

## Rhythmic Gymnastics Judging 101

In Rhythmic Gymnastics there are three panels of judges, and each of the panels judge a different part of the routine that each gymnast, or group, performs. The three panels are Difficulty (previously TV or technical value), Artistry (previously AV or Artistic Value) and Execution. The judges who are assessing Difficulty mark the body movement difficulties in each routine. Body difficulties are the jumps/leaps, pivots, balances or flexibility elements that a gymnast does.

Artistry judges assess how the apparatus is moved, the music, and the balance/variety of components and body movements in the routine. The Artistic judge will also determine if the gymnast is static, or if they keep moving throughout the entire exercise.

Execution judges mark whether the body movements and the apparatus movements are done clearly, precisely, and according to the International Federation's (FIG) published rule book, called the Code of Points. Execution is worth 10 points, and Difficulty and Artistry combine to be worth 10 points, for a total of 20 points available for top international gymnasts.

While the three judges assess different things, if the fault is significant, then the movement that was attempted does not count. When that happens, there are repercussions in the Difficulty judging panel and the Artistry panel, and the gymnast will also be penalized by the Execution panel.

### Difficulties

Body movements can have a difficulty (D) value ranging from 0.1 to 1.0, and are identified as A, B, C...J. An A movement might be a balance on toes with the free foot to the knee (passé balance); a C balance would be a balance without support or help of the hands with the foot over the head; and a J balance might be a balance on high toes, with a slow 360 degree turn, with the free leg bent back, touching the back of the head, without support of the leg by either arms or hands. Provincial gymnasts at the highest levels may only do A, B, C and D elements. Even top international rhythmic gymnasts have A – D elements, balanced with the more difficult body movements that make them outstanding.

### When does a Difficulty Count?

A Difficulty will count when it is done exactly as pictured in the FIG Code of Points. Otherwise it will be worth zero. If a gymnast loses her balance, or drops the apparatus, the difficulty does not count, and in addition the gymnast will be assessed Execution penalties for movements that are not done cleanly. In addition, if the gymnast does not manipulate the apparatus during the Difficulty or Body Movement, then it does not count. This means that a toss/throw, or handling, must be done from an unstable position while in a balance, and throws must be thrown or caught while in the process of jumping or landing.

A difficulty must be listed on the Difficulty/Artistry symbol sheet that is presented by each gymnast prior to competition, and is copied and is in front of each judge. The gymnast must do the difficulties exactly as stated on the sheet, and in the order stated. Each movement is defined by a symbol that the judges memorize and know at a glance.

### Artistic Value

Music is worth 2 points, basic composition of the routine is worth 2 points, and special artistic characteristics, or movements with the apparatus, determine the remainder of the score.

Music deductions from the 2.0 maximum will include inappropriate sounds, rhythm, and relationship between the music, the exercise and the apparatus.

Basic Composition deductions are taken for unbalanced use of technical elements of the apparatus, absence of contact with the apparatus at the end of the exercise, lack of movement with the apparatus or gymnast (static deductions), and lack of variety of manipulation or use of levels in the routine.

Special Artistic Characteristics (SAC) are those special manipulations that make a routine outstanding, including large throws, catches out of the visual range, and catches without use of the arms or hands. To get credit, these elements must be done with perfect execution, without vibrations in the hoop, or variations in the design of the ribbon or rope in the air. Each apparatus has its own character: Rope/Jumps and Leaps; Ball/Flexibilities and Waves; Clubs/Balances; Ribbon/Pivots; and Hoop needs a balance of all the body movements. Bonus points are awarded in artistry for additional apparatus movements with the body movement that is associated with the apparatus.

### **Execution**

The most obvious execution errors occur when the gymnast drops her apparatus, with a penalty that ranges from 0.3 (one step to recover) to 0.6 if the gymnast was to lose both clubs and have to take more than one step to retrieve each of them. However, execution judges are looking for, and deducting 0.1 or 0.2, in each instance that they see incomplete movements, heavy landings, wobbly balances, non-defined shapes of the body, or lack of amplitude and/or elevation in a jump, or loss of rhythm with the music. The body must be aligned, with toes pointed and knees straight. The apparatus must be held properly and caught with precision.

A simple split leap is worth 0.1 for the Difficulty judges, but the execution panel might deduct points for lack of elevation (hips have to move upwards), lack of amplitude (it has to be at least 180 degrees split in the air), toes that aren't pointed, bent knees, improperly positioned free arms and/or a heavy landing. The gymnasts could actually receive a negative score for this one movement, which, if done perfectly, is worth 0.1 towards the Difficulty score.

### **Groups**

Everything that applies to individuals also applies to groups, but the group is only as strong as the weakest group member. If, during an exchange, a gymnast drops the apparatus, then the exchange will count, with execution deductions applied, but if two gymnasts drop the apparatus the exchange will not count. If a movement is not done by one gymnast as it appears in the code of points, then the difficulty does not count for the whole group.

### **Judging Assignments**

At international and major national competitions, judges are selected by a draw, but at the Provincial level where judges may have varying levels of expertise, the judges will be assigned based on experience and the overall balance of the panel. Balance is needed geographically, among clubs and between experienced and newer judges who are still in training. The top judges in the province do the training, and oversee the work of the club and provincial judges while working to ensure a fair competition. Many of the people at the judging table are not judges, but are assistant judges working at tabulating and verifying the mathematics of the judging system.

Sometimes the judges will meet after they have given in their scores. This happens when the assistant judge or scores note that the difference between the judges' scores is more than the difference allowed according to the FIG regulation. At the provincial level, the general rule is that the scores shouldn't be more than +/-0.4 from the average of the panel scores.

WATCH, MARVEL AND ENJOY every performance, as each one of them has spent their entire year preparing for two or three competitions. In addition to months of practice the parents, coaches and gymnasts spend hours choosing and cutting music, and carefully implementing leotard and apparatus design options to complement the music and routine. It is easy to find something positive to say about each performance, but more importantly, ask the gymnasts how THEY think they did, rather than tell them how you thought they did. Rhythmic gymnasts are the best judges of their own performance, and only they know if they met the goals that they set with their coach. Respect their opinions, while encouraging and modeling good sportsmanship, as they are the future coaches, judges, parents, volunteers and educated audience members of the future. Most importantly, reinforce the values of cooperation, community, team work and camaraderie that rhythmic gymnasts learn through their participation in competitive sport.