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# SPIRIT EVENT GUIDELINES



**2024 – 2025 USA HIGH SCHOOL SPIRIT  
EVENT GUIDELINES  
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Visit [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) for the most up-to-date competition and camp information this season!

Information is subject to change.

**VERSION 9.5.24**



## **The USA is proud to offer multiple events for high school teams this season!**

**We hope these event guidelines help prepare you for one-day events and *“the most spirited weekend of the year.”***

### ***USA SPIRIT NATIONALS!***

Regionals – No prior qualification is required to compete at this one-day event. Regionals are local qualifying competitions for USA High School Spirit Nationals, as well as stand-alone events for those who wish to compete but have no goal to attend the USA Spirit Nationals event. All performers receive a participation ribbon (or other commemorative item). Regional awards are presented to top teams in each division. Non-competitive evaluations for a bid to High School Spirit Nationals are also available in all categories/divisions.

NOTE: Not all divisions are offered at every Regional competition.

High School Spirit Nationals – Prior qualification through a USA Regional competition or other sanctioned event/process is required in order to attend. All performers receive a commemorative participation gift and sponsorship “give-aways.” Trophies or plaques are awarded to the top teams in each division. Individual medallions are awarded to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place teams in each division. An exclusive “Champion” gift is awarded to the first place competitors in each division and a “Champion” banner awarded to the first place team in each division.

# Save the Date!



**2025 USA Spirit Nationals  
Anaheim Convention Center  
Anaheim, CA  
February 13 - 17, 2025**

## **Spirit Nationals Qualification Requirements**

Show Cheer, Group Stunt and Game Day (Cheer) Divisions: It is required that at least 75% of the cheer members competing at 2025 USA Spirit Nationals in cheer divisions must have completed the summer camp 2024 Varsity Spirit/NFHS Squad Credentialing Program.

All Divisions, including Game Day - Prior qualification through a USA Regional competition or other sanctioned event/process is required in order to attend Spirit Nationals in any division.

Bids to Nationals are awarded to teams receiving 80% of total possible points for all cheer, group stunt and game day cheer divisions and 75% of total possible points for all song, pep flag, mascot, and game day song divisions, regardless of any penalties received.

## **Spirit Nationals Tentative Schedule of Events**

### **(Note New Days for Song/Pom/Jazz/Pep Flag and Group Stunt Divisions)**

**Thursday, February 13** (Afternoon/Evening) – Group Stunt – Prelims & Finals

**Friday, February 14** – Show Cheer, Mascot, and Crowdleader™ Teams Divisions – Prelims

**Saturday, February 15** – Show Cheer, Mascot, and Crowdleader™ Teams Divisions – Finals and Cheer Game Day Divisions

**Sunday, February 16** – Song/Pom, Song/Jazz, & Pep Flag Divisions Prelims and Song/Pom Game Day Division

**Monday, February 17** – Song/Pom, Song/Jazz, & Pep Flag Divisions Finals

***Share your journey with us on Instagram and follow  
@usacamps #USANationals***

## 2025 NATIONALS REGISTRATION PROCESS

2025 USA Spirit Nationals weekend in Anaheim, CA on February 13 – 17, 2025.

Please visit <https://www.varsity.com/usa/school/competitions/highschoolspiritnationals/> for the most accurate and up-to-date event information.

### REGISTRATION

**Registration must be submitted online on or before December 2, 2024.**

Please do not wait to qualify before registering, as registration will close before all competitions at which you can qualify have taken place. No money is due until December 13, 2024. If a team does not qualify for Nationals, all monies paid will be refunded.

Performance order will be determined by date registration is entered if the deposit or payment in full is received by the deposit due date. If payment is not received by the deposit due date, performance order will then be determined by the date payment is received. Performance order adjustments may be necessary due to division/team conflicts.

Event registration is done on-line on myVarsity.com.

### PAYMENT INFORMATION

Registrations are not confirmed until payment is received.

Acceptable forms of payment include school purchase order, school check, cashier's check, money order, or credit card. Personal checks, organizational checks, cash or individual payments are not accepted. The school name and an authorized signature must appear on the PO. **If you submit a Purchase Order, the balance is due no later than 30 days after the event.**

Registrations, even with payment, do not guarantee event entry as the competition may close prior to the deadlines due to capacity. Registrations that are not paid in full, or guaranteed by school purchase order are subject to cancellation at any time but will be cancelled no later than January 31, 2025.

### DEADLINES

December 2, 2024 – Registration must be submitted online on or before December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

December 13, 2024 – \$100 non-refundable per competitor deposit is due.

December 20, 2024 – Original Spirit Nationals Roster is due in the USA office.

January 17, 2025 – Deadline for Division and/or Roster changes due. There are no division changes after January 17, 2025.

January 24, 2025 – All digital waivers must be submitted on registration.

January 31, 2025 – Final balance due

## ONE-DAY EVENT (NATIONALS QUALIFIER) REGISTRATION

### ONE-DAY REGISTRATION POLICIES & FEES

Early Registration Fee      The registration must be paid in full 35 days or more prior to the event for which you wish to register to lock in the early bird rate.

Standard Registration Fee      The standard registration fee will apply to those registrations paid in full 8-34 days prior to the event. New registrations will not be accepted the week of the event. Competitions may close to additional participants at any time, including before the “Early” registration/entry deadline.

Acceptable forms of payment include school purchase order, school check, cashier’s check, money order, or credit card. Personal checks, organizational checks, cash or individual payments are not accepted. The school name and an authorized signature must appear on the PO. **If you submit a Purchase Order, the balance is due no later than 30 days after the event.**

Alternates - Additional team members in attendance but not competing must be registered and pay the “alternate” fee. They must also be on the team roster, submit a release form and be in the proper team uniform in order to go into the back stage/warm up area.

Requests for refunds, transfers of registration fees (registration fees may be transferred only once and registration fee transfers may not be split) or category/division changes will be accommodated only if notice is submitted in writing 14 days or more prior to the affected event. After that time, all funds become non-transferable and non-refundable. Teams are responsible for the full registration fee(s) for cancellations past the refund deadline, regardless of payment status and/or “no shows” on the day of the event.

### DIGITAL RELEASE AND WAIVER FORM

A digital participant/adult participant release and waiver form must be submitted for each participating performer, coach and personnel listed on the roster. **COMPETITORS/COACHES/PERSONNEL WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO COMPETE/ENTER THE WARM UP AREA WITHOUT A SUBMITTED DIGITAL WAIVER.**

### TEAM ONSITE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

All teams should report to the registration table no later than 45 minutes prior to the beginning of the division in which they are competing.

You will need to submit an event roster of all participating students.

## 2024-25 HIGH SCHOOL SPIRIT COMPETITIONS GENERAL INFORMATION

### USA CHEER COACH MEMBERSHIP

Varsity Spirit requires that all school coaches, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box at our competitions have a USA Cheer Coach, STUNT Coach, Dance Coach or Professional Membership. Visit [usacheer.org/usa-cheer-membership-for-varsity-spirit](https://usacheer.org/usa-cheer-membership-for-varsity-spirit) to learn more and to complete the steps required before your first competition. Each registered cheer team/program must have at least one coach with a Cheer Coach membership and must accompany the team at every competition. Additional coaches can choose to have either a STUNT Coach, Dance Coach or Professional Membership. **The USA Cheer General Membership is not an acceptable membership for restricted area access.**

### ELIGIBILITY

At the time of competition, entrants must be registered students in the school they are representing and official full-time members of their team. No members shall be younger than 9<sup>th</sup> grade or older than 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The penalty for an eligibility violation will be disqualification.

### CATEGORIES/DIVISIONS

The USA and/or its competition personnel reserves the right to delete, combine, or divide categories and divisions as deemed necessary. If categories/divisions are altered, adjustments will be made in the awards.

An individual may not compete against her/himself in the same division/category (i.e., two Group Stunt teams). An individual may not represent more than one school at any given event. 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/technical limitations, squad level or All-Girl and Co-Ed. For example, 1) Small and Large Varsity Show Cheer divisions 2) Show Cheer Novice and Show Cheer Advanced categories 3) JV Cheer and Varsity Cheer division 4) All-Girl Show and Co-Ed Show Cheer 5) JV Song/Pom and Varsity Song/Pom division. The penalty for this violation will be disqualification of one of the routines.

An individual may not compete at an event at a higher level and then move to a lower level for competition within the same year (i.e., Varsity team for one event, and then JV team for another event).

A team must compete in the same category/division at Nationals for which it qualified in at a Regional unless prior written approval is received from the USA. For example, 1) If you qualify for Show Cheer at a Regional, you may not compete in Co-Ed Show Cheer at Nationals, unless you also qualify for that category at a Regional. 2) If you qualify for Show Cheer - Novice at a Regional, you may not compete in Show Cheer - Advanced at Nationals, unless you also qualify for that category at a Regional. The above are two examples – other examples of this may exist.

If a team qualifies for Nationals two or more times (80% of total possible points for Show Cheer and/or Group Stunt divisions and 75% of total possible points for Song/Pom divisions, regardless of any penalties received) in the Intermediate or Advanced level at a Regional competition, then that team must receive written permission to move to a lower technical division at Nationals.

A school may not have a co-ed and all-girl team in the same age level (i.e., Varsity Co-Ed Show Cheer and Varsity Show Cheer).

A school cannot have 2 teams in the same category type. For example, 1) Varsity Show Cheer Advanced and Varsity Show Cheer Novice divisions, 2) Show Cheer and Show Cheer Non-Tumbling divisions, 3) Varsity Song/Pom Intermediate and Varsity Song/Pom Novice division. The penalty for this violation will be disqualification of one of the routines. The only exception is Group Stunt (Advanced and Intermediate).

Freshman team members all must be in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and must represent a high school. Jr. High/Middle School teams may not compete in a freshman division.

Any exceptions to the above must be requested in writing and pre-approved in writing by the USA office prior to and for the effected event. It is up to the sole discretion of the USA in what division a team may be placed. The USA also reserves the right to deny any team registration for its competition as a result of not having an appropriate division for that particular team.

## **SPLITTING CATEGORIES BY TEAM SIZE**

At non-Nationals high school spirit competitions, Varsity, Junior Varsity and Freshman Show Cheer and Song/Pom are divided if there are 10 or more teams competing in that category. If there are 10 or more teams entered, indicating a possible division split, then there must be at least 3 teams in each division once a split occurs to keep the divisions separated by size.

## **MUSIC**

Note the music rules that are in place for the 2024-25 competition season. Be sure you are familiar with these prior to taking any competition floor. Failure to comply may lead to disqualification and forfeiture of all fees (registration, admission or otherwise) associated with a team's performance.

### **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, teams should email [musicinfo@varsity.com](mailto:musicinfo@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](http://varsity.com/music) for more details.
- If a team does not have the 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 representative (responsible adult recommended) that knows the routine and music remain at the music station (no alternates or team members please). 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.

### **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 your 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, teams should email [musicinfo@varsity.com](mailto:musicinfo@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. This information is subject to change.

### **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 USA Varsity Spirit Brand logo, the USA logo or the Game Day logo on banners, rings, bows, t-shirts, etc. without prior approval from the USA office. However, the use of the USA letters (not unique to the USA logo) will be allowed.

## **ENTRANCE/EXIT**

Judges are looking for enthusiasm and showmanship during entrances and exits. Teams and individuals are encouraged to move on and off the floor as quickly as possible.

All team breaks, rituals and traditions need to take place prior to the team being called to the performance floor. Organized entrances and/or marching processions are not allowed by any cheer team and can incur an overall routine length timing penalty. 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.

Set-ups and break-downs for props, signs, megaphones, etc. will be timed in the Mascot category.

Set-ups for props, signs, megaphones, etc. will be timed in the Crowdleader™ category.

Pep/Short Flags will be limited to 30 seconds for entrance (from announcement of team's name) and 30 seconds for exit (from conclusion of routine music). Choreographed entrances and exits will not be judged.

## **PERFORMANCE AREA**

Performance boundaries at competitions will be a regulation basketball court (unless otherwise noted). All Regionals will have a carpet bonded foam mat on the performance area that measures 54'x42'. Unless otherwise noted, the mat will be removed for the song/pom, jazz, mascot and/or pep flag/short flag categories/divisions.

There will be no practicing on the performance floor prior to the competition.

