NATIONAL CHEERLEADERS ASSOCIATION

BY VARSITY SPIRIT

NCA HIGH SCHOOL NATIONALS

NCA HIGH SCHOOL NATIONALS 2027

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FORT WORTH, TX



2026-2027 NCA

SCHOOL & RECREATIONAL

RULES & REGULATIONS

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These Rules and Regulations are the exclusive property of Varsity Spirit and may not be reproduced, in part or in whole, for events not sponsored and approved by Varsity Spirit.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Varsity Spirit encourages and supports sportsmanship, integrity and fairness among participants and coaches/owners/directors in all facets of team practice and performance. We strive to uphold the highest standards and promote this to the best of our abilities and believe that coaches are instrumental in promoting and instilling this among their respective team members.

To ensure the most positive experience for all attendees, Varsity Spirit asks that all participants, coaches, gym owners, directors and spectators adhere to and know the Code of Conduct and Prohibited Items for all Regional, Virtual, and Championships events.

To review the entire policy please click here: Varsity Spirit - Safety

EVENT ELIGIBILITY

Varsity Spirit will require that all coaches, directors, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warm up area, backstage, coaches' box, or athlete areas at our competitions have required credentialing, background check, and safeguarding as required by each event.

To review the entire eligibility policy please click here: Varsity Spirit - Event Eligibility

EVENT GUIDELINES

The coach/director of each team is responsible for understanding and following the Event Guidelines. Event Guidelines include:

- General Guidelines
- Safety Guidelines
- Music Guidelines
- Interruption of Performance
- Competition Area
- Warm Up Room Policy
- Spotter Policy

To review additional information, click here: Varsity Spirit - Event Guidelines

EVENT POLICIES

All attendees are expected to follow event policies to ensure a respectable and secure environment.

To review the event policies, click here: Varsity Spirit - Event Policies

DIVISIONS

NCA offers the following Divisions at all Regional and Virtual Events and our National Championship Event. See our School Divisions Page on the NCA Divisions, Rules & Scoring Page of our website for more information

Recreational Divisions- NCA offers 3 age groups for Novice Crowd Leading, 3 age groups for Intermediate Crowd Leading and 1 Game Day Recreational division. Additional splits may be made at the Event Directors discretion if/when at least 2 teams would compete in each split division. This division split would be used to then separate our affiliated rec team.

All Junior High/Middle School Divisions- 9th Grade and Below

- Novice/Intermediate/Advanced Crowd Leading Divisions
- Novice/Intermediate Non-Building Divisions
- Intermediate Non-Tumbling Divisions
- Novice/Intermediate/Advanced Performance Divisions
- Game Day Division

All Junior Varsity/Freshman Divisions- 11th Grade and Below

- Novice/Intermediate/Advance Crowd Leading Divisions
- Intermediate Non-Tumbling Divisions
- Novice/Intermediate/Advanced Performance Divisions
- Game Day Division

All Varsity Divisions- 9th-12th Grade

- Novice/Intermediate/Advanced Crowd Leading Divisions
- Novice/Intermediate/Advanced Non-Building Divisions
- Intermediate/Advanced Non-Tumbling Divisions
- Novice/Intermediate/Advanced Performance Divisions
- Game Day and Game Day Rally Divisions

All Varsity Coed Divisions- 9th-12th Grade

- Intermediate/Advanced Crowd Leading Divisions
- Intermediate/Advanced Non-Tumbling Divisions
- Intermediate/Advanced Performance Divisions
- Game Day Divisions

DIVISION POLICY

1. A participant may NOT compete in more than one Performance Division or Crowd Leading Division within the School Cheer categories at the same championship event.
    a. Example: An athlete may not compete on both a Junior Varsity Performance team and a Varsity Performance team at the same event.
2. NCA strongly recommends that you have an alternate (not a member of another competing squad at the same event), who is prepared to substitute in the event of injury, probation, etc. No cheerleader may represent more than one School Performance Division Team, even in the event of injury or emergency. Once a team checks into the championship, the team may not be allowed to change divisions due to an injury. Note: Cheerleaders may compete in a Performance **OR** Crowd Leading Division **AND** in the Game Day Divisions.
3. A School may, however, have multiple teams within the same division type if they meet all other division requirements and have no cross overs between these teams.

