



UCA SCHOOL & OPEN REC

RULES & REGULATIONS

UCA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHEERLEADING CHAMPIONSHIP • FEBRUARY 9-12, 2024



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All updates and changes displayed in RED font

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DIVISION GUIDELINES

Athletes may only perform up to 2 times if one routine is a performance routine and the other is a game day routine. If an athlete is performing 2 times, they must be representing the same program/school in both performances.

NEW 2023-2024

- **Teams must compete in the same style Performance Routine and Game Day Routine i.e. Non Tumbling or Non Building must be the same for both.**

Example 1: An Athlete may compete with a VA team in both a performance routine and game day routine.

Example 2: An Athlete may compete with a JV team in a performance routine and the VA game day routine.

Example 3: An Athlete MAY NOT compete with a JR team in a performance routine and with a JV or VA squad for any reason.

Example 4: An Athlete may only compete with a Rec Program in a performance routine and game day routine for that Rec Program.

UCA/UDA 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/dancer may represent more than one Team, even in the event of injury or emergency. Once a team checks into the event, the team will not be allowed to change divisions.

UCA SCHOOL DIVISIONS

All Junior High Divisions – 9th Grade and Below

Junior High Divisions WILL be allowed 9th grade participants if (1) they attend a school that is under the administrative supervision of the same school board as the junior high school that they are representing AND (2) a minority of the team are 9th graders. Junior High teams with majority of 9th grader participants must compete as a Junior Varsity.

All Junior Varsity Divisions – 7th Grade -12th Grade

Junior Varsity Divisions WILL be allowed 7th and 8th grade participants if they attend a school that is under the administrative supervision of the same school board as the high school that they are representing. Junior Varsity teams must be the official Junior Varsity of the school they represent. Teams will only be allowed to compete in the Junior Varsity Division if they are the official Junior Varsity team. If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.

All Varsity Divisions – 8th Grade - 12th Grade

7th grade and below participants will NOT be allowed on a Varsity team. 8th grade participants will be allowed to participate on a Varsity team if the school they attend is under the direct administrative supervision of the same school board as the Varsity team they are representing. If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.

Game Day Divisions

Individuals are only allowed to compete in a performance routine division and a game day division for the same school/program. If a Junior Varsity and Varsity combine/share athletes for a Game Day Division, they must compete in the Varsity Divisions.

Teams may add up to 1 (one) mascot in their Game Day Routine. The mascot must meet all the eligibility requirements as the athletes. The mascot must enter the floor with the team and should be used to raise crowd energy and participation. The mascot is not allowed to be involved in any stunts / technical skills and or tumbling and should position themselves away from skills being performed. The mascot will not count towards the total number or gender of participants allowed in the division.

Game Day Live Divisions

For more info on Game Day Live, go to page 11-12.

Please visit uca.varsity.com for a complete listing of divisions for regional competitions as well as the National High School Cheerleading Championship.

UCA OPEN RECREATIONAL GUIDELINES AND DIVISIONS

Open Recreational Guidelines

1. Athlete eligibility will be based on the birth year, or partial year listed to be eligible for that division.
2. Teams must submit a Varsity Recreational Roster Verification Form at each event. This form can be found online at under Required Forms.
3. Open Recreational Teams will require all coaches to have a USA Cheer Membership. At least one coach must have the USA Cheer Coach membership that includes the USA Cheer Youth Safety Risk Management certification course and must accompany the team at every competition. Proof of certification is required upon at registration for every event. See specific details under USA Cheer Coach Membership on page 4.
4. Basket tosses, elevator tosses, and similar multi-based tosses are prohibited.

Affiliated Open Recreational Divisions

The Affiliated Recreational Divisions exist for teams with the main purpose of cheering for and/or supporting a recreational team (i.e. youth football, pee wee sports, community sports teams, etc.).

Teams with a school affiliation may compete in the recreational cheer traditional division, only 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 7th and 8th graders must compete in the junior high division.

Non-Affiliated Open Recreational Divisions

Non-Affiliated Recreational Cheer Divisions exist for teams who will follow the same 2 and 1/2 minute routine format with cheer/sideline and music and all other rules and regulations along with all other teams competing at any UCA event and the NHSCC.

