

# YOUTH & RECREATION CHEER

## RULES & REGULATIONS



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VARSITY  
SPIRIT

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## TEAM GUIDELINES & REQUIREMENTS

- Team must submit a roster with birthdates for each athlete. A copy of this roster must also be brought to registration at each competition.
- Team members must fulfill the age requirement for the division that they are entering meeting the birth year requirement. Proof of Age must be readily available in hard copy or as a pdf at each competition. If a question or protest arises, teams must be able to immediately produce this information to event management or risk disqualification and/or suspension.
- Team must submit a medical waiver/form for each athlete for each event.
- Team agrees to adhere to all event producer rules and regulations, as well as music guidelines.
- All appropriate general safety rules and level rules must be followed for the division in which the team is registered.
- Any violation of the rules and regulations can result in a penalty, point deduction, or disqualification.

## CROSSOVERS

- A Recreation Cheer athlete will not be allowed to compete on more than 3 cheer teams within their organization per competition.
- A participant may only represent one Recreational organization at a competition.
- No more than 25% of your team may crossover from an All Star program at a particular event. An athlete should not compete more than 3 times on any given event day.

## EXHIBITION PERFORMANCES

- Teams that exhibition must adhere to the Recreation Division document and Level Safety Rules.
- A team of less than 5 participants or **that does not meet the age requirements** may perform as exhibition only.
- Exhibition performances will NOT compete against another team and will NOT be scored.
- CheerAbilities (Special Athlete) exhibition teams may only perform level 1 and 2 skills. (CheerAbilities Divisions will not be offered at The Quest)

## USA COACH MEMBERSHIP

1. USA Cheer has developed a comprehensive Membership Program, which includes a background check, athlete protection training, acknowledgement of concussion training with return to participation guidance, a member code of conduct, and safety training courses on risk management and safety rules.
2. Varsity Spirit will require that all school coaches, band directors, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box at our competitions have a USA Cheer Coach or Professional Membership. **At least one coach must have the USA Cheer Coach Membership that include the USA Cheer Youth Risk Management certification course and must accompany the team at every competition.**
3. You must complete your membership requirements before your first competition. Please note that the background check will take 2-10 days to be processed and returned. **Coaches without an approved Membership will not be allowed access to the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box.**
4. When checking in at Varsity Spirit competitions, you will now simply provide proof of membership for each coach from your organization who wishes to go into the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box. Upon proof of membership, each coach will receive a wristband that will allow them access.
5. The USA Cheer Membership is available on the USA Cheer website. Once your membership is complete, you can print your membership card, or save and display it on your mobile device at event registration along with your photo ID. This season's membership will be active until May 31, 2023.

## APPROPRIATE APPEARANCE

**Uniform.** All athletes should be appropriately covered. Pants, skirt or shorts are appropriate bottoms, and cover the hips of the athlete. There must be a minimum of a 2" inseam in all participants shorts. A pair of shorts or skirt should cover the entire bottom of an athlete when standing at attention. If an athlete is wearing a skirt, their bottom must be covered with briefs and the skirt must fall at least 1" below the briefs. Uniform tops must be secured to avoid any possible wardrobe malfunction. Tube tops are not allowed. All tops must be secured by at least 1 strap over the shoulder or around the neck. Uniform tops may not include an exposed midriff. Bows should not be excessive in size and should be pulled back away from the face and not touch the athletes' forehead, to ensure it does not inhibit the eyesight of the athlete.

**Make-up.** It is recommended that make-up and hair style look natural and appropriate for the age of the athlete. Rhinestones are not allowed to be adhered to the body. Making the athletes look older by use of make-up, hair style, or provocative clothing is not recommended.

**Shoes.** All athletes must wear soft-soled shoes, with a solid sole while in warm-ups and competing. (*Example: Sneakers.*)

**Jewelry.** Athletes may not wear jewelry during warm-ups and while on the competition floor. All jewelry, including, but not limited to necklaces, piercings, and rings, must be removed before warm-ups and may not be taped over or be replaced with a spacer. Medical ID tags are the only exception.

## APPROPRIATE CHOREOGRAPHY

All movement performed in the routine should be suitable for a family viewing audience. Inappropriate gestures may include, but not be limited to: slapping, touching and/or rubbing body parts, sticking bottom out at the crowd, aggressive thrusting, positioning of body parts relative to another person, or any sexually specific movement. If the appropriateness of the movement is questionable, it is recommended that the movement is removed from the routine.

