



2026 NCHSAA

Cheerleading

Invitational

Rules & Regulations

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CODE OF CONDUCT

NCHSAA and Varsity Spirit encourage and support sportsmanship, integrity and fairness among participants and coaches in all facets of team practice and performance. We strive to uphold the highest standards and promote this to the best of our abilities and believe that coaches are instrumental in promoting and instilling this among their respective team members. To ensure the most positive experience for all attendees, NCHSAA and Varsity Spirit ask that all participants, coaches and spectators adhere to and know the Code of Conduct and Prohibited Items for this event.

1. Any questions or concerns that affect a team's performance or experience must be communicated by the coach to the Routine Review Table. The appropriate Official will then be called to discuss the situation with the coach.
2. Any routine review ruling by the appropriate Official is final.
3. Judges' rulings are final related to deductions, final team placements and legalities.
4. Participants, coaches, and spectators are prohibited from contacting the Judges during the competition.
5. Any unruly, aggressive, or belligerent behavior by participants, coaches or spectators toward any other attendee or Event Staff will result in a deduction, potential team disqualification, removal from the event and/or barred participation from future NCHSAA events.
6. Varsity Spirit reserves the right to remove any persons from a competition for unsafe or unsportsmanlike conduct.

EVENT ELIGIBILITY

NCHSAA and Varsity Spirit will require that all coaches, Athletic directors, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warm up area, backstage, coaches' box, or athlete areas at our competitions have required credentialing through NCHSAA and must provide coaching dragonfly number and photo ID at registration.

EVENT GUIDELINES

[Event Guidelines link to all topics below](#)

- General
- Music
- Interruption of Performance
- Competition Area
- Warm Up Room Policy
- Spotter Policy

EVENT POLICIES

[Event Policies Document](#)

NCHSAA SCHOOL DIVISIONS

All Junior Varsity Divisions – 9th Grade - 12th Grade

Junior Varsity teams must be the official Junior Varsity of the school they represent. Teams will only be allowed to compete in the Junior Varsity Division if they are the official Junior Varsity team. If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.

All Varsity Divisions – 9th Grade - 12th Grade

If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.

Game Day Divisions – 9th Grade - 12th Grade

Individuals are only allowed to compete in a performance routine division and a game day division for the same school/ program. If a Junior Varsity and Varsity combine/share athletes for a Game Day Division, they must compete in the Varsity divisions.

Mascots –

Teams may add up to 2 (two) mascots in their Game Day Routines. The mascot(s) must meet all the eligibility requirements as the athletes. The mascot(s) must be a student at the school. The mascot(s) must enter the floor with the team and remain on the floor for the entire routine or an out of bounds penalty will be assessed. The mascot(s) should be used to raise crowd energy and participation. The mascot(s) is not allowed to be involved in any stunts, tumbling, or skills with hip over head rotation and should position themselves away from skills being performed. The mascot(s) will not count towards the

total number nor gender of participants allowed in the division. Mascots in costume will not be allowed outside of the competition venues.

Junior Varsity Performance Divisions			
<i>Division</i>	<i>Female/Male</i>	<i># of athletes</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Small	Female	5-16	
Large	Female	17-30	
Coed	Female/Male	5-30	1+ Male
Non-Tumbling	Female/Male	5-30	Males Allowed

*Schools will compete as their high school is listed with the NCHSAA (1A – 8A), but split into two divisions:

D1 = 5A-8A schools

D2 = 1A-4A schools

Varsity Performance Divisions			
<i>Division</i>	<i>Female/Male</i>	<i># of athletes</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Small	Female	5-15	
Medium	Female	16-19	
Large	Female	20-23	
Super	Female	24-30	
Small Coed	Female/Male	5-20	1+ Male
Large Coed	Female/Male	21-30	5+ Males
Non-Tumbling Small	Female	5-15	
Non-Tumbling Medium	Female	16-19	
Non-Tumbling Large	Female	20-30	
Non-Tumbling Coed	Female/Male	5-30	1+ Male
Non-Building	Female/Male	5-30	Males Allowed

*Schools will compete as their high school is listed with the NCHSAA (1A – 8A), but split into two divisions:

D1 = 5A-8A schools

D2 = 1A-4A schools

Junior Varsity Game Day Divisions			
<i>Division</i>	<i>Female/Male</i>	<i># of athletes</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Small	Female/Male	5-16	Males Allowed
Large	Female/Male	17-30	Males Allowed
Non-Tumbling	Female/Male	5-30	Males Allowed

*Schools will compete as their high school is listed with the NCHSAA (1A – 8A), but split into two divisions:

