



## 2021 SPIRIT NATIONALS RULES AND REGULATIONS

### I) GENERAL RULES

The competition will follow the NFHS Spirit Rules Book (cheer), 2020-21 USA High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations(cheer), 2020-21 USA High School Teams Song/Pom Division Limitations, 2020-21 USA Song/Pom and Pep/Short Flag General Safety Rules for School and Rec Teams, and General Information. (Available on-line at [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com))

The competition will consist of the categories/divisions listed on the 2020-21 USA Spirit Nationals Age Grid posted at [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com).

Categories/divisions may be subdivided or combined at the discretion of the competition director if the total number of teams in a division warrant this. **The USA reserves the right to adjust days of performance for all divisions based upon final competition enrollment.**

An individual may not compete against her/himself in the same division/category (i.e. two Group Stunt teams). An individual may not participate on two teams within the same category type and/or divisions within a category when separated by size, stunt/tumbling limitations or team level. [i.e. 1) Small and Large Varsity Show Cheer divisions 2) Show Cheer Novice and Show Cheer Advanced categories 3) All-Girl Cheer and Co-Ed Cheer division 4) JV Song/Pom and Varsity Song/Pom division]. The penalty for this violation will be disqualification of one of the routines.

Any exceptions to the above must be pre-approved in writing by the USA office prior to the event.

#### Athlete Eligibility

Any team or participant proven to be in violation of the age/grade requirements for any USA competition will be subject to disqualification from that competition. Requirements are as follows:

- a) Entrants must be registered students in the school they are representing and receiving credit for schoolwork at the time of the competition.
- b) No competitor shall have received a diploma for graduation from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- c) Each competitor must be under the age of 19.

Any exceptions to the above must be pre-approved in writing by the USA office prior to the event.

#### Routine Violations

For a list of routine violations refer to the “2020-21 Composite Scoresheet” for your division(s) found at [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com).

All teams must compete in the same categories in which they qualified for Spirit Nationals through a Regional or Classic (Show Cheer-Advanced, Song/Pom - Intermediate, etc.). Any exceptions to the above must be pre-approved in writing by the USA office prior to the event.

If a team qualifies two or more times for Spirit Nationals in the Intermediate or Advanced level at a Regional or Classic, then that team may not move to a lower technical division at Spirit Nationals. Any exceptions to the above must be pre-approved in writing by the USA office prior to the event.

To compete in the Varsity Jazz division, the school must compete at the same competition in the Varsity Song/Pom division. To compete in the JV Jazz division, the school must compete at the same competition in the JV Song/Pom division. Teams may not compete the same competition routine at both USA Spirit Nationals and USA Dance Nationals within the same season. For example, the same “pom” or “jazz” routine cannot compete in a Song/Pom or Song/Jazz division at USA Spirit Nationals and then the Dance/Pom or Jazz division at USA Dance Nationals. Teams which do not adhere to this may be subject to disqualification.

### Time Limitations

Timing of a routine will begin on the first note of music, the first vocal command (for cheer teams), or the first cheer movement, and will stop with the end of the cheer or the last note of music. Timing for prop set-up in the Mascot category will begin at the drop of the starter’s hand. Set-up timing will stop when the routine begins. For the Crowdleader™ Teams division, timing begins with the first note of music for the band chant section and ends at the conclusion of the fight song section. Penalties for exceeding the total routine time limit will be deducted from the final averaged score. In Show Cheer, up to 1:30 (90 seconds) of the routine may be performed to music. In the Song/Pom categories, females must use two poms for at least half of the total routine. Please refer to the General Information for time limits in each category. (Available on-line at [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com)) **We recommend that you “time” your performance several times prior to the competition and give yourself at least five seconds of “cushion” to allow for speed variations in sound equipment.**

Judges are looking for enthusiasm and showmanship during entrances and exits. Teams are encouraged to move on and off the floor as quickly as possible. Set-ups and break-downs will be timed in the Mascot category.