Spring floors will not be used for school-based cheer divisions.

All stunts and/or tumbling must be executed on the mat. At a Regional, a warning will be given for any infraction of this rule.

At Spirit Nationals, a 3-point penalty will be assessed for any stunting or tumbling executed off of the mat. Tumbling and stunting are considered outside the matted area when both feet are entirely off of the performance mat.

You will not receive a penalty if you step off of the mat at any USA competition (not tumbling or stunting related).

## **PERFORMANCE ORDER**

Typically, performance order is based on the receipt of registrations. The first registration received will be the last to perform in that division and the last registration received will be the first to perform. Adjustments may be necessary due to division/team conflicts.

All teams (cheer, song/pom, jazz and/or pep flag) will be given an assigned check in and warm up time prior to competition. Warm up areas will vary depending on the location of the competition.

Performance Order will be posted in the coaches BAND group for the event as well as on the USA website. The tentative line up with performance times will be posted at least 2 weeks prior to the competition. These times are subject to change. The final performance order will be available by checking [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) after 5:00 p.m. (PST) the Wednesday prior to your competition. On that Wednesday, performance times usually remain the same regardless of scratches. It is the advisor's/coach's responsibility to check the schedule for accuracy prior to the day of competition.

## **COMPETITION STANDARD FOR SPOTTERS**

### **Guidelines**

1. "Team Spotters" are a part of the performing team and are required for specific types of stunting/pyramid/tosses, etc. skills.
2. USA competition-provided additional spotters will be mandatory on the competition floor.

## **PENALTIES**

Points will be deducted from the final team average for violations of safety rules, division limitations, general competition rules, and/or time limits, etc. Below are some penalties that are in addition to the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book, 2024-25 USA High School Teams Show Cheer Division Limitations, 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules and the 2024-25 USA High School Teams Song/Pom and Pep/Short Flag Division Limitations. See [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) for these documents.

### **A. Safety Rules**

Two (2) points will be deducted from the final team average score for EACH occurrence of a safety rule violation or specialty skill/division level restriction.

### **B. Time**

For all divisions, timing will begin on the first note of music, the first vocal command (for cheer squads), the first organized cheer or the first movement, and will stop with the end of the cheer or last note of the music. See categories/divisions rules for total routine time. There is no minimum time requirement.

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. Mascots have 1 minute to set-up props and 1 minute to exit the floor at the end of their performance.

Pep/Short Flags will be limited to 30 seconds for entrance (from announcement of team's name) and 30 seconds for exit (from conclusion of routine music). Choreographed entrances and exits will not be judged.

Penalties will be deducted from the final averaged score for going over the total routine time limit. Penalties will be assessed as follows: 1-5 seconds over = 1 point penalty; 6 or more seconds over = 2 point penalty, etc.

For show cheer teams, up to 1:45 (105 seconds) of the routine may be performed to music. Penalties will be deducted from the final averaged score for going over the 1:45 total music time limit. Penalties will be assessed as follows: 1-5 seconds over = 1 point penalty; 6 or more seconds over = 2-point penalty.

In Song/Pom, female members must use two poms for 80% of the routine. There will be a 1-point penalty for every 5 seconds under the time requirement for pom use. (1-5 seconds under = 1 point penalty; 6-10 seconds under = 2-point penalty, etc.)

Due to the variability in sound systems, you should build leeway into your routine to avoid timing penalties. It is suggested that routines end 3-5 seconds prior to the routine length time limit.

### **C. Performance Order/Division Changes**

Preliminary performance order will be posted in the coaches BAND group and on the USA website at [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) at least 2 weeks prior to your competition date. It is the advisor's/coach's responsibility to check the preliminary schedule for accuracy of categories/divisions prior to the day of competition.

All changes to your original competition registration must be put in writing and e-mailed to [USARegistration@varsity.com](mailto:USARegistration@varsity.com). At the USA's and/or competition director's discretion, a penalty may be assessed for any requested changes from the schedule that was posted on-line. To help avoid this penalty, any changes must be received in the USA office in writing by 5:00 p.m. (PST) the Friday one week prior to your competition date.

Division changes may not be made the day of a Regional. At a Regional competition, a team performing in an incorrect division may be disqualified from competition but may perform for evaluation only to qualify for Nationals.

Division changes made the day of competition at Nationals may incur a 3-point penalty for "Unnecessary Change in Performance Order."

## **D. School/Organization Representation**

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 regarding grooming, traditional and appropriate attire, make-up, uniformity, etc.

### **Uniforms**

Appropriate attire suitable for all athletes should be worn. In all divisions (excluding mascots), an official school uniform that is worn for game/sideline cheering or performing must be worn (i.e., skirt and top). Costuming is not allowed. If an accessory (i.e., hair bows) or an article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered "costuming." A deduction of 3 points will be taken if "costuming" is used. (Exception: Costuming is allowed in the Jazz category and for mascots).

All participant uniforms must cover the midriff when standing at attention. Covered midriff includes nude/skin-tone mesh, uniforms with colored mesh, body suits and liners. Fringe or other such uniform designs are not considered a cover. If a violation occurs, a 3-point deduction will be incurred.

### **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, non-marking 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. (Exception: Half-sole shoes/dance paws/turners are acceptable in the Song/Pom and Song/Jazz categories. Performers who wear half-sole shoes/dance paws/turners while performing do so at their own risk. Shoes that cover the toe and heel are required at all other times when not directly performing).

Penalty of marking the floor is disqualification. The performing school will be responsible for any charges that may occur as a result of damage to any floor.

### **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.

## **E. Props**

Props are not allowed (excluding the exceptions below). A deduction will be taken if props are used. A prop is defined as any physical object used to enhance the overall effect and/or theme of your routine. Exception: hand-held signs, school/team flags, poms and/or megaphones are permitted. Rally towels are only permitted in the Game Day divisions.

Signs and school/team flags are permitted but may not be worn as an article of clothing or accessory.

See mascot division for specific restrictions related to props for that division.

## **F. Appropriateness of Choreography, Music, and Outfitting**

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

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.

## **INSURANCE**

Each participant must have their own personal insurance. All competitors must submit a USA Medical Release and Appearance Form at each competition in order to compete. The host facility, the host facility district, the directors/sponsors and/or the USA will not be responsible or held liable for any injuries occurring at a USA competition.

First aid staff will be on site at all competitions to provide assistance for emergencies only. Taping of wrists/ankles for individual performers will not be provided, unless medically necessary to treat an injury that occurs at the competition site.

## **FOOD**

At most locations, food and drinks will be available for purchase throughout the competition. Food purchased at the competition venue may or may not be permitted inside the performance venue. Food purchased outside of the competition venue and not provided through the host facility is not permitted inside the performance venue at any location.

## **DRESSING ROOMS**

Dressing rooms, locker rooms and/or restrooms may be available on a limited basis. The USA and/or the host facility will not be responsible for any lost or stolen articles.



## CATEGORIES AND DIVISION RULES

Sample score sheets for all USA competitions will be available on-line by visiting [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com).

You must visit the USA website for a complete listing of the following:

- 2024-25 USA Spirit Competition Divisions
- 2024-25 High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations
- 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book <https://www.nfhs.org/activities-sports/spirit/>
- 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag General Safety Rules
- 2024-25 USA High School Teams Song/Pom and Song/Jazz Division Limitations
- 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep Flag Glossary of Terms

Website Page: [Divisions, Rules & Scoring](#)

### SHOW CHEER DIVISIONS

#### Number on Team

5-36 members

#### Divisions

Refer to division grid on [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) under Competitions/Divisions, Rules & Scoring

#### Routine Procedure

Execute routine of your choice using a combination of music and words. An emphasis on practical and effective audience participation (i.e., use of signs, spell-outs, crowd response chants, etc.), especially during the cheer section, is encouraged. Costuming and/or certain props are not allowed [see D) Uniforms and E) Props above]. Up to 1:45 (105 seconds) of the routine may be performed to music. Penalties will be deducted from the final averaged score for going over the 1:45 total music time limit.

#### Total Routine Time Limit

2 ½ minutes maximum

#### Safety Rules

As with all categories, routines in these divisions must follow the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book. Additional Division Limitations may apply to your chosen category.

### DIVISION RULES: SHOW CHEER – ADVANCED

#### Specialty Skills Restrictions

There are no tumbling or stunt/pyramid/toss restrictions in this Advanced division besides those listed in the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book.

### DIVISION RULES: SHOW CHEER – INTERMEDIATE

#### Specialty Skills Restrictions

There are additional stunting and tumbling restrictions in this Intermediate division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations document for all specialty skill restrictions for this division.

## **DIVISION RULES: SHOW CHEER – NOVICE**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are additional stunting and tumbling restrictions in this Novice division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations document for all specialty skill restrictions for this division.

## **DIVISION RULES: SHOW CHEER – NON-TUMBLING (ADVANCED, INTERMEDIATE AND NOVICE)**

### **Division Rules**

The Non-Tumbling division prohibits all standing and/or running tumbling. Tumbling is defined as gymnastic skills that begin on the performing surface including rolls, inverted extended skills (cartwheels, handstands, walkovers, round-offs, handsprings), aerials, tucks (flips), twists, etc.

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are additional stunting and tumbling restrictions in the Non-Tumbling division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations document for all specialty skill restrictions for this division.

## **GROUP STUNT**

### **Number on Team**

Four/Five members, including spotter. There is no Co-Ed division, teams must be all female or all male.

### **Divisions**

Refer to division grid on [usa.Varsity.com](http://usa.Varsity.com) under Competitions/Divisions, Rules & Scoring

### **Routine Procedure**

The participants all must be from the same school. Execute stunts of your choice. Background music is encouraged but must meet music licensing requirements. For further details visit [www.Varsity.com/music](http://www.Varsity.com/music). Additional spotters are not permitted.

### **Total Routine Time Limit**

1 minute maximum

### **Safety Rules**

As with all categories, routines in these divisions must follow the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book. Additional Division Limitations may apply to your chosen category.

## **DIVISION RULES: GROUP STUNT – ADVANCED**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are no tumbling or stunt/pyramid/toss restrictions in this Group Stunt Advanced division besides those listed in the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book.

## **DIVISION RULES: GROUP STUNT – INTERMEDIATE**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are additional stunting and tumbling restrictions in this Intermediate Group Stunt division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations document for all specialty skill restrictions for this division.

## **MASCOT**

### **Number on Team**

1-10 members

Mascots may perform as individuals or as mascot groups. Participants in this category must be the official mascot(s) of the school and be in official mascot uniform or some other form of costume related to the theme of the routine. Proof from the school that an individual is an officially recognized mascot for the school may be required. Additional individuals, (i.e., cheerleaders and/or song/pom, etc.), are not permitted to be visible and/or perform as part of this routine.

### **Routine Procedure**

Execute any type of skit or novelty routine. Use of a theme and crowd involvement are encouraged. Competitors may use music, props, costumes and accessories. All props/accessories (either assembled or disassembled) are limited to "hand-held" in size. A back-drop to conceal props and/or non-visible members providing support for the routine is permitted. This back-drop may measure no more than 10' high x 20' wide and may be assembled prior to taking the performance floor. Moving the back-drop to the performance floor is part of the set-up and breakdown time limit for props. Please, no use of water, glitter or other substances that would be harmful to the floor and/or to another competitor. Individuals assisting with props may not be visible during the routine. Materials that require clean up (i.e., confetti) are not permitted. Pyramids and/or basket tosses are illegal. Tumbling is not allowed. Tossing, throwing or other projecting any type of object into the crowd is not allowed. A 2-point penalty will be assessed for any infraction of the above rules.

### **Total Routine Time Limit**

2 minutes maximum. You will be limited to 1 minute to set-up your props and 1 minute to breakdown your props. (See "Time" section penalty)

## **SONG/POM DIVISIONS – VARSITY/JV**

### **Number on Team**

5-23 members

### **Divisions**

Refer to division grid on [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) under Competitions/Divisions, Rules & Scoring

### **Routine Procedure**

A song/pom advanced routine consists of visual effects, synchronization, clean/sharp pom motions and advanced technical skills. Visual effects include level changes, opposition, group work, transitions and formations. Emphasis should be placed on proper pom/motion technique, proper dance technique, timing, and showmanship. All female members must use two pompons for 80% of the routine (See B – Time). Props and/or costuming are not allowed (See D – Uniforms and E - Props).

