UCA

2026-2027

RULES & REGULATIONS

SCHOOL AND RECREATIONAL

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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

UCA SCHOOL DIVISIONS

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 as a Junior Varsity.

All Junior Varsity Divisions – 7th Grade -12th Grade

Junior Varsity Divisions WILL be allowed 7th and 8th grade participants if they attend a school that is under the administrative supervision of the same school board as the high school that they are representing. Junior Varsity teams must be the official Junior Varsity of the school they represent. 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.

All Varsity Divisions – 8th Grade - 12th Grade

7th grade and below participants will NOT be allowed on a Varsity team. 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. 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.

Game Day/Spirit Program Divisions

Individuals are only allowed to compete in a performance routine division, a game day division, and/or a Spirit Program division for the same team. If a Junior Varsity and Varsity combine for a Game Day or Spirit Program Division, they must compete in the Varsity Division and follow Varsity division guidelines. If combined, no separate Junior Varsity Game Day team may compete from that school.

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 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.

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

DIVISION GUIDELINES

1. Athletes may only perform up to 3 times if one routine is a Performance routine, one routine is a Game Day routine, and one routine is a Spirit Program routine. If an athlete is performing 3 times, they must be representing the same team in all performances.
   a. *Example*: An athlete may compete with a VA team in a VA Performance routine, a VA Game Day routine, and a VA Spirit Program routine.
   b. *Example*: An athlete may compete with a JV team in a JV Performance routine and a JV Game Day routine.
   c. *Example*: An athlete may compete with a JR team in a JR Performance routine, a JR Game Day routine, and a JR Spirit Program routine.
   d. *Example*: An athlete may compete with a Rec team in a Performance routine and Game Day routine for that Rec team.
   e. An athlete MAY NOT compete in a VA Performance routine and a JV Game Day routine.
   f. An athlete MAY NOT compete with a JR team and with a JV or VA team for any reason.

   g. An athlete MAY NOT compete with a Rec team and a school team at the same competition **or** across NSSC weekends.
2. No athlete may compete on another team except for the following circumstances:
   a. If a school has both JV and VA Performance routines, those athletes may combine to compete in one VA Game Day division, including Spirit Program Game Day. If combined, no separate JV Game Day team may compete from that school. All athletes must meet VA age requirements (8th-12th grades).
   b. If an affiliated rec program has a 14Y Performance routine and a 12Y and/or a 10Y Performance routine, the athletes from those teams may combine for one 14Y Game Day routine.
   c. An affiliated rec 12-18 performance team athletes may only compete a second performance in the 12-18 Game Day division for the same team.
3. UCA/UDA strongly recommends that you have alternates (not a member of another competing team at the same event), who are prepared to substitute in the event of injury, probation, etc. No cheerleader/dancer may represent more than one team, even in the event of injury or emergency. Once a team checks into a regional event, the team will not be allowed to change divisions.
4. 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.
5. Each school and rec program may not have more than one team compete in one single division.
6. Regional Event – Division Guidelines: Universal Cheerleaders Association will SPLIT divisions in the best interest of providing a competitive environment.
   a. When/If a division has 11 or more teams, additional splits may be offered.
   b. When/If a division has 11 or more teams, a split will only be offered if there is an additional split allowed by the 2026-2027 UCA Division offerings.
   c. When/If a division has less than 3 teams, teams may be combined into the same age/size/type division.
   d. Please visit uca.varsity.com for a complete listing of divisions for regional competitions as well as the National High School Cheerleading Championship. 26-27 UCA School Divisions

ELIGIBILITY POLICY

1. All members of the cheerleading team must be current members of the official school spirit squads and must attend the school they are representing.
   a. *Exception 1*: Single-gender schools may use athletes from co-operative schools if they are official members of the squad. These teams must support the school(s) athletics/ endeavors throughout the year and not solely combine for competition purposes.
   b. *Exception 2*: A 7th or 8th grade athlete does not have to attend high school but must be a member of the official spirit squad throughout the season.
   c. *Exception 3*: A 9th grade athlete competing on a Junior High team does not have to attend the school they are representing but must be a member of the official team throughout the season.
   d. Athletes may not represent one team for sideline cheer and perform with another team for competition only purposes.
   e. Seniors who graduate in the fall would be eligible to compete at NHSCC if the school still considers the athlete an official member of the team during the championship. Documentation must be provided by the school administration. Athletes may not be enrolled in any other school at the time of the championship.
2. 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 Teams. Teams from State A will still be required to follow the 8th - 12th grade restrictions for Varsity Teams. These teams are NOT allowed to move into Junior Varsity Division.
b. *Example 2* – State B does not allow 9th grade or below participation on Varsity Sports. Teams from State B would then need to follow their State Restrictions.