4. Division splits will be made when the Event Director deems the split is in the best interest of providing a competitive environment. Performance/ Crowd Leading Divisions will be split when the following occur:
    a. Regional Event- If at least 5 or more teams are registered in a division with at least 2 teams remaining in each division split. If less than 2 teams are registered in a division, teams may be combined into same age/size division
    b. National Event- If at least 10 or more teams are registered in a division with at least 3 or more teams remaining in each division split. See our National Event section for more details on larger divisions/splits.
    c. Please visit nca.varsity.com for a complete listing of divisions for all NCA regional and Virtual events and our NCA National Championship Event. NCA SCHOOL DIVISIONS

ELIGIBILITY POLICY

1. High School/Junior High Division squads must consist entirely of students who have not graduated from high school. Divisions are determined by the grade of the participants at the time of the competition, regardless of the participant's current age unless they are competing in the Traditional Rec division. See Rec division Guidelines for the Rec division Age Restrictions.

2. Generally, every member of a team representing a school must be enrolled at that school, must be on a team officially representing the school and must perform in the official uniform of that school. All exceptions to this rule must receive written approval from NCA at least 2 weeks prior to competition. In an approved exception, a cheerleader must be a full- time member of the competing team and may not represent any other school-based team throughout the entire season. Promoting cheerleaders from other campuses for the sole purpose of competition will not be allowed. Members must be officially recognized by the competing school's administration as a member of the competing team's cheerleading squad. Athletes are NOT permitted to compete on two different school /rec teams at the same NCA Regional event or at NCA High School National Championship Event.

3. The lowest official grade level for all athletes participating in high school divisions is listed as 9th grade. However, athletes younger than 9th grade will be allowed to participate in High School Divisions if they are enrolled in the school they are representing, are recognized as full-time cheerleaders for that school and receive written permission from NCA prior to the competition. Teams competing in Rec divisions will not have to adhere by the standard eligibility requirements. Please see the Traditional Rec Divisions and additional Guidelines below.

4. In fairness to all, NCA strictly enforces its age/grade requirements for each division. NCA reserves the right to assess a penalty, disqualify, reclaim any and all awards and/or remove video appearance for any team found to be in violation of the eligibility policy, whether before, during or after the event. A Team Roster Form will be sent to all coaches participating in an NCA Championship. **One roster must be completed per team, and should include each participant's name, age, grade and birth date**. **This form must be signed and given to NCA during the event check-in. A school representative must sign and date this form. For High School and Junior High teams these forms must be notarized by school administration. The Team Roster Form will be reconciled against the Release and Waiver Forms to ensure all members are accounted for.**

RECREATIONAL GUIDELINES AND DIVISIONS

Affiliated Recreational Divisions

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

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

SCHOOL REPRESENTATION

We recommend that the team displays an overall behavior conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school with traditional and appropriate attire suitable for all athletes. Any violations to the restrictions below to Uniforms, Make-up or Hair and Bows will result in a reduction of the School Representation score.

1. UNIFORMS
    a. All participant uniforms must cover the midriff when standing at attention. Sheer, mesh, fringe and other "see through" material is not a legal midriff covering. Does not apply to color guard that attends with the Pep Band.
    b. A traditional sideline uniform (that covers the midriff when standing at attention and has an element that is identifiable to your school – colors, logos, letters, mascot, etc.) should be worn in all divisions. Costuming is not allowed.
    c. Cheerleaders must wear athletic shoes.
    d. Teams may not use Disney themes, nor may they have costumes that resemble a Disney character. However, Disney music is acceptable if it follows the music guidelines. Any use of Disney music requires prior approval and must be sent to musicinfo@varsity.com at least one month prior to your first competition.

2. MAKE-UP
    a. If worn, make-up should be appropriate for both the performance and age of the athletes.

3. HAIR
    a. Hair for all athletes must be secured off the face.
    b. Bows are not required. If worn, bows must:
        - Must be securely fastened and appropriate for the activity.
        - Be positioned in a manner to minimize risk for all participants.

All facets of a performance or routine, including choreography, music selection, outfitting (cheerleading), 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. Outfitting for cheerleading performances should follow traditional dress standards. In general, school performances, including but not limited to the actual routine, signs, cheers, chants and hand signals/gestures, should adhere to outfitting, performance and music guidelines and criteria in place and approved by the administration or institution to which the school team belongs.
Any uniform or music in which the appropriateness is questionable or with which uncertainty exists should be submitted to NCA for approval. Because multiple performances of the same routine will generally lack distinction, NCA is not able to approve with absoluteness the appropriateness of choreography (since movements can be easily modified, NCA could feasibly approve a particular movement when viewed on a video or in person, only to have it performed differently during competition). However, choreography, if questionable, may be submitted to NCAscoring@varsity.com for feedback.
Cheer words should incorporate school pride, honor, and tradition as well as sportsmanship in their cheer. Cheers that are negative, insulting to other teams or the judges may reflect a lower School Representation score.