## CREDENTIALS AT COMPETITION

When coaches check in at registration, they will be given credentials to wear throughout the competition that will identify them as a coach. Coaches must provide a valid form of photo identification **as well as their USA Cheer Coaches Membership** when checking in. Coaches' credentials must be worn at all times. You will not be allowed to enter the warm up area, coaches' hospitality room (if available at your event) or enter AccuScore without this. Bracelets and/or lanyards attached to bags do not count.

## SCORING

Officials will only discuss a routine and scores of a team with a coaching representative from that team. Coaches/directors may not challenge scores and/or deductions of other teams. Please refer to your Event Producer's guidelines for AccuScore Time Limitations to review scores. After this time period, coaches/directors waive the right to review their teams' scores.

## SPLITTING & COMBINING DIVISIONS

Teams will compete in the division in which they register. Small and large teams of the same type, routine style, age division, and level may be combined.

### COMBINED EXAMPLE:

'Affiliated – Performance Rec- 12 & Younger – Level 2 – Small' can be combined with an 'Affiliated – Performance Rec- 12 & Younger – Level 2 – Large.'

### CANNOT COMBINE:

- Traditional Rec with Performance Rec
- A team of a different age group; *i.e. 14 & Younger with 8 & Younger*
- A team of a different level; *i.e. Level 1 with Level 2*

**An Affiliated team may move into a Non-Affiliated division if they are the only team in the Affiliated division.**

**A team may move into a higher age division if they if they are they are the only team in that age division – Clarification, a team must still meet the age division requirement of the NEW division.**

- Recreation cheer divisions may be split into Small and Large divisions provided there are at least 2 teams left in each division.

Small = 5-15 members

Large = 16-36 members

- Split Exception: If an organization has 2 teams competing in the same division, but one team is small and one team is large, a mandatory split will occur. (If an organization has 2 teams competing in the same division, but both teams are the same size, they will compete against each other.)
- An event producer may further split a division by squad size, if there are at least 10 or more teams in the division. The event producer must clearly identify the number range for the split, and label the two groups, "A", and "B". This split may not occur unless a minimum of 2 teams are left in group A and B.

## ROUTINE TIMING

The maximum total performance time may not exceed two minutes and thirty seconds (2:30) for traditional and performance rec teams. Traditional rec teams also have a maximum music time of one minute and thirty seconds (1:30). Timing will begin with the first word, movement, or beat of music, and end with the last word, movement or beat of music. Choreographed team entrances and exits are not recommended and WILL be counted as part of performance time. If a team runs onto the floor and uses "5-6-7-8" set to get ready, this will NOT be counted as part of the team's performance time.

## MUSIC POLICY

1. I have read and understand the USA Cheer Music Copyrights Educational Initiative and all sound recordings used in our team's music shall only be used with written license from the owners(s) of the sound recordings.
2. For the most up to date music information, visit <http://varsity.com/music>. If you have any questions, cheer teams should email [info@usacheer.net](mailto:info@usacheer.net). Please check Preferred Provider list for updates and changes periodically.
3. Teams must be able to provide proof of licensing, in the form of a printed copy, during registration at the event.
4. For example:
  - a. Clementine – provide team's invoice from camp.
  - b. Itunes – provide screenshot of the song you are using from your purchased playlist
  - c. Music Provider – provide a printed copy of proof of licensing.
  - d. Band Music - If you'd like to perform to a recording of your band playing a single musical composition, you will need to provide documentation that confirms the following:
    - The team has secured a compulsory license to make copies of the recording made by the band or orchestra
    - The band or orchestra recorded the song for and in conjunction with the cheer/dance squad
    - The school principal or dean was aware of and approved this recording
    - The band or orchestra does not provide music to other cheer/dance squads
    - No other musical compositions are embodied in the recording to be used by the authorized cheer/dance squad
5. If your team is featured in the TV 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 sufficient. It should be signed by your program's administrative supervisor. Go to [varsity.com/music](http://varsity.com/music) for more details.
8. If a team does not have required paperwork, they will be given the option to count the routine verbally or perform to an approved track of music or a track with counts (Provided by Varsity Spirit).
9. 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.
10. If there are concerns regarding a certain team's use of music, a Challenge Form must be completed immediately following the team's performance.
11. A challenge can only be made by the official coach of a team competing at the event at which the challenge is being made.

