Program Description

The San Francisco Youth Circus (SFYC) is a comprehensive circus training program that nurtures students through their development as circus artists. SFYC is by audition only. Students must have basic skills, a passion for circus, the drive to train hard, and a willingness to commit to the program.

Students in SFYC must commit to at least 2 days of training per week and perform in the Winter and Spring shows. One day/week of SFYC training is Core Training and one day is the student’s main Specialty. Core Training includes tumbling, handstands, performance/dance skills, and juggling. Students are assigned to Core training groups based on their skills level (beginning, intermediate, and advanced).

Students may choose as many additional days of training as they would like in whatever disciplines they would like. These are the Specialty classes. Specialty classes include warm up, flexibility, conditioning, and skill development in the discipline. Specialty classes are categorized by level. Students advance with teacher approval. SFYC students will work with staff mentors to create a schedule that fits their interests and goals as a circus artist.

SFYC Beginner

- **Acro with Strength & Flexibility** – Students will train kicks, basic tumbling, handstands, and mini-tramp as well as introducing more advanced skills like hoop-diving and pole climbing. They will also train strength and flexibility necessary for advancing as circus athletes.

- **Aerial with Strength & Flexibility** – Students will train basic aerial skills on trapeze and tissu as well as introducing hoop and rope. They will also train strength and flexibility necessary for advancing as circus athletes.

- **Circus Skills with Strength & Flexibility** – Students will train juggling, rolla bola, and stilts as well as introducing diabolo, rolling globe, and tightwire. They will also train strength and flexibility necessary for advancing as circus athletes.
**SFYC Intermediate and Advanced**: Students who have advanced beyond the Beginner benchmarks in specific disciplines will be invited to take intermediate and advanced classes. Students might take one class at a beginner level and another at an advanced level. It all depends on where they are at with the skills. The current Intermediate and Advanced classes are listed below. These classes are subject to change.

- Hand-Balancing
- Pole/Hoop-Diving
- Teeterboard/Trampoline
- German Wheel
- Contortion
- Aerial Sling
- Tissu
- Aerial Hoop
- Static Trapeze
- Single Point Trapeze
- Aerial Rope
- Flying Trapeze
- Juggling and Balance
- Performance Troupe

**SF YOUTH CIRCUS PERFORMANCE**

All youth who train at Circus Center will have opportunities to perform. As students advance, more opportunities will be available to them. SFYC students who are passionate about performing have the option of enrolling in the Performance Troupe each term. There will also be off-site performance opportunities throughout the year.

**FALL: September-December**

- **SFYC** – SFYC will put together a group act for the Winter Showcase during Core Training. All SFYC students are expected to participate. The Winter Showcase performances are the weekend of December 10-12.
- **Performance Troupe** – SFYC students who enroll in the Fall Performance Troupe will be part of the ensemble for the Winter Showcase. They will have weekly classes in which they learn clowning and acting skills and develop material that will be in the Winter Showcase. In addition to their Saturday class, they will have additional rehearsals for the Winter Showcase during the tech weekend of December 4-5.
WINTER: January-March

- **SFYC** – SFYC will spend the Winter term preparing for the big Youth show. Students will continue with the specialty they chose in the Fall, and the emphasis will be on creating acts in their specialty. The most advanced and senior students may have solos or duos. All other students will be part of group acts in their specialty for this show.

- **Performance Troupe** – SFYC students are invited to enroll in the Winter/Spring Performance Troupe. Like the Fall Performance Troupe, this will be a class. The Winter/Spring Performance Troupe will create and perform the transitions and featured roles for the youth show in March.

SPRING: April-May

A scaled down version of the Youth show will tour during the Spring. SFYC students interested in being part of the tour are encouraged to sign up to be in the Winter/Spring Performance Troupe. Performances will range from booked shows in theaters to school events to nursing homes to outdoor festivals. The performance troupe will learn how to adjust the show for different events and venues as well as learning other basic performance and touring skills.

Attendance Policy

Circus Center’s SF Youth Circus students are expected to make a commitment to this intense and time-consuming program. Circus is an extremely difficult and demanding discipline that requires time, dedication, and focus. Students must manage their time so that they are able to complete their schoolwork and family commitments while also making time for circus. This requires a commitment from the family as well. *It is imperative that students attend all classes and rehearsals.* Missing class hampers students’ progress in their training. Missing rehearsal slows down progress on the show and is unfair to the rest of the ensemble.

We understand that life happens and sometimes absences are necessary. Absences are excused in the event of sickness, quarantining, mandatory school events, religious holidays, or unavoidable family commitments. As soon as you know about an absence, please let us know. Letting us know as soon as possible demonstrates respect for our staff, instructors,
and the other students. Please email Lex Baesen at lex@circuscenter.org as soon as you know you will be absent.