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

1. Teams and individuals are encouraged to move on and off the floor as quickly as possible and will be limited to 30 seconds for each. Penalties will be assessed as follows: 1-5 seconds over = .25-point penalty; 6 or more seconds over = .5-point penalty. Official timing will begin when the first athlete touches the mat or performance area.

2. All team breaks, rituals, and traditions need to take place prior to entering the mat.
3. Teams should not have choreographed movements to enter the stage. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures.
4. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team's performance. Any team in violation will receive a deduction. Excessive celebration includes but is not limited to team huddles, alternates/coaches entering the competition floor, drops to the floor, break dancing, head/hair swinging, split drops, inappropriate gestures, and/or similar moves.

TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Timing will begin with the first choreographed, movement, voice or note of music by the team after they are officially announced and have taken the floor. This includes any formal, organized entrances. Cheerleaders must have at least one foot on the performing surface when the routine starts.
2. Timing will end with the last choreographed movement, voice or note of music by the team, whichever comes last.
3. If a team exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed for each violation. See our deductions and violations sheet for a breakdown of overtime violations for each division offered at NCA Events. NCA DEDUCTIONS AND VIOLATIONS

PERFORMANCE/ CROWD LEADING

- Each team will perform a choreographed routine not to exceed 2 minutes and 30 seconds (150 seconds).
- **Up to 1 minute and 45 seconds (105 seconds)** of the routine may be performed to music. No voice-overs or words may be recorded to make the team's vocal projection sound louder.

GAME DAY/ GAME DAY RALLY

- The maximum performance time must not exceed 3 minutes. (180 seconds)

For Game Day routines, timing of the routine will NOT include the team spiriting, rallying, or individuals performing jumps, kicks, tumbling or single-based lifts but will begin with the first group movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first.

COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. NCA Competitions comply with the NFHS and USA Cheer Safety surface ruling that school-based programs may not compete on a spring floor. Most NCA Competitions will have a Competition Area measuring 42' deep by 54' wide carpet-bonded foam floor (9strips). See each event for confirmation of the floor type and size.
2. Participants must start in the competition area with at least one foot on the ground.
3. All permitted skills (stunts, pyramids, tumbling etc.) must be performed on the competition mat.
4. Poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners or other approved props may be placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member. Please see the deduction explanation sheet for additional Prop Restrictions.
5. Any team member who leaves the performance surface during the performance will receive a boundary violation. See deductions and violations for other specific boundary violation explanations NCA School Deductions & Violations
6. If a boundary violation has been assessed, the judges' decisions are final and will not be reviewed.
7. The center will be marked on all performance surfaces. Center markers will not be allowed. This includes but is not limited to stuffed animals, toys, banners, etc. Teams are prohibited from bringing any non-used props to the performance area.
8. Coaching staff, parents, fans and/or other members of the performing team entering the competition boundary before, during or after a performance is not allowed. The only people allowed on the performance floor are the competitors and competition personnel.

PROPS

Use of props in the Performance/ Crowd Leading and Game Day divisions are limited to flags, megaphones, poms, signs, and other **traditional** sideline props (this includes rally towels, body flags and foam fingers).

- Props may not be thrown into the crowd
- Props cannot bear the weight of the performer
- No air horns or artificial noise makers are allowed
- All equipment tips on flagpoles must be padded or taped
- All props must be able to fit through a standard size (36") single door
- Props may be discarded off the performance surface but not hit/banged on the floor outside the performance area

If you have specific questions about the legality of your prop, please contact ncascoring@varsity.com. We may request a video submission using our pre event legality review process.

