-K and Rec should be able to return to feet on their own

f. Strength

- i. Strength is very important, but is not a deal breaker.

1. Chin Hold

- a. Pre-K = Ideally can hold for roughly their age
- b. Rec = Can ideally hold for 5-10 seconds

2. Pull Up/Chin Up

- a. These are ideal if they can do, but not required
- b. Both Pre-K and Rec = aiming for 1-3 pull/chin ups

3. Hanging Tuck Hold

- a. Can be done on bar/wall bar
- b. Pre-K = 3-5 seconds minimum
- c. Rec = 10 seconds

4. Plank

- a. Pre-K = 10 seconds
- b. Rec = 20 seconds

5. Block Jump

- a. Pre-K = can they jump onto 1 of the “ABC/Ninja” trapezoids (or something equivalent)
- b. Rec = can they jump onto 2 of the “ABC/Ninja” trapezoids (or something equivalent)

g. Flexibility

- i. Flexibility is very important, but is not a deal breaker.

- 1. Pike**

- a. Ideally they can touch their toes with straight legs

- 2. Pancake (sitting straddle)**

- a. Ideally can lay tummy flat on the floor with straight legs

- 3. Right and Left Leg Split**

- a. Straight front leg
 - b. Lower to the floor is better
 - c. Pre-K = You will not work on these as often as the rec programs, but you’re encouraged to do these with at least the 4 year olds.

- 4. Middle Split**

- a. Ideally straight legs
 - b. Lower to the floor is better

- 5. Bridge***

- a. The goal is to get the shoulders over the hands where they are in a straight line (like the letter “I”).
 - i. If they can get their shoulders past their hands like “/”, this demonstrates good shoulder flexibility
 - ii. Please note, it is very rare to see quality bridges in pre-k**
 - b. Pre-K: bridges are hard for most Pre-K students to do due to physical limitations and development
 - i. Some will be able to do it, which is a plus, but not a requirement
 - c. Rec: should be able to do a straight arm bridge with minimal to no assistance