

WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM HIGH SCHOOL CHEERLEADING RULES

High school cheerleading coaches and cheerleaders in Wake County are governed by rules from the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, National Federation of State High School Associations, the State Board of Education, and Wake County. This information will be presented in the following order:

- A. NCHSAA
- B. National Federation of State High School Associations
- C. Wake County Rules

A. NCHSAA

Cheerleading is an activity that comes under the jurisdiction of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association in two areas- eligibility and safety guidelines. Spirit rulebooks are sent to principals.

Cheerleaders, both junior varsity and varsity, must have their eligibility certified in the same manner as other interscholastic athletes. In addition, the Board of Directors has approved a set of safety guidelines from the National Federation of State High School Associations. These guidelines have been recommended to each local educational agency for implementation and adoption.

It is strongly recommended that, before a cheerleading squad uses those safety guidelines, the coach or advisor for the cheerleaders consider their application with the training, experience and athletic ability of the students under supervision. Please be aware that the local LEA may have more restrictive guidelines and regulations.

Philosophy

Cheerleaders serve as a support group for the different interscholastic athletic teams within their schools. Cheerleaders should always strive to improve student morale, boost team spirit, and help a school achieve the most worthwhile objectives in its interscholastic program.

Positive crowd and student body involvement, directed by the cheerleading squad in support of the school team, should be a major goal and is a very important component of an athletic program. The squad is not intended to develop its skills and talents solely for entertainment or competition purposes.

These activities can provide the student with educational experiences that contribute greatly toward the development of good citizenship.

B. National Federation of State High School Associations

Coaches should thoroughly familiarize themselves with this rulebook. The following information has been provided as points of emphasis from the NF spirit rulebook.

Philosophy

Spirit groups shall serve as support groups for the interscholastic athletic program within the school and as such, play a very important role in the administration of athletics/activities contests. Each squad should strive to boost school spirit, promote good sportsmanship, develop good positive crowd involvement, and help student participants and spectators achieve the most worthwhile educational objectives of the interscholastic program.

Being the most visible and recognizable representatives of a school, spirit groups are in a position of great influence; therefore, high standards of conduct are essential. Positive personal behavior and squad cohesiveness demonstrate these standards. Appropriate behavior will help earn the respect of the student body and is the core of developing effective school spirit and student involvement.

Spirit groups have evolved to include competition as athletes. Participants must condition, practice and warm-up the same as other athletes in preparation for a performance. Competition should be a secondary consideration for all spirit groups.

If spirit competition is approved as a part of the school's activities, it should be placed in perspective with the total educational program, and should not interfere with the primary responsibility of spirit groups, which is to support the interscholastic athletic program. Spirit competition should serve to develop leadership, confidence, and skill.

Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is conduct that imposes a type of self-control involving honest rivalry, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of results. School spirit is a reflection of these attitudes and behavior. If a school is to succeed in one of its prime functions, that of developing good citizenship, it is necessary that student groups radiate proper sportsmanlike conduct. Sportsmanship is good citizenship in action. The promotion of sportsmanship is a primary responsibility of spirit groups.

- Spirit squads should always cheer in a positive manner. It is inappropriate to cheer against the other team or to cheer in response to an opposing player's mistake.
- Cheers and chants with suggestive words and/or motions shall not be used because in many situations they bring about an inappropriate response.
- Spirit leaders should discourage their followers from yelling or cheering while an opponent is shooting free throws. Intimidation of opponents has no place in high school athletics.

When Not to Cheer:

1. When a player is attempting a free throw, the quarterback is calling signals at the line of scrimmage, a server is about to serve in volleyball, a diver is ready to perform, etc.
2. When an opposing player makes a mistake or the opposing team is being penalized
3. When an opposing player is injured
4. As important announcements are being made over the public address system

The National Federation Spirit Rules Book includes many areas of valuable information:

- Definitions
- Safety
- Photographs Illustrating Rules
- Points of Emphasis
- Casebook Situations
- Coaches Manuals: Organizing an Effective Practice Schedule
 Health and Conditioning
 Spotting
- Participant Guidelines
- Guidelines for Competition

C. Wake County Cheerleading Rules

Because cheerleading is considered to be a sport in Wake County, there are rules governing the tryouts and selection process, weekly participation, and number of competitions. Failure to abide by the rules will result in a fine to the school of \$200 per incident payable to your conference.