3. Individuals are NOT permitted to compete on **two different School/Rec Teams** at the same event or across DI and DII NSSC weekends. They are permitted on both a School Team and an All Star Team at the same event.
4. 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.
5. Teams may participate in more than one local or regional competition during the season.
6. All athletes 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 at UCA Competition Required Forms under Regional Competition Forms & FAQs.
7. 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 NHSCC@varsity.com for approval to the Rules Committee to compete as one team by **October 1, 2026**.
   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. If each school has its own official spirit squad, the two schools would not be allowed to combine athletes from both teams onto one combined competition team.
   e. Any team approved must use the combined total enrollment for both schools when submitting the enrollment letter for DI/DII classification.
   f. If approved, the team must compete as one team for the entire 2026-2027 event season.
   g. *Any co-operative agreements outside of these parameters, please email NHSCC@varsity.com.
8. Student-athletes 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 or the U.S. All Star Federation 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 in-school students at the school and any other students also eligible to participate in athletics at that school.

1. High school enrollment is defined as all students in 9th-12th grade and also 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. For the 2026-27 season, any team representing a single gender school that includes athletes from co-operative (co-op) schools will have its DI/DII classification determined by the combined total enrollment of all participating schools. Teams must submit:
   a. The enrollment number for each co-op school from which athletes are pulled from, and
   b. The number of athletes on the roster representing each of those schools.

4. Cooperative teams must include total enrollment from both schools.
5. Magnet or affiliated school enrollment should be included if students from that school are members of the spirit squad.
6. Enrollment must include the number of students enrolled at the school and must be submitted no sooner than thirty (30) days from the start of school and no later than October 1, 2026.
    a. Link to enrollment form and details: *COMING SOON*
    b. Any supporting documents 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.

NHSCC divisions are split into Division I (1400+ school enrollment) & Division II (1399 or less school enrollment).

TRADITIONAL RECREATIONAL GUIDELINES AND DIVISIONS

1. Athlete eligibility will be based on the birth year, or partial year listed to be eligible for that division.
2. Teams must submit a Varsity Recreational Roster Verification Form at each event. This form can be found online under Required Forms.
3. Recreational Teams will require all coaches to have a USA Cheer Membership. At least one coach must have the USA Cheer Coach membership that includes the USA Cheer Youth Safety Risk Management certification course and must accompany the team at every competition. Proof of certification is required upon registration for every event. See specific details under USA Cheer Coach Membership on page 4.
4. Basket tosses, elevator tosses, and similar multi-based tosses are prohibited.

Affiliated Recreational Divisions

The program must be affiliated with, report to, and governed by an organization such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, City/County Parks and Recreational program, American Youth Cheer, Pop Warner Association, or other community run program not associated with All Star cheer. The team must also cheer for or support a sport during the 2026-2027 season. Teams with a school affiliation may only compete in the recreational cheer traditional division if at least half of the participants are in the 6th grade or younger and meet the age requirements. Teams with a school affiliation that have a majority of 7th, 8th, and/or 9th graders must compete in the junior high division. Teams with a school affiliation that have a majority of 7th -12th graders at that school must compete in the appropriate JV or VA division.

Non-Affiliated Recreational Divisions

Organization may be independent of a town/city organizations/clubs. Team does not necessarily cheer for or support a sports program. The team is not affiliated with an All Star program.

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.

   d. Teams may not use Disney themes, nor may they have costumes that resemble a Disney character. However, Disney music is acceptable if it follows the music guidelines. Any use of Disney music requires prior approval and must be sent to musicinfo@varsity.com at least one month prior to your first competition.
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 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.
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. UCA 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.

INTERMEDIATE DIVISION

1. Eligibility Restrictions
   a. All teams must meet eligibility requirements for school teams outlined in the UCA Event Guidelines.
   b. All teams must complete the squad credentialing program to be eligible to receive a bid.
   c. Bids to NHSCC will be awarded at regionals based on select criteria outlined on page 12.
   d. Eligible Teams:
      a. Teams that have never competed at a Varsity Spirit National Championship (all Varsity Spirit Brands)
      b. Teams that have not advanced from the opening round in an Advanced Performance Division at a Varsity Spirit National Championship (all Varsity Spirit Brands) in the last 3 years**.**
      c. Teams that have not won an Intermediate or below Performance division at a Varsity Spirit National Championship (all Varsity Brands) the last 2 years consecutively.

