

GHSA Cheerleading Manual 2011 -2012

General Guidelines for All Cheer Coaches



(This guide applies to all levels of cheer coaching including ninth grade, junior varsity, varsity spirit for football, basketball and other sport cheer spirit teams as well as competition cheer coaches and community coaches.)

SECTION ONE: COACHING FOR SAFETY

COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Recognize that risk exist
2. Identify the possible risks
3. Prepare or plan for risk and plan ways to lower risks
4. Evaluate the risks when they occur
5. Supervise the program to control risks
6. Remind participants of their role in controlling risks
7. Remain vigilant and manage the program
8. Review the program when necessary
9. Ask for assistance as needed
10. Educate yourself and your athletes
11. Care about the welfare of your athletes
12. Use good common sense

NINE LEGAL DUTIES

1. Properly plan the activity
 - a. Sequence activities
 - b. Know the progressions, keep records and follow the progressions
 - c. Have a master plan for practice
2. Provide proper instruction
 - a. Inform athletes of your expectations
 - b. Provide proper training and instruction for all activities
 - c. Explain the rules and make sure the athletes understand them
3. Provide a safe physical environment
 - a. Inspect sites (gym, field, performance surface) to make sure it is appropriate
 - b. Use the appropriate surface as expected (floor, grass, mats, field, concrete, etc.)
 - c. Provide a place safe from hazard
4. Provide adequate and proper equipment
 - a. Inventory at the end of season and replace equipment as needed
 - b. Make sure equipment is set up appropriately
5. Match the athlete to their ability
 - a. Watch for size, weight, age, maturity, and mental state when selecting positions for athletes
 - b. Be realistic when setting expectations for athletes
6. Evaluate your athletes for injury and ability to participate
 - a. Have CPR and First Aid Training for emergencies

- b. Be able to evaluate an injury and determine the immediate needs of the athlete
 - c. Have an **EMERGENCY PLAN** in place and go over the plan with the team
- 7. Supervise all activities closely
 - a. Be present
 - b. Be attentive
 - c. Be where you can control the situation
- 8. Warn all athletes of inherent risk
 - a. Provide information for both parents and athletes
 - b. Use INHERENT RISK FORMS**
 - c. Go over the inherent risk form and obtain signatures stating they were present
 - d. Make sure they understand the rules and the risk
- 9. Provide emergency assistance
 - a. Know first aid and CPR
 - b. Be ready to respond and prepare others to do so
 - c. Keep a list of contacts and phone numbers posted
 - d. Have a plan

**Good coaches know their legal duties, implement their legal duties,
and when in doubt seek assistance and help.**

If you are a good and caring coach who uses good common sense then you are most likely meeting your legal duties. The nine items listed above apply to all coaches. They are a vital part of athletic risk management and the prevention of injuries. However, regardless of the excellence of any risk management program, it cannot totally eliminate injuries. The coach must be a trained individual who is committed to every individual's safety, consistency in the program, and good management of the team.

COACHING GUIDELINES

1. Spirit teams should be under the guidance of a knowledgeable coach.
2. The coach should be knowledgeable in the first aid techniques and emergency procedures. Coaches must develop an emergency plan for dealing with injuries at practice, games, performances and other cheer activities. Participants must be made aware of these procedures.
3. The coach should remain up-to-date on all new techniques, progressions, and safety regulations by frequently attending conferences, clinics, and rules meetings. The coach should also belong to appropriate professional spirit organizations.
4. The coach should place spirit teams at athlete events to ensure safe performance.