### Music Guidelines

- a) I have read and understand the USA Cheer Music Copyrights Educational Initiative and all sound recordings used in our team’s music shall only be used with written license from the owners(s) of the sound recordings.
- b) For the most up to date music information, visit <http://varsity.com/music>. If you have any questions, dance teams should email [dancemusic@varsity.com](mailto:dancemusic@varsity.com). Please periodically check the provider list for updates and changes.
- c) Teams must be able to provide proof of licensing, in the form of a printed copy, during registration at the event they are attending.
- d) If your team is featured in a TV and/or virtual broadcast and uses an original composition created for your performance, your routine music will be used in the show if you also secured synchronization rights. Teams must be able to provide written documentation that synchronization rights were properly secured during registration at the event for the original routine music to be included in the show.
- e) When recording your music for the event, coaches or music editors should edit their song in a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) and make sure that the volume of the song is at 0. Things to note: Most DAW’s have a default that sets a track at -6 when a track is added. Check to see if there is a normalization process after you render or save your work.
- f) If you would like to perform your school’s original fight song, you may bring a recording of your marching band playing the song. You will need to get the school’s permission to use the song and recording. A letter granting permission for the cheer or dance team to use the fight song on school letterhead is enough. It should be signed by your program’s administrative supervisor. Go to [varsity.com/music](http://varsity.com/music) for more details.
- g) If a team does not have required paperwork, they will be given the option to count the routine verbally or perform to an approved track of music or a track with counts (provided by Varsity Spirit).
- h) If a team does not have the required paperwork and chooses not to count the routine or perform to an approved track of music or a track with counts, the team will be disqualified from the competition and not allowed to perform or compete.
- i) If there are concerns regarding a certain team’s use of music, a Challenge Form must be completed immediately following the team’s performance.
- j) A challenge can only be made by the official coach of a team competing at the event at which the challenge is being made.
- k) Challenge Process
  - i) All music challenges must be submitted in writing to the event director.

- ii) There will be \$100 fee to request a music challenge and must be in the form of a check made out to St Jude Children's Research Hospital.
  - iii) Fees collected will be voided if challenge is correct.
  - iv) If the team challenged can provide documentation during the event and can be verified, the fees will be donated to St. Jude.
  - v) If the team challenged can provide documentation that requires further review, a decision will be finalized within 48 hours of the event.
  - vi) Each team is required to have a responsible adult that knows the routine and music as a representative remain at the music station (no alternates or team members allowed). This representative is responsible for starting the music and stopping the music at the routine's end, or in case of technical malfunction or injury. Should an adult choose not to stay at the music station for the duration of the routine, and a malfunction occurs, the team may or may not be permitted to perform the routine again. Please hold on to your music until the time of your performance. If using an MP3, smart phone, etc. please ensure that there is no case on the device which will obstruct the jack from plugging into the sound system. Please ensure that jacks are clean and free of any debris which may impact connectivity. Note that you may need to acquire an adapter in advance if your player does not have a headphone jack. If you are using a smart phone, please ensure that no interruptions (i.e. phone call, alarm, etc.) occur during your performance. Place the smart phone in "airplane mode," ensure that the volume is turned up and the phone is fully charged. Interference caused by a smart phone that results in routine delay may receive an overtime or delay of contest penalty.
- I) Virtual Competitions Music Guidelines
- i) The USA Cheer Music Copyrights Educational Initiative will govern all sound recordings used at the event and all sound recordings used in our team's music shall only be used with written license from the owners(s) of the sound recordings.
  - ii) For the most up-to-date music information, visit <http://varsity.com/music>. If you have any questions, dance teams should email [dancemusic@varsity.com](mailto:dancemusic@varsity.com). Please check the Music Provider list for updates and changes periodically.
  - iii) 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.

### 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, non-commercial 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 Varsity Spirit, LLC 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. Any team traveling with a video crew may be disqualified.

### Logo Usage

Teams will not be allowed to use any Varsity Spirit Brand logo, the USA Logo or the Spirit Nationals logo including: banners, rings, bows, t-shirts, etc. without prior approval from the USA office. However, the use of USA letters (not unique to the USA logo) will be allowed.

### III) PERFORMANCE AREA

All Cheer and Crowdleader™ Teams will perform on a carpet bonded foam mat measuring 42' (front to back) x 54' (side to side). Group Stunt teams may perform on a smaller carpet bonded foam mat surface measuring at least 28' (front to back) x 42' (side to side) (4 strips). All stunts and/or tumbling must be performed on the mat surface. There will be a **three-point** deduction off your final averaged score for each infraction of the rule.

