

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
GYMNASTIC EXERCISES
FOR SCHOOLS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649193905

Suggestions for gymnastic exercises for schools by Hellen Clark Swazey

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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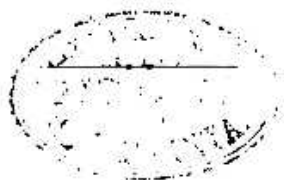
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"It is not a soul, it is not a body, that we are training up; it is a man, and we ought not to divide him into two parts."

—MONTAIGNE

INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE the adjustment of any truth to a balance is reached, popular opinions are subject to extreme oscillations; and thus it has been common for the scholar to despise "brute force," and for the athlete to regard with contempt the mere student. But we now recognize the fact that mind and body are complementary to each other, and that, as co-ordinate parts of a whole, their development should be simultaneous. It is not intended to question the fact that the body should be subservient to the mind, but it is evidently a great loss of power if the mind, in the exercise of its faculties, must fight against the body or drag it reluctantly along.

Mind is pre-eminent. Even beauty and grace are chiefly delightful to the cultivated observer as embodiments or earnestness of mental attributes: but that which is higher must exist upon a basis of what is lower, and that which is interior must be expressed in something exterior. It is, therefore, important that the mind should have good physical conditions under which it may manifest itself.

The brain is our sole physical organ of thought, and the work which it does is immediately dependent upon the quality and amount of blood which is sent to it by the circulatory system. Since the condition of the blood, moreover, is largely dependent upon its unrestricted flow to all parts of the body and upon its free oxidization, physical exercise becomes an important factor in mental training and is a legitimate and useful part of school work.

It is not possible in this little manual to enter into the physiology or philosophy of movements, but merely to suggest a few approved exercises to teachers who are desirous of making a beginning with their pupils in systematized exercise.

Acknowledgment is made to Miss Allen, of the Allen Gymnasium Company, for the following movements, many of which are selected from her work.

H. C. S.

BOSTON, Feb. 1887.



GENERAL REMARKS TO THE TEACHER.

It is very desirable that any one who regulates the physical exercise of himself or of others should have an intelligent knowledge of skeletal and muscular anatomy and of the general and particular effects of exercise. The body as well as the mind of each individual bears within itself its own standard of perfectibility, and this personal standard must be kept constantly in mind. Until, however, public conviction of the utility of the simultaneous training of body and mind is sufficiently strong to demand gymnasiums which shall be under the charge of teachers educated for the purpose of supervising them, the most that can be accomplished in school work is light general exercise.

It is absolutely essential that the clothing of the pupil should, in all cases, be sufficiently loose to admit of free and unimpeded movement. Already, in a few schools, blouse waists prettily made are voluntarily worn as a school uniform by teachers and pupils; and the Flint or Equipose waists upon which the dress skirts can be securely buttoned are replacing the stiff and awkward looking corset-cages. It is hoped that the obvious benefits of such a plan will soon be recognized in all schools and that it will become as popular as comfort, grace, and health urge that it should be.

In class work it is impossible to give much special attention to any one pupil, and out of twenty-five or fifty pupils there may be a few, who, from individual peculiarity, are unable to profit from some part of the exercises, and these exceptional cases should be carefully noted.

Accuracy should be insisted upon and no new movements undertaken while those already given are carelessly performed, but the exercises should be sufficiently diversified to be entertaining and should never be allowed unduly to tax the mind.

It is well to begin with a few movements for the upper extremities and pass then to the lower extremities. After this, breathing and other exercises for the middle third of the body may be given, returning again to other exercises if desired.

The air in the room must be fresh and pure, while the temperature during exercise should never be over 66° (Fahr.) or under 60°. After exercising it is well to throw some wrap over the shoulders for a few moments or until the temperature of the room is 70°.

GYMNASTIC EXERCISES FOR SCHOOLS.

BREATHING.

ONE of the most valuable series of exercises that can be given for home, school, or gymnasium work, is the forced breathing movements. In ordinary respiration and expiration comparatively few muscles are brought into action and these so lightly that the expansion and contraction never reach their maximum.

It is evident from the drooping heads, stooping shoulders, and cramped chests common among school children that there is special need for the development of the upper third of the body. The most important point to be gained, however, in chest work is the enlargement of the thoracic cavity from within rather than the building up of muscles from without, although the latter should not be neglected. Increase in the diameter of the chest is most satisfactorily obtained by breathing exercises, for in forced inspiration every muscle which can by contraction elevate the ribs and enlarge the chest is made to work, while forced expiration, which normally is mainly a simple, elastic re-action, brings into active service many muscles that are used in running, leaping, walking, dancing, and also the muscles used in bending and twisting the body.

Cautions.—No movements should be given very strongly at first, and breathing movements should not be continued until the veins become swollen in the forehead or until dizziness is experienced. In cases of organic heart disease forced breathing exercises should be without exception omitted as well as all other movements that have a marked effect upon respiration. The first four movements given may be taken either sitting or standing; the others require a standing position.

There will be found a tendency to fill only the upper or middle section of the lungs with air, or if a full breath is taken the shoulders are likely to be raised; this tendency must be guarded against. The action should begin at the diaphragm. The lower part of the lungs is to be filled as far downwards and outwards as possible, that is, the lower chest in a correct move-

ment will be seen to increase uniformly, in size, in lateral and transverse directions. The air is forced into the lungs much as water is poured into a pitcher, until the upper lobes of the lungs, which extend to the clavicle, are filled, and as many as possible of the six hundred million air cells of the lungs are brought into contact with the oxygen of the air.

POSITION.—Head erect, chin slightly back of vertical, shoulders firm and low, arms by the side. Breathe always through the nostrils, never through the mouth.

1. Take in a full breath, hold it five seconds.

Repeat from one to four times. Very gradually increase the number of seconds during which the breath is held, until the air can be retained in the lungs, with ease, from forty to sixty seconds.

2. Take in a breath quickly, and let it out with a continuous movement as slowly as possible, resisting the inclination of the lungs to push it all out at once, particularly on the last part of the movement.

Repeat from one to four times.

3. Take in a breath as slowly as possible with a continuous movement, and let it out quickly, as soon as the lungs are full.

Repeat from one to four times.

4. Take in a breath as slowly as possible and let it out as slowly as possible.

Repeat from one to four times.

5. Take a full breath into the lungs and blow it out strongly through the mouth formed as for whistling.

Repeat three or four times in quick succession.

6. Hands at side horizontal, palms facing upward. Clap the hands three times over the head while holding the breath. The face should be turned to the ceiling in this movement. (See foot-note.)

Repeat from one to four times.

NOTE.—When this occasions faintness or vertigo it should be omitted for a few days and afterward taken lightly, but with increasing strength to an average degree of vigor.