

# CHOOSING A GYM THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

For prospective Parents & students

"Seen one, seen them all" is NOT true when it comes to gymnastics facilities. Here are 4 things smart parents consider when choosing their gym home. Culture, Cost, Schedule, Logistics.

**1. CULTURE:** Do your values match? If you just want fun & fitness, but the gym is focused on their competitive team, you may want to keep looking. If your child needs to learn risk assessment, but the coach lets them run wild because "they're having fun", your needs aren't being met. Find a gym that sounds like it's up your alley.

## **Where do you look?**

- **Online:** Check out their web & social media accounts, read reviews.
  - How do they describe their programs?
  - Do they talk about any core values? What do their Mission and Vision statements say? Do they sound "professional", like your "buddy", or in-between?
  - Their advertised values & "tone" tell you what they want you to think of them.
- **In person:** You want this to match their online "persona".
  - Call after-hours and leave a voicemail. What does it say, and how do they respond?
  - Walk in and chat with the front desk. Does the front desk worker reflect their advertised values and communication style?
  - See if you can observe some classes. Don't just watch the class your child might be entering. Observe as many groups as you can. What tone do coaches use when talking to students? Will the student-teacher ratio meet your needs? Do the activities look safe and well-managed? What mood do the staff & students show? How interactive are the coaches while teaching?, etc.

Culture should be consistent all the way through the organization and employees, and the in-person culture should match the advertised culture. If the culture isn't consistent, you never know what you're going to get if you change levels, teachers, or programs.

**SPECIAL NOTE: SAFETY CULTURE IS A MUST in any sports program.** If their advertised culture does not include safety, that's a HUGE red flag. This doesn't just include the way skills are taught or what equipment is available. It also extends to staff safety & risk prevention training, professional development, certifications, and background checks. So ASK!

**2. COST:** It's more than just the "sticker price".

## **What to look for:**

- **Cost per hour.** Divide the monthly fee by how many hours of class time you're getting per month. This will give you the true cost so you can compare accurately between gyms & classes.
- **Membership fee.** This is pretty standard in the industry. Ask how much it is, and how long it's valid. Is it per child, or per family?
- **Enrollment options.** For most gyms, standard enrollment is for a set number of classes over a set period of time (usually a scheduled billing cycle). However, some offer different, or more flexible options as well.
  - Standard enrollment
  - Pay by class
  - Punch card
  - Gift certificate
  - Special drop-in events
  - Ask if walk-ins are ok, or if reservations are needed
- **Refund/ credit policies/ prorating.** What happens to your money if you miss a class? Is it gone? Do they refund for classes missed (this is extremely rare without special circumstances)? Do they offer make-ups? Credit your account? Prorate? This varies greatly between gyms, so be sure to ask.
- **Discounts:** Gymnastics can be expensive, so many gyms offer some relief or perks to stay affordable and to serve the community.
  - Sibling discounts
  - Membership perks/ rewards
  - Bulk purchase (signing up for a lot of classes)
  - Military
  - Financial hardship/ scholarship
- **Additional Fees:** What extra charges might you see on a bill?
  - Late fees, Convenience fees, Rush fees
- **Payment Options:** What methods of payment do they accept?
  - ⇒ Cash, Check, Credit Card, Crypto currency, Online Portal, Apps (VenMo, Apple Pay, PayPal, Square, etc.)
  - ⇒ Any limitations on accepted cards?
  - ⇒ AutoPay, or Bill-pay through bank.

**3. SCHEDULE:** Can you make it? It doesn't matter how amazing their classes are if they don't fit your schedule. But there's more to it than just "when are your classes?"

- **Availability of classes** isn't just about finding one class to attend.
  - How many different kinds of classes is your child eligible for?
  - How many of each appropriate class do they offer?
  - How many spots are available in any class or program you're considering?
  - How easy is it to switch programs or classes if your needs change- especially if it's mid-billing period?

More open classes/ available spots mean better chance you can get the class & time that works best for you. A program with very few class offerings or limited openings, means that you may have a harder time getting a convenient spot, or doing make-ups/ schedule changes in the future.

- **Enrollment period.** When can you start or end?
  - ⇒ Enroll any time, or start of period: Do they prorate for early start or end? If so, in what circumstances?
  - ⇒ Continuous, or renewal required: Do they keep your spot until you tell them you're leaving? Or do you have to reenroll every period? What could make you lose your spot?
- **Make-ups:**
  - ⇒ Do they offer make-ups? What is the process to schedule a make-up? What's the availability of classes you could use for make-ups, and do they work for your schedule? Do they overfill classes in order to fit make-ups in?
  - ⇒ Limitations for make-ups. Do they expire? Do you still have to be enrolled? Does it have to be in the same program/ class level? etc.

**4. LOGISTICS:** Do they make it easy for you?

- **Communication.** Are they easy for you to understand in person and in print? Do they use a lot of technical terms? Is the information easy to find?
  - Description of classes/ programs. Are eligibility requirements clear? Does the description outline what kind of goals, activities, benefits, or skills are emphasized? Do they explain the differences between various programs?
  - Program structure: How the classes fit together. Does it make sense?
  - Levels: Difficulty, age range, transparent curriculum, etc.
  - Class names: Are they easy to remember? Do they make sense or seem random? Do they support the gym culture?
  - Advancement: What is the process & requirement for moving up?
  - Staffing: Is it consistent or rotating? What if you and the coach aren't a good fit? What is the student-teacher ratio?
  - Ease of understanding policies: Do they make sense? Seem fair? Are they worded clearly?
  - Accessibility: Do they respond quickly? How easy is it to get in touch? What methods of contact do they use (email, phone, online portal, website, social media, etc.)?
  - Professional & friendly manner: Are they approachable? Do they volunteer additional, pertinent, helpful information? Are they patient? Efficient? Accurate?
- **Ease of joining:** How easy is the process, & how convenient are the enrollment periods?
  - Set start date, or join any time?
  - Online portal?
  - Paperwork: How clear are the entry forms? How easy is it to receive, complete. & return them?
  - Ease of payment
- **Ease of attending:**
  - Parking, Accessibility
  - Check-in procedures
  - Observation
  - Attendance restrictions (illness, unpaid balance etc.)
  - Make ups, Schedule changes
- **Ease of leaving:** How easy is the process?
  - Leave any time or set quit date?
  - Notice required, what methods of notice, what penalties?
  - Paperwork: How clear are the exit forms? How easy is it to receive, complete & return them?
  - Refund/cancelation policy
  - Special circumstances/ emergency drop

**"Why isn't quality on the list?".** Because "quality" is different for every family, based on how they value the factors above. You decide how important each one is for you and find the best balance with that in mind.