There are some dates throughout the year that are mandatory. Much like a commitment to a sports team, if you are not at practice you cannot play in the games. The same is true for circus. If you are not at practice you cannot perform in the shows. The Mandatory dates include performances and key rehearsals leading up to performances. Mandatory dates are:

- November 29-December 12: All training, rehearsals, and performances for the Winter Showcase.
- February 28-March 20: All training, rehearsals, and performances for the Youth Show.

If a student is absent on a Mandatory date, they will automatically be put on probation. Exceptions will only be made for excused absences (sickness, quarantining, mandatory school events, religious holidays, or unavoidable family commitments). In one of these cases, we expect a note from your doctor, religious community, or school. We still cannot guarantee that you will be able to perform.

We have designated breaks throughout the year to make sure that students and their families have time for rest, renewal, and holiday celebrations. We encourage families to plan vacations and travel during our breaks which line up with SFUSD breaks. Designated breaks are:

- November 22-26
- December 19-January 2
- March 27-April 2

We know that some students struggle to arrive on time for class due to commutes or late school dismissal. We have added extra flexibility into the schedule so that there is a rolling start time from 4:00-4:30. Students may also choose to train until 6pm or 6:20pm.

We understand this is a strict policy. However, this commitment is necessary for students to effectively train at a high level. This program is NOT for everyone. If this seems beyond what you are able to commit to, we encourage you to consider taking our youth classes or booking private lessons.
Discipline Policy

Students in the Youth Program are expected to adhere to the following rules in addition to all policies set forth in the Handbook:

- RESPECT instructors and fellow students.
- RESPECT the space and equipment.
- Practice safe behavior at all times.
- Wear appropriate attire (this may include face masks).
- Do not climb on or use circus equipment without the permission of an instructor.
- Put forth your best effort at all times.
- Follow the structure of class and participate in all aspects of class.
- Do not use phones, cameras, or recording devices during training time. These should be put away in your bag.

For minor disciplinary incidents, students will be given a verbal warning. If a student receives 3 verbal warnings in one class day, they will be asked to sit out for the duration of the current activity or the remainder of the class (depending on the seriousness of the infraction). For a serious or dangerous disciplinary incident, a student may be asked to sit out of class immediately. Parents will be notified when students are asked to sit out of class. If a student is asked to sit out of class three times, the student will be put on probation.

Probation

A student may be put on probation for discipline issues. Please see the Discipline Policy for details. When a student is put on probation, a meeting will be arranged for the parents, student, program director, and head coach. During this meeting an action plan will be developed. If the student follows the action plan, after one month they will be back in normal standing. However, if a student has an infraction while on probation, they will be removed from performances for that term. If an additional infraction occurs, the student will be asked to leave the program. No refunds are given in this situation.
COVID Policy

Circus Center is required to follow the current health order of San Francisco. This means that policies may change regularly. Please be sure to read all email communications from Circus Center as that is the easiest way for us to keep you up to date on changes. The current policies are as follows:

- All students 12 and older must be fully vaccinated in order to train at Circus Center. Send proof of vaccination to lex@circuscenter.org or show the card in person to a Front Desk staff member.
- Masks must be worn at all times while inside Circus Center.
- If you test positive for or have been exposed to COVID, please let us know immediately so that we can alert others that might have come in contact with you. Please email lex@circuscenter.org or covid@circuscenter.org.
- Students MUST follow the current guidelines regarding quarantining after exposure and travel.

Independent Training Policy

SF Youth Circus students are encouraged to train independently. In order to progress and grow as circus artists, they need to train more hours than we have in class. However, there are legal, liability issues as well as basic safety and common sense concerns related to independent training. Therefore there are restrictions on youth students’ independent training. Please read over the different levels of independent training as well as the expectations for independent training. Students who do not abide by these guidelines may be put on probation.

Supervised Open Training - All SFYC

There are two supervised open training times in the schedule throughout the year. Currently they are scheduled on Tuesdays 4-6 (Lion Dancing), Fridays 4-6 (Aerial Coach),
and Saturdays 12-2 (Acro Coach). These are subject to change. Any SFYC student may attend these.

**Solo Training During SFYC Time - Int/Adv with permission**
Students in our intermediate and advanced classes may receive permission to train independently during SFYC on days that are not designated as supervised training. If you are interested in this, please contact felicity@circuscenter.org.

**Independent User Status - students 16+**
Students 16 and older may receive Independent User status. Please contact the Front Desk to learn how to qualify for IU.