### **Total Routine Time Limit**

2 ½ minutes maximum

### **Uniform**

An official school uniform that is worn for game/sideline cheering or performing must be worn. Costuming is not allowed. If an accessory or an article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered “costuming”. A deduction of 3 points will be taken if “costuming” is used. (Exception: Costuming is allowed in the Song/Jazz Category).

### **Safety Rules**

Routines in these divisions must also follow all the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

## **DIVISION RULES: SONG/POM – ADVANCED**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are no additional restrictions in this Advanced division besides those listed in the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

## **DIVISION RULES: SONG/POM – INTERMEDIATE**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are additional technical/specialty skill restrictions in this Intermediate division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Song/Pom and Song/Jazz Division Limitations document.

## **DIVISION RULES: SONG/POM – NOVICE**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are additional technical/specialty skill restrictions in this Novice division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Song/Pom and Song/Jazz Division Limitations document.

## **SONG/POM – FRESHMAN**

### **Number on Team**

5-23 members

### **Divisions**

Refer to division grid on [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) under Competitions/Divisions, Rules & Scoring

### **Routine Procedure**

A song/pom routine consists of visuals effects, synchronization, clean/sharp pom motions and technical skills. Visual effects include level changes, opposition, group work, transitions and formations. Emphasis should be placed on proper pom/motion technique, proper dance technique, timing, and showmanship. All female members must use two pompons for 80% of the routine. (See B – Time). Props and/or costuming are not allowed (See D – Uniforms and E - Props).

### **Total Routine Time Limit**

2 ½ minutes maximum

### **Uniform**

An official school uniform that is worn for game/sideline cheering or performing must be worn. Costuming is not allowed. If an accessory or an article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered “costuming”. A deduction of 3 points will be taken if “costuming” is used. (Exception: Costuming is allowed in the Song/Jazz Category).

### **Safety Rules**

Routines in these divisions must also follow all the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are no additional restrictions besides those listed in the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

## **SONG/JAZZ**

### **Number on Team**

5-23 members

### **Divisions**

Refer to division grid on [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) under Competitions/Divisions, Rules & Scoring

### **Routine Procedure**

A song-jazz routine incorporates stylized jazz dance movements and combinations, visuals effects, level changes, formation changes and dance technique. Emphasis should be on uniformity of the selected jazz style, proper dance technique, timing and showmanship. Props are not allowed (See E - Props). Costuming is allowed in this category.

### **Total Routine Time Limit**

2 ½ minutes maximum

### **Safety Rules**

Routines in these divisions must also follow all the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

## **DIVISION RULES: SONG/JAZZ – ADVANCED**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are no additional restrictions in this Advanced division besides those listed in the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

## **DIVISION RULES: SONG/JAZZ – INTERMEDIATE**

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are additional technical/specialty skill restrictions in this Intermediate division. Please refer to the 2024-25 High School Teams Song/Pom and Song/Jazz Division Limitations document.

## **PEP FLAG/SHORT FLAG (2 FLAG)**

### **Number on Team**

4-23 members

### **Divisions**

Refer to division grid on [usa.varsity.com](http://usa.varsity.com) under Competitions/Divisions, Rules & Scoring

### **Routine Procedure**

A pep flag/short flag routine consists of visual effects, synchronization, twirls, tricks and tosses. Visual effects include level changes, opposition, group work, formations and transitions. Emphasis should be placed on proper twirling technique, timing, and showmanship. All team members must use flags for 80% of the routine. A deduction of .5 will be taken for each dropped flag shaft. A dropped flag is defined as a flag that is unintentionally released onto the performance surface. Props and/or costuming are not allowed (See D – Uniforms and E - Props).

### **Total Routine Time Limit**

2 ½ minutes maximum. Pep/Short Flags will be limited to 30 seconds for entrance (from announcement of team's name) and 30 seconds for exit (from conclusion of routine music). Choreographed entrances and exits will not be judged.

### **Safety Rules**

Routines in these divisions must also follow all the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

### **Specialty Skills Restrictions**

There are no additional restrictions besides those listed in the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

### **Equipment**

To avoid floor damage, pep flag shafts must be covered on both ends.

## **SAFETY RULES REVIEW CHEER/SONG/POM/JAZZ/PEP FLAG**

Routines at all USA competitions must follow the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book, 2024-25 USA High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations or 2024-25 USA Song/Pom/Jazz/Pep Flag Safety Rules and the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom and Song/Jazz Division Limitations.

Submitting an electronic video is the only way to review a routine for potential safety violations. All video review for safety rule legalities, for one-day events, must be submitted 14 days or more prior to the competition date.

For all legality, division limitations, or questions regarding specific performance elements, you may email a video that contains the skill in question.

All emailed videos must include the following:

1. Name of the school and USA competitive division in the SUBJECT LINE of the email
2. Videos should be in either Windows Media Player or Quicktime formats
3. Clear, close-up view of skill in question
4. Include your name, team name, division level, e-mail address and phone number in the body of the email

Cheerleading videos should be emailed to [USARules@varsity.com](mailto:USARules@varsity.com)

Song/Pom and Pep Flag videos should be emailed to [USADanceRules@varsity.com](mailto:USADanceRules@varsity.com)

Note that submission of a routine and/or its elements does not preclude a team from being assessed a penalty while at a specific USA competition, as performances from the video submission may differ from those executed on the competition floor. Submission of a routine does not guarantee that it can be reviewed.

USA rules and division limitations may be downloaded at [Divisions, Rules & Scoring](#)

For specific cheerleading stunt and safety questions that pertain to the NFHS Spirit Rules Book, or to the 2024-25 High School Teams Show Cheer and Group Stunt Division Limitations please email [USARules@varsity.com](mailto:USARules@varsity.com).

For specific song/pom, song/jazz or pep flag/short flag safety questions that only pertain to the USA Song/Pom/Jazz Pep Flag Safety Rules, or to the 2024-25 Song/Pom and Song/Jazz Division Limitations please email [USADanceRules@varsity.com](mailto:USADanceRules@varsity.com).

## 2024-2025 HIGH SCHOOL SHOW CHEER AND GROUP STUNT DIVISION LIMITATIONS

In addition to all rules covered in the “2024-25 National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Spirit Rules Book” the following restrictions also apply to teams entering these divisions:

Show Cheer – Novice and Show Cheer – Novice Non-Tumbling

Show Cheer and/or Group Stunt – Intermediate and Show Cheer – Intermediate Non-Tumbling

Show Cheer and/or Group Stunt – Advanced and Show Cheer – Advanced Non-Tumbling

### **SHOW CHEER -- NOVICE Division Limitations**

#### **TUMBLING:**

Standing tumbling: “Standing tumbling” is defined as any tumbling skill not originating from a cartwheel or round-off.

Limited in difficulty to a standing single back handspring.

Jump/handspring combinations and standing handspring series are not allowed. Connecting rolls and/or walkovers to handspring is not allowed.

Standing tucks and/or aerials are not allowed.

Running tumbling: “Running tumbling” is defined as tumbling that involves a forward step or a hurdle used to gain momentum as an entry to a tumbling skill.

Limited in difficulty to front handspring and/or back handspring series. Flips (tucks), aerials, and punch fronts are not allowed.

#### **STUNTS:**

1. Extended stunts are limited to both feet in the base(s) hands at all times. Both of the top person’s feet must be held throughout the entire transition to/from the extended position.
2. Single leg stunts may not be held or pass through an extended position.
3. Twisting stunt transitions are limited to a ½ twist. (Exception: A single full twisting log/barrel roll is allowed if it starts and ends in a cradle position, does not involve any skill other than the twist, and is not assisted by and/or connected to another top person.) Simultaneously performing a half twist while turning, and/or while bases are turning, is not allowed.
4. All release moves must land in a cradle. Released switch ups are not allowed.
5. The only stunt inversions allowed are:
  - a. Transitions from ground level inversions *up* to non-inverted positions. Example: Going from a handstand on the ground to a non-inverted stunt such as a shoulder sit is allowed. Ground level inversions may not be released from base(s).
  - b. Suspended forward rolls where two people on the performing surface control the top person in a suspended forward roll with continuous hand-to-hand contact and/or hand-to-wrist contact to a stunt, two-person cradle, loading position, or the performing surface. If caught in a cradle, load, or stunt, the new catchers must be in place and may not be involved in any other skill when the suspended forward roll is initiated. During the roll, no twisting is allowed, and the feet of the top person must be released.



- c. Inversions to the performing surface: The following three skills are the only allowable inversions to the performing surface. 1. A cradle to a back walkover out. 2. Prone position at waist level to a forward roll out. 3. A cartwheel from a horizontal position at waist level (there must be a pause in the horizontal position before the cartwheel).

#### **PYRAMIDS:**

1. All single leg extended stunts must be braced by two top persons at prep level or lower. The braced connection must be established at prep level or lower before the stunt passes into the extended level, and constant contact between the top person and the bracers must be maintained while the top person is on one leg above prep level.
2. Any time a top person is released by bases during a pyramid transition, the top person must be braced by two top persons at prep level or below with hand-arm connection only and constant contact between the top person and the bracers must be maintained throughout the transition.
3. Twisting pyramid transitions are limited to a ½ twist.
4. Pyramid inversions are not allowed.

#### **DISMOUNTS:**

“Dismount” is defined as the movement of a top person from a stunt and/or pyramid to a cradle or to the performing surface.

Basic straight cradles, ¼ turn dismounts, and the three specified inversion dismounts (above in stunts) are allowed. Straight pop downs/bump downs are *ONLY* allowed from prep level. *Pop downs/bump downs from one leg extended pyramids are allowed if the top person remains connected to the bracers until the top person is at prep level or lower.* All other dismounts are prohibited.

#### **TOSSES:**

The only body position allowed is a straight ride.

#### **SHOW CHEER – NOVICE NON-TUMBLING Division Limitations**

Non-Tumbling Novice teams will follow the 2024-25 USA Novice Division Limitations for Stunts, Pyramids, Dismounts, and Tosses with the following stunt and tumbling skill restrictions.

#### **STANDING/RUNNING TUMBLING:**

*This division prohibits all standing and/or running tumbling. This includes forward and backward rolls, cartwheels, round offs, handsprings, tucks (flips), etc. Legal inversions into or from stunts will not be considered tumbling. Exception: a back handspring into stunts/pyramids will not be allowed.*

## **SHOW CHEER AND/OR GROUP STUNT -- INTERMEDIATE Division Limitations**

### **TUMBLING:**

Standing Tumbling: “Standing tumbling” is defined as any tumbling skill not originating from a cartwheel or round-off.

Limited in difficulty to standing back handspring series and/or jump/handspring(s) combinations. Flips are not allowed. For example, a standing back tuck or standing back handspring back tuck is not allowed. A punch front is not allowed.

Running Tumbling: “Running tumbling” is defined as tumbling that involves a forward step or a hurdle used to gain momentum as an entry to a tumbling skill.

Limited in difficulty to tucks. Tucks (flips) can ONLY be performed in a tuck position and ONLY from a cartwheel, round off, or back handspring(s). Punch fronts are not allowed. No twisting is allowed while airborne. (Exception: Aerial cartwheels are allowed). The following types of advanced running tumbling skills are prohibited: X-outs, layouts, full twists, etc. No tumbling is allowed after a tuck (flip) or aerial skill.

### **STUNTS:**

1. Extended single leg stunts are allowed.
2. Only a ½ twist is allowed to any extended single leg stunt.
3. All other twisting transitions may not exceed 1 twist.
4. Stunt release moves must start at or below prep level and must be caught at prep level or below. Release moves may not pass above the base’s/bases’ extended arm level.

### **PYRAMIDS:**

1. Pyramid twisting transitions: Only a ½ twist is allowed to any extended single leg stunt (including platforms). All other twisting transitions may not exceed 1 twist.
2. Pyramid inversions: A braced forward, or backward flip is allowed; however, two bracers with hand to hand/arm connection with the top person is required, no twisting is allowed, and the flip must end in a cradle. All other braced flip rules in the “2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book” must be followed.
3. A pyramid braced backward roll is allowed if the top person is inverted (shoulders below waist) before the bases release the top person.
4. Extended single leg stunts may not be braced by other extended single leg stunts.