- a. Whenever possible, spirit teams should be at least three to four feet from the boundary line.
 - i. At a wrestling match the spirit team should be at least ten feet from the edge of the wrestling mat unless the facility does not permit otherwise.
 - ii. At a volleyball match, the spirit team should not stand in any playable area unless the facility does not permit otherwise.
 - iii. At a basketball game, the spirit team should not stand behind the free throw lane extended (NFHS: 2-1-12) and must be eight (8) feet from the boundary lines of the court (GHSA rule).
 - 1. 2-1-8 Addresses tumbling and stunting during the basketball or volleyball games.
 - 2. 2-1-9 Addresses warming-up tumbling and stunting on the court or sideline
 - 3. 2-1-10 Addresses time-outs and the playing area
 - 4. 2-1-11 Addresses artificial noise makers
 - iv. At football games, the safety of the spirit team should be considered in the placement of the team where they are not in harm's way of the football players, too close to the sideline, too close to the stands or concrete surfaces, and the field is safe (free from rocks, holes, equipment, etc.)
 - b. Spirit teams should be familiar with the action occurring during the game and the game rules. The spirit team should be prepared to move so as not to interfere with the game officials, the game actions, or the responsibilities of those playing in the game.
 - c. No action by the team should purposely distract the players.
 - d. All activities should be held in a location suitable for spirit teams, free of obstructions, and away from excessive noise or distractions.
 - e. Practices should be held in a location free of obstructions, away from excessive noise or distraction, and on an appropriate surface.
5. Rules and eligibility requirements should be shared with every team member.
 6. The coach should conduct pre- and post-season meetings with the parents.
 7. The coach or other school approved adult representative must be in attendance and accessible at all practices, games, performances, and other spirit activities.
 8. The coach should establish a good line of communication with school administrators, the athletic director, other coaches, and the band director.
 9. Warm-ups and stretching should be held prior to all spirit team activities.
 - a. Warm-up should be conducted prior to the event. The team should arrive early to conduct the warm-up and stretch.

- b. The warm-up should be conducted in a safe location without the interference of activities by other athletes such as shooting hoops or throwing or kicking footballs on the side-lines.
 - c. Stunting may be delayed until after the first half of a game to ensure a warm-up as occurred.
 - d. The coach may have to enlist others to stand between the players' warm-up area and the cheer team's warm-up area to prevent injury.
10. The coach should recognize a team's particular ability level and limit its activities accordingly. "Ability level" refers to the team's talents as a whole, and to individuals who should not be pressed to perform specific activities nor be limited by the ability level of the team. (See, understand, and use progressions in training and performing.)
 11. Coaches should not permit loose, slick, baggy clothes, or nylon hose or tights which are not appropriate for the specific activity in which they are participating.
 12. Coaches and participants should be trained in proper spotting techniques.
 13. Proper progressions and spotting techniques should be used by coaches when training a team.
 14. Appropriate matting should be used until stunts are mastered. Keep in mind that mats are required for competition performances and for training. Also, mats (or a grass like surface) are required for specific stunts such as the basket toss, elevator tosses, similar multi-base tosses, and twist to cradles.
 15. The coach should approve all cheers, chants, posters, signs, music, etc. and ensure good sportsmanship. All team activities should be approved by the coach.
 16. The team should be informed that all skills must be approved and practiced with the coach present prior to any performance.
 17. The coach should be aware of how the demands placed on the spirit team impact an athlete's academic achievement.
 18. Travel arrangements should be approved by the coach and the school administration while following local guidelines.
 19. When a team member is required to wear an insulin pump/pack or similar device during team activities, it is the responsibility of the coach to obtain competent medical advice concerning the protection and safety of the individual and other team members with whom the person wearing the device will be performing or stunting with.
 20. Coaches should be aware of all rules involving a participant wearing a brace or cast (2-3-8), bleeding (2-1-13), and concussions (2-1-14). Err on the side of caution in all cases.

SECTION TWO: COACHING WITH DIGNITY

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. Spirit teams should cheer in a positive manner and in support of their own teams. It is inappropriate to cheer “against” or “at” the other team or to cheer in an aggressive manner. (Example: “Miss it, miss it!” or “Oh yea, you walked, you walked...”)
2. Cheers which solicit an aggressive response would be inappropriate. (Example: “We got spirit, how about you!”)
3. Cheerleaders, both on the field and off the field, should show respect for the flag and during the National Anthem by standing at attention and not talking.
4. Cheers and chants with suggestive motions and/or words are highly discouraged.
5. It is strongly suggested that basketball cheerleaders be positioned at opposite ends of the gym to eliminate face-to-face cheering.
6. Cheerleaders should not point to, laugh at, or cheer at the opposing team, the spirit squad or the fans when cheering. They should lead their fans and cheer for their team.
7. Cheerleaders should realize the importance of positive signs. Signs should promote their team. This extends to run-throughs and pep rally signs as well as game signs. Signs, just as cheers do, should encourage your team and not degrade or intimidate the opposing team or mascot.
8. When a free throw is in progress cheerleaders should be quiet – no cheering, no stomping, no kicking the bleachers. Cheerleaders should not attempt to distract a player in any sport.
9. Cheerleaders should not draw attention to the mistakes of individual players.
10. Intimidation of opponents has no place in high school athletics.
11. Cheerleaders should behave in an appropriate, calm, and quiet manner with regard for an injured player on either team, kneeling quietly until the player has recovered or been removed from the field or the court.
12. Spirit cheerleaders should educate students and fans and promote good sportsmanship by providing appropriate leadership.
13. Obnoxious behavior should not be encouraged nor permitted under the guise of school spirit. Opposing players, coaches, administrators, officials, and fans should be treated with the utmost respect. This would extend outside of the game into the communication arena of the internet and the newspapers.
14. If inappropriate crowd behaviors exist, the cheerleaders should not join in but allow a school administrator to address the issue.

