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## The Guide to Cheerleading

Jaclyn Wright  
*University of South Florida*

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# The Guide to Cheerleading



Written by: Jaclyn Wright

Honor's Thesis

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
The History of Cheerleading .....	3
A Season in the Life of a Cheerleader: .....	7
Pre-Tryouts .....	8
Tryouts .....	9
Forms .....	10
Camp and Team Bonding .....	11
Practice and Conditioning .....	13
Fundraising and Building School Spirit .....	14
Competition and Games .....	14
End of the Season .....	15
Qualities .....	17
Qualities Needed .....	18
Qualities Learned .....	20
Are You Cheerleading Material? .....	22
The Types of Cheerleading .....	26
Pre-High school .....	27

High school.....	27
All Star.....	27
College.....	29
Professional .....	32
STUNT .....	32
<b>Rules.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Pre-High School Rules .....	34
High School Rules.....	34
All Star Rules .....	34
College Rules .....	35
Professional Rules.....	35
STUNT rules.....	35
Web Sites .....	36
<b>Where Can I Cheer?.....</b>	<b>37</b>
How To Find a Squad If You Chose:.....	39
<b>The Basics .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Motions.....	42
Jumps.....	46
Tumbling.....	49

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Stunting .....	51
Dangers .....	59
Most Common Injuries.....	60
Less Common Injuries.....	60
Why is Cheerleading so Dangerous? .....	61
Prevention.....	61
Is Cheerleading a Sport? .....	63
The Debate .....	64
Final Thoughts.....	67
Works Cited.....	69
Works Cited Pictures .....	70

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# Introduction

“Cheerleader (n.): An athlete who can jump, kick, toss, catch, stunt, tumble and fly”

Everyone has heard of cheerleading and probably thinks they know what a cheerleader is, but unless you are already a part of the exciting world of cheerleading, you may not quite understand what cheerleading actually entails. This guide, however, will provide you with an in-depth investigation about cheerleading, ranging from the types of cheerleading to cheerleading tryouts to the cheerleading basics to cheerleading safety! But before we can go any further on this cheerleading expedition, we must first make sure that you appreciate what it means to be a cheerleader. To do this, you must be able to answer this question: “What exactly is a cheerleader?”

The definition at the beginning of this chapter defined a cheerleader as “an athlete who can jump, kick, toss, catch, stunt, tumble and fly” and while these are things that a cheerleader does, are these things that really define a cheerleader? I believe that there is so much more to pieces, and so I decided to test my people-in which some were involved in almost nothing about cheerleading-to general, in one word. These are some enthusiastic, exciting, appealing, loud, cheerful, fun. None of these received, described cheerleading as remarkably close to what a cheerleader and cheerleaders, by their personality. So let’s go back to the question of what exactly a cheerleader is? I believe it is a manner in which people carry themselves and interact in a community, it is a way people socialize and present themselves to complete strangers, it is the mindset and the way a person approaches life; in other words, cheerleading is an attitude.

**Cheer-ability is a talent for deciding something quickly and getting everyone in the stadium doing it!**

If I were to describe cheerleaders in one word I would use the word ambassadors, which, by definition, means a promoter or representative. Cheerleaders fit this description perfectly as they are ambassadors of the school and of the school’s spirit, which requires them to be all of those characteristics listed above and most importantly, requires them to have that cheerleading attitude that makes them so well-known by their peers and the community.

Throughout this book you will encounter everything relating to cheerleading, including how cheerleaders have come to be known as the ambassadors they are known as today. You will start with the evolution of cheerleading, and then learn about everything else that comprises cheerleading. By the end, hopefully, you will further understand what encompasses a cheerleader and will also have discovered what makes cheerleading such a unique and special part of so many peoples’ lives.

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# The History of Cheerleading

“If football is so sensational why does it take cheerleaders to excite the crowd?”