All Song/Pom, Song/Jazz, Mascot and Pep Flag teams will perform on a marley, parquet, basketball court or similar type of dance floor measuring at least 42' (front to back) x 42' (side to side).

### IV) SPOTTER POLICY

#### **Guidelines**

- a) USA competition-provided additional spotters will be mandatory on the competition floor.
- b) School-based and recreational teams may provide additional spotters in rehearsal/warm-up.

**"Team Spotters"** = are part of the performing team and required as part of specific types of stunting/pyramid/toss, etc. skills.

**"Additional (Routine) Spotters"** = Individuals on the competition floor provided as a safety precaution to spot certain elements of a routine. These are in addition to the team and do not take the place of "team spotters" required by specific types of stunting/pyramid/toss, etc. Skills. Competition-provided additional spotters will follow the listed guidelines below.

- a) Should only be used during the stunt, pyramid and/or basket toss sections. Additional spotters are present for added safety and should stand at the back of the floor when not spotting those sections.
- b) Should not touch, assist or save skills being performed. Additional spotters should only be used to prevent a fall to the competition floor. Any touch, assist or saved skill will be given a fall deduction.
- c) Should be dressed so that they are presentable, professional and distinguishable from the performing athletes.
- d) Should not dress or act in a manner that distracts from the athletes and their performance.
- e) Should be at least 18 years old and familiar with spotting the skills of the performing team. **Note: To provide the safest competitive environment, teams should not attempt skills beyond their ability level.**

### V) INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCE

#### Unforeseen Circumstances

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

#### Fault of Team

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

## Injury

- a) The only persons that may stop a routine for injury are: i) competition officials, ii) the director/advisor/coach from the team performing or iii) an injured individual.
- b) The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time. If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed at a later time, the spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team may perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.
- c) The injured participant that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless:
  - i) The competition officials receive clearance from, first, the medical personnel attending to that participant, the parent (if present) AND THEN the head coach/advisor/director of the competing team.
  - ii) If the medical personnel do not clear the participant, the participant can only return to the competition if a parent or legal guardian in attendance signs a return to participation waiver.
  - iii) Any athlete who exhibits signs or symptoms consistent with concussion will be removed from the activity immediately and will not be allowed to participate (a) within 24 hours of the incident AND (b) without first being cleared by a medical professional trained in concussion management.
- d) In addition, the advisor/sponsor/director and all of the coaches attending the competition must be familiar with all federal, state and local laws applicable to such individuals and relating to such individuals' duties and responsibilities regarding the recognition and treatment of injuries.

## Uniform Distractions

- a) The Legality Official, Head Judge or any other competition official reserves the right to stop a routine, assess a deduction, and/or disqualify a team for a uniform distraction (e.g. garment not being securely fastened/attached, straps break, pants split, etc.).
- b) Each performer is required to take the necessary steps to avoid inappropriate exposure prior to the performance.
- c) If a judge stops the routine the penalty will vary from 3 three points to possible disqualification of the routine.

## **VI) APPROPRIATENESS OF CHOREOGRAPHY, MUSIC, OUTFITTING**

All facets of a performance or routine, including choreography, music selection and outfitting, should be suitable for family viewing and listening. Uniforms for all team types should be appropriate for the age of the participants performing the routine.

Bows should not be excessive in size and shouldn't be a distraction to the performance. Bows should be worn in a manner to minimize risk for the participants, should be adequately secured on the back of the head with the tails facing down and should not fall over the forehead into the participants' eyes or block the view of the participant while performing.

In general, performances from school-based teams, including but not limited to the actual routine, signs, cheers, chants and hand signals/gestures, should adhere to outfitting, performance and music guidelines and criteria in place and approved by the administration or institution to which the school team belongs.

Deductions will be given for vulgar or suggestive choreography, which includes, but is not limited to, movements such as hip thrusting and inappropriate touching, gestures, hand/arm movements and signals, slapping, positioning of body parts and positioning to one another. Deductions will be given for music or words unsuitable for family listening, which includes, but is not limited, to swearwords and connotations of any type of sexual act or behavior, drugs, mention of specific parts of the body torso, and/or violent acts or behavior. Removing improper language or words from a song and replacing with sound effects or other words constitutes inappropriate, and deductions will be made accordingly.