D1 = 5A-8A schools

D2 = 1A-4A schools

Varsity Game Day Divisions			
<i>Division</i>	<i>Female/Male</i>	<i># of athletes</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Small	Female	5-15	
Medium	Female	16-19	
Large	Female	20-23	
Super	Female	24-30	
Small Coed	Female/Male	5-20	1+ Male
Large Coed	Female/Male	21-30	5+ Males
Non-Tumbling Small	Female	5-15	
Non-Tumbling Medium	Female	16-19	
Non-Tumbling Large	Female	20-30	
Non-Tumbling Coed	Female/Male	5-30	1+ Male
Non-Building	Female/Male	5-30	Males Allowed

*Schools will compete as their high school is listed with the NCHSAA (1A – 8A), but split into two divisions:

D1 = 5A-8A schools

D2 = 1A-4A schools

DIVISION GUIDELINES

Athletes may only perform up to 2 times if one routine is a performance routine and the other is a game day routine. If an athlete is performing 2 times, they must be representing the same program/school in both performances. Teams must compete in the same style Performance Routine and Game Day Routine i.e. Non-Tumbling or Non- Building must be the same for both. Example 1: An Athlete may compete with a team in both a performance routine and game day routine.

To create a competitive event, divisions with only 1 team will be combined based on the following: JV: Small and Large; Varsity: Small and Medium; Large and Super. We will NOT combine DI with DII.

ELIGIBILITY POLICY

1. All athletes must meet the eligibility requirements set forth by NCHSAA.
2. All athletes and coaches must be listed on the master eligibility list.
3. All members of the cheerleading squad must be current members of the official school spirit squads and must attend the school they are representing.
4. Teams may participate in more than one local or regional competition during the season.
5. All coaches must meet the requirements set forth by NCHSAA.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment is determined by the NCHSAA Classification for each school. [Schools - NCHSAA](#)

DI = 5A – 8A

DII = 1A - 4A

SCHOOL/PROGRAM REPRESENTATION

1. UNIFORMS

- a. All participant uniforms must cover the midriff when standing at attention. Sheer, mesh, fringe and other “see through” material is not a legal midriff covering. Does not apply to color guard that attends with the Pep Band.
- b. A traditional sideline uniform (that covers the midriff when standing at attention and has an element that is identifiable to your school – colors, logos, letters, mascot, etc.) should be worn in all divisions. Costuming is not allowed.
- c. Cheerleaders must wear athletic shoes.

2. MAKE-UP a. If worn, make-up should be appropriate for both the performance and age of the athletes.

3. HAIR

- a. Hair for all athletes must be secured off the face.
- b. Bows are not required. If worn, bows must:
 - Must be securely fastened and appropriate for the activity.
 - Be positioned in a manner to minimize risk for all participants.

All facets of a performance/routine, including choreography, music selection, uniforms and cheer words, should be appropriate and suitable for family viewing and listening. Examples of inappropriate choreography may include, but are not limited to, vulgar or suggestive movement appearing offensive or

sexual in content, displaying acts of violence, and/or relaying lewd or profane gestures. Music, words, or sound effects unsuitable for family listening which includes, but is not limited, to swear words and connotations of any type of sexual act or behavior, drugs, and/or violent acts or behavior. Removing improper language or words from a song and replacing with sound effects or other words may still constitute 'inappropriate.' Cheer words should promote school pride, honor, tradition, and sportsmanship. Cheers that are negative, insulting to other teams or the judges may reflect a lower score. Music, movements, or cheer words in which the appropriateness is questionable or with which uncertainty exists should be assumed by the coach to be inappropriate and removed as to not put their team in an unfortunate situation. If you have any questions, please email UCArules@varsity.com.

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

1. All introductions (entrances, chants, spellouts, etc.) are considered part of the routine and will be timed as part of the performance. Skills are not allowed during the team's entry to the floor or any time prior to starting the performance. EXCEPTION – See Game Day Below
2. All team breaks, rituals, and traditions need to take place prior to entering the mat.
3. Teams should not have choreographed movements to enter or exit the stage. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures. Example: hugs, handshakes, choreographed dances, rituals, etc.
4. Teams have 30 seconds from the team's introduction to start the routine and 30 seconds after routine completion to exit the performance area. If a team exceeds this time limit, a penalty of a .25-point deduction for 1-5 seconds or a .5-point deduction for 6 seconds and over will be assessed. Official entrance timing will begin when the first athlete touches the mat or performance area.
5. 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. Excessive celebration includes, but is not limited to, team huddles, alternates/coaches entering the competition floor, falling to the ground, dancing, head/hair swinging, split drops, inappropriate gestures, and/or other similar moves.
6. There should not be any organized or choreographed exits or other activities after the official end of the routine. ROUTINE

ROUTINE TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Timing will BEGIN with the first choreographed movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first. Timing will END with the last choreographed movement, voice, or note of music whichever comes last.
2. If a team exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed for each violation. One (1) point deduction for 1-5 seconds over, Two (2) point deduction for 6 and over. 6

3. Acknowledging the potential variance caused by human reaction speed and sound system time variations, judges will not issue a deduction until 3 seconds over the allowed time. If a routine is retimed as part of a review, the exact time will be used without the 3 second allowance listed above.