## 12. Challenge Process

- a. All music challenges must be submitted in writing to the event director.
- b. 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.
- c. Fees collected will be voided if challenge is correct.
- d. If the team challenged can provide documentation during the event and can be verified, the fees will be donated to St. Jude.
- e. If the team challenged can provide documentation that requires further review, a decision will be finalized within 48 hours of the event.

13. It is required that each team have a responsible adult at the music station that knows the routine and music (no alternates or team members allowed). This representative is responsible for starting the music and stopping the music in case of technical malfunction or injury. Should an adult choose not to stay at the music table for the duration of the routine, and a malfunction occurs, teams may or may not be permitted to perform the routine again. Clarification: Athletes/Alternates are not allowed.

14. It is not recommended that a smart phone be used for playing music, due to interference that may be caused during a routine. No cover may be on any MP3 player so that a jack may be easily inserted into the device.

15. All teams must provide their own device for use on the event provided sound system. Music should be on a digital music player/iPod/iPhone. CD's will no longer be allowed, and CD players will not be provided at competition.

16. Music must be recorded at the correct tempo and loaded onto an MP3 device.

17. Please make sure that all devices have a headphone jack to connect to sound system and are fully charged, volume turned up and placed in airplane mode.

18. Please ensure that jacks are clean and free of any debris which may impact connectivity. You will need to acquire an adapter in advance if your player does not have a headphone jack.

19. Teams/Mascots may not use Disney themes nor may they have costumes that resemble a Disney character. However, Disney music is acceptable if following the music guidelines.

**Music Appropriateness:** Music or words unsuitable for family listening, which includes, but is not limited to swearwords and connotations of any type of sexual act or behavior, drugs, explicit mention of specific parts of the body, and/or violent acts or behavior are other examples of inappropriate. Removing improper language or words from a song and replacing with sound effects or other words may still constitute 'inappropriate.'

Varsity Spirit will not be responsible if your device cannot be read by the sound equipment.

## 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 Location"). 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 invites 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.

## LOGO USAGE

Teams will not be allowed to use any Varsity Spirit Brand logo including: banners, rings, bows, t-shirts, etc. without prior approval from the Varsity Spirit office. The use of the brand letters will be allowed.

## SCORES AND RANKINGS

1. Individual score sheets are for the exclusive use of each particular judge. Each judge has the responsibility and authority to review and submit his or her final scores and rankings prior to the final tally of the scores for all teams. Scores and rankings will be available only to coaches or captains at the conclusion of the competition. Judges' decisions are final.
2. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the final score. For more information on scoring, score sheet and judging criteria, please visit [varsity.com](http://varsity.com).
3. TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will not be broken.
4. **By participating in a Varsity event, teams give their consent for performances and scores to be made public.**
5. **Varsity TV publishes and makes available all competition routine videos from live-streamed events to recognize the hard work and talent of the athletes competing, and ultimately, to serve and grow the cheerleading and dance community. Due to the sheer number of teams and routines published, Varsity Spirit is unable to accommodate requests for removal.**



## SPOTTERS POLICY

In an effort to promote a higher level of safety for competing athletes, Varsity Spirit will allow programs to provide spotters at Varsity Spirit competitions. We feel that the program is more qualified to provide spotters because of their familiarity with routine skills and safety concerns. The use of spotters is left to the discretion of the coach or gym owner. Programs may use up to 4 spotters for each performance; however, spotters are not required. **Definition of Additional Spotter:** Individuals on the competition floor provided as safety precaution to spot certain elements of a routine.

Additional Spotters:

- a. Should only be used during the stunt, pyramid, and/or basket toss sections. Additional spotters are provided for added safety and should stand at the back of the floor when not spotting those sections. Spotters are not allowed to verbally coach while their team is on the performance surface, perform physical choreography of the routine or assist athletes with their choreography.
- b. Should not touch, assist, or save skills being performed. Additional spotters should only be used to prevent a fall to the competition floor. Any touch, assist, or saved skill will be given a major fall deduction. Additional Spotters are not allowed to replace a legal spotter required for building skills.
- c. Should be dressed so that they are presentable, professional, and distinguishable from the performing athletes. Program provided additional spotters should not wear clothing similar to the performing team's uniform.
- d. Should not dress or act in a manner that distracts from the athletes and their performance.
- e. Should be at least 18 years old and familiar with spotting the skills of the performing team.

