• The “Father of Modern Gymnastics” is Frederich Ludwig Jahn of Germany whom in the late 1700’s developed the side bar, horizontal bars, parallel bars, balance beam and jumping events.

• In the 1800’s gymnastics flourished in Germany.

• At the same time Guts Math of Sweden developed a more graceful form of the sport, stressing the rhythmic movement.

• The International Gymnastic Federation (FIG) was formed in 1881, then called the Bureau of the European Gymnastics Federation, opening the way for international competition. It is the oldest surviving international sports federation.

• The first large scale meeting of gymnasts was the 1896 Olympics, where Germany virtually swept the medal parade. Gymnasts from five countries competed.

• The first international gymnastics competition outside of the Olympics was held in 1903 in Antwerp, Belgium. This competition was considered the first World Championship.

• The most remarkable gymnast in Olympic history is George Eyser (USA) who won 6 medals in 1904 with a wooden leg.

• At the 1924 Games in Paris, the basis of modern Olympic Gymnastics Competition was firmly established. The athletes (men) began to compete for individual Olympic titles on each apparatus, as well as in combined individual and team exercises.

• The women’s program was introduced in 1928.

• The most successful athlete in Olympic history is gymnast Larissa Latynina (RUS) who won a record number of 18 medals between 1956-1964.

• In 1976 Nadia Comaneci (ROM) scored 7 ‘perfect tens’.

• The youngest Olympic gymnast was Nadia Comaneci aged 14 years 252 days (1976).

• Rhythmic gymnastics was introduced to the Olympics in 1984.

• You have to be both flexible and strong

• The first piece that was invented was vault.

• There are 6 pieces in boys gymnastics

• There are 4 pieces in girls gymnastics

• Gymnastics is a competitive sport in which individuals perform optional and prescribed acrobatic feats mostly on special apparatus in order to demonstrate strength, balance, and body control.

• While gymnastics has existed for more than 2,000 years, it has only been considered a competitive sport for a little more than 100 years.

• Current track and field events including pole vault, broad jump, shot put, rope climb, and the 100-meter sprint were at one time considered gymnastics events.

• The early Greeks practised gymnastics in preparation for war, as jumping, running, discus throwing, wrestling, and boxing helped produce the strong, supple muscles necessary for hand-to-hand combat. Because military training was necessary for the production of Greek citizens, and because the Greeks viewed the training both of the body and the mind as inextricably linked, gymnastics became a central component of ancient education.

Nadia Comaneci (1961 to present) won the world’s hearts in the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal when, at just 14 years old, she was the first female gymnast ever to be awarded a perfect score of 10 in an Olympic gymnastic event! She went home with three Olympic gold medals for her country, Romania. Four years later she won a further two gold medals at the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

In 1984, and again in 2004, Nadia was awarded the Olympic Order, the highest award given by the International Olympic Committee, making her the youngest person to ever win the award and the only person to receive it twice! Nadia is now a joint citizen of the United States and Romania, and is involved with many charities and international organisations.

Fun fact. When Nadia scored her perfect 10, it couldn’t be shown on the scoreboards as they only went as high as 9.9. The number 1.0 flashed up instead! “You should also appreciate the goodness around you, and surround yourself with positive people.” - Nadia Comaneci

Olga Korbut (1955 - present), won four gold medals and two silver medals for the USSR in the Summer Olympics of 1972 and 1976 with her charming, innovative and technically brilliant gymnastics. She caught the world’s imagination and made gymnastics popular all over the world. Olga now lives in the US.

Fun fact. In 1972 Olga performed a number of brand new and astonishing moves in her routines, including what became known as the “Korbut Flip”, which you can see in slow motion in the second video below.

"It’s better to have a rich soul than to be rich.” Olga Korbut