CROWD LEADING & PERFORMANCE ROUTINE REQUIREMENTS

1. All cheerleading skills including tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids, and jumps must follow the NFHS Safety Guidelines. All skills should be carefully reviewed and supervised by a qualified adult coach. See specific skill restrictions for each category.
2. Cheer words should be practical, and the flow of words should be easy to understand by the crowd and judges.
3. In Performance Divisions, **A maximum of TWO mascots may participate and will not count toward the participant count, only if they are two distinct mascots representing the school.** mascots will not count towards participant count. Mascots must be appropriately attired so their mobility, vision, etc. are not impaired. Mascots cannot participate in stunts, pyramids, or tumbling skills in any division.
4. The Crowd Leading divisions will follow the NCA Crowd Leading Division Guidelines along with the Novice, Intermediate or Advanced level restrictions and requires a cheer portion that emphasizes crowd- leading ability.
5. Scoring Guidelines available on our website to help guide you in understanding our ranges.
6. For additional division explanations including an in depth break down of each score sheet, be sure to check out our Division, Rules and Scoring Page at NCA.varsity.com NCA Rules, Scoring & Divisions - National Cheerleaders Association

*Performance/Crowd Leading sample score sheets are available online.

NCA SKILL RESTRICTED DIVISIONS

NOVICE AND INTERMEDIATE

In addition to NFHS rules and our Advanced divisions, NCA offers both Novice and Intermediate Level Restrictions for our Performance/Crowd Leading Divisions. Be sure to check out these level restrictions found on our Division, Rules and Scoring page of our website NOVICE AND INTERMEDIATE LEVEL RESTRICTIONS

NON- TUMBLING

In the Non-Tumbling division, will follow the above NCA Crowd Leading Division Guidelines and score sheet will prohibit all tumbling, except for inversions into or from load in positions, stunts and pyramids. Tumbling is defined as any skill with feet over head rotation. **Exception: a back handspring entry into stunts / pyramids will not be allowed.** Non-Tumbling divisions may not be eligible for certain specialty awards.

NON- BUILDING

In the Non- Building division, no partner stunts, pyramids or tosses are allowed. If an athlete is ever lifted off the performing surface by another athlete or athlete, it would be considered a 'building skill,' and therefore illegal.

TRADITIONAL REC and JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tradition Rec and Junior High/ Middle School Divisions will be restricted from performing any type of toss or waist level cradles- **See usacheer.org** for more information on these additional skill restrictions. This division is for the Recreational Teams as well as any

Elementary aged programs looking to register at an NCA School Event.

GAME DAY DIVISIONS

1. The incorporation of stunts/tumbling is required in the Crowd Leading and Fight Song sections if the division permits. If there are no skills (stunts and/or tumbling) performed, a score of 0 will be given for the skills categories.
2. All cheerleading skills including tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids, and jumps must follow the NFHS Guidelines. All skills should be carefully reviewed and supervised by a qualified adult coach.
3. Teams may not set up props in advance of any category.
4. Teams competing in the Game Day Rally Division will follow a structure identical to the other Game Day Divisions, with the exception of the fact that this division encourages the use of sideline cheerleaders, dancers, school bands, drumlines, and mascots, etc.
5. In all Game Day Divisions all participants on the performance surface will count as a member of the team. This includes band members, flag runners, etc. **A maximum of TWO mascots may participate and will not count toward the participant count, only if they are two distinct mascots representing the school.**
6. Mascots/Flag Runners do not affect if a team is All Girl or COED division. All other participants WILL determine if a team is All Girl or COED except for the additional school programs listed below for Game Day Rally.
7. Mascots/Flag Runner must be appropriately attired so their mobility, vision, etc. are not impaired. Only cheerleaders may participate in stunts, pyramids, and all tumbling skills.
8. Running Tumbling is not permitted during entry or exit of the performing surface
9. Spirited crowd leading interaction between each section is encouraged to continue the game day feel. Stunts are not allowed as a transition before/between sections, including the team's entry to the floor and any time before starting the performance. Each section should have a beginning and end. Note: Tumbling and single-based lifts are allowed anytime during the performance except during the Band Chant and still must be within the 3 8-count limit in Fight Song.

GAME DAY BAND CHANT REQUIREMENTS

1. Traditional school band chant(s).
2. Incorporation of props such as signs, poms, megaphones, flags, etc.
3. Recorded band music must be used.
4. Timing will begin with the first organized movement, voice or note of music, whichever comes first and end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
5. Camp material may be easily adapted to fit this category.

SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS

1. Tumbling and/or stunting of any kind is prohibited during the Band Chant Section.
2. Dance skills (i.e. turns, leaps, kicks, etc.) are permitted.

