NRG Foundation Gymnastics - Teaching Progressions

FORWARD ROLL

You are aiming for:

✓ Good, clean technique, with stretch before and after.
✓ Arms and hands shoulder width apart.
✓ Bottom high as the Roll begins with head well tucked in.
✓ A reach forward with arms out straight, and feet tucked into the bottom, pressing down.
✓ A roll up to stand without placing the hands down to help stand up.

● Don’t forget that there are a variety of other ending positions to explore alongside the roll up to stand. If the children are struggling to stand up, perhaps get them to choose a position to finish in.

Progressions & Set-ups

● Rocking backwards and forwards in tuck is often the first step to be taught. Ensure when the children are performing it, that their arms are straight and parallel, reaching forward, not clutching the knees.

● For the really young, slopes can help if you have the resources to set one up. Create one using soft play wedges, or perhaps a springboard with mat over. Make sure the child is standing at the top of the slope, and not on the floor to aid rolling. When first starting to explore this skill, rolling to a Tuck Sit is a good place to start.

Teaching Techniques:

A fun group activity is -

- To get the children to start in a crouch position with hands on the floor. Place a beanbag on their lower back, and tell them to quickly straighten their legs, keeping their feet on the floor. Can they flick the beanbag over their head?
- Once they can do that, ask them to repeat the process, but this time push the legs straight and try to lift the feet off the floor too.
- Finally, get them to flick the beanbag, tuck their head under and follow it i.e. Roll over.

● Flicking the beanbag over is also a great way to practice rolling over with straight legs for the more able child. It can be used to introduce rolling over with straight arms too, as the bottom has to be lifted high in order for this to be achieved.

● The roll up to stand is often the tricky bit, especially for young children with very little core strength. Once the roll over has been achieved, then the rock to stand can be practiced. If the children are struggling, you could partner them up, with one lying in tuck on their back, arms out straight forward. The second child holds their hands and gently pulls their partner up to stand. The child must stay in a ball (Tuck shape) until their feet touch the floor, then straighten their legs to stand up.
After a few partnered attempts, the assisting child can delay the pull up so the active child starts reaching forward with their hands. Eventually the partner simply holding out their hands should be enough for the child to be able to stand up on their own.

- To add a challenge, use beanbags or similar between the knees or ankles and see if the children can roll all the way over without dropping them. Not easy!

- Apparatus can be used for variety if the Coach feels it is safe. Simply performing the Forward roll on a slightly raised surface such as some stacked mats or 2 benches pushed together with a mat over, can seem exciting and challenging, and make for an interesting part of a rolling themed circuit.

- Apparatus can also be used to roll off. One idea is to have the child kneel on some raised mats, or matted bench, place their hands on the floor, and then tuck their head and roll out. For older children this can be explored further off higher platforms. Trestle tables or similar can be used, where the child leans over to place their tummy on the top of the Trestle, places their hands on the floor, and tuck and rolls out again.

NB. A child with large tummy or thighs will almost certainly not be able to roll to stand. Be aware and sensitive to this. Do not press the issue or highlight it, but say "ok, try this..." and ask the gymnast to tuck one leg under and come up to a kneel and stand up from there, or pick another finish shape.

**Common Problems**

- The young gymnast will almost always lose the tucked in shape on their first attempts as they roll over, flattening their back, straightening their legs, or both. If this happens, correct the shape while they are still lying on the floor, tucking their feet back into the bottom, and pull them to stand as before. It sometimes helps to replicate their incorrect shape and ask ‘is this a roly shape?!’

- The Roll looks more like a Headstand with the child falling over onto their back. This happens when the child begins to roll and immediately drops their hips and bottom down, thus having to place the top of the head on the floor instead of the back of the head. They must keep their hips up to begin rolling.

- The child’s knees drop down to touch the floor as the roll begins. Rolling from this shape is impossible so re-enforce rolling from squat keeping on the feet.

- The hands are placed behind them on the floor to aid the stand up. Encourage the child to reach forward with their hands, and lean forward with their head and body, while pressing down into the floor with their feet.
(In order of Difficulty)

FORWARD ROLL TO STRADDLE STAND

This skill requires a good Forward Roll and reasonably wide Straddle Sit to be executed correctly.

You are looking for:

✓ A strong, fast roll over.
✓ Straight legs throughout.
✓ A good lean forward of the torso and strong push through the hands and feet.
✓ A held Straddle Stand position to finish with arms to the sides or front, and a flat back.

Teaching Points:

● Get the gymnast to start straddling the legs as soon as the shoulders touch the floor.
● Hands should be placed on exit on the floor close into the body between the legs.
● The gymnast must lean forward with chest horizontal to the floor when pushing with the hands.
● Pushing down through the feet also helps the gymnast to stand and lock the knees out.
● If the legs are too narrow, the gymnast may not be able to push hard enough to get to feet. If the legs are too wide, the gymnast will not be able to maintain balance on standing up, and will look ungainly bringing the feet together, which is usually done by a jump.
● The actual stand in straddle should be held for at least 2 seconds, so the shape can be seen.

Common Problems:

● Lack of flexibility in the hips, not allowing the gymnast to split the legs wide enough apart to enable the stand part. There is no real cure for this, although depending on the width of the straddle, sometimes speeding up the rolling section and therefore increasing forward momentum can sometimes help.
● Gymnast relies on the feet to push up to stand, instead of the hands. This is easily spotted, as the legs will be quickly bent in, resembling a frog. Encourage the push through the hands instead.

Set-ups & Progressions:

● Rolling down a slope can sometimes be beneficial as the gymnast is not rolling to stand from a horizontal sitting shape. The hips being higher than the feet during the pushing phase, and momentum is increased as they are rolling downhill.

● Another fun one for those that are struggling, is to have them perform the rolling section along a Box Top or matted bench, then straddling the legs at the end, and pushing off the Box Top with their hands to Straddle Stand on the floor.
FORWARD ROLL TO WALK OUT

Used primarily on Beam, but another challenging variation to consider.

**You are looking for:**
- A strong, fast roll over from bent to straight legs.
- A placement of just one foot close in to the bottom, while the other stays straight.
- Deep lean forward, coinciding with strong push through the bent leg, steadied by the foot of the straight leg.
- Upper torso must be kept leaning forward until the gymnast’s hips are over the feet.

FORWARD ROLL TO PIKE STAND

The technique is almost the same as the Roll to Straddle stand. Momentum comes into play here, so it is important to roll fast.

**You are looking for:**
- A strong, fast roll over from bent to straight legs.
- A deep pike forward over the legs and strong push through the hands placed either side of the thighs.
- Heels, then the full foot must be pushed firmly into the floor on contact.
- Upper torso must be kept leaning forward until the gymnast’s hips are almost over the feet.

**Common Problems:**
- The Roll is too slow. Momentum is required to execute this skill.
- Lack of flexibility (or weight around the tummy area) prevents the gymnast from getting the torso into the required pike position.
- The timing of the hand push does not coincide with the piking phase, usually coming too late.

**Set-ups & Progressions:**
Similar to the standard Forward Roll, slopes and drop offs can be useful when learning the Pike Stand and the walk-out version.
Creating a drop off is both a good practise tool, and a nice compromise for gymnasts unable to do a the required deep bend forward required for both the above skills. The lower the starting platform, the harder the exit becomes.