CODE OF CONDUCT

UCA encourages and supports sportsmanship, integrity and fairness among participants and coaches in all facets of cheerleading including, but not limited to, team/squad 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, UCA asks that the following Code of Conduct be adhered to during all UCA Regional Competitions and National Championship:

1. Any questions or concerns that affect a team's performance or experience must be communicated by the coach to the AccuScore Table. The appropriate Official will then be called to discuss the situation with the coach.
2. Participants, coaches, or spectators are prohibited from contacting the Judges during the competition.
3. Judges' rulings are final related to deductions, final team placements and legalities.
4. Any unruly, aggressive, or belligerent behavior by participants, coaches or spectators toward any other attendee or Event Staff will result in a deduction, potential team disqualification, removal from the event and/or barred participation from future UCA Regionals and Championships.
5. Varsity Spirit reserves the right to remove any persons from a competition for unsafe or unsportsmanlike conduct.

SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY POLICY

1. All members of the cheerleading squad must be current members of the official school spirit squads and must attend the school they are representing.
 - a. Exception 1: Participation from sister schools for same-gender schools is allowed if they are official members of the squad.
 - b. Exception 2: See exception listed under Junior High, Junior Varsity and Varsity Divisions listed on Page 2.
2. If a school district or state association has more or less restrictions, teams will be required to follow the more restrictive set of rules.
 - a. Example 1 – State A allows 7th grade students to participate on Varsity Teams. Teams from State A will still be required to follow the 8th - 12th grade restrictions for Varsity Teams. These teams are NOT allowed to move into Junior Varsity Division.
 - b. Example 2 – State B does not allow 9th grade or below participation on Varsity Sports. Teams from State B would then need to follow their State Restrictions.
 - c. Example 3 – A Junior High school only has grades 7th- 9th grade. That team would only be allowed to utilize athletes from their school. They would not be allowed pull up or down any other athletes.
3. Individuals are NOT permitted to compete on two **different** School/**Rec** Teams at the same event. They are permitted on both a School Team and an All Star Team at the same event
4. Teams may participate in more than one local or regional competition during the season.
5. The team should display an overall behavior conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school/organization.
6. All athletes and coaches must be registered and listed on the Event Roster to be submitted at check in for each event. Roster Forms can be found at [UCA Competition Required Forms](#) under Regional Competition Forms & FAQs.

USA CHEER 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 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 **June 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024**.

UNIFORM GUIDELINES

1. UNIFORMS

- a. All participant uniforms must cover the midriff when standing at attention. Covered midriff does include flesh or nude colored body suits and liners; however, fringe would not count as a cover.
- b. Any team in violation of the uniform guidelines will be assessed a **TWO (2) point deduction**.
- c. 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.) is required for all divisions.
- d. Teams 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.

2. MAKE-UP

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

3. HAIR

- a. Hair for all athletes does not have to be worn the same but must be secured off the face with a simple style that considers all diversities.
- b. Bows are not required. If worn, bows must:
 - NOT be excessive in size
 - NOT be a distraction to the performance.
 - Be positioned in a manner to minimize risk for all participants. This is restricted to back of the head (below the crown)
 - If the bow has tails, they must be facing backwards and down to limit the ability to fall the forehead into the participants' eyes or block the view of the participants while performing.
- c. A .25 deduction will be given for teams in violation of this rule.

TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Introductions

- a. All introductions (entrances, chants, spellouts, etc.) are considered part of the routine and will be timed as part of the performance. Skills are not allowed during the team's entry to the floor or any time prior to starting the performance. EXCEPTION – See Game Day Below
- b. All team breaks, rituals and traditions need to take place prior to entering the mat.
- c. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures. Example: running of the flags, chest bumps, hugs, handshakes, etc.
- d. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team's performance. Any team in violation will receive a ONE point deduction.
- e. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official ending of the routine.

2. Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first.

3. If a team (cheer team or pep band) exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed for each violation. One (1) point deduction for 1-5 seconds over, Two (2) point deduction for 6 and over.
4. Acknowledging the potential variance caused by human reaction speed and sound system time variations, judges will not issue a deduction until 3 seconds over the allowed time. If a routine is retimed as part of a review, the exact time will be used without the 3 second allowance listed above
5. Because penalties are severe, it is recommended that all teams time their performance several times prior to competition and leave a several second cushion to allow for variations in sound equipment.

Performance Routines - Each performance routine presentation must include at least one cheer or sideline chant.