GAME SITUATION RESPONSE

Each team will respond to audio cues by a game announcer, as heard at football and basketball games. To imitate the Game Day environment, audio cues will include an announcer-lead situational cue to which the team will show a definitive OFFENSE or DEFENSE response. Squads should focus on crowd effectiveness, motion technique and skills relevant to game day. A general response would not meet the criteria.

*Regardless of the sport, you will receive credit for the Game Situation Response if your chant matches the cue given. (Ex- If your cue is an OFFENSE Football chant and you respond with an OFFENSE Basketball chant, you will still receive credit for this category). Your Game Day Situational Response score will be determined by the following criteria:

SITUATIONAL SCORING

- **Correct/Intricate Response = 5.0 (TWO POINTS REFERENCING offense or defense and other supporting action- i.e., Offense Move That Ball)**
- **Correct/Generic Response = 4.0 (Interchangeably only states offense or defense or only states an offensive or defensive action)**
- **Incorrect or General Response = 2.0 (Responds incorrectly or with a response neither Offensive or defensive)**

Below are some examples of the announcer-lead situational cues:

OFFENSE SIDELINE:

1. "And that's another (team)- FIRST DOWN."
2. "The (team) keeps the drive alive with that FIRST DOWN play."
3. "What a catch (or run)! That sets up the (team) to SCORE."
4. "The (team) takes control of the ball on their own 25-yard line."
5. "It's 1st and 10 for the (team)."
6. "It's a close game and the (team) are driving down the field for a SCORE."
7. "We're down to the final minute, the (team) needs a TOUCHDOWN for the win"
8. "Pass complete to #7 for another (team) -FIRST DOWN"
9. "That run results in another (team)- FIRST DOWN"

DEFENSE SIDELINE:

1. "The (team) needs to make a STOP to seal the win."
2. "It's 3rd down and the (team) needs to make a big STOP."
3. "After that turnover, the (team) needs to make a big STOP."
4. "The (team) needs a big STOP here, Let's Hold 'Em!"
5. "Our opponent has the ball and it's up to the (team) to STOP them"
6. "That will bring 4th down and short, the (team) need a STOP!"

GAME DAY CHEER REQUIREMENTS

1. No music may be used during the performance. Live drummer and/or drum track is allowed. All specialty skills (i.e., jumps, stunts, tumbling) must be performed within a safe distance of all drummers. Drummers cannot be involved in any type of specialty skill.
2. Each team's presentation must include at least two components required from the following: cheers, chants, traditional yells, and/ or drum cadences.
3. Teams should utilize all areas of their squad's crowd-leading strengths. The use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners is encouraged.
4. Emphasis on crowd involvement and practicality. All material should be suitable for a game or pep rally.

GAME DAY FIGHT SONG REQUIREMENTS

1. Teams are encouraged to use their traditional team fight song.
2. Props (poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners) are permitted in this category.
3. Performances is limited to three (3) eight counts of skills (stunts and/or tumbling). The three (3) eight counts must be consecutive. During the fight song, the three (3) eight counts may be repeated, if performed identically. The three (3) eight counts of skills include loading and dismounting from stunts (unless routine finishes in stunt/pyramid).
4. Building Skills must be stationary prior to the end of the 3rd 8-count and may remain stationary until the end of the routine.
5. Timing will end with the last organized movement, voice or note of music, whichever comes first and end with the last beat of music or organized movement.
6. Dismounts following the completion of the routine will not be included for timing purposes. Any choreographed dismounts will continue the timing of the routine. Example – Coed toe touch pop offs performed together, in unison would be considered choreographed.

SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS FOR ALL GAME DAY SECTIONS

- Basket and waist level tosses are NOT allowed. Examples of toss skills allowed are quick toss stunts, toss coed skills, and toss toe touches (require a spotter)
- Inversion stunts are NOT allowed
- Twisting released dismounts are NOT allowed
- Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
- Twisting Released Stunt Transitions are NOT allowed.
- Running tumbling is NOT allowed
- Single standing tumbling is allowed and cannot be connected. A single tumbling skill can only be connected to a single jump. The only standing tumbling skills that are allowed include back handspring, back tuck, forward roll, front walkover, cartwheel, standing aerial, jump back handspring, and jump tuck.

*Game Day sample score sheets are available online.