NOTE: Performance divisions include all Varsity Spirit brands 2:30 minute routine divisions outside of Game Day divisions.

2. General Restrictions
   a. A team that wins the Intermediate Division two consecutive years at NHSCC must compete in the Advanced performance division the following year at any Varsity Spirit event.
   b. A Varsity team may not compete in the Intermediate Division if the Junior Varsity from the same program competes in an Advanced Division.
3. Skill Restrictions
   a. General Tumbling
      i. No twisting while airborne. (Exception: Aerial cartwheels are allowed.)
   b. Standing Tumbling
      i. Series front and back handsprings are allowed.
      ii. Jump handspring(s) combinations are allowed.
      iii. Flips are not allowed.
   c. Running Tumbling
      i. Back flips performed in a tuck position are allowed.
      ii. Back flips are **ONLY** allowed from a roundoff, cartwheel, or round off handspring(s).
      iii. No other skills are allowed prior to the roundoff, cartwheel, or roundoff back handspring(s).

iv. Aerial cartwheels are allowed.
v. No tumbling is allowed after a back flip or aerial cartwheel. There must be a clear stop/pause in momentum prior to the next tumbling skill.
vi. Front flips are not allowed.

d. Partner Stunts - Twisting
   i. Up to ½ twist allowed to and from an extended position.
   ii. Up to 1 twist allowed to and from prep level or below.

e. Partner Stunts – Release
   i. Release moves must be initiated from prep level or below.
   ii. Release moves are allowed up to prep level.
   iii. Release moves are allowed up to ¼ twist.

f. Partner Stunts - Inversion
   i. Inversions are allowed from ground level to non-inverted stunts.
      a. No back handspring entries allowed.
      b. No inverted stunts allowed above ground level.
   ii. Released ground level inversions are only allowed up to prep level.
   iii. Released ground level inversions are allowed up to ¼ twist.
   a) *Exception*: Downward inversions are allowed from a horizontal/cradle position below prep level.

g. Pyramids
   i. All pyramid skills must follow Intermediate stunt restrictions unless connected to at least one bracer at prep level or below with hand/arm connection from the initiation of the skill and remain connected by hand/arm connection throughout the transition.
   ii. Non-inverted braced release moves are only allowed up to ½ twist.
   iii. All pyramid release moves from inverted to non-inverted must be inverted at the bottom of the dip and may not twist.
   iv. Extended single leg stunts may not be braced by any other extended single leg stunts.
   v. Braced flips are not allowed.

h. Dismounts and Tosses
   i. Only straight pop downs, basic straight cradles, and ¼ twisting dismounts that land in a cradle are allowed from any single leg stunt.
   ii. Up to 1 ¼ twists are allowed from any two-leg stunt and must land in a cradle.
   iii. No elevator or basket tosses are allowed.

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 uca.varsity.com.
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 ALL Regional events, 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.
    a. At NHSCC ONLY, there will be no sideline cue announced following the Band Chant. Teams can choose either an offensive or defensive sideline to execute and must show clear understanding of a game situation. Teams may not stunt until the sideline has been started by the athletes.
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.

SPIRIT PROGRAM GAME DAY GUIDELINES

Spirit Program Game Day division specific guidelines can be found here: Spirit Program Guidelines

VIRTUAL COMPETITION GUIDELINES

1. Virtual events are not categorized as bid eligible events for NHSCC. For states in which no regional event is available within close proximity, teams may request prior approval for a virtual bid. Email NHSCC@varsity.com
2. All videos must be recorded in a single take. Edited footage will not be accepted.
3. Virtual Event Information: UCA Virtual Competitions - UCA
4. Awards - Division placement banners will be awarded to each team competing that will be mailed following the event. Results will be posted in the Event BAND group for coaches. To view the routine videos from the event, you need an active Varsity TV subscription. If you have questions about your Varsity TV account, click here.
5. VIRTUAL COMPETITION MUSIC GUIDELINES
   a. All routines will be 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.
   b. Only music capture incidentally will be permitted. No music can be edited into the video. Teams who edit music into the video will receive a 2-point penalty.

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.

- Recreational Divisions will be restricted from performing any type of toss (basket, elevator, or similar multi-based tosses) or waist level cradles.
- Junior High toss restrictions can be found on the USA Cheer website: Safety & Education - USA Cheer
- 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.
- Intermediate Divisions must follow all Intermediate skill restrictions listed in the Intermediate section.