### **DISMOUNTS:**

“Dismount” is defined as the movement of a top person from a stunt and/or pyramid to a cradle or to the performing surface.

1. Single leg extended stunts (liberty, heelstretch, arabesque, scorpion, etc.) are only allowed up to ¼ twist.
2. Up to 1¼ twist is allowed from a single leg prep level stunt and/or from a platform position.
3. Up to 1¼ twists are allowed from any two leg stunts.

### **TOSSES:**

Limited to one trick only during a toss (i.e., one toe touch). Examples of skills not allowed: A kick followed by a twist, or a ball to an X. Twisting toss is limited to one twist.

## **SHOW CHEER – INTERMEDIATE NON-TUMBLING Division Limitations**

Non-Tumbling Intermediate teams will follow the 2024-25 USA Intermediate Division Limitations for Stunts, Pyramids, Dismounts, and Tosses with the following stunt and tumbling skill restrictions.

### **STANDING/RUNNING TUMBLING:**

*This division prohibits all standing and/or running tumbling. This includes forward and backward rolls, cartwheels, round offs, handsprings, tucks (flips), etc. Legal inversions into or from stunts will not be considered tumbling. Exception: a back handspring into stunts/pyramids will not be allowed.*

## **SHOW CHEER AND/OR GROUP STUNT -- ADVANCED Division Limitations**

Advanced teams will follow the “2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book” with no additional skill restrictions for the division.

## **SHOW CHEER – ADVANCED NON-TUMBLING Division Limitations**

Non-Tumbling Advanced teams will follow the 2024-25 USA Advanced Division Limitations for Stunts, Pyramids, Dismounts, and Tosses with the following *stunt and* tumbling skill restrictions.

### **STANDING/RUNNING TUMBLING:**

*This division prohibits all standing and/or running tumbling. This includes forward and backward rolls, cartwheels, round offs, handsprings, tucks (flips), etc. Legal inversions into or from stunts will not be considered tumbling. Exception: a back handspring into stunts/pyramids will not be allowed.*

To obtain a copy of the 2024/25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book, visit [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org) and click on the “Spirit” activity under the drop-down menu “Activities & Sports”.

Rev. 08/16/24



A VARSITY SPIRIT BRAND

## 2024-25 DEDUCTION SCORING GUIDELINES

SHOW CHEER DIVISIONS ONLY (Does not include Group Stunt, Crowdleader™ Teams, or Game Day divisions)

### **ATHLETE FALL (AF) - (0.5)**

#### ***Drops to the performance surface during tumbling and/or jump skills***

This includes the following:

- \* Hand or hands and/or knee or knees down in a tumbling or jump skills
- \* Head, shoulders, seat down, or other compromising position during tumbling or jump
- \* Tumbling transitions in and/or out of a building skill

This does NOT include the following:

- \* An athlete that trips while walking during a transition
- \* Trips/falls following a controlled completion of a tumbling or jump skill

### **BUILDING BOBBLE (BB) - (0.5)**

#### ***Building skills that almost fall or drop but are saved***

This includes the following:

- \* Top person leans and/or bears weight on a base/spotter and is pushed back up into the stunt/skill
- \* Lowering of a stunt from extended position to prep level (not a timing issue)
- \* Pyramid skills that would fall without the bracer(s) support
- \* Stunts including single based/coed style (unassisted or assisted) that drop to a load in position
- \* Both feet/both hands of the top person come in contact with performance surface during a cradle/prone (excluding one foot or one hand)
- \* Incomplete twisting dismount that lands in a prone (stomach) position

This does NOT include the following:

- \* An omitted skill
- \* Drop in a body position by the top person
- \* Excessive movement by the bases
- \* Balance check by the top person

### **BUILDING FALL (BF) - (1.0)**

#### ***Drops from a building skill or transition***

This includes the following:

- \* Drops to a cradle/ load in/ prone position
- \* Base or spotter drops to performance surface during a building skill
- \* Drops/lowering of a stunt, including single based/coed style skills, in a controlled manner to the performance surface with assistance from the base and/or spotter

This does NOT include the following:

- \* Lowering of stunt from extended position to prep level
- \* Top person remains standing and at least one foot remains at prep level

### **MAJOR BUILDING FALL (MBF) - (1.5)**

#### ***Drops to the performance surface from a building skill or transition by the top person OR more than one base/spotter***

This includes the following:

- \* Multiple bases and/or spotters drop to the performance surface
- \* Top person makes contact with base and/or spotter who drops to the performance surface
- \* Tosses and or dismounts that land in a prone (stomach), upright (feet down), or inverted (head down) position
- \* Top person lands on performance surface (bases are unable to prevent the top from falling to the performance surface)
- \* Skills in which the event spotter is the primary catcher/saves an athlete while falling

This does NOT include the following:

- \* Top person comes in contact with the performance surface during a transitional-stunt and/or pyramid that is continuous without interruption/stopping

### **MAXIMUM (MAX) - (2.0)**

#### ***When multiple deductions should be assessed during a pyramid skill, then the sum of those deductions will not be greater than 2.0***

This includes the following:

- \* Pyramids where a fall continues to affect other portions of the pyramid
- \* Two separated pyramids will result in separate deductions

# 2024-25 LEGALITY JUDGE - SCORING GUIDELINES

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## SHOW CHEER, GROUP STUNT, AND GAME DAY DIVISIONS

### **SAFETY VIOLATION** – (2.0) per occurrence

Given when a skill is performed, or other violation occurs, that is not allowed by the NFHS Spirit Rules

### **DIVISION LIMITATION VIOLATION** – (2.0) per occurrence

Given when a skill is beyond those allowed in the USA Division Limitations

### **PROP USE VIOLATIONS** – (.5) per occurrence

- ✿ Violation of NFHS prop rules. This includes prop use during building, dismounting, tumbling, and discarding of props.
- ✿ Illegal prop(s)

### **GAME DAY FORMAT VIOLATION** – (2.0) per occurrence

Given when skills or elements do not meet the additional skill restrictions for a Game Day routine. Examples include:

- ✿ Exceeding 3 consecutive 8-counts of skill incorporation in the Fight Song routine (excludes College)
- ✿ Stunting or tumbling in the Band Chant division (excludes College)
- ✿ Stunting beyond the restrictions listed for the Game Day routine

**TIME LIMIT VIOLATION FOR TOTAL ROUTINE LENGTH** – (1- 5 seconds over time limit = 1.0 point. 6 or more seconds over time limit = 2.0 points.)

**TIME LIMIT VIOLATION FOR SHOW CHEER TOTAL MUSIC LENGTH** – (1- 5 seconds over time limit = 1.0 point. 6 or more seconds over time limit = 2.0 points.)

**COSTUMING/FOOTWEAR**– (3.0) penalty for each violation of guidelines listed in the Spirit Information Packet.

**UNNECESSARY CHANGE IN PERFORMANCE ORDER** – (3.0) determined by competition officials/directors

**INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/LYRICS/CHEER WORDS, APPEARANCE AND/OR MOVEMENTS** – (3.0) determined by competition officials/directors in accordance with the guidelines listed in the Spirit Information Packet

**BOUNDARY VIOLATION = TUMBLING/STUNTING OFF THE MAT** – (3.0) (Nationals only)

### **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT** – (1.0)

When a coach is in discussion with an official, other coaches, athletes, and/or parents/spectators, they must maintain proper professional conduct. Failing to do so may result in a 1.0 deduction and removal of coach from event. Severity of infraction may lead to team disqualification. Penalty determined by competition officials/directors.

**DISQUALIFICATION PENALTIES** – Examples include violation of eligibility requirements, age/grade requirements, participating on two teams within the same category type/and or divisions, entering/performing in the incorrect category/division, failing to provide proof of music licensing, and severe sportsmanlike conduct. Disqualification will be determined by event officials and the Director of Special Events.

## 2024-25 SONG/POM, SONG/JAZZ & PEP/SHORT FLAG SAFETY RULES

### High School Teams

NOTE: Routines in these divisions must also follow the rules listed in "2024-25 High School Spirit (or Junior Spirit) General Information" and the "2024-25 High School Song/Pom and Pep/Short Flag Division Limitations".

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms for rules and skills terminology.

### General Guidelines

1. All participants agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship throughout the event. The coach of each team is responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents, and any other person affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly.
2. All programs should have, and review, an emergency action plan in the event of an injury.
3. Coaches must recognize the entire team's particular ability level and limit the team's activities accordingly.
4. No technical skills should be performed when a coach is not present or providing direct supervision.
5. All practice sessions should be held in a location suitable for the activities of dance, and away from noise and distractions.
6. Warm-up and stretching should precede and conclude all practice sessions, pep rallies, games, competitions, performances, and other physical activities.
7. The performance surface should be taken into consideration before engaging in any technical aspect of dance. The performance area should be reasonably free of obstructions. Dancers should not perform technical skills on:
  - a) Concrete, asphalt, or any other hard or uncovered surface
  - b) Wet surfaces
  - c) Uneven surfaces
  - d) Surfaces with obstructions
8. The dance team coach or other knowledgeable designated representative should be in attendance at all practices, functions, and games.

### Competition Routine Guidelines

1. **New: For Song/Pom and Pep Flag divisions, a school uniform or a costume may be worn. Costuming is allowed but not required.**
2. When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff (front of the body). If a violation occurs, a 3-point deduction will be incurred (Please refer to USA Spirit General Information).
3. **New Language:** All participants must wear soft-soled, non-marking shoes on **one or two** feet while competing. Shoes must have a solid sole and cover the toe and heel. (Exception: Half sole shoes/dance paws/turners are acceptable in the Song/Pom and Song/Jazz categories. Performers who wear half sole shoes/dance paws/turners while performing do so at their own risk. Shoes that cover the toe and heel are required at all other times when not directly performing). Penalty of marking the floor is disqualification. The performing school will be responsible for any charges that may occur as a result of damage to any floor. (Please refer to "Penalties" in the USA Spirit General Information).
4. **New: Jewelry and accessories are allowed, provided they are secured appropriately to the dancer.**

5. Support braces, etc., which are hard and unyielding or have rough edges or surfaces must be appropriately covered.
6. Props are not allowed. A prop is any physical object used to enhance the overall effect and or theme of the routine. (Exception: pom or pep/short flag)
7. Hands Free Poms: The use of hands-free poms will be allowed. Hands-free Poms are specifically made so that performers do not have to hold the poms but rather the poms are affixed to the performers hand. "Proper use" means bars cannot be in palm of the hand and only an elastic band can be between the supporting hand and performance surface making it possible to safely execute skills. A hair tie, rubber band, or tying pom strings/pieces together will not be counted as a hands-free pom.

### Executed By Individuals - Inverted Skills & Tumbling

Please note that any or all inverted skills and tumbling are not required in any category. If choreographed into routine, please be sure to follow the guidelines below.

1. Inverted Skills: Non airborne skills are allowed (Example: Headstand).
2. Skills with hip over head rotation:
  - a) With hand support are not allowed while holding poms or props in supporting hand(s). (Exception: Forward rolls, backward rolls and the proper use of hands-free poms) See "Hands Free Poms" competition routine guidelines #7.
  - b) Non airborne skills are allowed and are limited to 3 connected skills. Example: 3 consecutive cartwheels are allowed; 4 consecutive cartwheels are not allowed.
  - c) Airborne skills with hand support may not be airborne in approach but may be airborne in descent if the approach is non-airborne (Clarification: A round off is allowed – hands touch the ground before the foot leaves the ground).
  - d) Airborne skills without hand support are not allowed.
    - a) **Aerial/Side somis are only permitted in the Advanced Divisions and Song/Pom Game Day.**
      - i. **New: Front Aerials and Butterfly Aerials are permitted in the Advanced Division and Song/Pom Game Day.**
    - b) **NEW LANGUAGE:** Simultaneously hip over head rotation are not permitted in any division level.
    - c) If a team chooses to use non-hands free poms for aerial cartwheels they **must be moved to one hand**. If a dancer fails to move both poms to one hand or touches down with the hand that holds both poms during the skill, a penalty will be assessed.
3. Simultaneous tumbling over or under another dancer that includes hip over head rotation by both dancers is not allowed.
4. Dropping (from being completely airborne) to the knee, thigh, back, shoulder, seat, front or head onto the performing surface are not allowed unless the dancer first bears weight on the hand(s) or foot/feet.
5. Landing in a push up position onto the performance surface from a jump in which the legs are in front of the body and swing behind are not allowed.
6. Airborne skills without hip over head rotation may not jump from a standing or squatting position with backward momentum landing onto the neck, shoulders and hands.
  - a) Any kip up motion must initiate from the back/shoulder area touching the ground. (Note: This rule refers specifically and only to the "kip up"/"rubber band" skill.)

