Gymnastics can be traced to exercise in ancient Greece- in Sparta and Athens. That exercise for that time was documented by Philostratus' work Gymnastics. Exercise in the gymnasium in later dates prepared men for war. The original term for the practice of gymnastics is from the related verb γυμνάζω (gymnazo), which translates as "to exercise naked" because young men exercising trained without clothing.

In ancient Greece, physical fitness was a highly valued attribute in both men and women. It wasn't until after the Romans conquered Greece in 146BC that gymnastics became more formalized and used to train men in warfare. Based on Philostratus' claim that gymnastics is a form of wisdom, comparable to philosophy, poetry, music, geometry, and astronomy, Athens combined this more physical training with the education of the mind.

At the Palestra, a physical education training center, the discipline of educating the body and educating the mind were combined allowing for a form of gymnastics that was more aesthetic and individual and which left behind the form that focused on strictness, discipline, the emphasis on defeating records, and focus on strength.

[Don Francisco Amorós y Ondeano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Amor%C3%B3s_y_Ondeano), was born on February 19, 1770, in Valencia and died on August 8, 1848, in Paris. He was a Spanish colonel, and the first person to introduce educative gymnastic in France. The German [Friedrich Ludwig Jahn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Ludwig_Jahn) started the German gymnastics movement in 1811 which lead to the invention of the [parallel bars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_bars), [rings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rings_%28gymnastics%29), [high bar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horizontal_bar), the [pommel horse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pommel_horse) and the [vault horse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vault_%28gymnastics%29).

Germans [Charles Beck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Beck) and [Charles Follen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Follen) and American [John Neal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Neal_%28writer%29) brought the first wave of gymnastics to the United States in the 1820s. Beck opened the first gymnasium in the US in 1825 at the [Round Hill School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Round_Hill_School) in Northampton, Massachusetts. Follen opened the first college gymnasium and the first public gymnasium in the US in 1826 at [Harvard College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_College) and in Boston, Massachusetts, respectively. Neal was the first American to open a public gymnasium in the US in Portland, Maine in 1827.

The [Federation of International Gymnastics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration_Internationale_de_Gymnastique) (FIG) was founded in Liege in 1881. By the end of the nineteenth century, men's gymnastics competition was popular enough to be included in the first modern [Olympic Games](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympic_Games) in 1896. From then on until the early 1950s, both national and international competitions involved a changing variety of exercises gathered under the rubric, gymnastics, that included, for example, synchronized team floor calisthenics, rope climbing, high jumping, running, and horizontal ladder. During the 1920s, women organized and participated in gymnastics events. The first women's Olympic competition was limited, only involving synchronized calisthenics and track and field. These games were held in 1928, in Amsterdam. By 1954, Olympic Games apparatus and events for both men and women had been standardized in modern format, and uniform grading structures (including a point system from 1 to 15) had been agreed upon. At this time, [Soviet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) gymnasts astounded the world with highly disciplined and difficult performances, setting a precedent that continues. Television has helped publicize and initiate a modern age of gymnastics. Both men's and women's gymnastics now attract considerable international interest, and excellent gymnasts can be found on every continent.

In 2006, a new points system for Artistic gymnastics was put into play. With an A Score (or D score) being the difficulty score, which as of 2009 is based on the top 8 high scoring elements in a routine (excluding Vault). The B Score (or E Score), is the score for execution and is given for how well the skills are performed.

As early as 4,000 years ago, the people of China practiced Gymnastics exercises purely to benefit their health and promote longevity. In Ancient Greece, where perfection of the human physique was highly celebrated, Gymnastics was practised by men and women. The Ancient Greeks prized Gymnastics so much it was part of the Ancient Olympic Games, making it one of the world’s oldest sports along with athletics. Gymnastics was utilised by the Ancient Romans to turn their soldiers into finely tuned machines.

Physical activity to promote health and happiness was one of the developments of the Age of Enlightenment, when Greek classical education was revived and heralded by thinkers who presented concepts linking the soul and the body. Coming on the heels of the Scientific Revolution, this era led to physical education as a science and quickly, a societal and nationalistic concept. Governments mandating physical activity led to the "Battle of the Systems" as debate raged over what the best exercises were, with promoters of different schools of physical education arguing their merits over the others. During this era, the first seeds of the sport of Gymnastics and its future competitive disciplines were sewn, and Artistic Gymnastics returned as a sport at the first Modern Olympic Games in 1896.

Cuperus, who founded the FIG in 1881, saw Gymnastics as an activity that was good for the body and mind - and above all, non-competitive. This vision was shared by only a small number of his associates, and as the years passed competitions were slowly integrated into the FIG's activities. The move toward competition culminated in the first international tournament held in Antwerp - Cuperus's hometown - in 1903. Today, that event is recognised as the first World Artistic Gymnastics Championships.

Large group performance

Despite its new competitive dimension, Cuperus's idea of "Gymnastics for the masses" did not disappear. By the time the FIG was established, Gymnastics had been rooted into the fitness regimes of soldiers, and the military influence on the sport - marching out, saluting the judges at the beginning and end of a routine and the parade of flags - is still evident today.

Cuperus continued to cultivate his preferred brand of the sport, which was about facilitating social cohesion during a 19th century rife with industrial transformation and political upheavals. His vision followed the message long promulgated by the founding fathers of the activity, including Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and Per Henrik Ling.

Today, the Gymnastics for All movement strives to bring nations together through a world of movement and physical activity, contributing to global health, fitness and friendship. Anyone, regardless of age, shape or ability can take part in Gymnastics for All activities as part of a daily fitness routine.