GAME DAY RALLY DIVISION SPECIFICS

1. **To enter the Game Day Rally Division, the performance must include the following in addition to the cheer program:**
    - Incorporation of additional spirit group(s):
        - Minimum 20% band/drumline/dance team (can be one of these or mixed)
        - **Plus** At least 1 mascot/color guard/majorettes/student spirit group
2. Only cheerleaders may participate in stunts and pyramids. Dancers/Majorettes may incorporate tumbling skills that are allowed per the NDA Rulebook as well as the additional Game Day skill restrictions listed in the NDA Rulebook. All other members of the Spirit Program may not participate in any stunt, pyramid, or tumbling skills.

MASCOT DIVISIONS

MASCOT COMPETITION

1. Competition is open to all Middle School and High School mascots (Schools may have more than one mascot compete if each character maintains their own identity- (Ex. Mr. Wuf & Ms. Wuf). Division splits will be dependent upon registrations.
2. Only ONE costumed mascot can perform. NO other live props are allowed.
3. Each mascot will perform a routine lasting a maximum of 1 minute and 30 seconds (90 seconds)
    A. The following overtime penalties will occur:
        B. 1 - 5 seconds over time will result in a .5 deduction
        C. 6 or more seconds overtime will result in a 1.0 deduction.
4. Other people may assist with the set-up, support and tear-down. These assistants may not participate in any activity within the skit, other than to support props.
5. Mascots are allowed a total maximum set-up/tear-down time of 1 minute and 30 seconds (90 seconds). The following overtime penalties will occur:
        A. 1 - 5 seconds over time will result in a .5 deduction
        B. 6 or more seconds overtime will result in a 1.0 deduction.

    ** This penalty is separate from the routine time penalty. For example, if your set-up time is 1 minute, your routine is 1 minute 33 seconds and your tear-down time is 40 seconds you would be assessed a .5 penalty for going 3 seconds overtime for your performance and a 1.0 penalty for going 10 seconds overtime on your set-up/tear-down time.*
6. The routine should contain a theme and should be well organized and understandable.
7. Music may be used and must be compliant with copyright laws. Music must be in digital format. *For questions on Music Licensing please email musicinfo@varsity.com
8. Mascots should enter the performance area in a timely fashion.
9. Timing will begin with the first organized word, movement, or note of music after they are officially announced.
10. Timing will end with the last organized word, movement, or note of music by the mascot.

11. Any size props may be used. Props that may cause damage to the matted surface may not be used. Confetti, water, paints or other such props that may delay Competition are prohibited. Any hard or yielding props may NOT be thrown. Any props MUST be placed and remain within the performing surface (unless weather related) Violations will result in a 2.0 deduction or disqualification.
12. Mascots may not utilize any type of height increasing apparatus (mini tramps, springboards, etc.). A box is permitted however the height of the box cannot exceed 3 feet.
13. Participants must always be dressed in the school's official mascot costume including set-up. The costume must be the school's official mascot.
14. Routines must be appropriate for family viewing. Any vulgar or suggestive movements, words or music will result in a 2.0 score deduction or possible disqualification.
15. Mascots should utilize all areas of technical strengths including actions/reactions, motions/emotions, character traits and habits, pantomime, crowd interaction, crowd appeal, prop utilization, and overall impression.
16. Mascots will be judged on the following categories, each valued at 10 points:
    A. Characterization
    B. Creativity
    C. Crowd Leading
    D. Dance
    E. Prop Design/Effectiveness
    F. Overall Impression
17. Must follow the 2026-2027 School Cheer Rule Book.

*Mascot sample score sheets are available online.

VIRTUAL COMPETITION GUIDELINES

1. NCA Virtual Events are BID eligible events for NCA High School National Championships
2. All videos must be recorded in a single take. Edited footage will not be accepted.
3. Virtual Event Information: NCA VIRTUAL EVENTS
4. Awards - Division placement banners will be awarded to each team competing that will be mailed following the event. Results will be posted in the Event BAND group for coaches. To view the routine videos from the event, you need an active Varsity TV subscription. If you have questions about your Varsity TV account, click here.
5. VIRTUAL COMPETITION MUSIC GUIDELINES
    a. All routines will be available for Varsity TV subscriber viewing with sound for 48 hours once the event goes live. After 48 hours, the routines will be available without sound for Varsity TV subscribers. After 5 days, routines will be available free of charge without sound for the duration of the competition season.
    b. Only music capture incidentally will be permitted. No music can be edited into the video. Teams who do edit music into the video will receive a 2-point penalty.

2026-2027 SAFETY RULES

Rules subject to change by USA Cheer and NFHS. Go to usacheer.org and https://nfhs.org/activities-sports/spirit/ for the most updated rules and rules books.