- b) Kip ups are not allowed while holding poms or props. The proper use of hands-free poms for kip ups is allowed.

### **Executed By Groups or Pairs - Lifts and Partnering**

Please note that any or all lifts and partnering are not required in any category. If choreographed into routine, please be sure to follow the guidelines below.

1. Lifting with poms or pep/short flags is allowed.
2. The Executing Dancer must maintain contact with a Supporting Dancer who is in direct contact with the performance surface at all times. (Exception: Kick Line Leaps).
3. When a skill is above hip level, at least one Supporting Dancer must maintain contact with the Executing Dancer until the Executing dancer returns to the performance surface.
4. Hip over-head rotation of the Executing Dancer(s) is allowed provided:
  - a) Contact between the Executing Dancer and at least one Supporting Dancer(s) must be maintained until the Executing Dancer returns to the performance surface or is returning to the upright position.
5. Elevators, thigh stands, shoulder sits, and chair sits are allowed. Extensions, pyramids, and basket tosses are not allowed.
6. A Vertical Inversion is allowed provided:
  - a) Contact between the Executing Dancer and at least one Supporting Dancer(s) must be maintained until the Executing Dancer returns to the performance surface or is returning to the upright position.
  - b) When the height of the Executing Dancer's shoulders exceeds shoulder-level there is at least one additional dancer to spot who does not bear the weight of the Executing Dancer.  
(Clarification: When there are 3 Supporting Dancers an additional spot is not required).

### **Groups & Pairs - Dismounts to The Performance Surface (Clarification: May Be Assisted but Not Required)**

Please note that any or all dismounts to the performance surface are not required in any category. If choreographed into routine, please be sure to follow the guidelines below.

1. Dismounts are allowed provided:
  - a) At the highest point of the dismount, the Executing Dancer's hips may not elevate above head level and the Executing Dancer must land on their foot/feet.
  - b) The Executing Dancer's hips may not cross the vertical axis while airborne and inverted.  
(Clarification: while free of contact from both the performance surface and other performers.)
  - c) The Executing Dancer is not supine or inverted when released.
2. Toe pitches are not allowed.

Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep Flag questions can be sent to [USADanceRules@varsity.com](mailto:USADanceRules@varsity.com).



## 2024-25 SONG/POM & SONG/JAZZ DIVISION LIMITATIONS

### High School Teams

In addition to the rules covered in the “2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules” the following dance technical restrictions also apply to teams entering Song/Pom Novice, Song/Pom Intermediate and Song/Jazz Intermediate divisions.

For Song/Pom and Song/Jazz - The division limitations cover dance technical skills. For tumbling skills (executed by individuals) and skills done by groups and pairs (i.e., lifts and partnering) please see the Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms for rules and skills terminology.

### Song/Pom - Novice Division

Teams competing in Song/Pom Novice, must follow the below technical skill limitations:

1. **New: Dancers must have 4 counts between the completion of one technical skill to the execution of another.**
  - a) **Example: Dancer does a single pirouette and lands on count 1 - dancer can use transitional steps, choreography, or preparatory steps on counts 2, 3 & 4 and legally execute another skill on count 5.**
    - i. **Exception: chaines & piques in succession.**
    - ii. **Exception: chaine battement/fan**
2. Turns are limited to: Chaine turns, single pique (one rotation) and single pirouette turn (one rotation).
  - a) Single pirouette turns may be executed in passé, coupe, pencil and attitude positions.
  - b) A single pirouette, plie, into another single pirouette turn is permitted but the plie must be clear, or it may be considered a pirouette with more than 1 rotation.
  - c) Turn sequences such as consecutive fouette turns and/or a la second turns are not permitted.
  - d) Axels are not permitted.
3. Leaps are limited to a basic split leap with a step or chasse as the prep. The basic split leap is also referred to as a forward/front leap, jete or saut de chat. **Clarification: Tilt Jumps & a basic stag leap are permitted provided the prep is a step or chasse.** Leaps must follow the below limitations:
  - a) The preparation for the leap must be a step or chasse. (Clarification: A chaine turn directly into the leap is not permitted).
  - b) The legs may be straight or in attitude position.
  - c) **New: The executing dancer/dancers are permitted to release the head back on any permitted leap. The leap can be executed in a different direction as the prep/approach, as long as the prep is limited to a step or chasse.**
4. Jumps (except a turning C jump), Leg hold (with no rotations), kicks, kicklines and illusions are permitted.

5. The following skills are not permitted: Multiple turns (with the exception of the permitted turns), second leap (leaps in 2<sup>nd</sup> position), calypso leap, tour jete, turning C jump, switch/scissor leaps, leg hold turns and axels.

Please Note: For technical skills or combination of skills that are not specifically addressed in the “Novice” limitations, the USA has the discretion to determine the level of difficulty of that skill based on the similarity of other skills for that particular division. **Any limitations specifically addressed below in the Intermediate Division level will also be considered illegal in the Novice Division.**

### **Song/Pom and Song/Jazz - Intermediate Division**

1. **New: Dancers must have 4 counts between the completion of one technical skill to the execution of another.**
  - b) **Example: Dancer does a double pirouette and lands on count 1 - dancer can use transitional steps, choreography, or preparatory steps on counts 2, 3 & 4 and legally execute another skill on count 5.**
    - i. **Exception: chaines & piques in succession.**
    - ii. **Exception: chaine battement/fan**
2. **Technical Skill/Element Restrictions:**
  - A. **Turning Skills:**
    - a. Single and double pirouette turns may be executed in passé, coupe, pencil and attitude positions.
    - b. A single or double pirouette, plie, into a single turn is permitted but the plie must be clear, or it may be considered a pirouette with more than 2 rotations.
  - B. **Turn sequences:**
    - a. You are permitted to do a maximum of two separate turn sequences in your routine, which can be performed by one or more team members. Turn sequences may not be performed consecutively.
    - b. Pirouettes that are performed separately from fouette turns and second turns are not considered turn sequences.
    - c. Traveling turns (i.e., chaine turns, pique turns) are not considered turn sequences.
    - d. Turn sequences are limited to fouette turns, A la Seconde turns and pirouettes only. No other skills besides these turns are permitted within a turn sequence. No other skills can be connected and/or executed immediately out of the last turn before ending the turn sequence.
      - i. Single and double pirouette turns within the sequence may be in passé, coupe, pencil, and attitude positions. Clarification: Touching/holding the working leg during the turn sequence is not permitted.
      - ii. Spot direction must remain consistent throughout the entire turn sequence.
      - iii. Fouette turns, second turns may be performed only as a part of a turn sequence.
      - iv. Floats are not permitted
      - v. Changing spot/direction is not permitted
    - e. Each turn sequence is limited to one 8-count of turning (not counting the prep or ending/completion of the turn sequence).

- i. When a turn sequence starts with a fouette turn or second turn, the 8-count will begin when the working leg opens to second position. When a turn sequence begins with a pirouette turn, the eight count begins immediately.
- ii. The completion of the turn sequence must occur after one 8-count (or in other words, “count 9.”) For example – A turn sequence begins with a second turn and the working leg opens to 2nd position on count “1” the landing/completion of the sequence must finish on the following count “1”.
- iii. **New Language: Dancer(s) must come to a complete stop with both feet on the performance surface. Dancers must have 4 counts between the completion of one technical skill to the execution of another.**

C. Leaps/Jumps:

- a. Switch leaps/Scissor leaps are not permitted.
- b. Leaps/jumps that release the head toward the back must be performed stationary and cannot be connected to any other skill or technical element.
- c. Preparations for traveling leaps and/or jumps are limited to a step or chasse. A chaine turn used as a preparation directly into a leap and/or jump is not permitted.
- d. **New Language: Dancer(s) must come to a complete stop with both feet on the performance surface. Dancers must have 4 counts between the completion of one technical skill to the execution of another.**
  - i. **Clarification: Jump sequences or multiple jumps in a row are not permitted**

**In addition to the skills permitted at the Novice level, the following skills will be permitted or not permitted at the Intermediate level.**

<u>Permitted</u>	<u>Not Permitted</u>
Double Pirouettes (2 rotations)	Triple Pirouettes (3 rotations or more)
Single Leg Hold Turn (1 rotation)	Double Leg Hold Turns (Or more)
Tour Jete	Calypso Leap
Second Leap (leap in 2 <sup>nd</sup> position)	Axels
Surprise Leap	Switch/Scissor Leap
Reverse Leap	Turn sequences longer than one 8-count
Toe Touch	Turning Disc/chaine second jump
One 8-count of Fouette Turns/Second Turns (see #1B above)	3 or more turn sequences in a routine
Kip Ups (with hands)	Floats
Headsprings (with hands)	Ariel/ Front Ariel
	Side Somis
	<b>Multiple Jump Sequences</b>

Please Note: For technical skills or combination of skills that are not specifically addressed in the “Intermediate” limitations, the USA has the discretion to determine the level of difficulty of that skill based on the similarity of other skills for that particular division.

### **Song/Pom and Song/Jazz - Advanced Division and Song/Pom Game Day**

There are no technical skill limitations for this division except for those noted in the “2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.”

### **Song/Pom - Freshman Division**

There are no technical skill limitations for this division except for those noted in the “2024-25 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules.”

### **Pep Flag 2-Flag Division**

There are no technical skill limitations for this divisions except for those noted in the “2024-25 USA Song/Pom and Pep/Short Flag General Safety Rules.”

If you have questions, please email [USADanceRules@varsity.com](mailto:USADanceRules@varsity.com).

## 2024-25 SONG/POM, SONG/JAZZ & PEP/SHORT FLAG GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Note: This document provides terminology reference for the Song/Pom, Song/Jazz & Pep Flag Rule documents listed below:

- 2024-25 Spirit General Information for School Teams
- 2024-25 High School Song/Pom & Song/Jazz Division Limitations
- 2024-25 Song/Pom, Song/Jazz and Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules

### Rules Terminology

**Airborne (Executed by Individuals, Groups or Pairs):** A state in which the dancer is free of contact from a person and the performing surface.

**Airborne Hip Over Head Rotation (Executed by Individuals):** A tumbling skill in which the hips continuously rotate over the head and there is a moment of no contact with the performance surface (Example: Round Off or a Back Handspring).

**Axis Rotation:** An action in which a dancer rotates around his/her vertical or horizontal center.

**Connected/Consecutive Skills:** An action in which the dancer executes skills without a step, pause or break in between. (Example: Double Pirouette or Double Toe Touch)

**Contact (Executed by Groups or Pairs):** When two (or more) people physically touch each other. Touching hair and clothing does not qualify as contact.

**Costuming:** An accessory or an article of clothing that adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine.

**Dismount (executed by Groups or Pairs):** An action in which the Executing Dancer(s) returns to the performance surface or upright position with or without assistance from a Supporting Dancer(s) with whom there was prior contact.

**Drop:** An action in which an airborne dancer lands on a body part other than his/her hand(s) or feet without first bearing weight on the hands/feet.

**Elevate/Elevated:** An action in which a dancer is moved to a higher position or place from a lower one.

**Executing Dancer:** A dancer who performs a skill as a part of Groups or Pairs who use(s) support from another dancer(s).

**Head Level:** A designated and averaged height: the crown of the head of a standing dancer while standing upright with straight legs. (Clarification: this is an approximate height to measure space, and is not changed by bending, inverting, etc.)

**Hip Level:** A designated and averaged height; the height of a standing dancer's hips while standing upright with straight legs. (Clarification: this is an approximate height to measure space, and is not changed by bending, inverting, etc.)

**Hip Over Head Rotation (Executed by Individuals):** An action characterized by continuous movement where a dancer's hips rotate over the head in a tumbling skill (Example: Back Walkover or Cartwheel).

**Hip Over Head Rotation (Executed by Groups or Pairs):** An action characterized by continuous movement where the Executing Dancer's hips rotate over their own head in a lift or partnering skill.