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) 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)
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. NHSCC rules questions must be submitted by **January 15, 2027.** If received after the deadline, the video is not guaranteed a response.

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. REGIONAL COMPETITION TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will not be broken at UCA Regional Competitions.
5. NHSCC TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will only be broken for **FIRST PLACE** in the **FINAL ROUND** of competition at the NHSCC. The team with the lessor deductions will be awarded first place. If the deductions remain equal, the tie will not be broken, and both teams will be awarded first place.
6. By participating in a Varsity 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.

VIOLATIONS

Any team in violation of these UCA 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. Go to uca.varsity.com for more specifics.

National High School Cheerleading Championship Information

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR THE 2027 NHSCC:

In order to qualify for the National High School Cheerleading Championship (NHSCC), teams are required to fulfill the following requirements:

1. 75% of the qualifying team must have completed the Squad Credentialing program. Teams can be credentialed either at Varsity Spirit Camp or through the Squad Credentialing Program.
2. Compete and receive a bid at a 2026 UCA qualifying regional competition for the 2027 National High School Cheerleading Championship. Teams who do not receive a bid at their in-person regional may email NHSCC@varsity.com for other qualifying options.
3. The division the team competes in at the regional event will be the only division the team is allowed to compete in at the NHSCC. *Exception* – some divisions at the NHSCC are further split by Team Size or School Size.
   a. Any teams experiencing extenuating circumstances that would change their division size **MUST** send an email to NHSCC@varsity.com to have any requests reviewed by the rules committee.
   b. No division changes will be approved without clear outline of the situation from school administration affecting the administration's decision to remove athletes from a team.
   c. No division changes will be reviewed, regardless of circumstances, for a team to change to a larger division.
4. Teams may qualify for bids in multiple divisions if competing at different in-person regional qualifying events for each division of the same routine type.
5. Individuals may NOT represent more than one team between the respective National High School Cheerleading Championship event weekends. *Exceptions* - See division guidelines above.
6. The National School Spirit Championships will occur on 2 weekends hosting DII teams on January 29th-31st, 2027 and DI teams on February 4th-7th, 2027. NHSCC divisions will be hosted at both weekends respectively.
   a. Junior High teams will compete on the same weekend as their predominant feeder high school where most students are zoned to attend.
   b. Affiliated Rec programs will follow the feeder high school where most athletes from the team will attend.
   c. All Non Affiliated Rec will compete on the DII weekend.
7. Attending a regional UCA competition does not guarantee a bid to the National High School Cheerleading Championship. NHSCC bids are awarded based on qualifying minimum scores: The minimum score for Game Day is 80%. The minimum score for Performance is 70%. Additional bids MAY BE awarded for teams with lower scores based on the following factors:
   a. Depth of division
   b. Scores above the natural break in a division
   c. Deductions
   d. Raw scores versus final scores
   e. National averages

   It is the discretion of the Event Director and Scoring Manager to determine to award bids based on these factors. At the conclusion of the event all bids are final.
8. Virtual events are not eligible for bids to NHSCC. For states in which no regional event is available within close proximity, teams may request prior approval for a virtual bid. Email NHSCC@varsity.com

All UCA Event Guidelines in this document will apply at the NHSCC. The following Event Guidelines are in addition to and specific to the National High School Cheerleading Championship.

NHSCC CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISIONS

Athletes may only perform up to 3 times if one routine is a Performance routine, one is a Game Day routine, and one is a Spirit Program Game Day routine. If an athlete is performing 3 times, they must be representing the same team in all performances. *Exceptions* – See division guidelines above.

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.

UCA strongly recommends that you have an alternate (not a member of another competing squad at the same event), who is prepared to substitute in the event of injury, probation, etc. No cheerleader may represent more than one team, even in the event of injury or emergency.

NHSCC Game Day: At NHSCC ONLY, there will be no sideline cue announced following . Teams can choose either an offensive or defensive sideline to execute and must show clear understanding of a game situation. Teams may not stunt until the sideline has been started by the athletes.

TOURNAMENT FACILITY

1. The competition is scheduled to be held at Disney's Wide World of Sports ®
2. 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 offices to be essential to the successful execution of the championship.

