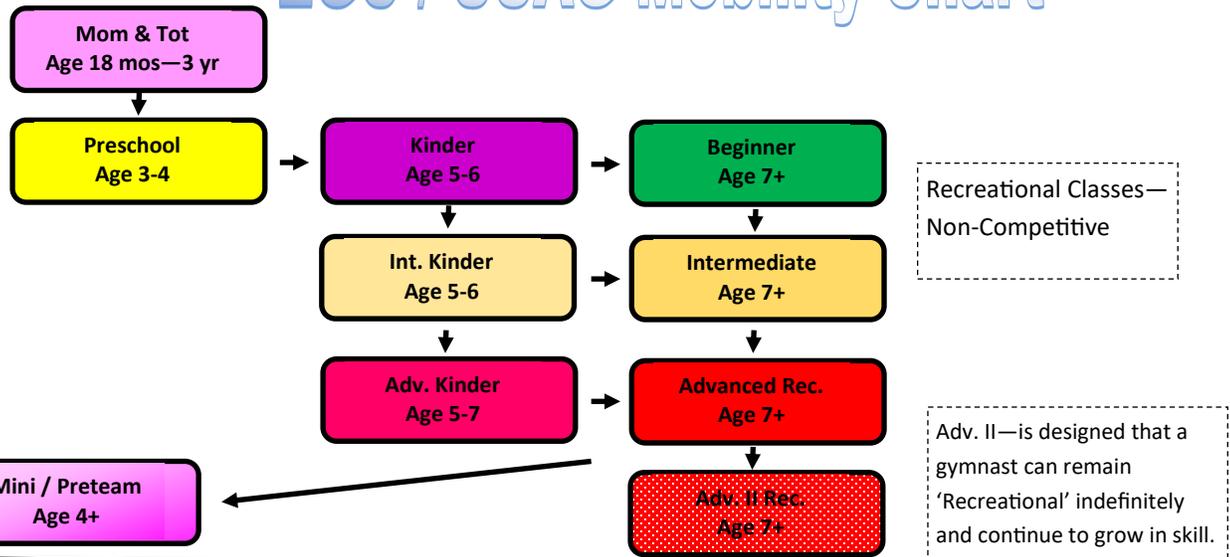
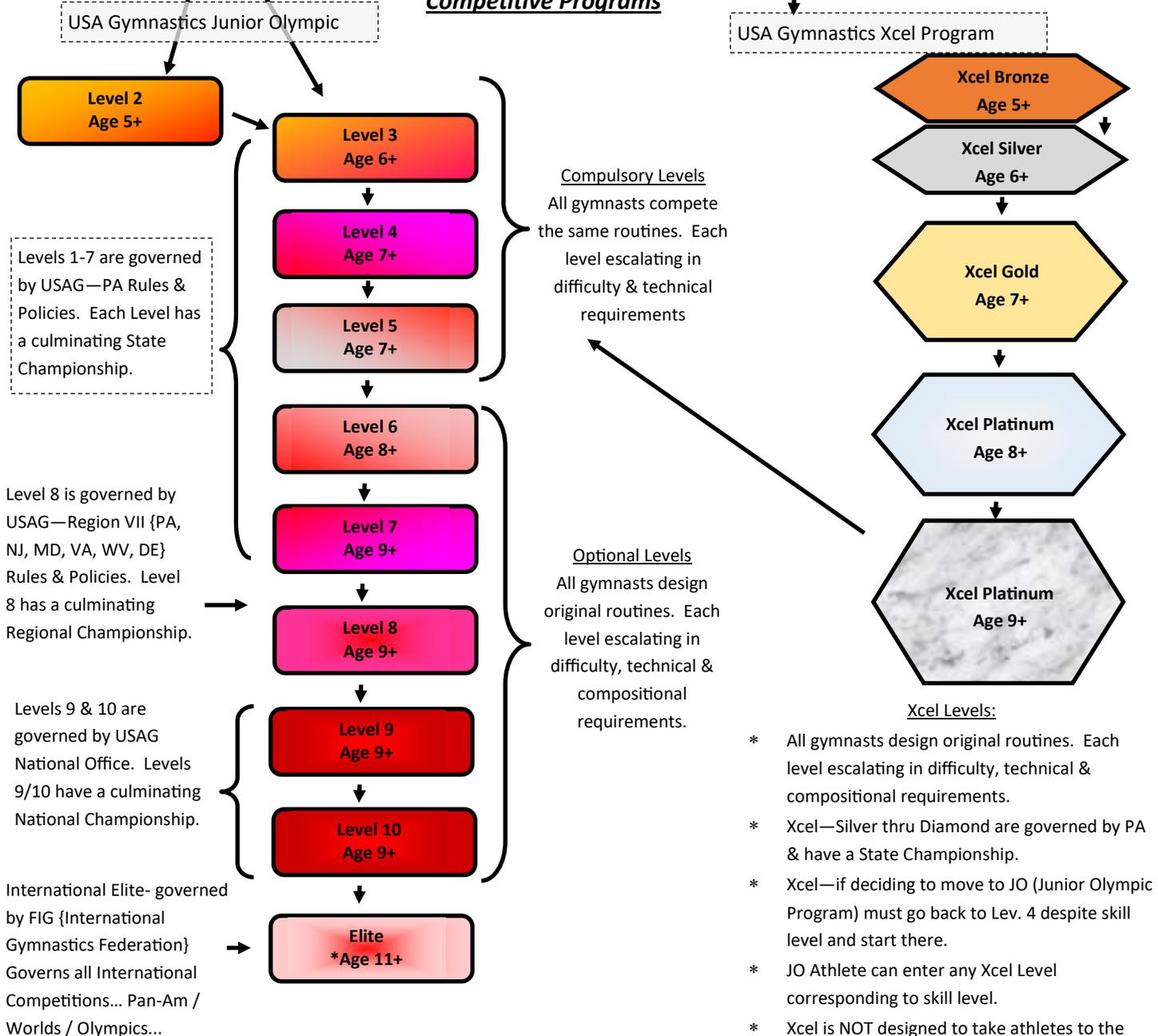