1. Recreational Divisions will be restricted from performing any type of toss (basket, elevator, or similar multi-based tosses) or waist level cradles.
2. Junior High toss restrictions can be found on the USA Cheer website: Safety & Education - USA Cheer
3. Non-Tumbling Divisions will restrict any hip overhead rotation except for entries and exits to stunts/pyramids. Back handspring entries WILL NOT be allowed in the Non-Tumbling Divisions.
4. Non-Building Divisions will restrict any athlete from providing support to another athlete off the performing surface.
5. Intermediate Divisions must follow all Intermediate skill restrictions listed in the Intermediate section.

LEGALITY REVIEW (PRE-EVENT)

As a coach, it is important to be current on the NCA Level Restrictions, the NFHS Spirit Rule Book and any additional USA cheer requirements. If you have questions concerning any safety rules or questions regarding specific performance elements, please follow these steps. This will ensure that you receive a timely and accurateresponse to your questions.

6. All reviews must be submitted through NCA Legality Inquiry Form
7. The skill in question must be recorded by the team at practice. We are unable to accept videos from performances, competitions, or of other teams including Tik Tok, Instagram and Facebook links.
8. All submission must include the coach, team, and division.
9. The recording will be reviewed as if every person in the video is included in the skill. This would include additional spotters.
10. Videos are limited to **30 seconds** and must be able to be viewed upright without rotating.
11. All videos must be sent via a **NON-EXPIRING LINK**, make sure the video is 'Unlisted' and not set to Private.
12. All videos will receive either a "legal" or "illegal" response. If the video receives an "illegal" response, the entire video will not be reviewed but stopped at the point that the video was illegal. *If the video is inconclusive, you will receive a response as to why the video was unable to make a judgement. It is up to you as a coach to resubmit the video to be re-reviewed.
13. Please note: Only submitting the skill will make the skill eligible for a warning. NCA can only guarantee this process will be accepted at NCA- branded events. This would not include other Varsity- branded or State Association events.
14. Videos received via text message, facetime, social media, or any other platform outside of this legality review process will not be reviewed. Videos that do not follow the above rules will not receive a response.
15. Videos must be received THREE WEEKS PRIOR to your team's performance to guarantee a response
16. Video submissions will only be accepted by the official coach of the team
17. Performing the skill at a prior event or in a prior round of competition does not ensure that a skill is legal nor that it would have warranted a legality warning.

USE THE LINK ABOVE OR SCAN HERE TO SUBMIT A LEGALITY VIDEO:

Please do not wait until the final days to submit these as this greatly slows the process to respond and get feedback returned if any changes may be necessary. Videos submitted for review for High School Nationals should be submitted prior to January 8, 2027, to allow for turnaround time.

DO NOT DEPEND ON YOUR CHOREOGRAPHER TO DETERMINE IF SOMETHING IS LEGAL. IF YOU FEEL THAT SOMETHING MAY BE ILLEGAL, SEND A VIDEO USING OUR PROCESS OUTLINED ABOVE.

EVENT PROCEDURES

Teams with scheduling conflicts must submit a schedule change request. If we are able to accommodate changes, teams will be moved earlier in the schedule for one of the performances.

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. to the final tally of the scores for all teams. Scores and rankings will be available only to coaches at the conclusion of the competition. Judges' decisions are final.
2. Any deductions or violations are taken from the raw score. For more information regarding scoring, the NCA score sheets and judging criteria, please visit NCA.varsity.com
3. For all scoring questions, please email ncascoring@varsity.com
4. Ties will not be broken at an NCA Regional or Virtual event or at our NCA National Championship Event.
5. By participating in a Varsity event, teams give their consent for performances and scores to be made publicly available.
6. 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 TV is unable to accommodate requests for removal.

INTERPRETATIONS AND / OR RULINGS

Any interpretation of these Event Guidelines or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee will render a judgment in an effort to ensure that the competition proceeds in a manner consistent with the general spirit and goals of the competition. The Rules Committee will consist of the Competition Director, Head Judge, and a designated competition official.

VIOLATIONS

Any team in violation of these NCA Rules and Regulations or any of the above-mentioned guidelines will be assessed a one (1) point general deduction. This deduction does not apply to deduction or violations within the point deduction system or any violation already assigned a lower/higher point value.