ROUNDS OF COMPETITION

1. UCA reserves the right to determine if a preliminary, semi-final, or final round will be necessary. All divisions with only one round prior to the finals will be classified as semi-finals.
2. From each round of competition, 50%* of the teams in each round/group will advance.
3. Final rounds of competition will be confirmed two weeks prior to the championship; however, all advancements will be based on the final number of teams that perform in each round/group.
   a. In divisions with 5 or less teams, a minimum of 5 will advance to the final round of competition.
   b. In divisions with 6 teams, a minimum of 4 teams will advance to the final round of competition.
   c. A maximum of 12 teams will advance from each round.*
   d. *In all divisions with 81 or more teams that start with a preliminary round, auto-advanced teams will be counted in the MAXIMUM number of teams (12) that can advance to the final round from each semi-final.
4. Tournament officials will have full authority to make the final determination of the number of rounds and the of teams selected to advance. In the event of a tie for the final spot advancing, both teams that are tied will move on. In the event of a tie for first in the preliminary round, both teams will automatically advance to the final round.
5. UCA will combine divisions in the best interest of providing a competitive environment. When/If a division has less than 3 teams, it may be combined with the same age/size/type division. Division combinations will be finalized no later than 2 weeks prior to the NHSCC.
6. Order of Competition
   - The Order of Competition for the first round will be random.
   - Preliminary/Semi-Final groups will be split based on previous placement and geography.
   - Advancing rounds will be determined by reverse rank with the lowest ranking team performing first.
   - Divisions with multiple prelim/semi-final groups that combine into one round of competition will be combined based on each groups' ranking and alternated accordingly.
   - Teams with scheduling conflicts when advancing to the next round must submit a schedule change request within 30 minutes of the division announcements. Teams will be moved earlier in the schedule for one of the performances.
7. The top team in each preliminary will automatically advance to the finals in their respective division.
8. UCA reserves the right to determine if preliminary, semi-final, or final rounds will be necessary; this will be determined using the following guidelines. UCA reserves the right to make final determination of the number rounds and splits within those rounds.
   - Divisions with 0-24 up to 30 teams will have Semi-Final and Final Rounds.
   - Divisions with 25 up to 30-40 teams will have Preliminary, Semi-Final and Final Rounds.
   - Divisions with 41-60 teams will have Preliminary, Semi-Final and Final Rounds.
   - Divisions with 61-80 teams will have Preliminary, Semi-Final and Final Rounds.

- Divisions with 81 or more teams will have a Preliminary A/B/C/D/E/F, A/B/C Semi-Final and D/E/F Semi-Final and Final Rounds.
    - In all divisions with 81 or more teams that start with a preliminary round, auto advanced teams will be counted in the MAXIMUM number of teams (12) that can advance from the semi-final to the final round.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PARTICIPATION

1. It is understood that teams that participate in the National High School Cheerleading Championship will NOT knowingly and willingly participate in any other cheerleading event promoted as a national or international championship for the 2026-2027 school year. (*Exception*: USA National Championship) This includes all prizes and awards labeled as National or International Champions.
2. School teams cannot compete in another event promoted as a National or International Championship (*Exception*: ICU World Cheerleading Championships and World School Cheerleading Championships) for the 2026-2027 school year within a school division or category regardless of team name.
3. A school can compete at UCA and NCA if that team is recognized as a separate team by the school and no athletes are the same. (No athletes can compete at both events)
4. Teams who violate this rule will be subject to disqualification and may forfeit the opportunity to participate in the subsequent National High School Cheerleading Championship.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

1. All athletes performing on the team must be registered and rostered for the event.
2. All teams in the final round of competition will receive a trophy.
3. Teams who rank first, second, or third place will additionally receive gold, silver, or bronze medallions for each athlete who performed on the floor plus two coaches and up to 5 additional rostered alternates, administrators or other.
4. National Champion teams will receive a National Champion banner.
5. National Champion teams will receive a National Champion jacket for each division/category. Jackets will be awarded for each athlete who performed on the floor plus two coaches and up to 5 additional rostered alternates.
6. Additional medallions and jackets may be requested at the conclusion of the event. Additional award requests will be shipped, based on availability, following the event.

TELEVISION COVERAGE

The National High School Cheerleading Championship, which is now a part of the National School Spirit Championships, is nationally televised on ESPN and ESPN2. Because of the format of the show, not all finalist teams will be shown on the telecast.

APPEARANCES, ENDORSEMENTS AND PUBLICITY

All teams winning titles, awards or prizes agree to have all appearances, endorsements and publicity approved through the NHSCC office.

UCA RULES & REGULATIONS 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 be coaching and directing teams at the UCA Regional Competition and NHSCC, (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 UCA Rules and Regulations.

These Rules and Regulations 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.