

What is the difference between Xcel & CCP?

Not all gyms offer both Xcel and CCP — but Explosion Gymnastics does! We believe one training method doesn't fit every gymnast, which is why we proudly offer both competitive tracks.

Traditionally, the Canadian Gymnastics Federation offered the Junior Olympic (JO) structure — now known as the Canadian Compulsory Program (CCP). In CCP, gymnasts progress through levels 1–10. Once a gymnast masters the skills at her level, she has the opportunity to move up. After Level 10, gymnasts may pursue the elite path or work toward earning college scholarships.

However, the CCP system has its limitations. It follows a very specific mold — one that not all gymnasts can or want to fit into. Whether due to age, financial constraints, ability, or commitment level, many athletes were left without a viable competitive option.

That's why we're so excited about Xcel — a program adopted by the Canadian Gymnastics Federation to offer a more flexible, inclusive, and affordable path to competitive gymnastics.

Fun fact: Explosion Gymnastics was the first club in Alberta to bring in the Xcel program, helping pave the way for its growth across the province!

According to Canada Gymnastics Federation, the Xcel program is “a broad-based, affordable competitive experience outside the traditional JO Program.” Like CCP, Xcel offers progression through levels — Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, and Sapphire — as gymnasts gain new skills.

Xcel athletes get the same exciting experience of being part of a team, training hard, and competing in front of judges and crowds. The major difference? Xcel has more relaxed requirements. It allows for a wider range of skills and gives gymnasts more freedom to progress at their own pace.

It's an excellent fit for gymnasts who may have started later, are juggling other sports, or who prefer a less intense schedule. At Explosion, our Xcel athletes train fewer hours than CCP athletes, making it ideal for multi-sport athletes or families looking for a more balanced commitment.

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We're proud fans of the Xcel program because it's opened the door for so many athletes who may have otherwise stepped away from gymnastics. It keeps the love of the sport alive for gymnasts who want to grow, compete, and stay active — even if they don't follow the traditional CCP path. Many of our gymnasts are now staying in the sport longer thanks to Xcel!

Explosion proudly offers both CCP and Xcel teams — and we compete at meets with both. Athletes can even switch between programs if one becomes a better fit over time. In fact, we've had many gymnasts successfully move between CCP and Xcel. Because we train many overlapping skills, transitions are smooth and supportive.

Here's a quick breakdown of the CCP structure:

- Levels 1–5 are “Compulsory” — these levels require gymnasts to perform set routines with predetermined music and skills.
- Levels 6–10 are “Optional” — gymnasts and coaches have more flexibility in routine choreography and skill selection.

CCP athletes are typically focused on high-level training and long-term goals like scholarships or elite competition. They train more hours, travel to more meets, and are held to higher physical and technical standards.

Xcel athletes also demonstrate talent, work ethic, and coachability, but with more flexibility in both training and competition. Xcel is perfect for gymnasts who love the sport but may not want the full commitment of CCP — or who want to balance gymnastics with other interests.

Not sure which path is right for your athlete?

Our coaching team is here to help guide your gymnast to the program where she'll thrive the most!