4. 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 allow for variations in sound equipment.

Performance Routines - Each performance routine presentation must include at least one cheer or sideline chant.

- Maximum Overall Time: 2:30 (150 Seconds)
- Maximum Music Portion: 1:45 (105 Seconds)

Game Day Routines - Each Game Day performance must consist of a Band Chant, Crowd Leading section, and Fight Song.

- Maximum Overall Time: 3:00 (180 Seconds)

For Game Day Routines, timing of the routine will NOT include the team spiriting, rallying, or individuals performing jumps, kicks, tumbling, or single-based lifts but will begin with the first group movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first. The entrance time limit of 30 seconds still applies for Game Day routines.

COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Participants must start in the competition area with at least one foot on the ground.
2. Teams may line up anywhere inside the competition area.
3. NCHSAA and Varsity Spirit-Competitions comply with the NFHS surface ruling that school-based programs may not compete on a spring floor.
4. Approximate floor size will be '54 feet wide by '42 feet deep (9 strips).
5. Any team member stepping outside or touching outside the performance area will cause the squad to receive a .5 penalty per occurrence. If a violation is assessed, the judges' decisions are final and will not be reviewed.
 - a. The white line is considered a warning mark.
 - b. A penalty will be assessed when any part of the seat/torso or any combination of two hands and/or feet are completely outside of the performance surface.
 - c. Out of bounds are called by line judges and decisions are final.
 - d. Once a team member takes the floor, they must remain on the floor until the end of the performance.

6. The center will be marked on all performance surfaces. Center markers will not be allowed. This includes but is not limited to stuffed animals, toys, banners, etc. Teams are prohibited from bringing any non-used props to the performance area.
7. Coaching staff, parents, fans and/or other members of the performing team entering the competition boundary before, during or after a performance is not allowed. The only people allowed on the performance floor are the competitors and competition personnel.
8. Signs or props may be safely placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area. Please see the deduction explanation sheet for additional Prop Restrictions. (See Game Day division rules for additional mascot prop guidelines)
 - a. Approved props include foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. Props should be used for crowd leading and appropriate for crowd response.
 - b. Props may not be thrown into the crowd.
 - c. Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline cheer/dance boxes used at games.
 - d. No air horns or artificial noise makers are allowed.
 - e. All equipment tips on flagpoles must be padded or taped.
 - f. All props must be able to fit through a standard size (36") single door.
 - g. Props may be discarded off the performance surface but not hit/banged on the floor outside the performance area.
 - h. Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to UCARules@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.

PERFORMANCE ROUTINE DIVISIONS

1. The judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the UCA performance routine score sheet.
2. Cheer will count for 30 points; Building Skills will count for 50 points and Overall will count for 20 points. Building and Overall score sheets only judge skills and choreography within the music portion of the routine.
3. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the final score. For more information on scoring, score sheet and judging criteria, please visit uca.varsity.com.

GAME DAY ROUTINE DIVISIONS

1. The performance will follow this order: Band Chant, Crowd Leading, Fight Song.

2. The judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the UCA Game Day score sheets. For detailed score sheets please visit [Score Sheets and Scoring Guidelines](#).

3. The use of crowd leading tools is recommended (All are not required).

- a. Approved props include foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. Props should be used for crowd leading and appropriate for crowd response.
- b. Props may not be thrown into the crowd.
- c. Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline cheer/dance boxes used at games.
- d. Air horns or artificial noise makers are not allowed.
- e. All equipment tips on flagpoles must be padded or taped.
- f. All props must be able to fit through a standard size (36") single door.
- g. Props may be discarded off the performance surface but not hit/banged on the floor outside the performance area.
- h. Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to UCARules@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.
- i. Mascots will only be allowed to use the approved props listed above. Any part of the mascot uniform that is used as a prop must have prior approval here: [UCA Legality Inquiry Form](#)

4. The incorporation of stunts/tumbling is required in the Crowd Leading and Fight Song sections if the division permits. If there are no skills (stunts and/or tumbling) performed, a score of 0 will be given for the skills categories.