15. Cheer and dance motions should not be suggestive, contain sexual implications, or create unwanted crowd response. All music should reflect the high moral standards of GHSA athletics and be free from sexual references and vulgarity.

Read the new sportsmanship section of the NFHS Rules book. Rule 2 – Section 2 on Page 17.

“Sportsmanship is a commitment to ethics and integrity. It is a promise to uphold the dignity of the sport of cheerleading and to honor the coaching position. As a team and as a coach we are striving for the highest ethical and moral conduct by our team and our fans.”

TECHNIQUES IN CHEERING:

1. Leading Cheers and Chants
 - a. Cheerleaders not only elicit a crowd response to supporting their team, they also control the crowd response through positive interaction, the use of appropriate cheers and chants, the use of appropriate signs, and working with the band to motivate a crowd to respond appropriately.
 - b. Cheerleaders need to know the game and use the appropriate cheers and chants at the correct time based on the action taking place in the game. They must be alert and ready to alter their cheers and chants as needed.
 - c. Cheerleaders should use cheers and chants that do not suggest, inflame or taunt the opposing team and fans or solicit an inappropriate response from their own team and fans.
 - d. For indoor games and events, cheerleaders should not use artificial noise makers or enhancers, including but not limited to cowbells, sirens, clackers, cans with rocks or marbles, air horns, whistles, or other noise apparatus. (NFHS: 2-1-11)
 - e. Cheerleaders should not boo at an opposing team, player, coach, or an official. If booing develops in a crowd, cheerleaders should attempt to divert the team by starting a crowd cheer.
 - f. Cheerleaders should attempt to work with the fans prior to the game showing them how to respond to signs and chants.
 - g. Cheerleaders should make eye contact with the fans, and their facial expressions should generate enthusiasm and support of the team.
 - h. Cheerleaders should work with the band and review the sportsmanship and cheer guidelines with them. They are a vital part of the athletic program and should be shown respect.

2. When to cheer and when not to cheer

a. Cheer or applaud when:

- i. A team comes on the field or court.
- ii. When the team or a player makes an exceptional play.
- iii. When a substitution is made on a team; both incoming and outgoing players should be cheered when appropriate.
- iv. As a tribute to an injured player as they leave the game.
- v. As an encouragement to your own team in its drive for a score.
- vi. As an encouragement to your own team in defense of its goal.
- vii. When an opponent who has played a spectacular game, leaves the game or court or when a great play is made.

b. **Do not** cheer or applaud when:

- i. An opposing player or team makes a mistake.
- ii. An opposing player or team is being penalized.
- iii. An important announcement is being made over the public address system.
- iv. When the sport coach is trying to talk to the team.
- v. When an unsportsmanlike act has occurred or is occurring.
- vi. When it is the opposing cheerleaders turn to cheer during a basketball game. The rotation for cheers should be established prior to the game.
- vii. Remember that a cheerleader may stunt or tumble when the basketball is in play, including free throws. (NFHS: 2-1-8)

c. **When to** go on the court in basketball or football:

- i. During pregame when the teams are not warming up.
- ii. During a football pregame where physical space and time allow for the team to perform.
- iii. During the quarter break or the half-time of a basketball game when teams are not warming up. This should be planned with the opposing cheerleading team and the home team alternating on court.
- iv. During the half-time when the band is not performing at a football game.
- v. During the full 60 second time out of a basketball game.
- vi. During the postgame.