- Maximum Overall Time: 2:30 (150 Seconds)
- **Maximum Musical Portion: 1:45 (105 Seconds)**

Game Day Routines - Each Game Day performance must consist of a Band Chant, Situational Sideline, Time Out Cheer and Fight Song.

- Maximum Overall Time: 3:00 (180 Seconds)

Game Day Live – Game Day Routine plus the inclusion of a Pep Band

- Maximum Overall Time: 5:00 (300 Seconds)
- Maximum Cheer Routine: 3:00 (180 Seconds)

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

MUSIC GUIDELINES

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 musicinfo@varsity.com. Please check Music 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. For example:
 - a. Clementune – 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
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. If you would like to perform your school's original fight song, you may bring a recording of your marching band playing the song. You will need to get the school's permission to use the song and recording. A letter granting permission for the cheer or dance team to use the fight song on school letterhead is enough. It should be signed by your program's administrative supervisor. Go to varsity.com/music for more details.
7. 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).
8. 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.
9. If there are concerns regarding a certain team's use of music, a Challenge Form must be completed immediately following the team's performance.

10. A challenge can only be made by the official coach of a team competing at the event at which the challenge is being made.
11. 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.
12. It is required that each team have a responsible adult remain at the music station that knows the routine and music (no alternates or team members allowed). This representative is responsible for pressing "play". 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. Teams 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.
18. VIRTUAL COMPETITION MUSIC GUIDELINES
 - a. School Cheer & Open Rec: 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.
 - 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.

VIRTUAL COMPETITION GUIDELINES

1. All videos must be recorded in a single take. Edited footage will not be accepted. Footage may not be edited to add in the template, introduction card, program logo, etc. Editing the template or not including the template will result in a 1-point deduction.
2. Filming Guidelines — We've created a step-by-step PDF guide, [HERE](#) with filming requirements and tips.
3. Awards - Division placement banners will be awarded to each team competing that will be mailed following the event. Awards Presentations for each Virtual Competition will be hosted on Varsity TV and will be FREE to all viewers on their scheduled awards day.
4. To upload a performance video, you must create a Varsity TV account. The account does **not** need to have an active subscription in order to upload a video. However, to view the videos on the event day, you need an active Varsity TV subscription. If you have questions about your Varsity TV account, [click here](#).

COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Participants must start in the competition area with at least one foot on the ground.
2. Teams may line up anywhere inside the competition area.
3. UCA Competitions comply with the NFHS surface ruling that school-based programs may not compete on a spring floor.
4. Approximate floor size will be 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 strips).
5. BOUNDARY FOR THE NHSCC – Any team member stepping outside or touching outside the performance area will cause the squad to receive a .5 penalty per occurrence. Pep Band members must remain in designated area during the performance.
 - a. The white line is considered a warning mark.
 - b. A penalty will be assessed when any ONE full hand, foot or body part touches outside of the performance surface.
 - c. Once a team member takes the floor, they must remain on the floor until the end of the performance.
 - d. Boundary deductions will not be issued at UCA Regional Competitions.
6. All team mascots (ex: stuffed animals), center markers, etc. are prohibited. The center will be marked on all performance surfaces.
7. Signs or props may be safely placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area. Please see the deduction explanation sheet for additional Prop Restrictions.
 - a. Approved props include **foam fingers, rally towels**, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. **Props should be used for crowd leading and appropriate for crowd response.**
 - b. **Props may not be thrown into the crowd.**
 - c. **Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline cheer/dance boxes used at games.**
 - d. **No air horns or artificial noise makers allowed.**
 - e. **Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to UCARules@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.**

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, venue (power outage, fire alarm, etc.), the coach of the team at the music stand affected should STOP the routine.
 - a. **Examples: Equipment Issue – Music volume is all the way down and athletes can't hear the beginning of the routine, etc.**
 - b. **Venue Emergency – power outage, fire alarm, etc.**
2. **If the coach chooses not to stop the routine, the team may not have the option to perform again.**
3. 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.
4. **UNIFORM MALFUNCTION** As a precaution, each performer is required to take the necessary steps to avoid inappropriate exposure during the performance. Should a uniform malfunction resulting in indecent exposure occur, the routine should be stopped immediately. This is a shared responsibility of all parties involved to recognize a malfunction has occurred.
5. **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 / ILLNESS

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 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 may be escorted backstage during the evaluation process. While backstage, they will need to remain with the athlete or an event staff member.

