



A VARSITY SPIRIT BRAND

2020-21 COLLEGIATE CHEER GAME DAY RULES & GUIDELINES

(Updated 1/25/21)

(Please read through all Rules & Guidelines carefully as changes have been made from the 2019-20 season)

At Varsity Spirit, the health and safety of our athletes, coaches, employees, families and friends is our top priority. We are diligently monitoring the Coronavirus/COVID-19 and closely watching official information from health authorities, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as it relates to our larger community and our events, camps and competitions.

We understand that as we move into competition season the rules and regulations put on by your state and local government, as well as the CDC, may affect how you can approach your season and choreography. This may look very different depending on where your team is located, if you're allowed to have contact with your team, if you're required to wear masks and maintain social distancing, or any other requirements. Our suggestion is to continue to adhere to your state and local guidelines at the time of the event, including but not limited to social distancing measures when it comes to lifts/partnering, pom passes, and/or any other choreographed contact.

The United Spirit Association is taking the proper steps in training our judging panel on how this may effect what is seen on the competition floor in order in to provide the same quality experience regardless of restrictions in place for your team. This will remain in place for the 2020/21 season. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Changes/updates from the 2019-20 competition season are in red.

I. GENERAL RULES

All permitted cheerleading specialty skills, including tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids and jumps for the Game Day Divisions must follow the 2020-21 USA Cheer College Cheerleading Safety Rules. Please see additional specific skill restrictions below for each category. All skills should be carefully reviewed and supervised by a qualified adult advisor/director/coach.

A. DIVISIONS

College 6+ Members

B. SCHOOL REPRESENTATION

- All members of the performing squad must be current members of the official school spirit squad, dance team and/or band, and must attend the school they are representing. These must be individuals who cheered and/or performed for games during the appropriate season.
- All Cheer Game Day routines are required to be comprised of at least 50% cheerleaders. Schools are encouraged to include other sideline spirit groups (i.e. dance team, mascot, etc...); however, the routine(s) must be comprised of at least 50% cheerleaders and will be judged as one unified routine. Other performance-based and/or spirit groups may not enter the division without their cheerleaders.

- If other sideline spirit groups are part of a cheer game day routine, then that activity must abide by any specific game day rules related to them (i.e. dance members must follow the specific game day rules/specialty skill restrictions during the routine).
- Mascots are limited to the same props as cheerleaders (poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners) and are **NOT** allowed to stunt in any Game Day division.
- Routines must be appropriate for family viewing. Any vulgar and/or suggestive movements, words, or music will result in a score deduction.
- The team should display overall behavior/appearance conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school/organization.
- The team and each participating member/coach should constantly display good sportsmanship throughout the entire performance regarding respect for themselves, other teams and the viewing audience. Teams should refrain from any taunting, bragging, or suggestive expressions or gestures as well as discrimination of any nature.
- We recommend that the team and each of its members display an overall appearance conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school in regards to grooming, traditional and appropriate attire, make-up, uniformity, etc.

UNIFORM RULES:

- Sideline/traditional school uniforms must be worn.
- No tear-away uniforms and/or removal of clothing are permitted.

Uniform Distractions

The Legality Official, Head Judge or 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.). Each performer is required to take the necessary steps to avoid inappropriate exposure prior to the performance.

Shoes

All participants must wear soft-soled shoes on both feet while competing. Shoes must have a solid sole and cover the toe and heel. This is a safety rule and if a violation occurs, a 3 point deduction will be incurred.

Make-Up

If worn, make-up should be appropriate for both the performance and the age of the athletes, utilizing colors for skin tone.

Hair

Hair for all athletes does not have to be worn the same, but must be secured off the face (cheer teams) with a simple and unexaggerated style that is acceptable to all diversities.

Bows

Bows are not required, however if worn 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 participants while performing. A .25 deduction will be given for teams in violation of this rule.

Appropriateness of Choreography, Music, Words and Outfitting

All facets of a performance or routine, including choreography, music selection, outfitting and words 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.

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 which the team represents.