(**Note: In most cases it is best to clear any performances with the sport coaches prior to a game. Also, cheerleaders and coaches should be aware of the sports' rules and the officials'/referees' signals watching for any changes in the game.)

SECTION THREE: RULES AND REGULATIONS

BASIC GUIDELINES

1. All spirit coaches must be aware of the **GHSA Constitution and By-Laws** and the basic rules governing all sports and the cheerleading section of this manual.
2. All spirit coaches must be aware of the **NFHS Spirit Rules Book**. All cheerleading teams for any sport are governed by this book. The rules in this book will apply to all spirit teams and govern practice, performances, and cheering.
(*Note: The NFHS Spirit Rules Book may be obtained from the GHSA, P.O. Box 271, Thomaston, GA. 30286; phone 706-647-7473)
3. All spirit coaches must complete a rule's clinic as required by the GHSA. It is the responsibility of the coach to obtain the information pertaining to the clinics or the rule's training. This course may be completed and on line beginning the summer of 2011.
4. The spirit coach is responsible for ensuring that the action of and/or the behavior of the school's spirit team adheres to the rules of the GHSA and the NFHS.
5. All spirit team members must be eligible members of the team and students enrolled in their school. All spirit team members must be declared eligible by the GHSA. Names must be submitted and approved prior to an athlete participating on the team. (GHSA RULES and NFHS: 2-1-2; Please note this rule confirms that small children or students from other programs cannot cheer with the cheerleading team. There is one exception to the GHSA eligibility requirements. All male schools may use female cheerleaders from a school close to their area to cheer on spirit teams.)
6. All coaches and spirit teams should honor the rules of the school or school system where they are cheering. If a school system or region has specific rules that apply to their system then they should be honored by all visiting teams.
7. Basic safety rules for all spirit teams must be adhered to:
 - a. No jewelry should be worn while cheering. This would include practice, performances, and cheering at games. Please note that this includes earrings, bracelets (including wrist bands or rubber bands), necklaces, belly rings, lip and tongue rings, nose rings, studs of any form, and so on. Jewelry is not allowed. (NFHS: 2-3-1)

- b. No chewing gum or candy during practice, performances or while cheering. Teams should refrain from eating while completing their assigned cheer duties. (NFHS: 2-1-7)
 - c. No glitter or hard and unyielding facial stickers. (GHSA Rule)
 - d. Fingernails and hair must follow the NFHS guidelines as stated in the NFHS Spirit Rules Book. (NFHS: 2-3-2; 2-3-3)
 - e. Uniforms should be appropriate. The NFHS clearly defines what is legal and illegal. Uncovered midriffs are illegal. **(NFHS: 2-3-6)** The length of uniforms should be appropriate to this rule. Uniforms should reflect the school colors and/or the school mascot.
 - f. Performing surfaces should be safe and appropriate for the activity. Be aware that this includes practices. (NFHS: 2-1-5)
 - g. All coaches should be aware of the NFHS rules governing bleeding, cast, braces and injuries including concussions. (NFHS: 2-1-13; 2-1-14; 2-3-8)
8. All coaches should modify activities, practices, stunting and tumbling based upon the performing surface and the location as well as the physical environment at the time of the activity. (NFHS: 2-1-5)

The Job of the Coach

1. The coach should be accessible and be in proximity to the location of the team when practicing and/or performing. The coach will attend games and supervise the team.
2. The coach should plan and supervise all practices and be prepared to run the practice.
3. The coach should maintain medical records, update records as needed, and be aware of any medical issues which may occur.
4. The coach should take first aid and CPR
5. The coach should create an emergency plan and prepare the team to react to emergencies.
6. The coach should maintain a first aid kit and keep it up-to-date.
7. The coach should understand skills and progressions and maintain records of athletic performances of those skills.
8. The coach should seek training and understand how to teach or instruct a team in how to build specific stunts, how to dismount, how to spot, and what to do in the case of a fall or accident.
9. The coach should work with the administration, the faculty, and the athletic department to ensure that the cheerleading team works cooperatively with the entire school program.
10. The coach will work closely with parents educating them on all aspects of the cheer program and keeping them informed of the schedule.