NCA RULES & REGULATIONS AGREEMENT

By accepting the Terms and Conditions as the authorized person from my program I agree and acknowledge that (i) I am the sponsor/director of the team (ii) I have read and understand the foregoing, (iii) I will be solely responsible for communicating the foregoing to all coaches/directors in my program that will be coaching and directing teams at the NCA Regional Competition, (iv) I will ensure that my teams will comply with all rules and regulations at all times, and (v) my team will support the results of the competition, as I am a role model for my programs. I have read and reviewed both these specific UCA Rules and Regulations.

NCA High School National Championship Information
January 22-25, 2027
Fort Worth, TX

The NCA High School National Championship is held each January in Texas and is an opportunity for teams to showcase both their Performance and Game Day skills.

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR THE 2027 CHAMPIONSHIP:

STEP 1: NFHS CREDENTIALING

75% of the qualifying team must have completed the Squad Credentialing program. Teams can be credentialed either at Varsity Spirit Camp or through the Squad Credentialing program. A mascot would count towards the 75% requirement.

STEP 2: RECEIVE A BID

Teams must compete at an NCA Regional or Classic Championship – In Person or Virtual.

NCA TEAM GOLD (not a part of qualification)

To qualify teams must complete the following:

- Teams must attend an NCA camp of 2 days or more
- Teams must compete in a regional (live or virtual)
- Teams must attend NCA High School Nationals
- Teams who qualify receive:
  - Priority hotel booking
  - Athlete Gifts and More!

NCA TEAM PLATINUM

In addition to the above:

- TEAM GOLD teams who place in the TOP 3 at a regional (live or virtual) receive:
- Priority Open Practice Sign Up
- Priority On-Site Check In
- Preferential Order of Performance
  not guaranteed

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PARTICIPATION

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

NCA High School Nationals Rounds of Competition & Scoring

- Every team registered automatically qualifies for the Sunday round of competition. Saturday and Sundays score will affect your Final score with Saturday being 25% and Sunday being 75%.
- Day 2 order of performance will be in reverse ranked order based on the division rankings from the Day 1 scores
- Divisions with 25 or more teams may be split into additional competing divisions

Change in Performance Order

Teams with scheduling conflicts must submit a schedule change request within 30 minutes of all schedules being posted. Teams will be moved earlier in the schedule for one of their performances.

NCA High School Nationals Prizes and Awards

If a team wins a Game Day National Championship title and also wins a National Title in a Performance/Crowd Leading division, individuals will only receive one National Championship jacket. Teams will receive a banner and trophy for each national title.

HERKIE HIGH POINT

This award recognizes our top scoring Novice and Intermediate Crowd Leading or Performance Team. The Herkie High Point recipient receives a banner recognizing this accomplishment. Non- Tumbling and Non-Building Divisions are not eligible for this prestigious award.

ADVANCED GRAND CHAMPION

In recognition of their High Score completion at NCA National Championships, ONE Advanced level team will be awarded as the Grand Champion. As with the Herkie High Point, a banner will be awarded to the Advanced Grand Champion and Non-Tumbling or Non-Building division teams do not qualify.

California Teams Competing Under CIF Rules

Teams that fall under the California Interscholastic Federation will be able to compete in a preliminary round and a final round at our championship without competing on a Sunday. Each team competes within their chosen division for a preliminary round on Saturday which accounts for 25% of their final score. On Saturday evening, the California teams return to perform their final round which accounts for the remaining 75% of their final score. The judges score the routine at that time and the performance is recorded. On Sunday, the teams from California are placed into the performance order, however, the video of their performance is played for the crowd during that time. The judges will review the scores and finalize. California teams are then welcomed onto the mat for theirFinal Awards Ceremony to receive their awards.

RULES AND REGULATIONS AGREEMENT

By accepting the Terms and Conditions as the authorized person from my program I agree and acknowledge that (i) I am the sponsor/director of the team (ii) I have read and understand the foregoing, (iii) I will be solely responsible for communicating the foregoing to all coaches/directors in my program that will coaching and directing teams at NCA Regional Competition and NCA High School Nationals, (iv) I will ensure that my teams will comply with all rules and regulations at all times, and (v) my team will support the results of the competition, as I am a role model for my programs. I have read and reviewed these specific NCA Event Rules and Regulations.

These Rules and Regulations are the exclusive property of Varsity Spirit and may not be reproduced, in part or in whole, for events not sponsored and approved by Varsity Spirit.