

Simple Drills for Giant Swings

“*They Might Be Giants*” is a FUNdamental progression system that coaches can use to teach giant swings in their recreational classes. Almost all of the drills are appropriate for and could be performed by 6-year-old beginning gymnasts up through adults. This is a comprehensive list of drills to be performed at various stations: high bar, low bar, single bar, floor bar, and TumbITrak / trampoline. This system has proven very effective but is by no means the “end-all” list of possible progressions. If you have any other drills that you have used that have worked well, please contact me and I can add your suggestion to this list.

High Bar

1. Long hang
2. Long arch position
3. Long hollow/scoop position
4. Whip-Tap
5. Whip-Tap swings
6. Whip-Tap with DynaBand (for conditioning)



Floor Bar

1. Kick or jump to handstand to belly flop on crash mat
2. Back extension roll down incline mat over floor bar
3. Back extension roll down incline mat over floor bar to belly flop on crash mat
4. Lever up
5. Lever up to handstand on floor bar to belly flop on crash mat

Low Bar

1. Cast to horizontal away from bar
2. Bent knee swings
3. Bent knee swing pullover
4. Straddle sole circles (3x)
5. Whip-Tap swings (3x) to long hang pullover
6. Cast (to horizontal or higher) to long hang pullover (Baby Giant)
7. Low Bar Baby Giant to immediate back hip circle
8. Low Bar Baby Giant to immediate back hip circles (2x)
9. Low Bar Baby Giant to immediate clear hip circle
10. Low Bar Baby Giant to immediate clear hip circles (2x)

High Bar

1. Cast to horizontal away from bar
2. Whip-Tap swings (3x) to long hang pullover
3. Cast (to horizontal or higher) to long hang pullover (Baby Giant)
4. Baby Giant* to immediate back hip circle
5. Baby Giant* to immediate back hip circles (2x)
6. Baby Giant* to immediate clear hip circle
7. Baby Giant* to immediate clear hip circles (2x)

Trampoline / TumbiTrak

1. From back, bounce (3x) to back pullover
2. From back, bounce (3x) to back pullover to handstand
3. From handstand, drop bounce on back, back up to handstand
4. Handstand, drop bounce to back, bounce up to handstand
5. Handstand, drop bounce to back, bounce up to handstand, fall to front drop

Strap Bar

1. If available, use a single bar to postpone the “low bar anxiety.”
2. Encourage experimentation.
3. Prepare the athlete for “stall swings” and allow bent legs on top of swings.
4. Emphasize control of swing.

A Few Suggestions

1. Safety Always!
2. Always remember to check all spin locks.
3. Make sure ALL landing surfaces are well padded.
4. Make sure all potential hazard areas are matted / padded (cable tighteners).
5. Most of these drills were designed to be performed on the Low Bar. Allow, and maybe even encourage bent legs for the early learning stages.
6. Bars should be low enough that children are only about 4” from the floor with body fully extended and toes pointed.
7. Metal bars are a better circumference for smaller hands.
8. Be aware of potential use areas where an athlete may fall and make sure every area and station is properly matted so as to avoid injury.
9. Beware of unsupervised activities through, around, anywhere near your class.
10. At no time should any athlete be out of your field of vision.
11. Do not allow athletes to attempt skills before they have mastered all lead up skills and are properly prepared (physically, mentally, and emotionally) for the next drill.
12. Avoid “Paralysis By Analysis.” At the beginning levels of learning, worry less about technique and more about the process. Let the student experience the natural desire to swing and let them explore the movements. Form and execution can be addressed as the comfort level of performance increases.
13. Keep vigilant for signs of fatigue. Some of these drills are so much fun for the athletes that they may want to continue when they should stop.
14. Try to engage the athletes in having fun and the desire to learn. Remember to teach the child and not the skill.

*** “Baby Giants”****STEP #1**

After casting (to horizontal or higher), you should assume the proper body position; head between the shoulders, shoulder angle wide open; body completely stretched away from the bar.

STEP #2

To set up your tap, you will need to hollow your entire body. To do this, you need to use your upper body and not just your hips. Try to round your back and avoid just piking at the hips.

STEP #3

As you approach the bottom of the swing, it's time to relax a little and let gravity create a natural tap. Your body will go from the hollow position to an arched position. Be sure to keep perfect form, however. Imagine leading through the bottom with your belly button.

STEP #4

As you pass through the bottom, your legs will automatically begin to lift forward (if you are relaxed). As you kick through the bottom, lift your knees vigorously as though you were doing a flyaway dismount. Lift your knees in front of you, bending at the hips and knees. Be sure that you are lifting your knees rather than just dragging your feet behind.

STEP #5

Continue lifting your knees while keeping your head between your arms. Do not throw your head back, as this might cause you to open up from your tuck position. Keep your shoulder angle firm. As you lift your knees, you will be shortening the radius of your giant circle. In terms of physics, this is what enables you to go over the top.

Most beginners open up at this point and look back at the bar. If you do that, you will slow your swing by enlarging the radius of your giant circle.

STEP #6

Keep your knees bent all the way to the top. When you make it to the handstand, just straighten your knees and start the giant again. You may go a little faster than you expected, because when you shorten the radius of the circle you will speed up. Don't worry; you will learn how to control it very easily.

When you have mastered the bent-knee giant, go ahead and try going all the way around with straight legs (lifting the toes instead of the knees). At first, it's a good idea to do the first 1-2 giant with bent knees to get some momentum, and then straighten your legs for the rest of the set.