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 profanity and connotations of any type of sexual act or behavior, drugs, mention of specific parts of the body, and/or violent acts or behavior. Removing improper language or words from a song and/or replacing with sound effects or other words may be considered inappropriate, and deductions will be made accordingly. Any uniform, choreography, words or music in which the appropriateness is questionable or with which uncertainty exists should be submitted to the USA for approval prior to competing.

C. COMPETITION AREA:

- Participants may enter from outside the competition area for their performance.
- All permitted skills (stunts, pyramids, tumbling etc.) must be performed on the competition mat.
- Approximate floor size will be a traditional mat (non-Spring floor) of 54' (feet) wide by 42' (feet) deep – 9 strips.
- Tossing, throwing or other projecting of any type of object outside the competition floor and/or into the crowd is not allowed.
- Poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners may be placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member.

D. MUSIC RULES/RESTRICTIONS:

Music is defined as any recorded sound amplified through the competition sound system. One or several selections of music may be used, as long as they follow the music licensing rules. Failure to comply may lead to disqualification and forfeiture of all fees associated with a team's performance.

- Coaches are responsible for reading and understanding the USA Cheer Music Copyrights Educational Initiative and understanding that all sound recordings used in their team music shall only be used with written license from the owners(s) of the sound recordings.
- For the most up to date music information, visit <http://varsity.com/music>. If you have any questions, cheer teams should email info@usacheer.net and dance teams should email dancemusic@varsity.com. Please periodically check the provider list for updates and changes.
- Teams must be able to provide proof of licensing, in the form of a printed copy, during registration at the event they are attending.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 for more details.
- 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).
- 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.
- If there are concerns regarding a certain team's use of music, a Challenge Form must be completed immediately following the team's performance.
- A challenge can only be made by the official coach of a team competing at the event at which the challenge is being made.

Challenge Process:

- All music challenges must be submitted in writing to the event director.
- 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.
- Fees collected will be voided if challenge is correct.
- If the team challenged can provide documentation during the event and can be verified, the fees will be donated to St. Jude.
- If the team challenged can provide documentation that requires further review, a decision will be finalized within 48 hours of the event.
- A sound system will be provided. Speed control is not available. Music must be recorded at the correct tempo. Music checks on the main sound system are not permitted.
- All teams must provide their own MP3 device (or smart phone) for use on the event-provided sound system. Although it is not recommended due to potential interference that may be caused during a routine, a smart phone may be used for playing music.
- 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 head phone 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.

- Virtual Competitions Music Rules
 - 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.
 - For the most up-to-date music information, visit <http://varsity.com/music>. If you have any questions, cheer teams should email info@usacheer.net and dance teams should email dancemusic@varsity.com. Please check the Music Provider list for updates and changes periodically.
 - 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.

E. TIME LIMITATIONS/ENTRANCE/EXIT:

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- Teams may not set up props in advance of any category.
- See specific category for details on the start and stop of each type of routine.
- All team breaks, rituals and traditions need to take place prior to the team being called to the performance floor.
- Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures. Example: chest bumps, hugs, hand shakes, etc.
- All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team’s performance. Any team in violation may receive a “sportsmanship” penalty.
- There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official ending of the routine.

F. 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.

G. 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.

COLLEGE GAME DAY CATEGORIES

II. BAND CHANT CATEGORY

A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- Band Chant must be made up of at least 50% cheerleaders. Non-cheer teams may participate (i.e. dance team), but may not comprise more than 50% of the total team numbers
- A team may begin on or off the performance floor for the start of their music. Once the team name is called and the music begins, timing of the overall routine starts.
- Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
- The Band Chant must be one traditionally played by a school sideline/jazz band. Crowd interaction and involvement, including yell-backs, spell-outs, school colors are encouraged.
- Camp material may easily be adapted to fit this category. For example, any band chant learned at a Varsity Brands camp could be used for this routine. Examples might include “Rock ‘N Roll Part II, “Land of A Thousand Dances,” etc.
- Sideline/traditional school uniforms are required.
- The use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners is permitted and encouraged.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the scoresheet:
 - Creativity and musicality, variety and the execution of transitions and formations.
 - Crowd leading ability, including crowd encouragement, ease of crowd to participate, etc.
 - Material appropriate for a sideline situation during a time-out, quarter break, between downs, etc.
 - Placement, synchronization and strength of motions/movement.
 - Visual effect and spacing.
 - Overall impression and crowd appeal.
 - Thematic routines and/or specialized costuming is not encouraged.