**Expectations for Independent Training:**
- SF Youth Circus students may ONLY train independently on approved apparatus.
- Students may NOT rig any equipment unless they have completed the Aerial Rigging Certification course.
- All SF Youth Circus students MAY stretch, juggle, do ground conditioning, and do handstands.
- Youth students may NOT use the trampoline without an instructor at the trampoline.
- Students training independently must return all equipment to its appropriate location.

**Parent Involvement**

We encourage parents to be involved in their child’s training. It is important to us that you communicate problems, concerns, and special needs. We work very hard to meet each child’s unique needs. We can only do this if we have a full picture of what is going on with each student.

The best way to access current information about the program is on the SFYC Families webpage. You can access that under the Youth tab on Circus Center’s Home page. The direct link is: [www.circuscenter.org/youth-families](http://www.circuscenter.org/youth-families)
We will send out regular updates and reminders by email. Please be sure to read these carefully as they include important information.

It is also important that you know what’s going on with the larger Circus Center community. If you are not currently signed up for Circus Center’s newsletter, we encourage you to do so.

There is a Google Group that allows youth program families to get in touch with one another. If you have not yet joined but would like to, please let us know and we will invite you. Finally, we will create a contact list for families that would like to be included. This will be shared with participating families privately.

We sincerely hope that there will be opportunities this year for parents to get more involved by attending and volunteering at shows and events. This is always so much fun!

**General Policies**

**Food and Drink:**
Eating is not permitted at any time during class. No food is allowed in any training space including: the Gymnasium, Theater, Basement Studio, Trapeze Room, and Green Room. Drinks are allowed in closed containers. Students and staff are requested to be especially careful when carrying hot beverages. Once emptied, paper cups, cans, plastic bottles, etc. must be disposed of in the proper receptacles. Empty containers left in the building will be disposed of.

Students are encouraged to bring water bottles with them to reduce use of disposable cups. Please make sure that your name is on your water bottle.

**Clothing and Hygiene:**
Students should wear form-fitting activewear. Students should have tights or pants that can cover their knees to avoid burns. No jeans or jewelry are allowed at any time. Hair must be tied back and away from face. Braids are highly recommended. Girls who need bras should
wear sports bras. We work very closely with everyone so please make sure that you are clean; students should wear deodorant and clean socks.

Students are expected to pay a uniform/costume fee. This fee helps cover the cost of costumes for performances throughout the year.

All students in SF Youth Circus need Feiyue Acro shoes that they can use throughout the year. Please make sure that you have your name on your shoes as they all look the same.

**Circus Nutrition:**
Students should eat a healthy snack before class that will help to fuel their bodies during training. Circus is extremely physically demanding, and students need to eat a snack with protein and healthy carbohydrates prior to training. Please make sure that your child has good food options between school and circus training. Some examples of good snacks include: an apple and nuts, a hard-boiled egg and a banana, edamame and fruit, berries and yogurt, and the quickest and easiest is protein bars. Chips, cookies, and candy are NOT good to eat before training.

Nutrition is not just important before training. It is vital that students are getting the nutrients they need, especially for our upper level students who are training multiple days a week. Please be sure that your child is eating a varied diet that includes protein, multigrains, and produce.

**Training Spaces:**
It is very important that students only train in training spaces. Students should never be doing acrobatics in the hallways. Students should never climb on or use equipment without the permission of an instructor.

**Instruction:**
The Youth Program teachers are all highly trained and experienced. Student safety is our priority. In order to provide the best instruction, teachers will need to touch students. Teachers use hands-on teaching to spot students in new skills, to actively stretch students,
and to help students make corrections to their body position. Students should always let an instructor know if something is painful or doesn’t feel right.

Injuries:
While injuries are not a common occurrence, they do happen. If a student is injured during class time, the instructors follow protocol for handling the injury. Our instructors are only authorized to administer ice and band-aids. If an injury requires medical attention, parents are immediately notified. If parents cannot be reached, we are required to call 911 for an ambulance.

If a student has an ongoing injury that prevents them from participating in class activities, we need notification from parents. We do not want students to train on an injury, but we need to have parental verification of the problem. If a student has recurring pain or an ongoing injury, we encourage parents to seek help from a physical therapist. Our instructors are happy to have students do their physical therapy exercises in class as part of their warm-up and/or conditioning.

Socializing:
Training should be fun, and we encourage students to make friends with one another. However, training also requires focus and discipline. Students should not socialize and talk too much during class time. This is especially important during the warm-up and teacher instructions. The more focused students are during training, the more they will grow as circus artists.

Cell phones are never to be used inside the training spaces for phone calls, texting, taking pictures or video, or internet browsing. Cell phones should be in bags and out of sight.