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Many people have heard the saying, “If cheerleading was any easier then it would be all guys,” but what many people don’t know is that when cheerleading was first introduced over 100 years ago, it was made up of only male cheerleaders! In fact, the first person to ever introduce the idea of synchronized crowd yelling at football games was a male Princeton graduate named Thomas Peebles.

In 1884, when he was employed as a teacher at the University of Minnesota, he started yelling and cheering on the football team from the crowd. Soon people everywhere were yelling with him and groups of men began sitting in groups to facilitate this yelling. By the 1890’s, these men came to be known as yell captains, or leaders, and their job was to sit on the sidelines and gain the cooperation of the crowd in yelling and cheering on their football team. This notion spread throughout the country and it was not long before many colleges and universities had elected yell captains of their own. But, cheerleading still had a lot of evolving to do in order to get it ready for our modern world!

Cheerleading, as we know it today, was founded one night, November 2, 1898 to be exact, when one of the yell captains, who happened to be a 1<sup>st</sup> year medical student by the name of Jack Campbell, became frustrated with only sitting on the sidelines cheering the team on. He decided then and there that yell leaders needed to be more interactive with the crowd in order to boost the football team’s morale, and this meant they needed to be in front of the crowd. Without any hesitation, he stood up from the sidelines, ran to the front of the crowd, and began leading the cheers from there. The crowd loved it and from then on the yell captains’ place was in front of the crowd.

The yell captains soon realized that in order to inspire the athletes they must continuously find new ways to excite the crowd. In 1914 a young man from the University of Southern California, named Lindley Bothwell, came up with a great idea, one that is still in used by cheerleaders today. He thought that if there was some way for the crowd to see the words they might be more inclined to get involved with the cheers, and so the use of flashcards was born.

In 1919, not long after the founding of flashcards, at the University of Kansas, a student from the University of Kansas was expanding cheerleading even more; he was planning the very first pep rally. This man, Shirley Windsor, had just watched his football team tie in one of the most important games of the season. He decided that if he could raise enough money to build his college its own stadium then the next time they played, they would not just tie, they would win! To do this, he organized a pep rally and got his fellow students to donate money to his cause. He was extremely successful in his endeavor and soon pep rallies were being used all over the country and soon these pep rallies became a job of the cheerleaders.

During the 1920’s and 30’s, however, cheerleading saw a drastic change; men were being drafted to war and women were forced to take over jobs that were typically all male. This was no different in the cheerleading world and, soon the sport

became infiltrated with females. Eventually, the sport was even being dominated by females and, as we know, remains dominated by females to this day.

But the best cheerleading innovations were yet to come; the man who came to be known as the Father of Modern Cheer was about to step onto the scene in 1948. Who knew that this man, who mainly started cheerleading to help rid him of his horrible stuttering problem, would become what The New York Times called “a legend in the cheerleading world.” This man was Lawrence Herkimer and it was through his cheerleading experiences at Southern Methodist that cheerleading became a huge part of him. Through his involvement in cheerleading, he developed many ideas which would he believed would take cheerleading to a whole different and much improved level. His first major innovation was to combine gymnastics and motions to invigorate the crowd, and this idea took off. He even invented one of the most popular cheerleading jumps, which was named after him, called the herkie! Soon, he was holding cheerleading clinics in his gymnastics gym to teach interested cheerleaders this new sensation. These clinics became so popular that he decided to hold a cheerleading camp one summer at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, TX. He invited cheerleaders from all over to come and learn all that he had to offer and 52 girls came! Cheerleading camps became extremely popular and hundreds of girls began swarming the camps to learn all about jumping and tumbling. But Herkimer decided that this was not enough in the world of cheerleading, that something more was still needed - cheerleading needed to be institutionalized. It was then, in Dallas, TX, that he founded the National Cheerleader’s Association, also known as the NCA.

Through the NCA, Herkimer’s many other ideas also became fundraising and selling booster ribbons at football enough money to go to camp. He was also pon to further excite the crowd. showed the importance of a emphasized sprit and attitude. NCA culture and spurred the entire spirit introduced the spirit stick during important thing to a cheerleader, but sportsmanship. He gave this spirit stick as an award to the squad that embodied these elements and soon receiving the spirit stick became a most coveted honor.