11. The coach will support the academic program and help all team members to place priority on their academic performance.
12. The coach will prepare and conduct the tryouts and the selection of the cheer team.
13. The coach will attend workshops, clinics, and seminars to learn how to train and teach cheerleading skills, learn how to maintain a safe program, and develop coaching skills.
14. The coach will provide motivation and organization to the cheer program.
15. The coach will provide consistency in the implementation of rules and guidelines of the cheer program.
16. The coach will organize and maintain equipment as needed including uniforms.
17. The coach will follow the policies of the local, state, and national governing organizations as specified by the GHSA.
18. The coach will arrange transportation as needed and follow local school guides in doing so.
19. The coach will follow good common sense in running the program and all safety rules both in practice and in performance.
20. The coach will consider both moral and behavioral aspects of life when running the program. The coach will remember that they are a mentor to the team and take into consideration the type example they set for their team. (Considering: Integrity, honesty, morality, dependability, attitude, fairness, professionalism, responsibility)

National Federation of
High Schools
2011 -2012 Spirit Rules Changes

NFHS Spirit Rules Books
may be purchased from the GHSA Office
706-647-7473
joycekay@ghsa.net

Rules Interpretations may be
found on
www.ghsacheerleading.com

Contact Pam Carter for rules interpretations
pcarters@aol.com
706-576-5397
334-448-5123

2011 – 2012 Spirit Rules Changes

- 2-4-9d** Add d
d. Hold objects in his or her hand(s)

A spotter is unable to hold in objects in his or her hand. The spotter's full attention must be on the flyer. The primary responsibility of the spotter is to protect the flyer. If a spotter's hands are not free, the ability of the spotter to spot safely is greatly diminished.

- 2-5-5g** Delete (c)
Delete last phrase in (g)..... "therefore, all full pendulums require two bases."

Eliminating (c) will allow the top person to land on her/his side. Removing the last phrase of (g) will allow a single-base full pendulum in which the top person drops to the side. These allowances do not present a greater risk than dropping face up or face down.

- 2-5-12c** Add EXCEPTION: A backward leapfrog to a prone position is permitted provided there are at least two catchers and the top person maintains continuous hands-to-hands contact with the post throughout the transition. The original bases, post, and catchers must remain stationary.

This stunt presents minimal risk to participants if adequate restrictions are in place.

- 2-6-2** Basket tosses, elevators and similar multi-base tosses are permitted only on grass (real or artificial) or a mat.

Prohibiting tosses from being performed on hard surfaces is consistent with the NFHS focus of risk minimization.

- 2-6-4c** Quick/load-in tosses that begin with the top person in weight-bearing contact with the performing surface and end in a stunt or pyramid are legal provided the following conditions are met.
- (same) The toss does not significantly exceed the height of the intended stunt.
 - (same) The top person is not tossed again or does not lose contact with the base(s) without first dismounting to a cradle or the performing surface.
 - (change) The top person does not twist during the release unless it is performed on the grass (real or artificial) or a mat.

Prohibiting airborne twist during quick/load-in tosses from being performed on hard surfaces is consistent with the NFHS focus on risk minimization.

- 2-7-7c** Add c. and add Note
- The top person begins from a cradle or the performing surface.

Note: A slight downward swing to prepare for an upward swing is permitted.

Allowing a downward swing from a stunt higher than a cradle presents increased risk to the top person.

- 2-8-9b** A twist to a cradle is permitted only on grass (real or artificial) or a mat.

Prohibiting all twisting cradle dismounts from being performed on hard surfaces is consistent with the NFHS focus on risk minimization.

- 2-9-5** Add new: Airborne twisting tumbling skills are permitted only on grass (real or artificial) or a mat, with the exception of roundoffs and aerial cartwheels.

Prohibiting twisting tumbling skills from being performed on hard surfaces is consistent with the NFHS focus on risk minimization.

- 2-14** Remove rule pertaining to vaults.

Rules pertaining to vaults are now covered in the Non-Release Stunts Section.

NOTE:

When reading your spirit rules book keep in mind that when you see an **asterisk (*)** or a **'P'** beside the rule you will find further clarification in the "Situations Section" or pictures in the "Picture Section".
Gray highlighting means a change has been made in the book.