RE-PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

1. The competition officials will determine whether the team will be allowed to perform at a later time.
2. 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 and must be within thirty minutes after the rest of the division is complete.
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.
4. Teams that limit/mark skills prior to the point of interruption could result in an adjustment in scores based on the skills performed.
5. If a team prefers not to re-perform 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.

SPOTTER POLICY

UCA will allow teams to provide additional spotters in the warm-up room only. The use of additional spotters is left to the discretion of the coach. Teams may use up to 4 additional spotters for each warm-up; however, additional spotters are not required. The use of additional spotters is not mandatory and will be at the discretion of the coach. Spotters will be available on the main competition floor at all venues.

Guidelines for Additional Spotters:

1. Should only be used during the stunt, pyramid, and/or basket toss sections. Additional spotters should stand at the back of the floor when not spotting those sections.
2. Should not touch, assist, or save skills being performed.

3. Additional spotters should only be used to prevent a fall to the competition floor.
4. If a spotter touches, assist or saves a skill, a minimum of a Major Building Fall (MBF) will be issued.
5. Spotters are not allowed to count or coach while on the floor.
6. 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.
7. Should not dress or act in a manner that distracts from the athletes and their performance.
8. Should be at least 18 years old, listed on the official event roster and familiar with spotting the skills of the performing team.

Note: Teams should not attempt skills beyond their ability level.

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. All participants agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship throughout the competition with positive presentation upon entry and exit from the performance area as well as throughout the routine.
2. The advisor and coach of each team is responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents and other persons affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly. Severe cases of unsportsmanlike conduct are grounds for disqualification.
3. When a coach is in discussion with an official, other coaches, athletes and parents/spectators, they must maintain proper professional conduct. Failing to do so may result in 1.0 deduction, removal of coach or disqualification.
4. Additionally, athletes and coaches who do not comply with the face covering requirement may be assessed an unsportsmanlike deduction of 1 point.

VIOLATIONS

Any team in violation of these Rules and Regulations or any of the above-mentioned guidelines will be assessed a two (2) point general deduction. This deduction does not apply to deduction or violations within the point deduction system or already assigned a lower/higher point value. Go to uca.varsity.com for more specifics.

DISQUALIFICATION

Any team that does not adhere to the terms and procedures of these "Rules and Regulations" will be subject to disqualification from the competition, will automatically forfeit any right to any prizes or awards presented by the competition.

FINALITY OF DECISIONS

By participating in this competition, each team agrees that the decisions by the judges will be final and results may ONLY be reviewed for clarification. Each team acknowledges the necessity for the judges to make prompt and fair decisions in this competition and each team therefore expressly waives any legal, equitable, administrative or procedural review of such decisions.

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 uca.varsity.com.
3. REGIONAL COMPETITION TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will not be broken at UCA Regional Competitions.

4. NHSCC TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will only be broken for **FIRST PLACE** in the **FINAL ROUND** of competition at the NHSCC. The team with the lessor deductions will be awarded first place. If the deductions remain equal, the tie will not be broken and both teams will be awarded first place.
5. By participating in a Varsity event, teams give their consent for performances and scores to be made public.
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 Spirit is unable to accommodate requests for removal.

HOW TO HANDLE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS

1. **RULES & PROCEDURES** - Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the competition will be handled exclusively by the advisor / coach of the team and will be directed to the Competition Director. Such questions should be made prior to the team's competition performance.
2. **PERFORMANCE** - Any questions concerning the team's performance should be made to the Competition Director immediately after the team's performance and/or following the outcome of the competition.
3. **MUSIC / AGE** - Any questions concerning a specific violation in music compliance must be submitted in writing to the Competition Director immediately following the team's performance.

INTERPRETATIONS AND / OR RULINGS

Any interpretation of these Rules and Regulations 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.