EGC / USAG Mobility Chart



Competitive Programs



Explanation of Mobility Chart

The preceding chart represents the ‘hierarchy’ of the Erie Gymnastics Recreational & USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic / Xcel Level System. The ‘theory’ behind the chart is easier when compared to our ‘Educational System’ (Grade Levels) / and or perhaps the ‘Belts system’ in the Martial Arts.

Everyone starts as a Beginner. Our Beginner Programs are defined by Age. Both a 3 year old Preschooler & a 9 year old Beginner must start with the ‘ABC’s’ of gymnastics. Once the ‘ABC’s’ are mastered, what next? What, Who, When—determines when a child moves to the next level?

To start, think of it as a school. Our Beginner Teacher—just like your 1st grade teacher is responsible for teaching the children a set curriculum. That curriculum consists of the prerequisite skills necessary to have success at the next Level. Once the ABC’s are learned, then we combine them to form small words— Cat, Dog, Ball.... That then prepares them to form sentences, then paragraphs, then term papers, then novels... each a graduating Level of expertise.

In the Recreational Program—just like your 1st grade teacher, the class teacher passes or fails the child to the next level. The child need not be 100% on every subject, but rather at least 75% proficient at the level to qualify to the next level class. Our curriculum is designed to follow the ‘school year’ just like a Public School. A first grader will start in September, and by May—most are ready for 2nd grade. Who says so? The class teacher typically determines this. The average is about 9 months but can vary widely depending on a whole host of things from age & maturity to physical or mental status.

When a Gymnast reaches the Advanced Level in our Recreational Program, there is a fork in the road. They can continue to participate in Recreational Gymnastics (just for fun) and go as far as they like at their own pace. Or, they can choose (try out) to try to challenge themselves in the Competitive Gymnastics Program. If they chose that route, then they participate in the Mini Team (Preteam). During that year, they are prepared physically & mentally for the Competitive Team.

At that point, the ‘school teacher’ is sort of removed in terms of the Recommendation. The gymnast must be evaluated by a ‘Program Director’ or equivalent certified expert. I (they) must ‘sign off’ on the gymnast and assure they are capable of the mental & physical demands. The Program Director can sign off at several “Entry Level” for the sport. He/she can enter an athlete at Levels 1-3 in the Junior Olympic Program / or Xcel Bronze or Silver.

Once entered into a Competitive Level, the Teacher, Coach, Program Director is removed from the mobility process and it now goes to the hands of ‘trained / qualified’ Gymnastics Judging officials. The athletes will compete for a Mobility Score. As an example: Level 4’s must score a 32.00 All Around (all 4 events (subjects) added together) to be eligible to move to Level 5. The ‘Mobility Score’ varies from Level to Level.

Xcel vs. Junior Olympic Program: Once passing the ‘Mini Team’ / Preteam Level, athletes, coaches, parents have again another ‘fork in the road’. Do I choose Xcel - or Junior Olympic. The differences between the 2 Programs are philosophical in nature and depend on a number of factors including the Club, training facilities, age of the athlete, desires of the gymnast and/or parent, financial....

Let’s start with the similarities... Both Xcel & the JO Program are both challenging, extremely competitive, offer advancement opportunities, offer recognized State or Beyond Championships.