- While recognizing the benefits of athletic competition, the primary function of a cheerleading program is to support interschool athletics and to uphold, reflect and project the goals of the school community.
 - A cheerleader's first responsibility is to his/her academic program. The educational process should not be compromised by participating in cheerleading.
 - The Institution should adopt a rigorous safety program including a coaches' education program, adequate practice location, access to the school's conditioning facilities and athletic trainers, and access to outside training when needed.
 - The athleticism involved in modern cheerleading requires that the institution must match the development of cheerleading coaches.
 - If "outside" coaches (non-district employees) are paid for competitive routines, thorough background checks should be conducted on the character and technical knowledge of such persons, and compensation provided should be in compliance with the institution's established financial controls and policies.
1. Tryouts and the selection of the cheerleading squad will be held no earlier than Monday of the week of August 1st.
 2. Cheerleaders must have a medical examination prior to tryouts, practice, or participation on a squad. Any known medical condition that might interfere with active participation should be recorded (example: asthma, heart condition, epilepsy, diabetes, etc.)
 3. All students are eligible if they meet academic eligibility guidelines and observe all safety guidelines.
 4. Cheerleading coaches will select the team in the same manner that other coaches select teams.
 5. Tryouts will involve practice prior to the actual selection process.

6. **It is permissible to have up to 3 alternates when choosing your cheerleading squad. It is recommended to have policy on the duties and responsibilities of being an alternate, and how an alternate becomes a member of the squad.**
7. Planned efforts should be carried out to ensure that all students are aware of and are encouraged to volunteer for tryouts.
8. Schools may choose to have one or two cheering squads per school year. Tryouts for the fall squad will be held according to Fall Sports Season dates. If a second squad is to be selected, it should be chosen at the end of the fall sports season and will replace the fall squad. A student may try out for one or both squads.
9. Official practice begins when a coach and cheerleaders meet together, including warm-ups, conditioning, instructional time, and videos. Players are not allowed to be active without a coach present. There will be no practice on Sunday.
10. The sport season for cheerleading would begin with the fall sport season and continue through the winter sport season as defined by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.
11. Varsity cheerleading squads should cheer for varsity teams and JV cheerleading squads should cheer for JV teams. Whenever cheerleading squads are responsible for cheering at an athletic event, they may not choose to practice instead of cheering for the team.
12. Cheerleaders will be allowed to participate at a maximum of three games per week plus one competition.
13. In the fall sports season, cheerleading squads cheer for the sport of football. Some schools cheer for soccer (this can be determined at the school level). In the winter sports season cheerleading squads cheer for boys' and girls' basketball (this may be determined at the conference level).
14. Cheerleaders are required to use the transportation provided by the school administration.
15. The principal and/or coach shall determine how cheerleaders are to be disciplined for conduct, missing practices, and other unusual types of behavior.
16. Cheerleaders will be allowed to participate in five competitions each school year. The athletic director and principal of the school must approve competitions.
17. Individual schools will determine the type and/or style of uniforms.
18. Cheerleader stunts may not be performed on asphalt. Stunts (mounts, pyramids, tosses and tumbling) shall be modified to be appropriate to the performing surface/area.
19. Questionable stunts or pyramids will be referred for approval to the Wake County Public School System Senior Administrator for Athletics.
20. If cheer gyms are used for any service by the cheerleading squad, there must be a WCPSS approved Service Agreement with the vendor that describes the services rendered, according to Board Policy 8361.
21. Permissible costs that may be passed on to the cheerleaders would be limited to items related to the uniform (bloomers, socks, shoes, warm-ups, bags for uniform, etc.).
22. "Other" costs (other than permissible costs) would include, but not be limited to cheer gym services, competition costs, and competition routine costs that cannot be passed on to the cheerleaders. The costs and the funding source would need approval by the athletic director and principal of the school before plans are made for the "other" costs.
23. All fundraising must be approved by the athletic director and principal of the school according to Board Policy 6830 and 6830 Regulations and Procedures.
24. The principal and Human Resources office must approve non-faculty and volunteer coaches. Human Resources requires a completed support application, volunteer form, recommendation form, and health form. Human Resources must approve non-faculty and volunteer coaches prior to the individual starting the assignment.
25. Cheerleading squads are not permitted to practice without the supervision of the approved school cheerleading coach.
26. No stunting will be permitted unless the supervising coach has attended and been approved through the WCPSS Cheerleading Coaches Education Program.
27. Per Board Policy 2311 when school is closed for the day or dismissed early due to inclement weather, all cheerleading activities (practices, games, events, competitions) for the day shall be cancelled. (This includes on or off-campus activities.)
28. During 30-second timeouts, cheerleaders cannot perform. They may do partner stunts, jumps, etc. in front of their designated bleacher area. They may not go on the playing floor. When the 30-second timeout is over and the ball is put in play, all cheerleaders must be seated.

