



2026-2027 NSSC SPIRIT PROGRAM GAME DAY DIVISION GUIDELINES

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*All updates and changes displayed in **RED** font*

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Spirit Program Game Day Overview

The Spirit Program Game Day Divisions emphasize the collaboration and cohesion of a school's cheer, dance, and/or band spirit groups in an exciting Game Day format that fosters school pride while showcasing the school's traditions in an entertaining and crowd effective performance.

- **Fight Song**
 - The fight song section should demonstrate a school's traditional Fight Song that a team performs at games and pep rallies. Teams should incorporate crowd effective elements and choreography that enhances the overall effect.
 - Teams that do not have an official school Fight Song may use fight song music from an approved provider or use a second selection of band chant music. Music guidelines are available at varsity.com/music.
- **Crowd Leading (Sideline Chant)**
 - The Crowd Leading section should incite and encourage crowd engagement by using traditional sideline material with repetitive, easy to follow words.
 - **Teams should perform a sideline chant appropriate for a specific game situation: offense, defense, or general.**
 - Examples:
 - Defense XX, Defense XX...
 - L-I-O-N-S, Let's Go Lions, L-I-O-N-S, Let's Go Lions
 - Blue X Gold, Let's Go Lions
 - If performing with a band: The pep band should accompany and emphasize the effort by providing grooves, cadences and or tags that the cheer/dance team and crowd could easily yell along with, enhancing crowd interaction.
- **Timeout/Tradition**
 - The timeout/tradition section should exhibit an interactive and entertaining performance similar to what spirit teams might collaboratively perform during halftime, an extended timeout, or a pep rally. This is the best time to showcase spirit program cohesiveness and unison while demonstrating energy, leadership, visual appeal, and connection to the crowd.

Spirit Program Game Day Divisions

NSSC Spirit Program Game Day:

- **Spirit Program Divisions – Varsity D I & Varsity D II**
 - Spirit Program (Cheer & Dance)
 - Spirit Program Cheer LIVE (Cheer & Band)
 - Spirit Program Dance LIVE (Dance & Band)
 - Spirit Program LIVE (Cheer, Dance & Band)
- Junior High and Varsity divisions will be split.
- Junior Varsity teams can combine with the Varsity for Spirit Program Game Day/LIVE Divisions.
- A minimum of five (5) athletes must represent each performance group (cheer, dance, &/or band/color guard).
 - Overall minimum of 10 athletes/performers
 - **Individual athletes must be registered as the same performer type (cheer, dance or band) throughout the championship weekend.**
- A maximum of 75 athletes/performers are allowed to represent the spirit program.

- Spirit Program divisions will be split into Small and Large at NSSC Championships.
 - DII: Small is up to 35 athletes/performers; Large is 36-75 athletes/performers
 - DI: Small is up to 39 athletes/performers; Large is 40-75 athletes/performers
 - Numbers subject to change based on registrations to provide
- Up to two (2) Mascots are allowed and are **not** included in the total participant number.
- Spirit Program Game Day size division splits for NSSC - subject to change based on registrations:
 - * DII Small Spirit Program up to 34 athletes; DII Large Spirit Program 35-75 athletes.
 - * DI Small Spirit Program up to 39 athletes; DI Large Spirit Program 40-75 athletes.

NOTE: UCA and UDA 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. NSSC Division splits will be confirmed approximately 2 weeks prior to the event. Splits into Small and Large will be made in the best interest of providing the most even split among the two groups.

General Rules and Time Limitations

Spirit Program General Rules

- Each section should have a beginning and end. Note: Spirited crowd leading interaction and/or the continuation of a groove/cadence/tag between each section is encouraged to continue the game day feel.
- In Spirit Program divisions, voice-overs and words may not be recorded or overlaid on the music tracks at all. Any voices captured in the original recording are allowed.
- All athletes must compete as their registered school spirit squad member throughout the NSSC weekend. For example: Cheer athletes must compete as cheer athletes all weekend.
- Teams must follow all Varsity Spirit Rules & Regulations and Event Guidelines.

Spirit Program Game Day Props:

- Approved props for all spirit program performers are: foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. Props should be used for their intended purposes to enhance crowd leading and to guide appropriate crowd responses.
- Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline boxes and band platforms.
- Flyovers are allowed but cannot be done over any technical cheer or dance skills.
- Swing flags are restricted to spins only.
- Flag tosses are not permitted.
- Bayonets, sabers, knives, rifles or fire batons are not permitted.
- All equipment tips on flagpoles must be padded or taped.

NOTE: These prop rules differ from UDA Dance and UCA Cheer Game Day. See the UDA or UCA Game Day sections in the brand Rules and Regulations for specific prop guidelines.

Time Limitations

Time Limitations

- Total time limit for divisions with 2 spirit groups is 3:00 minutes.
 - Spirit Program (Cheer & Dance)
 - Spirit Program Cheer LIVE (Cheer & Band)

- Spirit Program Dance LIVE (Dance & Band)
- Total time limit for the division with 3 spirit groups is 4:00 minutes.
 - Spirit Program LIVE (Cheer, Dance & Band)
- Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music— whichever comes first.
- 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 4 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.

Skill Restrictions

Cheer Athlete Skill Restrictions

- Basket and waist level tosses are NOT allowed. Examples of toss skills allowed are quick toss stunts, toss coed skills, and toss toe touches.
- Inversions are NOT allowed.
 - **Exception: Partner cartwheels on thighs starting and ending on the performance surface are allowed. The skill must immediately pass through inverted and may not be held static.**
- 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 skill standing tumbling is allowed and cannot be connected to other tumbling skills. 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.

