

4 Home Workouts for Beginner Gymnasts



1. Strength Builders

Lunge Walks. Place hands on hips, keeping the torso upright. Take large steps either forward or backward, bending the knees to nearly 90 degree angles. Avoid slamming the knees on the floor.

Squat Jumps. Also known as frog jumps. Squat low then jump upward and forward, just like a frog!

Sit-ups. Beginners can tuck their toes under a couch. Cross arms in front or place hands behind the head. The goal is to do them with feet flat on the floor without the aid of the couch.

Leg Lifts. Lie flat on the floor. Place hands under the lower part of the back with palms down. Keep the legs tight and pressed together with toes pointed. Slowly lift to vertical or past, if possible, then slowly lower them. Always keep the back pressed against the hands. Avoid arching.

Planks. Hold a plank position with a straight tight body. Avoid sagging in the mid-section. For fun, place your feet on a paper plate on the carpet. Then walk on your hands across the floor while keeping your body tight without sagging.

Push-ups. These can be either in a full plank position or from the knees for beginners. Keep hands only shoulder width apart, no wider. Do not bend the head either upward or downward during the push-up. Keep it in a neutral position.

Bent arm hangs or pull-ups. (If you have a bar or sturdy tree branch!) Begin with bent arms hangs. Hold chin above the bar for as long as possible. Transition into dropping the chin a few inches below then pulling it back up until a full pull-up is achieved.

2. Flexibility Builders

Straddle and Pike Stretch. Sit on the floor with straight legs in a straddle or pressed together. Reach out in front as far as possible and hold for at least 30 seconds. The goal is to bring your chest to the floor or to your knees if in a pike while keeping legs straight and tight.

Shoulder Stretch. Stand straight about two to three feet from a wall. Lift arms above your head, close to ears. Bend 90 degrees forward at the waist, keeping arms straight and by ears. Place hands on the wall and press chest downward until you feel a stretch through the shoulders. Hold for at least 30 seconds.

Seal Stretch. Lie down on your stomach, legs and feet together. Place hands, palms down, close to your sides just below the shoulders. Press them against the floor, lifting your head and chest until your back is arched. Inch your hands toward your feet until you feel a comfortable stretch in your lower back. Hold for 30 seconds.

Splits. A split position is seen in many gymnastics skills. Leaps, jumps and walkovers all pass through a split position. Good leg flexibility prevents many injuries. Be sure to practice both right and left leg splits. (wikihow.com/Do-the-Splits-Quickly) Center splits are also important to work on. (wikihow.com/Do-Center-Splits)



3. Balance Builders

Balance on one foot. Hold arms in airplane position to the side. Stand straight and tall. Lift one leg straight forward as high as possible without bending either leg. Hold for 10-30 seconds. When that becomes easy, try standing on your toes! Work on both left and right legs.

Beanie Baby balance. Place a Beanie Baby on top of your head. How long can you walk without dropping it? Squat down then up. Try turning around and going up and down on your toes. This is great for body alignment awareness.

Beam line practice . Create a floor beam by placing two pieces of masking tape 4" apart. Walk, run, hop or jump on the line. Practice going forward and backward. Place hands close together and hopping on one foot down the beam. Kick up to a 3/4 handstand and land on the beam in a lunge.

4. Skill Builders

Dance skills. Jumps, leaps and turns. Practice with good form, trying to achieve perfect balance and steady landings.

Handstands. This is an essential basic skill that gymnasts must learn. Practice walking up a wall feet first with hands on floor to strengthen the upper body. Practice kick-ups to a ¾ handstand on the floor or kick up to a wall and hold for 10 or more seconds.

Cartwheels. This basic Level 1 skill is illustrated with tips here. (justifyingfun.com/how-to-do-a-cartwheel/)

Forward and backward rolls. Be sure the head is tucked in the forward roll (wikihow.com/Do-a-Forward-Roll). Backward rolls are a little more difficult and considered a Level 2 skill. (wikihow.com/Do-a-Backward-Roll)

Bridges. Use caution when beginning bridges. Talk to the gymnastics coach to be sure your little gymnast is ready for this skill and to what degree. Beginners should place their feet on a sturdy elevated surface. Place hands by ears with elbows close to the head. Slowly press upward without straining the lower back. This video demonstrates a full bridge then shows the phases that lead up to it. (youtu.be/FcX2fUC_QDE)

Practice routines. Floor and beam routines are easily adapted to home at the early levels if you have the space.