



PEP BAND

RULES & REGULATIONS

2025-2026



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All updates and changes displayed in RED font

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CODE OF CONDUCT

Varsity Spirit encourages and supports sportsmanship, integrity and fairness among participants and coaches/owners/directors 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, Varsity Spirit asks that all participants, coaches, gym owners, directors and spectators adhere to and know the Code of Conduct and Prohibited Items for all Regional, Virtual, and Championships events.

To review the entire policy please click here: [Varsity Spirit - Safety](#)

EVENT ELIGIBILITY

Varsity Spirit will require that all coaches, directors, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warm up area, backstage, coaches' box, or athlete areas at our competitions have required credentialing, background check, and safeguarding as required by each event.

To review the entire eligibility policy please click here: [Varsity Spirit - Event Eligibility](#)

EVENT GUIDELINES

The coach/director of each team is responsible for understanding and following the Event Guidelines. Event Guidelines include:

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

To review additional information, click here: [Varsity Spirit - Event Guidelines](#)

EVENT POLICIES

All attendees are expected to follow event policies to ensure a respectable and secure environment.

To review the event policies, click here: [Varsity Spirit - Event Policies](#)

VPA DIVISION

All Junior High Divisions – 9th Grade and Below

Junior High Divisions WILL be allowed 9th grade participants if (1) they attend a school that is under the administrative supervision of the same school board as the junior high school that they are representing AND (2) a minority of the team are 9th graders. Junior High teams with a majority of 9th grader participants must compete in the Varsity Division.

All Varsity Divisions – 7th Grade - 12th Grade

7th and 8th grade participants will be allowed to participate on a Varsity team if the school they attend is under the direct administrative supervision of the same school board as the Varsity team they are representing.

Mascots

Teams may add up to 2 (two) mascots in their Game Day and/or Spirit Program Routines. The mascot(s) must meet all the eligibility requirements as the athletes. The mascot(s) must be a student of 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 overhead 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.

Mascot participants are limited to performing in a maximum of 3 divisions per individual within an event.

DIVISION GUIDELINES

1. Junior High and Varsity divisions will be split.
2. A minimum of five (5) performers
3. Individual athletes must be registered as the same performer type (cheer, dance or band) throughout the championship weekend or regional event.
4. Athletes may only perform up to 2 times if one routine is a performance routine and one routine is a Spirit Program routine. If an athlete is performing 2 times, they must be representing the same program/school in all performances.

NOTE: VPA will split divisions in the best interest of providing a competitive environment. If/when a division has 11 or more teams, additional splits may be offered. If/when a division has less than three teams, they may be combined into the same age/size division.

VPA ELIGIBILITY POLICY

1. All members of the team must be current members of the official school and must attend the school they are representing.
 - a. Exception 1: Single-gender schools may use athletes from affiliated schools if they are official members of the band. These teams must support the school(s) athletics/endeavors throughout the year, and not solely combined for competition purposes.
2. Pep Band members are allowed to play for multiple performances.
3. Each school may not have more than one team compete in one single division.
4. Please visit [Pep Band Regional Competitions - Performing Arts](#) for a complete listing of divisions for regional competitions as well as one of the Varsity Spirit National Championships.
5. If a pep band chooses to attend a competition, the pep band must register for the event and complete a release waiver for each participant. Information Found [HERE](#).
6. The pep band must be current members of the **official band program for the school/program they are representing.**
7. The pep band must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing your school colors, letters, mascot, etc.).
8. If a school district or state association has more or less restrictions, teams will be required to follow the more restrictive set of rules.
 - a. Example 1 – State A allows 7th grade students to participate on Varsity. Bands from State A will still be required to follow the 8th - 12th grade restrictions.
 - b. Example 2 – State B does not allow 9th grade or below participation. Bands from State B would then need to follow their State Restrictions.