*It's not the glitz of the uniform that matters, but the spirit that shines within it*

a reality. He came up with the idea of games, so cheerleaders could raise credited for inventing the paper pom Through the NCA, Herkimer also cheerleaders’ mind-set as NCA basically founded present-day cheerleading industry. To further stress this idea of spirit, Herkimer camp in 1954. He believed that talent was not the most rather the most critical thing was vibrant, positive energy and

Thanks to Herkimer and his work laying the foundation for it, cheerleading, and everything about cheerleading, was growing in popularity by the minute. There remained one real problem, though; it was hard to find cheerleading supplies. Like all of the other problems he encountered, however, Herkimer had a solution to this and so founded the Cheerleaders Supply

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Company, the first cheerleading equipment organization. Shortly after, cheerleading was a booming business and thousands of girls and boys all over the country were participating.

Because of Herkimer's fascination with cheerleading, many other people with intense interests in the sport were drawn to him and his organization. One man with these characteristics was Jeff Webb, who worked for Herkimer. He learned the basics from Herkimer, but began to form his own opinions and ideas about where the world of cheerleading was heading. In 1971, he decided to break away from the NCA and form a new company, one that was more modern with even more gymnastics and showy moves, a company that became known as the Universal Cheerleaders Association, or UCA. With this new modern cheer, Webb believed a new modern uniform was needed, one that could be differentiated for each team with new and different accessories. So he, too, founded his own supply company, which still is very successful today. One of Webb's biggest accomplishments, however, happened in 1981 when he organized a national championship of cheerleading (one of the most prestigious competitions, even to this day) and was even able to convince ESPN to televise it!

Because of these pioneers, cheerleading is one of the most popular sports in the United States and continues to grow in popularity internationally!

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# **A Season in the Life of a Cheerleader:**

## **From Beginning to End**

“It’s not a question of winning; it’s how you cheer the game!”

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## Pre-Tryouts

Believe it or not, the season for a cheerleader starts before tryouts, about 4-6 weeks before tryouts to be precise, and the first thing a cheerleader must do is decide what type of cheer he or she wants to participate in. Most of the time a cheerleader is deciding between school cheerleading and All Star cheerleading, or in some cases whether they will be able to participate in both. (In order to help you make this decision, there is a quick quiz in the Locations chapter, which will help you determine which type of cheerleading is best for you!)

Once this decision has been made, the next step is to find out when and where the tryouts will take place. This is an extremely important step because it tells the potential cheerleaders how much time they have to prepare and get their bodies ready for what can be a grueling couple of days of tryouts.

The next thing that has to be done is research. There are two types of research that can be important to a potential cheerleader; one type deals with the information about the squad and the other deals with the squad's skills. The first type of research is used to obtain information about the cheerleading program. For example, some schools offer scholarships for cheerleading, and others have different types of benefits. Knowing this information can be very useful in the future and, so, is a step that should not be skipped. The second type of research is important because before a cheerleader can create a workout schedule to get in shape for the team they want to be a part of, he or she must know the skills and qualifications of the squad and compare those to skills that he or she already possesses. Once the cheerleader knows what skills and strengths he or she will need, it will be much easier to build a tryout preparation plan, which will ensure that he or she is ready for tryout day.

The plan that the cheerleader develops should be a weekly plan and should mainly focus on conditioning, as skills can be taught at practice but building stamina and strength takes time. The conditioning, however, should be different each day of the week, that way every muscle is worked on and every muscle also gets days to rest. The plan should start building strength very slowly and gradually increase as to safely get the body ready for a whole season of cheerleading. Because attitude is extremely important in cheerleading, focus should also be placed on maintaining a positive attitude throughout the whole pre-tryout process.

One last thing that is helpful during pre-tryouts is to become accustomed to basic choreography and motions. This can be done by learning a basic cheer from last year, a simple cheer online, or even just learning what the basic motions are and being familiar with them. Once all of this has been done, the potential cheerleader is then ready for tryouts!