5. Band Chant should have an emphasis on crowd appeal and practicality – No stunting or tumbling is permitted, jumps and kicks are allowed. Squads should focus on crowd engagement and visual appeal and use creative movements such as level changes and ripples.

6. Crowd Leading – At this event, teams must give time for the announcer to give squads a game scenario indicating an offense or defense situation following the Band Chant. Teams should show their definitive understanding of the situation with an offensive or defensive Sideline. Teams may not stunt until the sideline has been started by the athletes. After the Situational Sideline, teams will move into their Cheer which can include one reflective of a timeout, general sideline/spell-out or other cheer material that incites a response and encourages the crowd to yell along. Teams will be evaluated on their ability to lead the crowd, crowd effectiveness, proper use of motions/crowd leading tools and execution of stunts/tumbling relevant to a game day environment. No music is allowed during the crowd leading section.

7. Fight Song should represent the traditional Fight Song the school does at games. Incorporation is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts of stunts and/or tumbling. If the fight song repeats, the

incorporation will only be allowed both times if it is repeated exactly the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill (stunt or tumbling) until one of the following:

- a. The routine ends within the 3 consecutive 8 counts.
- b. Building skills must be stationary prior to the end of the 3rd 8-count and may remain stationary until the end of the routine.
- c. Dismounts following the completion of the routine will not be included for timing purposes. Any choreographed dismount will continue the timing of the routine. Example – Coed toe touch pop offs performed together, in unison would be considered choreographed.

8. Each section should have a beginning and end. Note: Spirited crowd leading interaction between each section is encouraged to continue the game day feel. Stunts are not allowed as a transition before/between sections, including the team's entry to the floor and any time before starting the performance. Tumbling and single-based lifts are allowed anytime during the performance except during the Band Chant and still must be within the 3 8-count limit in Fight Song.

9. Additional Skill Restrictions

- Basket and waist level tosses are NOT allowed. Examples of toss skills allowed are quick toss stunts, toss coed skill entries, and single-based toss toe touches.
- Inversions are NOT allowed.
- Twisting Released Dismounts are NOT allowed.
- Twisting Released Stunt Transitions are NOT allowed.
- Single leg stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
- Running Tumbling is NOT allowed.
- Single standing tumbling is allowed and cannot be connected. A single tumbling skill can only be connected to a single jump. The only standing tumbling skills that are allowed include back handspring, back tuck, forward roll, front walkover, cartwheel, standing aerial, jump back handspring, and jump tuck.

10. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the raw score. For more information on scoring, score sheets and judging criteria, please visit uca.varsity.com.

11. For Game Day routines, voice-overs and words may not be recorded or overlayed on the music tracks at all. Any voices captured in the original recording are allowed.

2026-2027 LEGALITY AND ADDITIONAL DIVISION SKILL RESTRICTIONS

Coaches are responsible for knowing the rules set forth for Varsity Spirit events. Rules subject to change by USA Cheer and NFHS. Go to usacheer.org and <https://nfhs.org/activities-sports/spirit/> for the most updated rules and rules books.

- Non-Tumbling Divisions will restrict any hip over head rotation except for entries and exits to stunts/pyramids. Back handspring entries WILL NOT be allowed in the Non-Tumbling Divisions.
- Non-Building Divisions will restrict any athlete from providing support to another athlete off the performing surface.

LEGALITY REVIEW (PRE-EVENT)

A deduction will be given for EACH safety/general competition rule violation. Athlete and building deductions can be found on the UCA scoring page [Competition Rules & Scoring | Universal Cheerleaders Association \(varsity.com\)](https://varsity.com). The scoring review process for UCA Regional Events and NHSCC can be found here: UCA AccuScore Process. Each event is a new event, and reference to previous events within the season will not be allowed during the review of legality of skills. Performing the skill at a prior event or in a prior round of competition does not ensure that a skill is legal nor that it would have warranted a legality warning.

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR PARTNER STUNTS, PYRAMIDS AND TOSSES

Universal Cheerleaders Association offers a service to help teams with legality and safety questions. Teams will be able to submit skills throughout the year to receive a legality or safety response. This service will help teams get a response to use in situations where the skill may be in question.

To submit a video:

1. All reviews must be submitted through [UCA Legality Inquiry Form \(jotform.com\)](https://jotform.com)
2. The skill in question must be recorded by the team at practice. We are unable to accept videos of performances, competitions, or of other teams.
3. All submissions must include the coach, team, and division in the entry information.
4. The recording will be reviewed as if every person in the video is included in the skill. This would include additional spotters.
5. Videos are limited to 30 seconds and must be able to be viewed upright without rotating.
6. All videos will receive either a “legal” or “illegal” response. If the video receives an “illegal” response, the entire video will not be reviewed but stopped at the point that the video was illegal. *If the video is inconclusive, you will receive a response as to why we were unable to make a judgement on the video. It is up to you as a coach to resubmit the video to be re-reviewed.