Any uniform or music in which the appropriateness is questionable or with which uncertainty exists should be submitted to the USA for approval prior to the performance taking place.

## **VII) PRELIMINARY COMPETITIONS**

All divisions will advance to Saturday/Sunday finals if preliminary registrations warrant, excluding Group Stunt. The judges and tournament officials have full authority to make final determination of the number of teams selected for the finals in each division.

**VIII) TELEVISION COVERAGE**

The 2021 USA Spirit Nationals may be televised. Because of the format of the television shows not all finalist teams would be shown on the telecast, nor could the length of routine coverage be guaranteed.

**IX) HOW TO HANDLE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS**

Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the competition will be handled exclusively by the captain or the advisor of the team and will be directed only to the Competition/Venue Director or their designee. Such questions must be made prior to the team's competition performance. Any questions concerning the performance of the team must be made to the Competition/Venue Director immediately after the performance. **Should a director or coach wish to lodge a formal complaint against another team in the competition for any violation of "Policies & Procedures" or competition rules, this complaint must be submitted in writing, signed, dated and presented to the Competition/Venue Director prior to any awards ceremony for which the team in question may be eligible to receive an award. It is to the discretion of the Competition/Venue Director whether investigation into the complaint will be completed prior to or after the awards ceremony.**

**X) SPORTSMANSHIP**

All participants and spectators affiliated with a team must conduct themselves in a manner displaying positive sportsmanship throughout the competition. The advisor, head coach and/or captain of each team is responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents/guardians and any other persons affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly. Unsportsmanlike conduct may include, but is not limited to, taunting, bragging, suggestive expressions/gestures, discriminatory comments/actions, approaching other teams, competition judges and/or any competition personnel with inappropriate comments, outbursts or gestures; confrontation with members of another team and/or between spectators of teams. Unruly, aggressive or belligerent behavior by participants, coaches or spectators toward any other attendee or Event Staff are also considered unsportsmanlike conduct. Cases of unsportsmanlike conduct at any time during the event are grounds to receive a 1-point penalty per occurrence, up to and including disqualification. The USA also has the right to deny entrance to or to remove an individual from the competition site. Additionally, barring a school/team and/or individual from future USA events may occur.

Payment for any damage caused by participants, parents, family and/or friends to hotel property and/or event will be the sole responsibility of the individual(s) and/or the school involved. School administration may be notified of any damages that occur.

**XI) SCORES AND RANKINGS**

Individual judge's 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 prior to the final results of each division being announced. Score sheets will be available only to advisors or captains at the conclusion of the competitions on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. No scores or rankings will be given over the phone. Scoring officials will only discuss my routines and/or scores/deductions. Coaches/directors may not challenge scores/deductions of other teams.

**XII) APPEARANCES, ENDORSEMENTS AND PUBLICITY**

All teams winning titles, awards or prizes agree to have all appearances, endorsements and publicity approved through the USA office. Teams will not be permitted to use the USA and/or Varsity logos, without the express written permission of the United Spirit Association. This includes usage on items such as banners, rings, t-shirts, bows, etc.

**XIII) INTERPRETATIONS AND RULINGS**

Any interpretation of any aspect of these Policies & Procedures or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Competition Rules Committee. The Rules Committee will render a judgement in an effort to ensure that the competition proceeds in a manner consistent with the general spirit and goals of the competition. The Rules Committee will consist of but is not limited to the Event Director(s), the Head Panel Judge, the Head Legality Official and the Director of Special Events.

**XIV) FINALTY OF DECISIONS**

By participating in this competition, each team agrees that decisions by the judges will be final and will not be subject for review. Each team acknowledges the necessity for the judges to make prompt and fair decisions in this competition and each team therefore expressly waives any legal, equitable administrative or procedural review of such decisions.

Any school/team and/or individual that does not adhere to the terms and procedures in the “Policies & Procedures” may receive a penalty, up to disqualification from the competition, and automatically forfeit the right to any awards presented by the competition. In addition, the school/team and/or individual may also forfeit the opportunity to participate in any competition produced by the United Spirit Association the following season or subsequent seasons. Any fees (team and/or spectator based) associated with participation in the event will be forfeited in the event of disqualification. The USA reserves the right to deny registration to any team.