### Pre-tryout steps:

1. Decide which type of cheer you want to participate in.
2. Find out when and where tryouts take place.
3. Research information about a)the school and/or benefits that the cheer program can provide and b)what skills and qualifications the cheerleading squad requires.
4. Compare skills and qualifications to those that you already possess.
5. Develop a weekly plan that focuses on building strength and stamina and also a positive attitude.
6. If necessary, learn a basic cheer or familiarize yourself with the basic cheer motions.

You are ready for tryouts!

## Tryouts

The tryout process is often one of the most stressful and tense times of the season for the cheerleader as this is when the cheerleader finds out if he or she will actually be able to participate on the squad. Every tryout is different, even from season to season, however, often there are many similarities.

At the very beginning of tryouts, some squads require the cheerleaders sign a tryout waiver, for insurance and safety purposes, enabling them to tryout. After all the potential squad members have signed the waiver, the actual tryout process begins.

The length of tryouts varies from team to team but they typically last about three days, where the first two days are a clinic in which the cheerleaders prepare for judgment day, or the final day of tryouts. During the clinic the cheerleaders are often separated into groups, which are used for stunting and for simple cheer formations. On the third day of camp, the cheerleaders are usually judged one group at the time. This ensures that the coaches are able to see each cheerleader clearly to assess whether or not the potential cheerleader will be an asset to the squad. On tryout day, the judges base their decision on about five or six separate aspects of cheerleading. These things are often judged using a point system, where the candidates can gain points for certain tricks and skills and lose points for any mistakes they make. They are judged on their technical skills, which are examined through stunting, and also on their tumbling skills

*If it's in your heart, it shows in your spirit!*

and jumps. One of the most important things that the cheerleaders are judged on is their performing skills, which is a cheer and includes things like sharp motions, eye contact, volume, and spirit. Sometimes there is also an interview portion of the tryout so the judges can assess a cheerleader's personality and ability to cope with different situations. The last thing the candidates are judged on is overall presentation; appearance, posture, and to note that appearance tryout process is extremely important. For school cheerleaders are the representatives of the school and competition cheerleaders are judged at competitions for appearance, requiring cheerleaders to always maintain a proper, clean appearance. Because of this, appearance is always judged at tryouts, and not just on the actual judgment day.

**A good cheerleader is not measured by the height of her jumps, but by the span of her spirit.**

Another important note is that while skills are very important for a potential cheerleader, maintaining a good and positive attitude can be even more imperative than skills. After tryouts are over, the coaches tally the points and choose the cheerleaders they think will best benefit their squad. The results from this decision can be posted any time from a couple hours to a couple days after the tryout.

**A typical tryout:**

Day 1 – Clinic:  
Warm up,  
Cheer skills,  
Jump skills,  
Break,  
Stunting,  
Tumbling,  
Dance,  
Closing

Day 2 – Clinic:  
Warm up,  
Stunting,  
Cheer skills,  
Break,  
Tumbling,  
Dance,  
Jump Skills,  
Closing

Day 3 – Judgment Day:  
Group 1,  
Group 2,  
Group 3,  
Group 4,  
Group 5  
etc. until all the groups have gone.

**Forms**

Once a cheerleader has made the squad the next thing that must be completed is all of the cheerleading paperwork. Each team has different paperwork and forms to fill out and some squads make the cheerleaders fill out some, if not all, of the paperwork

during the tryout process. Some of the forms that have to be filled out deal with safety and medical information. This includes things like a physical examination from a doctor, insurance waivers, and other medical forms. Some squads require other types of paperwork like parental consent (if the cheerleader is under 18 years of age), transcripts from school to make sure the cheerleaders GPA is high enough (usually a 2.0), and sometimes even personal references are needed. The forms also usually include the gym rules or squad rules and consequences and many teams even require squad members to sign a contract stating that they will abide by the rules.

