



I. GAME DAY DIVISION GUIDELINES

A. GAME DAY DIVISIONS:

1. All permitted cheerleading gymnastics including tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids and jumps for the Game Time Divisions must follow the NFHS Safety Guidelines. All skills should be carefully reviewed and supervised by a qualified adult advisor or coach. See specific skill restrictions for each category.
2. DIVISIONS:
 - A. High School - (7th through 12th grade, male/female)
 - B. Junior High / Middle School – (4th through 8th grade, male/female)
 - C. Elementary School – (6th grade and below, male/female)

B. SCHOOL REPRESENTATION:

1. All members of the cheerleading squad must be current members of the official spirit squad and must attend the school they are representing. These must be individuals who cheered on the sidelines for games during the appropriate season. (Exception: this will not preclude participation from sister schools for same-gender schools as long as they are official members of the squad.)
2. Cheer teams are encouraged to include other sideline spirit groups (i.e. dance team, song/pom, mascot, pep/short flag, etc.), but sideline spirit groups will not be judged separately. Additional performance-based and spirit groups may not enter the division without their cheerleaders.
3. Mascots are limited to the same props as cheerleaders (pom, signs, flags, megaphones and / or banners) and are NOT allowed to stunt in any Game Time Divisions.
4. Routines must be appropriate for family viewing. Any vulgar and/or suggestive movements, words, or music will result in a score deduction.
5. The team and each participating member/coach should constantly display good sportsmanship throughout the entire performance in regards to respect for themselves, other teams and the viewing audience of all ages. Teams should refrain from any taunting, bragging, or suggestive expressions or gestures as well as discrimination of any nature.
6. We recommend that the team and each of its members display an overall appearance conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school in regards to grooming, traditional and appropriate attire, conservative make-up, uniformity, etc.

C. UNIFORM GUIDELINES:

1. All participant uniforms must cover the midriff when standing at attention. Covered midriff does include flesh or nude colored body suits and liners; however fringe would not count as a cover.
2. No tear-away uniforms and/or removal of clothing are permitted.
3. Any team in violation of the uniform guidelines will be assessed a five (5) point deduction.

D. MUSIC / TIME LIMITATIONS:

1. Each team will perform a "Time Out Cheer" not to exceed 1 minute and a "Time Out Dance" not to exceed 1 minute and 30 seconds.
2. Teams may not set up props in advance of any category.
3. Timing will begin with the first organized movement, voice or note of music, whichever comes first and end with the last beat of music or movement. In addition, all music must comply with all music copyright laws.
4. In most locations, Time Out Cheer will begin and end with Buzzer sound – similar to a Time Out at a game.
5. If a team exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed for each violation. Three (3) point deduction for 1 – 5 seconds over, Five (5) point deduction for 6-10 seconds over and Seven (7) point deduction for 11 seconds and over.
6. The routine time limit is 1:15. Acknowledging the potential variance caused by human reaction speed and sound system time variations, judges will not issue a deduction until their stopwatches show a time of 1:18.
7. Because penalties are severe, it is recommended that all teams time their performance several times prior to competition and leave a several second cushion to all for variations in sound equipment.
8. Introductions
 - a. All introductions (tumbling, entrances, chants, spell outs, etc. are considered part of the routine and will be timed as part of the performance.
 - b. All team breaks, rituals and traditions need to take place prior to entering the mat.
 - c. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures.
Example: chest bumps, hugs, handshakes, etc.
 - d. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team's performance. Any team in violation will receive a ONE point deduction.
 - e. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official ending of the routine.

E. COMPETITION AREA:

1. Participants may stand or enter outside the competition area.
2. All permitted skills (stunts, pyramids, tumbling etc.) must be performed on the competition mat.
3. Competitions comply with the NFHS surface ruling that school based programs may not compete on a spring floor.
4. Approximate floor size will be a traditional mat of 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 strips).
5. Objects cannot be thrown outside the competition floor.
6. Poms, Signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners may be placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member.

F. SPOTTER POLICY

In an effort to promote a higher level of safety for competing, spotters may be present on the competition floor as a safety precaution to spot certain elements of the routine. Definition of Additional Spotter: Individuals on the competition floor provided as a safety precaution to spot certain elements of a routine. Competition provided additional spotters will follow the listed guidelines:

Additional Spotters:

1. Should only be used during the stunt, pyramid, and/or basket toss sections. Additional spotters are present for added safety and should stand at the back of the floor when not spotting those sections.
2. Should not touch, assist, or save skills being performed. Additional spotters should only be used to prevent a fall to the competition floor.
3. Should be dressed so that they are presentable, professional, and distinguishable from the performing athletes.
4. Should not dress or act in a manner that distracts from the athletes and their performance.
5. Should be at least 18 years old and familiar with spotting the skills of the performing team.

Note: To provide the safest competitive environment, teams should not attempt skills beyond their ability level.

II. FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

1. Teams are encouraged to use their traditional team fight song.
2. Props (poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners) are permitted in this category.
3. Performances can incorporate up to three (3) eight counts of skills (stunts, tumbling and/or jumps). The three (3) eight counts must be consecutive and the same three (3) eight counts can be repeated if the fight song is repeated.
4. Judging will be based on the following criteria:
 - a. Crowd oriented material, fit to music, using effective spacing and formations, and incorporating visual effects.
 - b. Placement, synchronization and strength of motions
 - c. Overall impression and crowd appeal.
 - d. Emphasis will be placed on practicality. All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally.

