AAU Youth Open Optional Rules
2026-2027



Mission

The AAU Open Optional level was created to inspire, challenge, and develop the premier athletes within the AAU gymnastics program. This level is designed for gymnasts who are ready to pursue higher-difficulty skills, push beyond traditional level expectations, and prepare for opportunities at the national and international levels.

Our goal is to encourage our top athletes to embrace challenge, pursue excellence, and strive for the opportunity to qualify for the AAU National Team and International Team. Open Optional provides a progressive and supportive environment where athletes can develop the advanced skills, confidence, resilience, and competitive experience necessary to take their gymnastics to the next level.

The rules for Open Optional were thoughtfully designed to create a challenging yet balanced pathway for elite-level development. The composition and special requirements are based on USAG Level 8 special requirements, while incorporating the Level 9 and Level 10 bonus structure. This combination allows athletes to work toward higher-level skills and difficulty while maintaining a strong foundation of quality gymnastics and competitive readiness.

Through the Open Optional program, we aim to cultivate the premier athletes of AAU gymnastics — gymnasts who are willing to challenge themselves, embrace difficult skills, persevere through obstacles, and strive for excellence both in and beyond the gym.

Open Optional is more than simply another level. It is an opportunity to dream bigger, train harder, and pursue the highest opportunities available within the AAU gymnastics program, including the possibility of representing AAU on the national and international stage.

Scoring

- Each routine will start from a **9.5 start value**
- Gymnasts then can add **+.30 Bonus + .20 Composition Credit = 10.0**
- **Bars, Beam, and Floor will require 4A and 4B value parts**
- 10.1 start value is possible has to have all the bonus, SRs, and E element - see event for specfic details
- The .30 tenth bonus can come from connective or difficulty bonus **no limit** on either - *specifics listed on each event*
- **Composition Credit (CC)-** this replaces the up-to-level composition deductions and adds a system of rewarding harder skills in start value with **up to .20 on each event.** CC credit can be given on any skill that receives value part. *Specifics are listed in each event.*
- Vaults are marked on the chart
- Bars: cast angle deductions will be applied
- Beam: Series connections: A connection will be considered broken if:
  - stop between elements
  - loss of balance
  - any deviation of body movement which is NOT in line with BB
  - repositioning of foot/feet or pivoting
  - extra step/hop/jump between elements
  - legs straighten between elements
    - 1st element lands in pile' on 2 feet
    - legs totally totally straighten and pile' again to initate jump into next element
    - straightening the legs breaks series
  - Acro series considered broken if kick/leg-swing above 45 degrees leading into 2nd element
    - NOTE- series with 2 of the same elements with broken connection: no VP awarded for 2nd (same) element
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refer to USAG optional code of points if needed

Equipment

Policy Changes and Clarification:

- A springboard may now be put on an 8-inch mat for mount
- **All vaults are allowed to use the alternate spring board without penalty on SV except the round off entry vault**
- Floor mats may be removed **AT ANY TIME DURING THE ROUTINE** regardless of placement. Coaches should use most expedient and least intrusive path onto the floor.
- Walkovers included in the acro series on beam are **not** subject to the split deduction (even if series is broken)
- Music failure is **NO** longer considered equipment failure. Gymnasts must continue with no deduction for absence of music or any musicality deductions.
- After a fall, judging begins when the first element receiving an **A value** part is performed.

Vault

Please refer to the vault chart for start values and allowable vaults

Rules/Changes

- Depending on the requirements for the competition phase, the gymnast is required to perform one or two vaults from the Table of Vaults.
- The vault begins with a run, an arrival and take-off from the springboard with two feet, from either a forward position or backward position
- All vaults must be performed with repulsion from both hands off the vaulting table.
- The gymnast is required to properly use the “safety collar” supplied by the equipment company for round-off entry vaults.
- A hand placement mat may be used only for Yurchenko vaults from groups 1, 4 and 5
- Alternative spring board is **permitted on all vaults except on round off entry vault**
- If a gymnast performs the first vault as a Tsukahara or Yurchenko type vault – (flipping) and DOES NOT land on her feet or if the vault is facilitated by the coach resulting in a zero, as decided by the judging panel, the judging panel must notify coach of the zero awarded vault
- **Angle of repulsion(up to 0.50)**
- **Foot form is now throughout for up to .10 deduction**
- **Deep squat on landing applies to excessive amount of squat OR knee compression**
- **Deep squat to a fall can receive a .80 total deduction**
- Spotting during post flight 1.00
- Spotting Landing -.50
- If the coach facilitates the entire vault at the judge’s discretion, the vault can result in a Void Vault

Uneven Bars

Start Value: 9.5

Special requirements (0.50 each)

1. Cast to Handstand- SR given when angle is min. of 0-20 from vertical

VP: 4A, 4B,

#1 and #2 Special Requirement can be the same skill

2. #2 and #3 Special Requirements: Two minimum B elements (same or different) not permitted in dismount
3. One 3/6/7 360-degree circling skill
4. A value part salto dismount

Rhythm up to .20 and Dynamics up to .20 are applied as general execution deductions.