- c. Example 3 – A Junior High school only has grades 7th- 9th grade. That team would only be allowed to utilize athletes from their school. They would not be allowed pull up or down any other athletes.
9. Pep Bands may participate in more than one local or regional competition during the season.
10. The team should display an overall behavior conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school/organization.
11. All participants and coaches must be registered and listed on the Event Roster to be submitted at check in for each event. Roster Forms can be found here - [Regional Competition Forms & FAQs](#).
12. Schools participating in cooperative sports agreement must have written permission from their single governing school board and send in an official request on school board letterhead to PerformingArts@varsity.com or approval to the Rules Committee to compete as one team by **October 1, 2025**.
 - a. Cooperative teams are limited to combining from no more than 2 (two) schools.
 - b. Both schools must be in one school district or governed by one school board.
 - c. Cooperative teams must support the school(s) athletics/ endeavors throughout the year, and not solely combined for competition purposes.
 - d. Any team approved must use the combined total enrollment for both schools when submitting the enrollment letter for DI/DII classification.
 - e. If approved, the team must compete as one for the entire competitive event season.
13. Students who are subject to an open criminal proceeding relating to any offense involving sexual misconduct or violence, who have a criminal conviction for any offense involving sexual misconduct or violence, or whose names are listed on temporary or permanent ineligible lists maintained by USA Cheer are prohibited from participating in any Varsity Spirit competition.

ENROLLMENT

All teams must submit an official school enrollment letter to declare DI/DII division status. School enrollment is defined as all students registered as athletically eligible students at the school.

1. School enrollment includes all students registered for attendance at the school for the school the team represents.
2. The total enrollment must also include all virtual, co-curricular, and/or home school students if they are eligible for athletics at the school.
3. Single gender schools who use athletes from other schools will use the total enrollment of the school the team is representing for DI/DII classification. Teams also need to supply enrollment numbers from each affiliated school.
4. Cooperative teams must include total enrollment from both schools.
5. Enrollment letters must include the number of students enrolled at the school as of October 1, 2025, and be submitted no later than October 31, 2025
6. The official enrollment letter must come from the school's principal or athletic director on official school letterhead and include a copy of the registrar's/attendance office documentation of enrollment by grade/student type.

UNIFORM GUIDELINES

1. The Pep Band must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing your school colors, letters, mascot, etc.) is required for all divisions.
2. 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. Does not apply to color guard.

PERFORMANCE ROUTINE GUIDELINES

1. **Props/Flags/Batons:**
 - a. **Pep Bands and Color Guards may use props.**

- b. Approved props are: foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, batons, flags/flyovers and/or megaphones.
 - c. Props should be used for their intended purposes to enhance crowd leading and to guide appropriate crowd responses.
 - d. Props cannot bear the weight of the performer at any point throughout the routine.
 - e. All equipment tips on flagpoles and batons must be padded or taped.
 - f. Props may not be thrown into the crowd.
 - g. Props may be discarded off the performance surface but not hit/banged on the floor anywhere within the performance area.
 - h. Swing flags are restricted to spins only.
 - i. Flag tosses are not permitted.
 - j. Baton tosses are limited to 3 revolutions and must remain central on the body.
 - Tosses can not exceed the height of the performer's extended arm position.
 - k. Bayonets, sabers, knives, rifles or fire batons are not permitted.
 - l. Signs or props may be safely placed or dropped around the competition area by a team member.
 - m. Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to PerformingArts@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.
 - n. Teams are prohibited from bringing any non-used props to the performance area.
2. Instruments:
- a. ONLY Handheld or harnessed instruments allowed by the pep band.
 - b. Pep Bands/Color Guard will be responsible for transportation of all equipment to and from the event.
3. The use of pre-recorded tracks is not prohibited. However, it is recommended that the Pep Band members provide the music live for the routine.

ENTRANCES & EXITS

- 1. All athletes and performers have 30 seconds from the team's introduction to take the floor and begin the routine. The 30 second entrance time is NOT included in the 5 minutes total time limit. If a team exceeds the 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.
- 2. Please, see event guidelines for additional restrictions. (<https://tinyurl.com/Varsity-Event-Guidelines>)

TIME LIMITATIONS

- 1. The first note of music or the first choreographed movement by a member of the band will start the timing of the performance.
- 2. If a team exceeds the 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.
- 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.
- 5. Total allotted time is 6:00 minutes to stage the performance and exit the performance area.
- 6. Within the Pep Band Division, bands can perform their segments in any order.
- 7. Maximum Performance Time: 5:00 minutes (300 Seconds)
- 8. Allotted Time:
 - a. Introduction: less than or equal to 30 seconds
 - b. Performance: up to 5:00 minutes