GAME DAY ROUTINE FORMAT

1. The performance will follow this order: Band Chant, Situational Sideline, Cheer, followed by the Fight Song.
2. The use of crowd leading tools is recommended (All are not required).
 - a. Approved props include **foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. Props should be used for crowd leading and appropriate for crowd response.**
 - b. **Props may not be thrown into the crowd.**
 - c. **Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline cheer/dance boxes used at games.**
 - d. **No air horns or artificial noise makers allowed.**
 - e. **Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to UCARules@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.**
3. The incorporation of stunts/tumbling is required in the Situational Sideline, Cheer and Fight Song.
4. **Band Chant** should have an emphasis on crowd appeal and practicality – No stunting or tumbling is permitted, however jumps and kicks are allowed.
5. **Situational Sideline** - Following the band chant, the announcer will give squads a game scenario indicating an offense or defense situation. Teams should show their definitive understanding of the situation with an offensive or defensive crowd-leading response.
6. **Crowd Leading Cheer** - Teams will be evaluated on their ability to lead the crowd, crowd effectiveness, proper use of motions/crowd leading tools and execution of stunts/tumbling relevant to a game day environment.
7. **Fight Song** - Incorporation is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts of stunts and/or tumbling. If the fight song repeats, the incorporation will only be allowed both times if it is repeated exactly the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill (stunt or tumbling) until one of the following:
 - a. The routine ends within the 3 consecutive 8 counts.
 - b. Building Skills must be stationary prior to the end of the 3rd 8-count and may remain stationary until the end of the routine.
 - c. Dismounts following the completion of the routine will not be included for timing purposes.

8. Each section should have a beginning and end. Note: 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, this would include the team's entry to the floor and any time prior to starting the performance. Tumbling would be allowed during the performance with the exception of during the Band Chant.
9. Additional Skill Restrictions
 - Tosses (basket, sponge or elevator) are NOT allowed.
 - Inversions are NOT allowed.
 - Twisting Released Dismounts are NOT allowed.
 - Single leg stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
 - Running Tumbling is NOT allowed.
 - Standing Tumbling is allowed. Connected tumbling skills are NOT allowed and a back tuck is the most elite tumbling skill allowed. Examples: Standing full is not allowed. Rippled Single Back Handsprings would be allowed. Jump tumble (single skill) would be allowed.
10. Any deductions or violations will be taken off of the final averaged score. For more information on scoring, score sheets and judging criteria, please visit uca.varsity.com.

GAME DAY LIVE ROUTINE FORMAT & PEP BAND GUIDELINES

1. Same rules and skill restrictions will still apply as the above stated guidelines for Game Day Routines.
2. Pep Band/**Color Guard** members would be allowed to play for multiple performances; however, they may only play for the school they attend. The pep band must be current members of the official pep band/**Color Guard** for the school they are representing.
3. The pep band/**Color Guard** must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing your school colors, letters, mascot, etc.).
4. The entire performance may not exceed 5 minutes with entry and exit of all performers.
5. ONLY Handheld or harnessed instruments allowed in the pep band.
6. **Single swing flag is the ONLY prop allowed for Color Guard. Horizontal (if center on the body) and Vertical tosses are the only planes of travel allowed. Angled tosses are prohibited.**
7. Pep Bands/**Color Guard** will be responsible for transportation of all equipment to and from the event.
8. Pep bands/**Color Guard** may use props; however, props must conform to the NFHS Band safety course guidelines and UCA Rules and Regulations listed above for cheer teams. **Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline boxes/band platform used at games.**
9. Pep band/**Color Guard** member may not be involved in any stunts, tumbling, **splits, leaps or aerial skills.**
10. Designated Pep Band/**Color Guard** Performance Area.
 - a. Pep Bands/**Color Guard** will line up anywhere center stage within the performing surface (54 X 42) and their timing will begin the first beat of music.
 - b. Pep bands/**Color Guard** must remain in designated areas of approximately 54 feet wide by 5 feet deep on the back side (behind the mats). Additional performance area on either side of the raised stage of 5 feet wide by 42 feet deep each area will be designated.
 - c. Pep Bands/**Color Guard** will be limited to 40 total members. Teams may place those members to the side or back with a maximum of 20 members in each location.
 - d. During the performance, Pep Band/**Color Guard** members are allowed to change formation but must remain in the designated performance area in which they started.
 - e. Any team member stepping outside or touching outside the performance area will cause a .5 penalty per occurrence. Pep Band/**Color Guard** members must remain in designated area during the performance.
 - f. Once a team member takes the floor, they must remain on the floor until the end of the performance.
11. Game Day LIVE Format
 - a. Game Day Live performances will allow one (1) minute for Pep Bands/**Color Guard** to play prior to the cheer team being called. Pep Bands may play any cadence or song. Only the pep band/**Color Guard** is scored during this time.