**Inversion/Inverted:** A position in which the dancer's waist, hips and feet are higher than his/her head and shoulders.

**Inverted Skills (Executed by individuals):** A skill in which a dancer's waist and hips and feet are higher than his/her head and shoulders and there is a stop, stall, or change in momentum.

**Lift (executed by Groups or Pairs):** A skill in which a dancer(s) is elevated from the performance surface by one or more dancers and set down. A Dance Lift is comprised of an Executing Dancer(s) and a Supporting Dancer(s).

**Partnering (Executed by Pairs):** A skill in which two dancers use support from one another. Partnering can involve both Supporting and Executing skills.

**Perpendicular Inversion (executed by individuals):** A skill that begins with backward airborne momentum and lands on the hands and head in an inverted position in which the dancer's head, neck and shoulders are directly aligned with the performance surface, creating a 90 degree angle between the head and floor.

**Prop:** Any physical object used to enhance the overall effect and/or theme of your routine.

**Prone:** A position in which the front of the dancer's body is facing the ground and the back of the dancer's body is facing up.

**Release (executed by Groups or Pairs):** An action that results in a moment of time when the Executing Dancer is free of contact from the performance floor and the Supporting Dancer(s) with whom there was prior contact.

**Shoulder Inversion (executed by individuals):** A skill that begins with backward airborne momentum and lands on the hands /shoulders /upper back area on the performance surface and the dancer's waist and hips and feet are higher than his/her head and shoulders.

**Shoulder Level:** A designated and averaged height; the height of a standing dancers' shoulders while standing upright with straight legs. (Clarification: this is an approximate height to measure space, and is not changed by bending, inverting, etc.)

**Supporting Leg:** The leg of a dancer that supports the weight of the body, during a skill.

**Supporting Dancer:** A dancer who performs a skill as a part of a group or pair who supports or maintains contact with an Executing Dancer.

**Supine:** A position in which the back of the dancer's body is facing the ground, and the front of the dancer's body is facing up.

**Tumbling:** A collection of skills that emphasize acrobatic or gymnastic ability, are executed by an individual dancer without contact, assistance or support of another dancer(s) and begin and end on the performance surface. (Clarification: tumbling skills do not have to include hip over head rotation)

**Vertical Axis (executed by Groups or Pairs):** a designated line in space that goes straight up and down and has no slope.

**Vertical Inversion (executed by Groups or Pairs):** A skill in which the Executing Dancer's waist, hips and feet are higher than his/her own head and shoulders and bears direct weight on the Supporting Dancer(s) by a stop, stall or change in momentum.

**Working Leg:** The leg of a dancer that is responsible for momentum and/or position, during a skill.

### **Skills Terminology**

**A la Secondé Leap (Second Leap):** A leap in which the legs open to second position in turnout, so that the dancer's heels are visible.

**A la Secondé Turn (Second Turn):** Pirouette a la secondé is a classical ballet term meaning a "spin with leg to the side" or "spin with leg in second position." A dancer performing a pirouette a la secondé will be turning on their supporting leg with their other leg to the side and straight with a pointed foot.

**Aerial Cartwheel:** (airborne hip over head rotation skill without hand support) A skill which emulates a cartwheel executed without placing hands on the ground.

**Attitude:** A position where the working leg is lifted in the air to the front (devant), side (a la secondé) or to the back (derrière). The leg in the air is bent and is most often turned out so that the knee is higher than the foot.

**Axel:** (airborne skill with axis rotation) A turn in which the working leg makes a circle in the air to passé as the supporting leg lifts off the ground enabling the dancer to perform a rotation in the air and then lands on the original supporting leg.

**Back Walkover:** (non-airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A skill in which the dancer moves backward into an arched position, with the hands making contact with the ground first, then rotates the hips over the head and lands on one foot/leg at a time.

**Backward Roll:** (non-airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A skill in which the dancer rotates backward, rotating the hips over the head while curving the spine (a tucked position) to create a motion similar to a ball “rolling” across the floor.

**C Jump:** A jump in which a dancer uses a deep plie, the legs pull behind the body and are bent, the head is released, and arms are pulled back. The body forms the shape of a “C”.

**Calypso:** (airborne skill) A turning leap in which the working leg extends making a circle in the air as the supporting leg lifts off the ground enabling the dancer to perform a rotation in the air then the supporting (back) leg reaches behind the body, often in an attitude, and then lands on the original working leg.

**Cartwheel:** (non-airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A skill where the dancer supports the weight of the body with the arm(s) while rotating sideways through an inverted position landing on one foot at a time.

**Chassé:** A connecting step in which one foot remains in advance of the other; meaning to chase.

**Chaines/Chaine Turn:** Chaînés or “chaîné turns” is when a dancer is performing a series of turns on both feet, picking up each foot back and forth in order to keep moving in a line or circle.

**Coupé:** A position in which one foot is held lifted and close to the ankle. Also known as Coup de Pied: quickly takes the place of the other; meaning to cut or cutting.

**Developpé:** An action in which the working leg moves through passé (bends) before extending into position; meaning to develop.

**Dive Roll:** (airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A forward roll where the dancer’s feet leave the ground before the dancer’s hands reach the ground.

**Elevator:** When the top person is being held at shoulder level by the base(s). Also known as Extension Prep, Prep or Half.

**Extension:** A fully extended stunt above head level where the Executing Dancer stands with both legs locked out (shoulder-width apart) and one foot in each hand of the base (partner stunt) or each foot is held by a different base (group stunt).

**Forward Roll:** (non-airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A skill in which the dancer rotates forward, rotating the hips over the head while curving the spine (a tucked position) to create a motion similar to a ball “rolling” across the floor.

**Fouetté:** A turning step, usually done in a series, in which the working leg makes a circle in the air and then into passé as the dancer turns bending (plié) and rising (relevé) at each revolution; meaning to whip. Fouetté turns can also be done to the side or in second position (fouetté à la seconde).

**Fouetté à la Seconde:** A turning step done in a series in which the working leg makes a circle in the air and extends at a 90° angle from the supporting leg remaining parallel to the ground as the dancer turns with a plié and relevé at each revolution.

**Front Aerial:** (an airborne hip over head rotation skill without hand support) A skill which emulates a front walkover but is executed without placing hands on the ground.

**Front Walkover:** (a non-airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A skill where the dancer moves forward with the hands making contact with the ground first, then rotates the hips over the head passing through an arched position and lands on one foot/leg at a time.

**Glissade:** A connecting step that transfers weight from one foot to the other; meaning to glide.

**Handstand:** (a non-airborne inverted skill with hand support) A non-airborne, nonrotating, skill where the dancer supports him/herself vertically on his/her hands in an inverted position and the arms are extended straight by the head and ears.



**Headspring:** (an airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) A skill where a dancer moves forward with the hands then head, making contact with the performance surface, then rotates the hips over the head passing through an arched position. It is non-airborne in approach but airborne in descent after hips pass through perpendicular.

**Headstand:** (a non-airborne inverted skill with hand support) A non-airborne, nonrotating, skill where the dancer supports him/herself vertically on his/her head in an inverted position with hands in contact with the floor to support the body.

**Illusion:** (a stationary turn) A skill where a dancer steps onto a standing leg, releasing the upper body all the way forward, lifting the working leg as close to 90 degrees as possible while rotating on the standing foot.

**Jeté:** A skill in which the dancer takes off from one foot by brushing the feet into the ground and swiftly 'whipping' them into the position and then landing on one foot. A jetté can be executed in various directions, sizes and positions.

**Jump:** Movement taking off and landing on same foot or both feet.

**Kick:** Throwing the working leg in the air in a controlled manner, while the supporting leg and body stay properly aligned in the position of choice. Jazz equivalent of a grand battement in ballet.

**Kip Up:** (non-airborne in approach, airborne in decent, inverted skill) A skill where the dancer begins in a supine position, rolls back onto their shoulders elevating their hips off the performance surface and into an inverted position. Using their arms and/or legs, core, and momentum, the dancer thrusts their body in an upward direction away from the floor. The movement is completed by bringing the feet to the performance surface keeping the body inline and following to an upright position.

**Leap:** (airborne skill) A skill in which the dancer pushes from a plié (bend) off of one foot, becomes airborne, and lands on one foot.

**Leg hold/Leg Hold Turn:** A skill in which a dancer extends one leg upward showing flexibility. When executing this skill, the dancer grabs the leg and/or foot of the leg that is extended. To make the skill more advanced, rotations can be incorporated making it a leg hold turn.

**Passé:** A position or movement in which the working leg bends connecting the pointed foot to or near the knee of the supporting leg; meaning to pass. Passé can be executed with the hips parallel or turned out.

**Pencil:** A position of the working leg during a pirouette turn in which the leg is forward, turned out and pointed to the floor. The foot is a couple inches off the floor.

**Pique/Pique Turn:** "Pricked" a step in which a dancer transfers weight onto the pointe or demi pointe of the supporting leg. The working leg is in passé position and turned out. This action can be immediately followed by a turning motion, known as a pique turn.

**Pirouette:** (axis rotation) A skill in which the dancer bends (plié) with one foot in front of the other (fourth position) and rises (relevé) to one supporting leg making a complete rotation of the body; meaning to whirl. A pirouette can be executed in a variety of positions.

**Plié:** A preparatory and landing skill in which the dancer bends, softens his/her knees; meaning to bend.

**Relevé:** An executing skill in which the dancer lifts up to the ball of his/her feet; meaning to rise.

**Reverse Leap:** A leap in which a dancer begins facing back and travels toward the back (with steps or a chasse), then rotates the shoulders and hips to the front/direction the dancer came from and hits the split leap position facing the front/the direction the dancer came from.

**Round Off (Executed by Individuals):** (airborne hip over head rotation skill with hand support) An airborne hip over head rotation skill that takes off on one foot and lands on two feet simultaneously. (Clarification: the skill becomes airborne after the hips have rotated over the head).

**Scissor Leap/Switch Leap:** A leap in which the legs exchange positions (by swinging past each other while in the air), showing a split with both legs in one jump.

**Shoulder Roll (forward/back):** A non-airborne tumbling skill where the dancer rolls with the back of the shoulder and maintains contact with the floor and the head is tilted to the side to avoid contact with the floor.

**Shushunova:** A jump variation in which the dancer lifts extended legs to a toe touch or pike position and then circles them behind the body dropping the chest and landing in a prone support (push up position).

**Stag:** A grand jete in which the front and back leg bend as the body travels through the air. It can also be performed with the back leg extended.

**Surprise Leap:** A leap in which a dancer begins facing back and travels to the side (with steps or chasse) and then rotates the shoulders and hips to the front while also bringing the leg through passé and hits the split leap position facing front.

**Thigh Stand:** Stunt in which the top person stands on two bases' lunged thighs.

**Toe Pitch (executed by Groups or Pairs):** A skill in which the Executing Dancer(s) starts in an upright position with one foot in the hand(s) of a Supporting Dancer(s) and is propelled upward. (Clarification: this is not the definition of a toe pitch back tuck).

**Toe Touch:** (airborne skill) A jump in which the dancer lifts the legs through a straddle position. Hips externally rotate to turn out the legs and the chest is upright. Arms are typically held in a T position.

**Tour Jete:** (airborne skill with axis rotation) A skill in which the dancer takes off from one leg, executes a half turn and lands on the other leg.

**Turning C Jump:** A jump in which a dancer uses a chaine turn to prep into a C jump and the jump is performed while turning.

## **Pep Flag Terminology**

**Dropped Flag:** A flag that is un-intentionally released onto the performance surface. (Clarification: Any part of the flag shaft that touches the floor un-intentionally is a dropped flag. For example: If just the ball of the flag shaft or just the tip of the flag shaft touches the floor for any amount of time; it is considered a dropped flag.

**Flag Shaft:** The pole of a pep/short flag including the end components (ball and tip).

### **Single-Arm Twirls (Can Be Executed with Either Arm)**

**Baby:** This twirl starts the same as the Big Scoop and is the counterpart to the scarecrow, but it goes in the opposite direction.

**Big Scoop:** The Big Scoop starts with the arm starting at the side, shoots out away from the body, travels up starting at feet, continues up torso, across the face and falls behind the head with your arm ending in a 90° angle.

**Chop:** The flag is traveling on the horizontal plane, parallel to the floor. It continues over your head and back around.