**Note:** To provide the safest competitive environment, teams should not attempt skills beyond their ability level.

## INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCE

### UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

1. If, in the opinion of the competition officials, a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the competition equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the competition rather than the team, the team affected should STOP the routine.
2. While masks are not required on the warmup floor and/or performance floor unless dictated by state or local guidance, an athlete may choose to wear a mask. If an athlete chooses to wear a mask during the performance and the mask restricts the athletes view and/or interferes with skills or otherwise becomes a safety concern, the athlete should either secure or remove the mask. If the athlete does not secure or remove the mask, the routine is subject to being stopped by competition officials.
3. **If allowed to perform again, judging will resume from the point at which the injury/interruption occurred as determined by the judges. The routine must be performed full-out from the beginning of the routine. All point deductions accumulated to that point will carry over. If a team prefers not to re-work the routine, at the coach's discretion, they will take the score they have received up to that point. If a skill has not been performed a "0" will be given in the category. Teams that limit/mark skills prior to the point of injury could result in an adjustment in scores based on the skills performed.**

### FAULT OF TEAM

1. In the event a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the team's own equipment, the team must either continue the routine or withdraw from the competition.
2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time. **If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed later, the spot in the schedule where the re-**

performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team must perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.

## INJURY

1. The only persons that may stop a routine for injury are: competition officials, the advisor/coach of the team performing or an injured individual. This is a shared responsibility of all parties involved to recognize an injury has occurred.
2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time. If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed later, the spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team must perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.
3. The injured participant that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless:
  - a. The competition officials receive clearance from, first, the medical personnel attending to that participant, the parent (if present) AND THEN the head coach/advisor of the competing team.
  - b. If the medical personnel do not clear the participant, the participant can only return to the competition if a parent or legal guardian in attendance signs a return to participation waiver.
  - c. An athlete who has a suspected concussion should be removed from the activity immediately and should not be allowed to return to participation the same day of the incident and without being cleared by a medical professional in accordance with state law or organizational policy.
4. In addition, the sponsor/director and all of the coaches attending the competition must be familiar with all federal, state and local laws applicable to such individuals and relating to such individuals' duties and responsibilities regarding the recognition and treatment of injuries.
5. In the event of an injury or emergency, 1 parent or legal guardian maybe allowed backstage during the evaluation process. While backstage, they will need to remain with the athlete or an event staff member.

## UNPLANNED ATHLETE REPLACEMENT

In the event of an absent/injured member of a team, a team may replace that athlete with another athlete from the same organization for the current season, who was not initially on the team's roster. The replacement athlete must meet the age requirements for that division. If the replacement athlete does not meet the age requirements for that division, then the team is not permitted to compete and may only perform in the exhibition division.

## ELIGIBILITY CHALLENGE

Coaches are required to bring documentation of ages for every athlete. If there is a concern regarding the eligibility of an athlete, a Challenge Form must be completed. A challenge can only be made by the official coach, advisor, or director of a team competing at the event in which the challenge is being made.

### Challenge Process:

- a. All athlete eligibility challenges must be submitted in writing to the event director.
- b. There will be a \$100 fee to request an athlete eligibility challenge, which must be in the form of a check made payable to St Jude Children's Research Hospital.
- c. Challenges will be reviewed and finalized prior to awards for the division in which the athlete is competing.
- d. If the challenge is correct, fees collected will be voided. If the challenge is incorrect, fees will be donated to St. Jude.