- b. Pep Bands may play any cadence or song during the 30 second cheer team introduction. Pep Bands/Color Guard should ensure the entrance for the cheer athletes is clear.
- c. **NEW BAND CHANT:** The pep band/color guard may remain on the stage/mat during the Band Chant portion of the Game Day routine. Pep Band should focus on playing spirited music that reflects a game day environment, and that the cheerleaders can incorporate visual movements to.
- d. **Prior to the end of the Band Chant, the Pep Band must relocate to the designated areas before the start of the sideline.**
- e. **SITUATIONAL SIDELINE:** The pep band should provide a cadence that the cheer team and crowd back home could easily yell along with, eliciting a crowd response.
- f. **CROWD LEADING:** There must be a clear distinction between the Sideline and kicking off the Crowd Leading portion. The cheerleaders and pep band may show spirited interaction as a clear transition. The pep band's role is to influence crowd participation by responding to the cheer team's call-backs and encouraging the crowd to yell along. They may also create a cadence that would be relevant to the game day environment to increase the overall crowd effectiveness.
- g. **FIGHT SONG:** The final element should reflect your school's traditional Fight Song. For teams that do not have an official Fight Song, it is recommended to use a second selection of band chant music. When performing the fight song, the pep band should focus on sound quality, technical accuracy, musicality and engagement. They should lead the cheerleaders and the crowd with their performance, as well as participate in call-backs, if applicable.
- h. **RUN OFF:** The pep band has 30 seconds to play original, spirited music while the cheerleaders exit the competition floor. Once the piece ends, the pep band may exit. Only the pep band is scored during this time.

2023-2024 SAFETY RULES AND ADDITIONAL DIVISION RESTRICTIONS

Rules subject to change by USA Cheer. Go to usacheer.org for the most updated rules.

- Open Rec and Junior High Divisions will be restricted from performing any type of toss or waist level cradles.
- Non-Tumbling Divisions will restrict any hip over head rotation except for entries and exits in to stunts/pyramids. Back handspring entries WILL NOT be allowed in the Non-Tumbling Divisions.
- Non-Building Divisions will restrict any athlete from providing support to another athlete off the performing surface.

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, noncommercial 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.

LOGO USAGE

Teams will not be allowed to use the UCA logo or the NHSCC logo including: banners, rings, bows, t-shirts, etc. without prior approval from the UCA Office. However, the use of the UCA letters will be allowed.

VARSITY COMPETITION RULES

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 Varsity Competition Rules.

National High School Cheerleading Championship Information

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR THE 2024 NHSCC:

In order to qualify for our National High School Cheerleading Championship (NHSCC), teams are required to fulfil the following requirements:

1. 75% of the qualifying team must have attended a 2 Day Varsity Spirit Summer Camp and participate in the Squad Credentialing program.
2. Compete and receive a bid at a 2023 UCA qualifying regional competition for the 2024 National High School Cheerleading Championship.
3. The division the team competes in at the regional will be the only division the team is allowed to compete in at the NHSCC. Exception – some divisions are further split further by Team Size or School Size at the NHSCC than they are at a qualifying regional competition.
4. Individuals may NOT represent more than one team at the National Championship. Exception – Junior Varsity members may perform with the Varsity in a Varsity Game Day Division.
5. To create a Championship that gives equal opportunity for schools of similar student composition, UCA will sub-divide the Varsity divisions at the NHSCC based on school enrollments in the 9th - 12th grades as of October 1, 2023. Varsity Divisions I & II – Please provide a letter signed and verified from your registrar's office on school letter head with your total enrollment information. Check out www.uca.varsity.com for more details.

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR GAME DAY LIVE AT 2024 NHSCC:

In order to qualify for our National High School Cheerleading Championship (NHSCC) in the Game Day Live division, teams are required to fulfil the following requirements:

- 1. Video Submission Qualifications:**
 - a. To earn a bid, the pep band and cheer team must create and submit a video up to a 2-minute performance of the school's traditional fight song together.
 - b. Videos will be accepted from September 1, 2023 until November 1, 2022.
 - c. Submissions will receive an invitation to compete in the Game Day Live division starting one week after the submission is received.
 - d. Game Day Live bids will be offered at select UCA Regional Competitions in 2023.
 - e. Videos may be composed of original footage at practice, or a game day setting and should be filmed to see the band and cheer team performing together.
- 2. Cheerleaders:**
 - a. Videos must be submitted prior to the cheer team attending a UCA Regional Competition.
 - b. The cheer team must attend a UCA Regional Competition and compete and receive a bid in the Game Day division, even if they already received a guaranteed bid for Game Day Live from the video submission process.
 - c. Teams that accept the invitation to compete in the Game Day Live division will ONLY be allowed to compete in the LIVE version of Game Day. They will not be allowed to compete in another Game Day division.
- 3. Pep Band:**
 - a. If a pep band and cheer team choose to attend a competition; the pep band must register for the event and complete a release waiver for each participant.
 - d. The pep band must be current members of the official pep band for the school they are representing.
 - e. The pep band must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing your school colors, letters, mascot, etc.).
 - f. The pep band does NOT need to attend a Varsity Spirit Camp or UCA Regional Competition in order to submit a video in conjunction with the cheer team.

NHSCC SPECIFIC RULES & REGULATIONS

Please note: All UCA Rules & Regulations in this document will apply at the NHSCC. The following Rules & Regulations are in addition to and specific to the National High School Cheerleading Championship.

NHSCC CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISIONS

Athletes may only perform up to 2 times if one routine is a performance routine and the other is a game day routine. If an athlete is performing 2 times, they must be representing the same program/school in both performances.

NEW 2023-2024

- Teams must compete in the same style Performance Routine and Game Day Routine. i.e. Non Tumbling or Non Building must be the same for both.

UCA/UDA 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/dancer may represent more than one Team, even in the event of injury or emergency.

TOURNAMENT FACILITY

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

ROUNDS OF COMPETITION

1. UCA reserves the right to determine if a preliminary, semi-final or final round will be necessary. All division with only one round prior to the finals will be classified as a semi-final.
2. From each round of competition, 50% of the teams in each round/group will advance.
3. Final rounds of competition will be confirmed two weeks prior to the championship; however, all advancements will be based on the final number of teams that perform in each round/group. **A minimum of 3 teams will advance to the finals round of competition.**
4. Tournament officials will have full authority to make the final determination of the number of teams selected to advance to the next round. In the event of a tie for the final spot advancing, both teams that are tied will move on. In the event of a tie for first in the preliminary round, both teams will automatically advance to the final round.
5. UCA will combine divisions in the best interest of providing a competitive environment. When/If a division has less than 3 teams, they may be combined into the same age/size division. Division combinations will be finalized no later than 2 weeks prior to the NHSCC.
6. The top team in each preliminary will automatically advance to the finals in their respective division unless otherwise listed below.

Advancing Guidelines

- Divisions with 0-24 or less teams will have a Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 25-40 teams will have a Preliminary A/B, Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 41-60 teams will have a Preliminary A/B/C, Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 61-80 teams will have a Preliminary A/B/C/D, Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 81 or more teams will have 4 rounds of competition.
 - a. Preliminary rounds (**round 1**) will advance 1 team from each group directly to the Semi-Final round.
 - b. **Quarter-Final (round 2)** will advance 1 team from each group to the Final round.
 - c. Semi-Final (**round 3**) will advance 1 team from each group directly to the Final round.
 - d. 50% of the teams in each Semi-Final group will advance to the Final round.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PARTICIPATION

1. It is understood that teams that participate in the National High School Cheerleading Championship will NOT knowingly and willingly participate in any other cheerleading event promoted as a national or international championship for the 2023-2024 school year. (Exception: USA National Championship and The Quest Recreational 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 and World School Cheerleading Championships**) for the 2023-2024 school year within a school division or category regardless of team name.
3. A school can compete at UCA and NCA 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 National High School Cheerleading Championship.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

All teams in the final round of competition will receive a trophy. Teams who rank first, second, or third place will additionally receive bronze, silver, or gold medallion. Teams place first will receive a championship banner and jacket for each participant who performed on the floor plus two coaches. Based on availability, rostered alternates may request additional jackets after the competition of our final awards sessions on Sunday evening.

TELEVISION COVERAGE

The National High School Cheerleading Championship is nationally televised on ESPN and ESPN2. Because of the format of the show, not all finalist teams will be shown on the telecast.

APPEARANCES, ENDORSEMENTS AND PUBLICITY

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

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 the UCA Regional Competition and NHSCC, (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.