NOTE: These building skill restrictions apply when cheer athletes stunt with only cheer athletes.

Dance Athlete Skill Restrictions (same as current UDA Dance Game Day Divisions)

- Game Day Routine Safety: Teams competing in the Game Day divisions must follow all the routine safety rules and regulations at any regional or NDTC event.

NOTE: All lift skill restrictions apply when dance athletes lift only dance athletes.

NEW IN 2026: Skills allowed by Cheer and Dance Athletes Together

- Single-based show and go lift. Example: partner straddle lift
- Shoulder sit.
- Partner cartwheel on thighs starting and ending on the performance surface. The skill must immediately pass through inverted and may not be held static.
- Double-based thigh stand (with or without spotter).
- Connected skills between a legal dance a lift and legal cheer stunt. Example: A shoulder sit by dance athletes can connect to a cheer liberty hitch to form a pyramid structure.

Band Performer Restrictions

- The Pep Band/Color Guard must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing school.).
- Pep Band/Color Guard instrument/equipment rules:
 - ONLY Handheld or harnessed instruments allowed by the pep band.

- Pep Bands/Color Guard will be responsible for transportation of all equipment to and from the event.
- Baton tosses are limited to 3 revolutions and must remain central on the body. Baton tips must be padded/taped.
- Pep Band/Color Guard members may not be involved in any stunts, tumbling, or skills with hip overhead rotation. Members should position themselves a safe distance away from skills being performed.
- 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.

Mascot(s) Restrictions

- Teams may add up to 2 (two) mascots in their Spirit Program routine. The mascot(s) should be used to raise crowd energy and participation.
- The mascot(s) must meet all the eligibility requirements as the athletes.
- The mascot(s) will not count towards the total number nor gender of participants allowed in the division.
- The mascot(s) must enter the floor with the team and remain in the performance area for the entire routine.
- 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.
- Mascots will only be allowed to use the approved props listed above for cheer and dance. Any part of the mascot uniform that is used as a prop must have prior approval here: [UCA Legality Inquiry Form](#)

Performance Area

- The provided performance surface is based on the division type.
 - For SP C/D and SP C/D/B – The performance surface will be laid out as 4 horizontal cheer panels in the back and ½ regular marley floor in front. Cheer mats may be lengthened to about the width of the marley floor.
 - For SP C/B – The performance surface will be 9 panel mats set up the same as Cheer Game Day.
 - For SP D/B – The Performance surface will be either 10 panel marley floor or a marley marker on gym floor the same as Dance Game Day.
- Cheer, Dance, Pep Band and/or Color Guard may stand or perform on either surface and must stay within the performance area.
- All cheer skills and dance skills must be performed on the appropriate legal surface for the skill being performed. Athletes must follow the specific NFHS and UCA/UDA Safety Rules and Regulations for the respective cheer, dance or band team for which they represent.
- Once athletes and performers take the floor, they must remain in the performance area until the end of the performance.
- **Regional UCA and UDA events offering Spirit Program divisions will confirm flooring specifics about 2 weeks prior to the event.**

Scoring and Judging

The Spirit Program score sheet emphasizes school spirit, crowd engagement, and collaboration across all members throughout the performance.

- The Spirit Program performance must be in the following order:
 - Fight Song
 - Sideline Chant
 - Timeout Tradition
- Score Sheet criteria – 100 Points Total Possible
 - Fight Song
 - Sights – 10 Points
 - Content: Visual appeal and crowd coverage
 - Execution: Synchronization, spacing, timing, collaboration/uniformity between participants, technique of skills and musical elements
 - Sounds – 10 Points
 - Content: Collaboration of musical and callback elements
 - Execution: Voice, pace, flow, musicality, technique
 - Crowd Engagement – 10 Points
 - Content: Material that encourages a crowd response
 - Execution: Ability and genuine energy to lead the crowd; Appropriate use of props/instruments
 - Sideline Chant
 - Sights – 10 Points
 - Content: Visual appeal and crowd coverage
 - Execution: Synchronization, spacing, timing, collaboration/uniformity between participants, technique of skills and musical elements
 - Sounds – 10 Points
 - Content: Material relevant to the game day environment
 - Execution: Voice, pace, flow, technique, rhythm
 - Crowd Engagement – 10 Points
 - Content: Material that encourages a crowd response
 - Execution: Ability and genuine energy to lead the crowd; Appropriate use of props/instruments
 - Timeout/Tradition
 - Sights – 10 Points
 - Content: Visual appeal and crowd coverage
 - Execution: Synchronization, spacing, timing, collaboration/uniformity between participants, technique of skills and musical elements
 - Sounds – 10 Points
 - Content: Collaboration of musical and callback elements
 - Execution: Voice, pace, flow, musicality, technique
 - Crowd Engagement – 10 Points
 - Content: Material that encourages a crowd response

- Execution: Ability and genuine energy to lead the crowd; Appropriate use of props/instruments
- Overall Impression/Collaboration of Spirit Program – 10 Points
 - Genuine school spirit and fun energy
 - Consistency and uniformity of program
 - Entertainment value

National School Spirit Championships Qualification

How to Qualify for the Spirit Program Division at the 2027 NSSC

- Cheer and Dance teams: 75% of the qualifying team must participate in the Varsity Spirit/NFHS Squad Credentialing Program. Teams can be credentialed at a VS camp or through the credentialing program to be eligible to compete.
- Bands will not need to qualify for the National School Band Championship.