## Camp and Team Bonding

Camp and team bonding are some of the most crucial parts of the season for a team because those bring the team together and allow them to feel like they have become part of a family. This process usually starts out with the decision of who will be the captain of the squad. While some squads only choose one captain, it not unusual for a squad to choose two captains, and these can consist of two captains, or a captain and a co-captain. For the teams with only one captain, the captain is usually voted on

**The refs have always been blind; it's our job to make them deaf!**

by the team or chosen by the coach, and is usually a cheerleader with a lot of spirit and talent. The process for the teams with two captains is quite similar. One of

the captains is often chosen by the coach and many times is the best all-around cheerleader, or the cheerleader who earned the most points at tryouts. The other captain or co-captain, then, may be voted on by the squad or may be chosen again by the coach, and this cheerleader is usually one with the most positive and encouraging attitude and spirit.

The next step in the process happens before camp and is where the coach focuses on bonding the team, and getting the squad acquainted with one another. There are many activities that the coach may employ to encourage the team to bond. One activity that the coach may use to accomplish this is to divide the cheerleaders into groups and have each group create a short cheer and then combining them or choosing one for the squad to use throughout the entire season as the squad cheer. Another activity that can be used is called the big/little cheerleader. In this activity the old, or former, squad members are paired with a new cheerleader for the season so that the new cheerleader has someone to go to should he or she have questions. The former cheerleaders are also responsible for giving their new buddies gifts, introducing them to other members on the team, and making sure the new cheerleader feels comfortable and like he or she is part of the team. Creating squad goals is another way to get the team to bond. This provides a way for the team to collaborate and decide what is important to them by answering questions such as: What do we want to accomplish this season?, What skills should we focus on and/or need to work on?, etc.



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Although not part of team bonding, another thing the coaches have the squad member think about before camp, and often write down, is individual goals. This is usually a form containing similar questions as the squad goals like: What skills do you need to work on? By the end of the season, what skills do you hope to have learned? What accomplishments do you wish to achieve this season? etc. The coaches keep these forms and throughout the season will periodically refer to them to see if the team and/or the individual cheerleaders are on track to completing their goals.

Team bonding, although highly stressed at the beginning of the season, continues throughout the entire season with activities such as holiday parties, get-togethers for birthdays and other important events, and reevaluation of the squad's goals.

To finalize the team bonding process and to also get the team comfortable with working in their stunt groups, many teams attend camp. There are many different types of camps and teams choose which camp to attend based on what they are trying to accomplish during the season or based on what skills they want to work on. Choosing a camp starts with the decision of whether the squad wants to attend an overnight camp or just a day camp. This decision can be based on whether the team has the money to travel to an overnight camp and also on what type of camp they are trying to attend, as some camps only offer overnight camps or day camps. Camps are also held at different places, like at a gym, a school/university, or a resort depending on whether the camp is a day camp or an overnight camp. The second decision to be made in choosing a camp is deciding what type of camp would be most beneficial to the team. There are general cheerleading camps where all aspects of cheerleading, like cheering, stunting, tumbling, etc. are worked on at some point and there are more specific camps which focus on only one aspect of cheerleading. These camps include cheer camp where the focus is learning motions and new cheers for games, stunt camp where the emphasis is placed on pyramids and stunt sequences, tumble camp where teams work on building their tumbling skills with running and standing tumbling often combined with jumps, and also choreography camp where the squad learns a routine to compete with in competitions. Once these questions are answered it is much easier to choose a camp.

While all the camps may have different classes and workshops, there are still many similarities between the camps. Basically all camps, whether day camps or overnight camps, are all day events, starting with breakfast and ending either with a dinner or right before dinner. Like tryouts, camps usually last more than a day and often last anywhere from three to five days, depending on the type of camp. Almost every camp, regardless of the type of camp the team attends, includes in its curriculum a fun and game time where the focus is on unity and teambuilding activities; this enforces the team bonding that the coaches try to establish. Almost all camps also end with some type of award ceremony. While sometimes these awards go to teams with the best stunts or skills, often the focus of the awards at camp is about attitude, with the most prestigious awards being the most spirited or the best sportsmanship.