**Crank:** A Crank is a wrist twirl, where your wrist executes a “cranking” motion either in front of the face like the beginning of a Drop or behind the head like the ending motion of a Little Scoop. The shaft of the flag rolls between your thumb and pointer finger in order to execute this twirl.

**Drop:** The Drop can be executed as its own twirl or as a continuation of the Swipe. It is essentially the same twirl as the Swipe, traveling in the same direction, except that your arm is constantly at a 90° angle. This causes your flag to only travel down the face fall behind the head and ends away from the head.

**Little Scoop:** The Little Scoop can be executed as its own twirl or as a continuation of the Big Scoop. It is essentially the same twirl as the Big Scoop, traveling in the same direction, except that your arm is constantly at a 90° angle. This causes your flag to only travel up the face and falling behind the head. The Little Scoop’s movement is executed with the wrist.

**Scarecrow:** The Scarecrow starts the same as the Swipe. The difference is that you use your wrist and pointer finger to cause your flag to twirl behind your lower back and legs. To execute the second part of the twirl, think of your pointer finger is drawing a small circle and your palm is facing the back.

**Swipe:** The Swipe is the counterpart for the Big Scoop. Arm starts at the side but shoots out across the body instead of away. The flag continues with flag crossing in front of legs and out away from the body. It falls behind the head with your arm ending in a 90° angle, but the flag end away from the head, instead of behind as in the Big Scoop.

### **Two-Arm Twirls**

**Big Twirl:** A Big Twirl is when both arms execute a Big Scoop at the same time.

**Chasers:** Chasers are when one flag follows the other flag and wrists travel in an infinite sign. The flags can either travel toward you or away from you.

**Parallel Twirl:** A Parallel Twirl is when one arm executes a Big Scoop and the other executes a Swipe. This causes the flags to travel parallel to each other. Parallel Twirls can also be executed when both hands execute a Crank, one flag in front of the face and one flag behind the head.

**Snap:** A Snap is when both arms execute a Swipe at the same time. This causes the two flags to rub against each other, causing a “snapping” sound. It can also be executed without making a sound.

**Windmill:** A Windmill is a variant of Chasers but happens above your head. One arm executes a Drop while the other that follows it executes a Little Scoop. When executing a Windmill, arms are extended past 90° to allow wrists to stay close together above your head.

## 2024-25 LEGALITY SCORING GUIDELINES

### SONG/POM, SONG/JAZZ, PEP FLAG, MASCOT AND SONG/POM GAME DAY DIVISIONS

#### **SAFETY VIOLATION/DIVISION LIMITATION VIOLATION – (2.0) per occurrence**

Given when a skill is performed beyond division limitations, or other violation occurs, that is not allowed by 2024-2025 USA Song/Pom, Song/Jazz, Pep/Short Flag Safety Rules, or violation of Mascot or Game Day guidelines.

**MASCOT PROP 1 MINUTE SET UP/BREAK DOWN TIMING – (1.0) for every 1-5 seconds over time limit. (1-5 = 1 point; 6-10 = 2 points; etc.)**

**PEP/SHORT FLAG 30 SECOND ENTRANCE/EXIT TIMING – (1.0) for every 1-5 seconds over time limit. (1-5 = 1 point; 6-10 = 2 points; etc.)**

**TIME LIMIT VIOLATION FOR TOTAL ROUTINE LENGTH – (1-5 seconds over time limit = 1.0 point. 6 or more seconds over time limit = 2.0 points.)**

**SONG/POM – POM USE RESTRICTION (Poms must be used for at least 80% of the routine)– (1.0) for every 5 seconds under pom usage. (1-5 = 1 point; 6-10 = 2 points; etc.)**

**PEP/SHORT FLAG USE RESTRICTION (Flags must be used for at least 80% of the routine)– (1.0) for every 5 seconds under flag usage. (1-5 = 1 point; 6-10 = 2 points; etc.)**

**PEP/SHORT FLAG DROPPED – (.50)**

**COSTUMING/FOOTWEAR/PROPS/FLAG SHAFT TIPS – (3.0) penalty for each violation of guidelines listed in the General Information**

**UNNECESSARY CHANGE IN PERFORMANCE ORDER – (3.0) determined by competition officials/directors**

**INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/LYRICS/CHEER WORDS, APPEARANCE AND/OR MOVEMENTS – (3.0) determined by competition officials/directors in accordance with the guidelines listed in the General Information**

#### **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT – (1.0)**

When a coach is in discussion with an official, other coaches, athletes, and/or parents/spectators, they must maintain proper professional conduct. Failing to do so may result in a 1.0 deduction and removal of coach from event. Severity of infraction may lead to team disqualification. Penalty determined by competition officials/directors.

**DISQUALIFICATION PENALTIES – Examples include violation of eligibility requirements, age/grade requirements, participating on two teams within the same category type/and or divisions, entering/performing in the incorrect category/division, failing to provide proof of music licensing, and severe sportsmanlike conduct. Disqualification will be determined by event officials and the Director of Special Events.**

Rev. 5/1/24

# CHEER GAME DAY RULES & GUIDELINES

## GENERAL RULES

All permitted cheerleading specialty skills, including tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids and jumps for the Game Day Divisions must follow the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book. 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. Categories/Divisions

There are three stand-alone categories and one combined Crowdleader™ category. Qualification to attend Spirit Nationals is required to compete in any of the Game Day categories below.

#### Stand-Alone Categories

- Band Chant
- Situational Sideline/Cheer
- Fight Song

**Crowdleader™ combined category** (includes Band Chant, Situational Sideline/Cheer, Fight Song)

There is no co-ed split of divisions for the stand-alone Game Day divisions. See 2024-25 High School Spirit Divisions for split requirements.

### B. School/Organization Representation – Refer to same section(s) above.

**Uniforms** – Refer to same section above.

**Uniform Distractions** – Refer to same section above.

**Shoes** – Refer to same section above.

**Make-Up** – Refer to same section above.

**Hair** – Refer to same section above.

### C. Appropriateness of Choreography, Music, Words and Outfitting – Refer to same section above.

### D. Competition Area – Unique to Game Day

- 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.
- Competitions comply with the NFHS & USA Cheer surface ruling that school-based programs may not compete on a spring floor. Approximate floor size will be a traditional mat 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 outside the competition area by a team member.

**E. Music** – Refer to same section above.

**Music Rules/Restrictions** – Refer to same section above.

**Challenge Process** – Refer to same section above.

**Virtual Competition Music Rules** – Refer to same section above.

**F. Time Limitations/Entrance/Exit** – Unique to Game Day

- Stand-alone divisions - Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- Crowdleader™ combined division - Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 3:30 in total.
- Teams may not set up props in advance of any stand-alone category.
- Set-ups for props, signs, megaphones, etc. will be timed in the Crowdleader™ 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.

**G. Video Media Policy** – Refer to same section above.

**H. Logo Usage** – Refer to same section above.

## **BAND CHANT CATEGORY**

### **ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS**

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- Emphasis should be placed on crowd involvement and interaction, as well as entertaining the crowd.
  - All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally/assembly.
  - Incorporated skills (kick, turns, jumps) are used to cue and encourage participation.
- The use of props (i.e. poms, signs, flags, megaphones, banners, foam fingers, and/or rally towels) to lead the crowd is required.
  - Tossing, throwing or other projecting of any type of object outside the competition floor and/or into the crowd is not allowed.
  - No use of water, glitter, or other substances that would be harmful to the floor and/or to another competitor.
- The Band Chant music must be an instrumental band version.
- Camp material may easily be adapted to fit this category. For example, any band chant learned at a 2024 Varsity Brands camp could be used for this routine. Examples might include “Rock ‘N Roll Part II,” “Land of A Thousand Dances,” etc.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the score sheet:
  - Ability to lead the crowd and encourage participation from all audience members.
  - Material is appropriate to the sideline, but also elevated to enhance the entertainment value.
  - Visual effects, variety, creativity, and musicality.
  - Execution (placement, synchronization, spacing, etc.)
  - Crowd appeal, showmanship, and confidence.
- Band Chant performance must be made up of at least 50% cheerleaders. Non-cheerleaders may participate (i.e. song/pom, dance) but may not comprise more than 50% of the total team members.
  - Auxiliary groups (i.e. drummers, band members, etc.) may perform with the spirit squad. These “auxiliary groups” must remain on the gym floor and are not permitted on the carpet bonded performance mat.
- A team may begin on or off the performance floor.
- Timing will begin with the first organized movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first.
- Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
- Sideline/traditional school uniforms are required. Thematic/specialized costuming is not allowed.

### **SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS- BAND CHANT CATEGORY**

- Tumbling and/or stunting of any kind is prohibited, including during entrance and exit.
- Kicks, jumps, leaps, and turns are permitted.

## SITUATIONAL SIDELINE/CHEER CATEGORY (2 elements to this routine)

### ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- This routine requires TWO elements: a sideline cheer and a crowd-oriented cheer/chant/traditional yell/drum cadence.
  - Sideline cheer: response to a game time sideline situation (presented by the announcer). Announcer sideline script will be posted on the USA website.
  - Cheer/chant/traditional yell/drum cadence: a separate crowd-oriented cheer that is not directly related to the situational cheer, but rather an add-on following the situation cheer.
  - The total routine length for both of these elements is one minute.
- Emphasis should be placed on crowd involvement and interaction, as well as entertaining the crowd.
  - All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally/assembly.
  - Incorporated skills (kick, turns, jumps, tumbling, stunts, etc.) are used to cue and encourage participation.
- The use of props (i.e. poms, signs, flags, megaphones, banners, foam fingers, and/or rally towels) to lead the crowd is required.
  - Tossing, throwing or other projecting of any type of object outside the competition floor and/or into the crowd is not allowed.
  - No use of water, glitter, or other substances that would be harmful to the floor and/or to another competitor.
  - Props (other than megaphones) used for rhythm/back beats are not allowed on the mats.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the score sheet:
  - Ability to lead the crowd and encourage participation from all audience members.
  - Material is appropriate to the sideline, but also elevated to enhance the entertainment value.
  - Visual effects, variety, creativity, and musicality.
  - Execution (placement, synchronization, spacing, etc.)
  - Crowd appeal, showmanship, and confidence.
  - Accurate response to the game situation.
- The team may start their routine on or off the mat for the reading of their game sideline situation.
- Timing begins once the situation is read and ends at the conclusion of the second element of the routine (cheer/chant/traditional yell/drum cadence).
- Music is not permitted except for a drum cadence. A live drummer, or a drum track is allowed.
  - Auxiliary groups (i.e. drummers) must remain on the gym floor and are not permitted on the carpet bonded performance mat.
- Sideline/traditional school uniforms are required. Thematic/specialized costuming is not allowed.

### SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS- SIDELINE/CHEER CATEGORY

- No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar tosses permitted.
- No stunt/pyramid inversions are allowed.
- No twisting dismounts are allowed.
- Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
- No running tumbling is allowed.
- Standing tumbling skills are limited to single skills.



## FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

### ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- Emphasis should be placed on crowd involvement and interaction, as well as entertaining the crowd.
  - All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally/assembly.
  - Incorporated skills (kick, turns, jumps, tumbling, stunts, etc.) are used to cue and encourage participation.
    - Skills incorporation (stunts, tosses, pyramids, and/or tumbling) is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts. If the fight song repeats, the incorporation will only be allowed if it is repeated exactly the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill and continue until either the incorporation is complete or the end of the 3rd 8-count.
- The use of props (i.e. poms, signs, flags, megaphones, banners, foam fingers, and/or rally towels) to lead the crowd is required.
  - Tossing, throwing or other projecting of any type of object outside the competition floor and/or into the crowd is not allowed.
  - No use of water, glitter, or other substances that would be harmful to the floor and/or to another competitor.
- 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 for approval.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the score sheet:
  - Ability to lead the crowd and encourage participation from all audience members.
  - Material is appropriate to the sideline, but also elevated to enhance the entertainment value.
  - Visual effects, variety, creativity, and musicality.
  - Execution (placement, synchronization, spacing, etc.)
  - Crowd appeal, showmanship, and confidence.
- 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.
- Sideline/traditional school uniforms are required. Thematic/specialized costuming is not allowed.

### SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS- FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

- No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar tosses permitted.
- No stunt/pyramid inversions are allowed.
- No twisting dismounts are allowed.
- Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
- No running tumbling is allowed.
- Standing tumbling skills are limited to single skills.
- A kick/jump may be performed at any time during the routine.

## CROWDLEADER™ TEAMS

### OVERVIEW AND PARTICIPATION

The Crowleader™ Team routine weaves together the three separate stand-alone categories offered as part of USA Game Day Competition divisions: Band Chant, Situational Sideline/Cheer, and Fight Song. It can be performed by a single team, or a combination of separate spirit groups from a school (cheer, song/pom, pep flags, mascot, dance team, and band).

- Performance must be made up of at least 50% cheerleaders. Non-cheerleaders may participate (song/pom, pep flags, mascot, dance team, and band) but may not comprise more than 50% of the total team members.
  - Teams will be required to quantify the number of different programs that make up their routine (i.e. 25 cheer, 10 song/pom, 4 pep flag, 1 mascot).
  - The number of band participants does not count in the total number of participants in the routine.
  - Auxiliary groups (i.e. drummers, band members, etc.) must remain on the gym floor and are not permitted on the carpet bonded performance mat.
  - Other performance-based and/or spirit groups may not enter the division without their cheerleaders.

### ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

- **NEW!** -- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 3:30 in total.
- This routine requires THREE components performed one after another. Transitions should be seamless and remain crowd-focused. Routine components must be performed in this order:
  - (1) Band Chant
  - (2) Situational Sideline/Cheer
    - This portion requires TWO elements: a sideline cheer and a crowd-oriented cheer/chant/traditional yell/drum cadence.
      - Sideline cheer: response to a game time sideline situation (presented by the announcer). Announcer sideline script will be posted on the USA website.
      - Cheer/chant/traditional yell/drum cadence: a separate crowd-oriented cheer that is not directly related to the situational cheer, but rather an add-on following the situation cheer.
  - (3) Fight Song
    - The routine must end at the conclusion of the fight song music. Additional cheer/chant section may not be added.
- Emphasis should be placed on crowd involvement and interaction, as well as entertaining the crowd.
  - All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally/assembly.
  - Incorporated skills are used to cue and encourage participation.
- The use of props (i.e. poms, signs, flags, megaphones, banners, foam fingers, and/or rally towels) to lead the crowd is required.

- Tossing, throwing or other projecting of any type of object outside the competition floor and/or into the crowd is not allowed.
- No use of water, glitter, or other substances that would be harmful to the floor and/or to another competitor.
- Props (other than megaphones) used for rhythm/back beats are not allowed on the mats.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the score sheet:
  - Ability to lead the crowd and encourage participation from all audience members.
  - Material is appropriate to the sideline, but also elevated to enhance the entertainment value.
  - Visual effects, variety, creativity, and musicality.
  - Execution (placement, synchronization, spacing, etc.)
  - Crowd appeal, showmanship, and confidence.
  - Accurate response to the game situation.
- A team may begin on or off of the performance floor.
  - Props may be set-up prior to the team taking the floor, but teams are limited to 30 seconds.
- Timing will begin with the first organized movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first.
- Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
- Sideline/traditional school uniforms are required. Thematic/specialized costuming is not allowed.

## **CROWDLEADER™ ROUTINE COMPONENTS**

Here are things to keep in mind when choreographing your routine.

### **(1) BAND CHANT**

- The Band Chant music must be an instrumental band version.
- Camp material may easily be adapted to fit this category. For example, any band chant learned at a 2024 Varsity Brands camp could be used for this routine. Examples might include “Rock ‘N Roll Part II,” “Land of A Thousand Dances,” etc.
- Specific skills restrictions:
  - Tumbling and/or stunting of any kind is prohibited, including during entrance and exit.
  - Kicks, jumps, leaps, and turns are permitted.

### **(2) SITUATIONAL SIDELINE/CHEER (two components in this portion)**

- Music is not permitted except for a drum cadence. A live drummer, or a drum track is allowed.
  - Auxiliary groups (i.e. drummers) must remain on the gym floor and are not permitted on the carpet bonded performance mat.
  - Props (other than megaphones) used for rhythm/backbeats are not allowed on the mats.
- Specific skills restrictions:
  - No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar tosses permitted.
  - No stunt/pyramid inversions are allowed.
  - No twisting dismounts are allowed.
  - Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
  - No running tumbling is allowed.
  - Standing tumbling skills are limited to single skills.

### (3) FIGHT SONG

- Teams are encouraged to use their traditional school fight song. If the school does not have a fight song, a fight song from another school may be used. In either case, only fight song music may be used.
  - Skills incorporation (stunts, tosses, pyramids, and/or tumbling) is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts. If the fight song repeats, the incorporation will only be allowed if it is repeated exactly the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill and continue until either the incorporation is complete or the end of the 3rd 8-count. Additional cheer/chant section may not be added.
- Specific skills restrictions:
  - No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar tosses permitted.
  - No stunt/pyramid inversions are allowed.
  - No twisting dismounts are allowed.
  - Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
  - No running tumbling is allowed.
  - Standing tumbling skills are limited to single skills.
  - A kick/jump may be performed at any time during the routine.

### **SAFETY RULES**

As with all categories, cheerleaders in the Crowdleader™ division must follow the rules in the 2024-25 NFHS Spirit Rules Book in addition to restrictions listed for each routine component as part of the 2024-25 Cheer Game Day Rules & Guidelines and the 2025-25 High School Spirit Competitions General Information.

Song/pom, dance, or pep flag team members that are part of the Crowdleader™ division with their cheerleaders must follow the 2024-25 USA Song/Pom/Pep Flag Safety Rules or the 2024-25 USA Dance Safety Rules in addition to restrictions listed for each routine component as part of the 2024-25 Cheer Game Day Rules & Guidelines and the 2025-25 High School Spirit Competitions General Information.

Mascots that are part of Crowdleader™ division with their cheerleaders are not permitted to be involved in stunts/pyramids and must follow the 2024-25 Cheer Game Day Rules & Guidelines and the 2025-25 High School Spirit Competitions General Information.

# SONG/POM GAME DAY RULES & GUIDELINES

## GENERAL RULES

Please see specific skill restrictions below for each category. These restrictions must be followed whether a song/pom competitor is in a Song/Pom Game Day category or a combined routine under one of the Cheer Game Day categories. All skills should be carefully reviewed and supervised by a qualified adult advisor/director/coach.

### A. Categories/Divisions

There is an all-in-one category. Qualification to attend Spirit Nationals is required to compete in Game Day. All-In-One Performance (performed in this order -- Fight Song/Spirit Raising/Performance Routine)

### B. School/Organization Representation

All members of the performing squad must be current members of the official school song/pom team. These must be individuals who performed for games during the appropriate season. (Exception: this will not preclude participation from sister schools for same-gender schools as long as they are official members of the squad.) All Song/Pom Game Day routines are required to be comprised entirely of members of the school's song/pom team. Other performance-based and/or spirit groups may not enter the song/pom only divisions.

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 regard to grooming, traditional and appropriate attire, make-up, uniformity, etc.

**Uniforms** – Refer to same section above.

**Uniform Distractions** – Refer to same section above.

**Make-Up** – Refer to same section above.

**Hair** – Refer to same section above.

#### **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.

**C. Appropriateness of Choreography, Music, Words and Outfitting** – Refer to same section above.

**D. Competition Area** – Unique to Game Day

- Participants may enter from outside the competition area for their performance.

- Tossing, throwing or other projecting of any type of object outside the competition floor and/or into the crowd is not allowed.
- Teams may use poms, but they are not required in the Performance Routine category. Poms are required for all female team members for the Fight Song and Spirit Raising categories.
- The use of signs, flags, banners or other spirit related props are permitted but not required.

**E. Music** – Refer to same section above.

**Music Rules and Regulations** – Refer to same section above.

**Challenge Process** – Refer to same section above.

**Virtual Competition Music Rules** – Refer to same section above.

**F. Time Limitations/Entrance/Exit** – Unique to Game Day

- All In One division - Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 3 minutes, including transitioning from section to section. Each component has a maximum time limit of 1:00 per section.
- Teams may not set up poms 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.

**G. Video Media Policy** – Refer to same section above.

**H. Logo Usage** – Refer to same section above.

## GAME DAY “ALL-IN-ONE” PERFORMANCE

### ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

- This category combines all 3 divisions described below into one performance.
- Teams will perform the following routines in the below order to fulfill the “All-In-One” category:
  - Fight Song
  - Spirit Raising
  - Performance Routine
- Time limitations: 1:00 minute for each routine. Timing will begin with the first organized movement, voice or note of music, whichever comes first. Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement. Timing will be recorded for each routine.
- A team may begin on or off the performance floor for the start of the Fight Song. They must remain on the performance floor for the start of Spirit Raising and Performance Routine.
- Each routine will have a beginning and an end. Teams are encouraged to show spirit to the crowd between each routine.
- The use of poms is required for all female members during the Fight Song and Spirit Raising. For the Performance Routine, the use of poms is permitted, but not required. The use of signs, flags, banners or other spirit related props are permitted but not required.
- If an accessory (i.e. hair bows) or an article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered “costuming.” Costuming is not allowed.
- For each routine, see category description below for routine/judging requirements and specialty skill restrictions

For specific Song/Pom Game Day questions, please email [USADanceRules@varsity.com](mailto:USADanceRules@varsity.com).

## FIGHT SONG SECTION

### 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 for approval.
- 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 use of poms is required for all female members.
- The use of signs, flags, banners or other spirit related props are permitted but not required.
- Choreography should represent a traditional Fight Song that your team performs at games or community events.
- Costuming is not permitted.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the scoresheet:
  - Game Day oriented material
  - Crowd communication skills
  - Incorporation of game day/sideline appropriate skills
  - Formations/transitions
  - Motion strength and placement
  - Spacing
  - Execution of skills
  - Crowd appeal and overall impression

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.

### SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS – FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

- Teams will follow the same Safety Rules as all other USA Song/Pom Song/Jazz Divisions.



## **SPIRIT RAISING SECTION**

### **ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS**

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- A team must start on the performance floor for the start of their music.
- Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
- The use of poms is required for all female members. The use of signs, flags, banners or other spirit related props are permitted but not required.
- The performance should have an emphasis on crowd appeal, encourage crowd interaction and involvement (i.e., yell backs, spell outs, school colors, etc.), and display excitement and genuine school spirit.
- The performance should consist of one or more of the following types of material:
  - Band Chant
  - Drum Cadence
  - Sideline Routine
  - Stand Routine
- Camp material may easily be adapted to fit this category. For example, any band chant learned at a 2024 Varsity Brands camp could be used for this routine. Examples might include “Party in the USA”, “Rock ‘N Roll Part II”, “Land of A Thousand Dances,” etc.
- If an accessory (i.e. hair bows) or an article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered “costuming.” Costuming is not permitted.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the scoresheet:
  - Game Day oriented material
  - Crowd communication skills
  - Incorporation of game day/sideline appropriate skills
  - Formations/transitions
  - Motion strength and placement
  - Spacing
  - Execution of skills
  - Crowd appeal and overall impression

These routines are intended for quick, spur-of-the-moment game day situations. There may or may not be a repeated sequence of choreography. Emphasis should be placed on crowd interaction/involvement and entertaining the crowd. All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally/assembly.

### **SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS – SPIRIT RAISING CATEGORY**

- Teams will follow the same Safety Rules as all other USA Song/Pom Song/Jazz Divisions.

## PERFORMANCE ROUTINE SECTION

### ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute.
- A team must start on the performance floor for the start of their music.
- Timing will end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
- The use of poms is permitted, but not required. The use of signs, flags, banners or other spirit related props are permitted but not required.
- If an accessory (i.e. hair bows) or an article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered “costuming.” Costuming is not allowed.
- The Performance Routine must be in the style of pom, jazz, hip hop, kick or combination of any of these styles.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria, as well as elements noted on the scoresheet:
  - Game Day oriented material
  - Incorporation of game day/sideline appropriate skills
  - Formations/transitions
  - Motion strength and placement
  - Spacing
  - Execution of skills
  - Crowd appeal and overall impression

Emphasis should be placed on crowd entertainment.

### SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS – PERFORMANCE ROUTINE CATEGORY

- Teams will follow the same Safety Rules as all other USA Song/Pom Song/Jazz Divisions.