7. Please note: Only submitting the skill will make the skill eligible for a warning. UCA can only guarantee this process will be accepted at UCA-branded events. This would not include other Varsity-branded and state association events.

8. Videos via text message or facetime will not be reviewed. If you know that your video does not meet all the requirements above, please refilm/resubmit the video. Only videos that meet the above requirements will be reviewed.

9. Inquiries need to be submitted 2 weeks before your team's performance to guarantee a response.

10. Video submissions will only be accepted by the official coach of the team.

If you have any questions or require additional assistance, please email UCARules@varsity.com. Due to volume, please allow up to 5 business days to get back to you. Include your team's name, your name, division, and a contact phone number.

SCORES AND RANKINGS

1. 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 at the conclusion of the competition. Judges' decisions are final.

2. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the raw score. For more information on scoring, score sheet and judging criteria, please visit uca.varsity.com.

3. Please send any scoring questions to UCAscoring@varsity.com at the conclusion of the event.

4. TIE BREAK POLICY – The team with the lessor deductions will be awarded the higher place. If the deductions remain equal, the team with the highest score on the Cheer Score Sheet (performance divisions), Crowd Leading (Game Day Division) will be awarded the higher place.

5. By participating in the NCHSAA Cheerleading Invitational event, teams give their consent for performances and scores to be made public.

7. Varsity TV publishes and makes available all competition routine videos from live-streamed events to recognize the hard work and talent of the athletes competing, and ultimately, to serve and grow the cheerleading and dance community. Due to the sheer number of teams and routines published, Varsity Spirit is unable to accommodate requests for removal.

VIDEO MEDIA POLICY

No commercial recording (audio or visual) or commercial live streaming is allowed in the event venue or other event related venues (including, but not limited to, hotels and restaurants) or on the grounds of any such venues (collectively, "Event Locations"). In the event a team authorizes the commercial recording or streaming in any Event Location, the team will be automatically disqualified. In addition, the personal, noncommercial use of live streaming apps (such as Periscope, Facebook Live, etc.) to capture all or any part of a performance during the event is not permitted. By attending/purchasing admission to the event, each attendee grants permission to NCHSAA and Varsity Spirit and its affiliates, designees, agents, licensees, and invitees to use the image, likeness, actions and statements of the attendee in any live or recorded audio, video, film, or photographic display or other transmission, exhibition, publication, or reproduction made of, or at, the event in any medium, whether now known or hereafter created, or context for any purpose, including commercial or promotional purposes, without further authorization or compensation.

LOGO USAGE

Teams will not be allowed to use the Varsity Spirit logo or the NCHSAA logo including banners, rings, bows, t-shirts, etc. without prior approval from the appropriate office.

NCHSAA CHEERLEADING INVITATIONAL SPECIFIC RULES & REGULATIONS

TOURNAMENT FACILITY

1. The competition is scheduled to be held at the [Cabarrus Arena & Events Center](#)
2. The competition officials shall have the right to alter the time and location of the competition in the event changes because necessary due to inclement weather, facility problems, television production requirements, or any other situation deemed by the officials to be essential to the successful execution of the event.

DIVISION WINNER AWARDS

All teams that win their division will receive a trophy, medals, and a banner. Teams will additionally receive a trophy 2nd and 3rd place.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Cheersounds Spirit Award: NCHSAA will award (8) \$500 scholarships.

Scholarship opens October 1, 2026

Scholarship deadline is November 6, 2026

Information can be found at: [NCHSAA/Cheersounds Spirit Scholars Award Overview](#)

RULES AND REGULATIONS AGREEMENT

By accepting the Terms & Conditions as the authorized person from my program I agree and acknowledge that:

- i. I am the sponsor/director of the team
- ii. I have read and understand the foregoing,
- iii. I will be solely responsible for communicating the foregoing to all coaches/directors in my program that will coaching and directing teams at the NCHSAA State Cheerleading Invitational,
- iv. I will ensure that my teams will comply with all rules and regulations at all times, and
- v. my team will support the results of the competition, as I am a role model for my programs.

VIOLATIONS

Any team in violation of these Rules and Regulations or any of the above-mentioned guidelines will be assessed a one (1) point general deduction. This deduction does not apply to deduction or violations within the point deduction system or already assigned a lower/higher point value.