- c. Performance exit: less than or equal to 30 seconds
- d. Total Allotted Time: 6:00 minutes

COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Approximate floor size will be dependent on floor provided at select Varsity Spirit Events
 - a. **Regional Cheer Events – 9 panel cheer mat set up (54' X 42')**
 - b. **Regional Dance Events – marley markers on gym floor OR marley floor at approved venues (53.5' X 53.5')**
 - c. **Regional combined cheer/dance Events --** the performance surface will be split 1/2 mat (approx.. 25 feet deep and 42 feet wide - 4 strips) and 1/2 Marley (approx. 25 feet deep and 53.5 feet wide for Dance).
***Note:** Some facilities may be adjusted based on the host location and logistics, and will be confirmed no less than two week prior to the event.*
2. Teams should not have choreographed movements to enter the stage. Teams have 30 seconds from the team's introduction to take the floor and start the routine. If a team exceeds the 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.
3. Choreography and crowdleading elements are encouraged.
4. Pep Band and/or Color Guard may utilize the entire performance area for their routine.
5. 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.

PEP BAND PERFORMANCE ROUTINE FORMAT

1. Pep Band Performance Divisions will be offered at select Varsity Spirit events.
 - a. All music must conform to the Varsity Spirit Rules and Regulations Music Guidelines. ([HERE](#))
2. Pep Bands must play a minimum of 3 selections:
 - a. 1 (one) selection must be school theme related
 - i. Examples include: traditional fight songs, spell-outs, chants using school colors/letters, cadences with school themed vocals.
 - b. The other 2 (two) or more selections can be any selection of the ensemble's choosing as long as it conforms to the Varsity Spirit Rules and Regulations Music Guidelines.
3. Pep Bands may play more than 3 selections and must stay within their maximum performance time of 5:00 minutes (300 seconds).
4. Pep Band/Color Guard members may not be involved in any stunts, tumbling, or skills with hip overhead rotation.
5. Teams may not use Disney themes, nor may they have costumes that resemble a Disney character at any of the Walt Disney World ® Championship events based in Orlando, FL. However, Disney music is acceptable if it follows the music guidelines.

VIRTUAL COMPETITION GUIDELINES

1. All videos must be recorded in a single take. Edited footage will not be accepted. Footage may not be edited to add in the template, introduction card, program logo, etc. Editing the template or not including the template will result in a 1-point deduction.
2. Filming Guidelines — We've created a step-by-step PDF guide, [HERE](#) with filming requirements and tips.
3. To upload a performance video, you must create a Varsity TV account. The account does **not** need to have an active subscription in order to upload a video. However, to view the videos on the event day, you need an active Varsity TV subscription. If you have questions about your Varsity TV account, [click here](#).

4. All routines will be judged with sound and available for Varsity TV subscriber viewing with sound for 48 hours once the event goes live. After 48 hours, the routines will be available without sound for Varsity TV subscribers. After 5 days, routines will be available free of charge without sound for the duration of the competition season.
5. Only music capture incidentally will be permitted. No music can be edited into the video. Teams who do edit music into the video will receive a 2-point penalty.

VIOLATIONS

Any team in violation of these Pep Band Event Guidelines 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.

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 or captains at the conclusion of the competition. Judges' decisions are final.
2. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the final score. For more information on scoring, score sheet and judging criteria, please visit [Varsity - Performing Arts Website](#).
3. REGIONAL COMPETITION TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will not be broken at Regional Competitions.
4. CHAMPIONSHIP TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will only be broken for **FIRST PLACE** in the **FINAL ROUND** of competition. The team with the highest SOUNDS score will be awarded first place. If the SOUNDS score remains equal, the tie will not be broken, and both teams will be awarded first place.
5. By participating in a Varsity event, teams give their consent for performances and scores to be made public.
6. 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, dance, and band community. Due to the sheer number of teams and routines published, Varsity Spirit is unable to accommodate requests for removal.

PEP BAND EVENT GUIDELINES AGREEMENT

By accepting the Terms and 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 Competition, (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. I have read and reviewed both these specific Event Guidelines and the Varsity Spirit Rules and Regulations.

These Event Guidelines are the exclusive property of Varsity Spirit and may not be reproduced, in part or in whole, for events not sponsored and approved by Varsity Spirit.