B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS:

1. No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar type tosses permitted.
2. No inversions and /or twisting into or out of stunts regardless of contact with bases.
3. No single leg extended stunts.
4. A jump is considered a skill and can only be performed in the three (3) eight count segment.
5. A kick will not be considered as a skill and can be performed at any time during the routine.
6. Maximum difficulty in tumbling is a standing back handsprings.

III. TIME OUT CHEER CATEGORY

A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

1. No music may be used during the performance. Live drummer and / or drum track is allowed. All specialty skills (i.e.: jumps, stunts, tumbling) must be performed in a safe proximity with all Drummers. Drummers cannot be involved in any type of specialty skill.
2. Each team's presentation must include at least two components required from the following: cheers, chants, traditional yells, and/or drum cadences.
3. Teams should utilize all areas of their squad's crowdleading strengths. The use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners is encouraged.
4. Judging will be based on the following criteria:
 - a. Crowd communication, including: crowd effective material, spacing and formations, voice and pace, crowd leading skills and use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners.
 - b. Placement, synchronization and strength of motions
 - c. Overall impression and crowd appeal.
 - d. Emphasis on crowd involvement and practicality.
 - e. All material should be suitable for a game or pep rally.

B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS:

1. No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar type tosses permitted.
2. No inversions and /or twisting into or out of stunts regardless of contact with bases.
3. No single leg extended stunts.
4. Maximum difficulty in tumbling is a standing back handspring.

IV. TIME OUT DANCE CATEGORY

A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

1. Any dance style that is appropriate for a time-out situation within a sideline cheering setting is acceptable.
2. Traditional sideline uniforms required.
3. Poms are the only props permitted.
4. Judging will be based on the following criteria:
 - a. Creativity and musicality, variety and the execution of transitions and formations.
 - b. Placement, synchronization and strength of motions/movement.
 - c. Visual effect and spacing.
 - d. Overall impression and crowd appeal.
 - e. Emphasis will be on audience appropriateness and appeal. This is a performance-based division. Crowd leading components will not be judged.

B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS:

1. Tumbling and/or stunting of any kind is prohibited.
2. Dance skills (i.e. turns, leaps, kicks, etc.) are permitted.

V. INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCE

A. UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

1. If, in the opinion of the competition officials, a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the competition equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the competition rather than the team, the team affected should STOP the routine.
2. The team will perform the routine again in its entirety, but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred. The degree and effect of the interruption will be determined by the competition officials.

B. FAULT OF TEAM

1. In the event a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the team's own equipment, the team must either continue the routine or withdraw from the competition.
2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time. If decided by officials, the team will perform the routine again in its entirety, but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.

C. INJURY

- 1) The only persons that may stop a routine for injury are:
 - a. competition officials,
 - b. the gym owner / coach from the team performing or
 - c. an injured individual.
- 2) The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time. If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed at a later time, the spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team may perform the routine again in its entirety, but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.
- 3) The injured participant that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless:
 - a. The competition officials receive clearance from, first, the medical personnel attending to that participant, the parent (if present) AND THEN the head coach/advisor of the competing team.
 - b. If the medical personnel do not clear the participant, the participant can only return to the competition if a parent or legal guardian in attendance signs a return to participation waiver.
 - c. In the event of a suspected concussion, the participant cannot return to perform without clearance from a licensed medical professional that has training related to head injuries, even with a waiver from a parent or legal guardian.

VI. HOW TO HANDLE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS

- A. RULES & PROCEDURES --Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the competition will be handled exclusively by the Owner/coach of the team and will be directed to the Competition Director. Such questions should be made prior to the team's competition performance.
- B. PERFORMANCE --Any questions concerning the team's performance should be made to the Competition Director immediately after the team's performance or following the outcome of the competition.

VII. INTERPRETATIONS AND / OR RULINGS

Any interpretation of any aspect of these Rules and Regulations or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee will render a judgment in an effort to ensure that the competition proceeds in a manner consistent with the general spirit and goals of the competition. The Rules Committee will consist of the Competition Director, Head Judge, and a designated competition official.

VIII. SPORTSMANSHIP

All participants agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship throughout the competition with positive presentation upon entry and exit from the performance area as well as throughout the routine. The gym owner and coach of each team is responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents and other persons affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly. Severe cases of unsportsmanlike conduct are grounds for disqualification.

IX. FINALITY OF DECISIONS

By participating in this competition, each team agrees that the decisions by the judges will be final and results may ONLY be reviewed for clarification. Each team acknowledges the necessity for the judges to make prompt and fair decisions in this competition and each team therefore expressly waives any legal, equitable, administrative or procedural review of such decisions.

X. SCORES AND RANKINGS

Individual score sheets are for the exclusive use of each particular judge. Each judge has the responsibility and authority to review and submit his or her final scores and rankings prior to the final tally of the scores for all teams. Scores and rankings will be available only to coaches or captains at the conclusion of the competition.

XI. TOURNAMENT FACILITY

The tournament officials shall have the right to alter the time and location of the competition in the event changes become necessary due to inclement weather, facility problems, television production requirements, or any other situation deemed by the tournament officials to be essential to the successful execution of the championship.

XII. JUDGING CRITERIA

The judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the official score sheet. Each team will be evaluated on a 100 point system. Any deductions or violations will be taken off of the final total score. For more information on scoring, score sheet and judging criteria please see sample score sheet.

XIII. PENALTIES AND DISQUALIFICATIONS

The following penalties will apply for all cheerleading/dance divisions:

1. All Star teams should visit www.usasf.net for a complete list of rules, penalties and disqualifications.
2. Youth/ Parks and Recreation and School teams should visit www.nfhs.org for a complete list of rules, penalties and disqualifications.