Emphasis should be placed on practicality and crowd involvement. All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally.

B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS – BAND CHANT CATEGORY

Skill incorporation should promote and encourage crowd involvement, and the practicality of the skills for a game day environment should be a priority.

- Tumbling – twisting flips are not permitted.
- Twisting stunts may not exceed 1¼ twisting rotation
- Flipping tosses are permitted with 0 twisting rotations

COLLEGE GAME DAY CATEGORIES

III. SITUATIONAL SIDELINE/CROWD LEADING CHEER CATEGORY

(2 elements to this routine)

A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

- Each team will respond to a game situation (presented by the announcer at a live/in person event or chosen by the team for a virtual event), followed by a second element of an additional crowd-oriented cheer/chant/traditional yell/drum cadence, etc. not to exceed 1 minute in total routine length for the two elements that are required.
- Situational Sideline/Crowd Leading Cheer will begin with the presentation of a game time sideline situation.
- Timing starts once the game situation has been presented and ends at the conclusion of the second element of the routine – the crowd leading cheer section of the routine. (this is the overall end of the routine)
- The team may start their routine on or off the mat for the reading of their game time sideline situation. Once the situation is read, timing begins.
- No music may be used during the performance. Live drummer(s), other band members and/or drum track is allowed. All specialty skills (i.e. jumps, stunts and/or tumbling) must be performed within a safe distance of all drummers and/or other band members. Drummer(s) and/or any other band members cannot be involved in any type of specialty skill and must be positioned off the cheerleading mat.
- Each team’s crowd leading cheer presentation (the second element of the overall routine) must include at least one component required from the following: cheers, chants, traditional yells, and/or drum cadences. This is a separate crowd-oriented cheer that is not directly related to the situational cheer, but rather is an add-on following the situational cheer.
- Teams should utilize all areas of their squad’s crowd leading strengths. The use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners is **required**.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the scoresheet:
 - Crowd communication, including; crowd effective material, spacing and formations, voice and pace, crowd leading skills and use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners.
 - Placement, synchronization and strength of motions.
 - Overall impression and crowd appeal

Emphasis should be placed on practicality and crowd involvement. All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally.

B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS – SITUATIONAL SIDELINE/CROWD LEADING CHEER CATEGORY

- Tumbling – twisting flips are not permitted.
- Twisting stunts may not exceed 1¼ twisting rotation
- Flipping tosses are permitted with 0 twisting rotations

IV. FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- Teams are encouraged to use their traditional school fight song. Should your school fight song exceed 1 minute, and no reasonable way to edit the routine is possible, please contact the USA office.
- Timing will begin with the first organized movement, voice or note music, whichever comes first. Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
- Props (poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners) are permitted in this category and encouraged.
- Performances can incorporate up to three (3) eight counts of skills (stunts, tumbling and/or jumps). The three (3) eight counts must be consecutive and the same three (3) eight counts can be repeated if the fight song is repeated. The three (3) eight counts of skills includes loading into and dismounting from stunts (unless the routine finishes in a stunt/pyramid).
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the scoresheet:
 - Crowd oriented material, fit to music, using effective spacing and formations, and incorporating visual effects.
 - Placement, synchronization and strength of motions.
 - Overall impression and crowd appeal.

Emphasis will be placed on practicality and crowd involvement. All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally.

B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS – FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

- A jump is considered a skill and can only be performed in the three (3) eight count segment
- A kick will not be considered as a skill and can be performed at any time during the routine
- Tumbling – twisting flips are not permitted
- Twisting stunts may not exceed 1¼ twisting rotation
- Flipping tosses are permitted with 0 twisting rotations