## GENERAL RULES

- A coach must supervise athletes throughout warm-ups, while on the competition floor, and during awards. It is recommended that athletes also remain with a coach, team representative, or parent during the competition event when not competing.
- All teams within an organization should have a separate emergency response plan for practices and competitions.
- It is illegal for athletes to consume alcohol, narcotics, and performance enhancing substances. If an athlete is taking medication, it is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that the athlete is still capable of executing the routine safely before allowing them to compete. All coaches should be sober when checking into registration and remain free of alcohol and drugs until awards are over. (If a venue is serving alcohol to adults, coaches should not be purchasing or consuming alcohol.)
- Athletes at competitions may only practice on grass, foam mats, or a spring floor. Skills should not be performed on concrete, asphalt, brick, or tile surfaces. All appropriate surfaces should also be flat and dry. (Athletes may also perform skills on Velcro that is adhered to the competition surface.)
- Trampolines and springboards are not allowed to be brought onto the performance surface to be used during the competition. The only props allowed in a routine are a flag, standard flat banner or sign, pom poms, megaphones, and pieces of cloth. Props should be simple, clear, and appropriately include organization, team, mascot, logo, or team colors on it. Athletes may not bear weight on the prop for any reason. A prop may not obstruct an athlete's vision. Athletes may not step on or off of the competition floor to get prop(s) or discard prop(s). All props must be safely discarded. (Ex. Teams may not throw a hard sign from a stunt or across the floor.)
- All athletes must start with at least 1 body part on the performance surface when the routine begins.
- Athletes cannot be exchanged during the routine. Any athlete who begins the routine must stay within the performance surface boundaries during the routine. A team cannot have one athlete start the routine and replace that athlete with a different athlete part of the way through the routine.
- Athletes may not have items in their mouth during warm-ups or while competing, to prevent choking.

## COVID-19 RULES AND REGULATIONS UPDATES

While the final details and schedule of any competition could require up to the day adjustments, and all guidelines are subject to change based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"), federal, state and local guidance, please be assured that Varsity Spirit is committed to delivering the same quality of competition experience for which we are known. We appreciate your understanding of the flexibility this will require. By accepting the Terms and Conditions as the authorized person from my program I agree and acknowledge to abide by the COVID-19 Varsity Competition Rules.

## ROUTINE LEGALITY RULES

For the 2022-2023 season, Varsity Rec will follow the USASF All-Star Rules for all Leveled Divisions.

USASF Cheer Rules:

<https://www.usasf.net/rules>

Teams in the **Open Rec** Divisions will follow the NFHS Spirit Rules, with additional the following additional restriction- No tosses are allowed.

NFHS Spirit Rules

<https://www.nfhs.org/activities-sports/spirit/>

## QUEST CHAMPIONSHIP RULES & REGULATIONS

### The Semi-Final Round:

The Semi-Final Round of The Quest will take place **on Friday, March 10th** at the Walt Disney World® Resort, FL. Teams advancing from the Semi-Final round will compete in the Final Round on Saturday, March 11th. The Quest reserves the right to split divisions based on size. All split divisions will be recombined in the Final Round. Below is the number of teams that will advance from Semi-Finals to Finals based on division size:

- All divisions with 10 or less teams in Semi-Finals will have no more than 5 teams advance to finals. \*In the event of a tie for the 5th spot, all teams tied for the 5<sup>th</sup> spot will advance to Finals.
- All divisions with 11 – 19 teams in Semi-Finals will have 50% of the division advance to finals.
- All divisions with 20 – 30 teams in Semi-Finals will have no more than 10 teams advance to finals. \*In the event of a tie for the 10th spot, all teams tied for the 10<sup>th</sup> spot will advance to Finals.
- Once registration is FINAL, division with 31 or more teams in Semi-Finals will be evaluated to consider advancing additional teams.

### The Final Round:

The Final Round of The Quest will take place on **Saturday, March 11th** at the Walt Disney World® Resort, FL. Teams advancing from the Semi-Final rounds will face off to determine who will be named The Quest Recreational Champion. Ties will not be broken at The Quest– in the event that there is a tie for first place, The Quest will name Co-Champions.

### APPEARANCES, ENDORSEMENTS, AND PUBLICITY

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

### AWARDS AND PRIZES

- All athletes: Commemorative Quest medallions
- All teams: Quest Qualifier banners
- Teams in finals: Full sized team banner
- 1st-3rd place teams: Individual sized placement banners
- 1st place teams: Full sized championship banner and Quest Championship rings

### Tournament Facility

The competition is scheduled to be held at Disney's Wide World of Sports® Complex. The tournament officials shall have the right to alter the time and location of the competition in the event changes become necessary due to inclement weather, facility problems, television production requirements, or any other situation deemed by the tournament officials to be essential to the successful execution of the championship.