The following are from GUIDELINES GOVERNING CHEERLEADING SAFETY as outlined by the State Board of Education with modifications to reflect current National Federation Rules.

29. All cheerleading squads shall adopt a comprehensive conditioning program. Emphasis must be placed on problem areas (i.e. leg flexibility, upper arm strength, ankle and wrist strength, etc.).
30. Preceding all practice sessions and performances there shall be structured stretching exercises and a basic warm-up of cheerleading gymnastics (jumps, partner stunts, pyramids, tumbling, etc.).

31. All cheers, chants, dances, or spirit raising activities shall be well planned, practiced, and organized to promote the safety of students participating in cheerleading activities.
32. All squads shall be supervised by a cheerleading coach/sponsor during all warm-ups, practices, and performances. Locations of practices should be suitable for the activities of cheerleaders, (i.e.: tumbling mats, away from excessive noise and distractions, etc.) Practices should also be conducted in an atmosphere conducive to maximum concentration and with minimal talking.
33. Cheerleading coaches/sponsors should have a background in cheerleading, dance choreography, and/or gymnastics; and must be knowledgeable in proper cheerleading techniques and safety procedures. Coaches must coach only within his or her level of expertise and the abilities of their squads. It is recommended that cheerleading coaches/sponsors should regularly attend cheerleading camps and state and local cheerleading clinics to be more knowledgeable of current cheerleading techniques and safety procedures.
34. Sponsors/coaches must know their squad's ability level and must limit the squad's activities accordingly. As quoted by Universal Sports Camp Inc., "ability level refers to the squad's talents as a whole, and individuals should not be pressed to perform activities until safety perfected, (all routines, pyramids, stunts, and gymnastics shall be practiced to perfection prior to actual performance)."
35. Cheerleaders shall adapt their routines to the environmental conditions and playing surfaces for which stunts, pyramids, and routines are used (i.e.: no mount or gymnastics should be done during rain or on slippery surfaces. Hot and humid weather may also present problems).
36. Pyramids and partner stunts may be a part of the squad's routine, provided the following safety precautions are taken:
 - a) No pyramid or stunt formation is to be higher than two levels. (Refer to National Federation Spirit Rulebook.)
 - b) No base should support more than 1 ½ full people.
 - c) No free roll-off or free flips off pyramids or stunt.
 - d) No knee drops.
 - e) No collapsing pyramids or stunts (does not mean cradling).
 - f) No toe pitches.
 - g) No single support split catch.
 - h) Spotters should be present throughout the mounting, result, and dismounting stages of pyramids. (Spotters should always be in position throughout with hands up and eyes on the top mount).
 - i) Back dismounts into a cradle must be received by at least two people (example: Fireman's catch).
36. Gymnastics maneuvers where competency has been mastered are permitted (coaches/sponsors not knowledgeable in gymnastics should consult someone with expertise in this area to advise them of the ability level of their squad members).
37. Mini tramps, springboards, and similar equipment are prohibited.
38. No jewelry should be worn during practices or performances.
39. Aerobic type shoes shall be worn.
40. Cheerleaders shall have access to the school athletic trainer.
41. A cheerleader who misses practices at which a pyramid, stunt, or gymnastics maneuver was mastered shall not perform the maneuver at the next performance.

These rules and regulations also apply to practice, game situations, and outside competitions.