Bonus: Connection Value CV

0.10	0.20
C+C same or different	C+C (both w/ turn/flight)
No Turn or flight needed	C+D or greater no turn/flight needed

Difficulty Bonus

D=+0.10

E=+0.20

Composition- up to .20 is reflected in START VALUE

Each:

- ***Difficulty:* .10**- Minimum of one C element in routine (no dismount)
- **Dismount- .10**- Minimum of C dismount
  OR B skill connected to B dismount

10.1 SV- Must have .4 in bonus + all CC + E release element

Balance Beam

Start Value: 9.5

VP: 4A, 4B

Special requirements (0.50 each)

1. Full turn
2. 180 degree leap or jump
3. Acro series, one element must have flight
4. Salto or Aerial dismount, minimum of A value part

Specifics to Beam

- **Concentration Pause .10 for 2 seconds and .20 for more than 2 seconds.**
- **Rhythm/Tempo between elements up to .20 (all but backward acro series**
- **Dynamics- up to .20 (up to .10 Amplitude and up to .10 Energy)**
- **Rhythm and Tempo -up to .20 (up to.10 Variation and up to .10 disconnected/lack of continuity)**
- **Sureness- up to .20**

Bonus: Connection Value CV

	0.10	**0.20**
Acro flight (2 elements) (excludes dismount)	A+D/E B+C SALTO	B+D or greater C+C or greater
Acro flight (3 elements) (includes dmt) 3-part acro series receives an additional 0.10 bonus	B+B+C	B+C+C B+B+D
Dance or mixed series	B+C A+D	C+C B+D
Turns	C+A	

Difficulty Bonus

D=+0.10

E=+0.20

Artistic Performance (applies to non-VPs and connections

- **Choreography- up to .40**
- **Purposeful – up to .20 (excessive prep/unnecessary steps w/o choreography)**
- **Direction- up to .10 (Side and back .05 each)**
- **Variety- up to .10**
- **Body Posture- up to .30 Head, neck, shoulders and trunk**
- **Footwork- up to .30**

Composition- up to .20 is reflected in START VALUE

Each:

- ***Difficulty:* .10**- One C acro and Two B acro elements
  OR one D acro and one B/A acro elements (no mount or dismount)
- **Dismount- .10**- B dismount or greater

10.1 SV- Must have .4 in bonus + all CC + E acro element

Floor Exercise

Start Value: 9.5

VP: 4A, 4B

Special requirements (0.50 each)

1. Acro series with two saltos
2. 3 diferent saltos in routine
3. Dance passage with 180 degree split (one must be a one foot take off leap)
4. Minimum of A value part salto in last pass

Specifics to Floor

- **Concentration Pause (2 seconds) before acro series .10**
- **Not holding ending pose for 1 second .05**
- **Not ending with music .10**
- **Turns not in high releve up to .10**
- **Lack of precision in dance value parts- up to .10**
- **Rhythm during direct connections up to .10**

Bonus: Connection Value CV

	0.10	0.20
Acro indirect (saltos/aerials)	B +C A + D A/B+A/B+C	C+C B/C +D/E A+E A +A+D
Acro direct (saltos/aerials)	B+B A+C A+A+C	A/B +D/E B/C +C A +A+ D/E
Dance or mixed series	B+D/E C+C D/E salto+A jump	C+D/E

Difficulty Bonus

D=+0.10

E=+0.20

Artistic Performance (applies to non-VPs and connections

- **Choreography- up to .40**
- **Up to .15 Purposeful (more than one step to prepare**
- **for acro .05 each time)**
- **Up to .15 Focus and projection**
- **Up to .10 Variety- poses and connections**
- **Musicality up to .20 Move w/ music, theme, tempo**
- **Expression up to .20 Emotion and engaging**
- **Body Posture up to .30**
- **Footwork up to .30**
- **Dynamics up to .20 (up to .10 amplitude of movement and up to .1 energy throughout)**

Composition- up to .20 is reflected in START VALUE

Each:

- ***Difficulty:* .10**- One C across and Two B acro skils or greater in routine
- **Dance- .10**- 2 C or 1 C + 1 D/E dance skill

10.1 SV- Must have .4 in bonus + all CC + E acro elements