In terms of Philosophical differences... let’s start with the JO Program. In the school system, we have 12 grades. Although a child at some point (I think 9th grade) is free to drop out, it is assumed that a child is going to push through at “Graduate 12th grade”. In the JO Program it is assumed that a gymnast is continually going to push themselves up the 10 step ladder, and possibly beyond to the Olympics or NCAA Gymnastics Team. Each subsequent level becomes more difficult in terms of skill level, mentality, competitiveness.... As a result of the ever increasing difficulty, more time (more money) is needed to achieve the skills necessary to be competitive. As a result, each level—ever increasingly becomes more and more demanding and the gymnast must make sacrifices to continue up the ladder. These sacrifices typically include giving up extracurricular activities such as other Sports, Academic Clubs, Hobbies, Social Activities (school dances / football games), ... in order to advance in the sport. Many gyms eventually (at some level) home school their athletes in order to attain or remain competitive. The rewards can be great including National Titles, NCAA Scholarships & the pinnacle which is Olympic Champion.

The Xcel Program developed from USAG losing a significant amount of athletes due to the fact that they did not offer an alternative program to the JO Program. Xcel developed as a means to continue to offer Level Mobility, Competition, serious workouts... but to mitigate the extreme mentality required in the Junior Olympic Program. In other words, we needed a Program

for children who LOVE gymnastics, but perhaps had other interests too. Yes, they are giving up the possible 'long shot' of Olympic Champion, but also can participate in a school sport too. Perhaps they want to be active in an Academic Club at school, or want to go to the School Dances, play a musical instrument. It was 'sort of' agreed that clubs would minimize the number of practice days / or time spent in the gym—so as to allow for some other opportunities outside gymnastics, but still keep the fun parts of learning new skills (just at a slower rate), traveling to competitions, competing against like minded athletes.

Xcel also allowed room for the 'non-traditional' gymnast. In the JO Program, it is almost impossible for a child to reach the 'pinnacle' if they just found gymnastics at age 12. Seeing that the average Level takes a year to master, 10 Levels of Competitive gymnastics would put that kid at age 22—well past High School and far outside the 'bell curve'. Xcel allots for this and readily accepts 'non traditional' students— age, height, weight... to experience gymnastics.

Due to the fact that Xcel trains less hours, it therefore is less expensive, less travel... many incentives of this nature have lured many parents into encouraging their child in that direction.

In the Chart, the Xcel Levels are listed next to the JO Levels and the boxes are 'sized' approximately to correspond to the skill level required in the other Program. For example, Xcel Platinum is next to JO Level 6 & 7. The skill level of both of those groups are similar. However the composition & scoring for each is vastly different.

One notable Con with the JO / Xcel Program to consider is that athletes can go back and forth between Xcel & JO. However, JO athletes can easily move over to any Xcel level corresponding to their current skill level. However if in the Xcel Program, an Xcel athlete wanting to move to the JO Program must start back at Level 4, even if they are years beyond that in skill level.

If in doubt or considering the Pros & Cons (and there are Pros & Cons to both programs) consult your child's coach. We typically guide you in the direction we feel will best suit the Gymnast & Parent.

Optional vs. Compulsory:

Compulsory refers for JO Levels 1 to 5. Compulsory routines are designed by a Chorographer for USAG. The routines are designed with specific, typically progressive skills designed to instill discipline & exactness in technique. In essence the Chorographer designed lets say a Level 4 routine and taught it to an Olympic athlete to perform. They selected the music, the skills, and the dance. It is now up to the Level 4 athletes to try to mimic that exact routine—performing every skill perfectly—as would an Olympian. Thus, there is a video of this gymnast doing this 'basic' routine to a set piece of music. Every Level 4 must learn this exact routine and try to compete it exactly as shown in the video.

When a Level 4 gymnast takes the floor and salutes the judge, they have a 10.00 score. As they perform the routine, any deviation of that routine is written down with a specific deductions for the amount of deviation and then subtracted from the 10.00 giving the gymnast their final score. Every child performs the exact same routine to the exact same music.

Optional Gymnastics refers to Levels 6 thru 10 and all Xcel Levels. Optional gymnasts work exactly the opposite of the Compulsory athletes. When the gymnast takes the floor, the gymnast starts with a zero 0.00. The gymnast must then demonstrate any of several classes of skills (Value Parts) in that routine. As well they must also meet specific 'Special Requirement' relevant to their level. In addition, they may also have difficulty bonus and combination bonus opportunities to enhance their score. The initial goal is to get enough skills, difficulty, and bonus necessary to get a possible 'Start Value' of 10.00. The judges use an unusual type of 'short hand' to record the skills. Every skill has a specific hieroglyphic symbol and difficulty rating. Once the "Start Value" is determined, the judges then go back to the 'execution' (proper technique) of the skills, determine the deductions and then calculate the final score.

In coaching, Optional Gymnastics can offer specific strategies to improve the gymnasts scores. For example, in the Compulsory routines, all the skills are predetermined. A child with weak leg flexibility might get hammered by the judges when performing a 'back walkover' on the balance beam. However in Optional Gymnastics a coach can hide this flexibility by perhaps putting a 'back handspring' in substitution for that walkover. Thus, Optional coaches can play to the strengths of their individual athletes.