## Practice and Conditioning

After camp the team should be well acquainted with one other and have developed close personal relationships with each other and, therefore, the next thing that the team focuses on is practicing with other and building trust. Teams usually practice about two to three times week, with each practice lasting about two to three hours. As the season progresses and/or competitions approach, however, some teams may practice as many as five to six times a week to ensure readiness for the upcoming event. Typically every skill is worked on at every practice, although some practices may focus on a specific aspect depending on what skills require extra work and fine-tuning.

*Practice does not make perfect;  
Perfect practice makes perfect.*

Some teams also require extra individual practice for their team members. For example, some squads require every member of the team to attend an hour of tumbling class every week and others require the flyers to attend an hour of stretching class every week. Some teams only require team members needing

improvement to attend extra practices to perfect any skill they are lacking or in need of improving. In addition to these practices, teams also often require their members to attend conditioning practices about two times a week and lasting about an hour. The goal of conditioning is to build strength and stamina in the muscles cheerleaders use most often, like the abdomen, upper body, and legs; this can not only enhance the cheerleaders' performances but, can also result in fewer injuries to the cheerleaders.

### A Typical Practice:

Warm up & Stretch  
Cheer and jumps  
Dance  
Short break  
Pyramid & Stunt Sequence  
Full routine (if that applies)  
Stretch  
Closing

**Remember: How you practice is how you perform!**

## Fundraising and Building School Spirit

Throughout the season, squad members are also usually required to participate in different types of fundraising activities. While teams fundraise for many different purposes, some of the main reasons a team fundraises is to raise money guarantee that the schools can continue to supply scholarships to its cheerleaders, to ensure that the squad has the ability to attend camps and competitions both this season and next, and also to purchase supplies, like flashcards, pom poms, shoes, uniforms, etc. Some of the main fundraising activities are attending events to build awareness of the team, performing community service, bake sales, selling ribbons and game day paraphernalia, organizing raffles and auctions, and planning pep rallies.

Building school spirit is another aspect of cheerleading that is extremely important for cheerleaders to participate in. The excitement of the crowd and the spirit and support of the students in the school often influence the performance of the other sports teams, which is part of the cheerleader's job. While pep rallies can be used for fundraising, they can also be used to build school spirit and are often coordinated and directed by the cheerleaders. Because of this, it is necessary for the cheerleaders to organize the pep rallies efficiently and effectively. Another activity the cheerleaders participate in that is used to raise the school spirit of students is spirit week. During spirit week, students of the school can be asked to wear certain colors, participate in certain activities, or attend certain functions. To encourage students to participate, the cheerleaders usually provide some sort of incentive, whether through a raffle for football tickets, free t-shirts, or other valuables.

## Competition and Games

For the squad, this is the most essential and exciting time during the whole season; this is what they practice and work so hard to accomplish! For the competition cheerleaders, this means competing in national and local competitions and, hopefully, returning home with a first place trophy. To do this, however, other imperative things must have been completed first. Firstly, this means the team must have created a routine that focuses on their strengths, undermines their weaknesses, and is also appealing to both the judges and the crowd. This can be done through the use of appealing routine music and sounds, attractive formations, clever transitions, clean appearances, and sharp motions. Another thing that must have been done is for the squad to have learned the competition rules and judging style of the competition. Each competition has different judging rules, although it is always a point based system where points are added for creativity and technicality and deducted for mistakes and areas needing improvement. Competitive cheerleaders must have also been made aware of the different awards that are given out at each competition and have learned which of these are most prestigious and would benefit their specific cheer program. This could include awards like the high point award, which

*Competitive Cheer:  
Want to know champions look like?  
Give me 2 minutes and 30 seconds  
and I'll show you!*

is given to the squad that earns the most points out of the whole competition, and the spirit award, given to the most supportive team with the best sportsmanship.

*Game Day Cheer:  
Simply because we don't run across goal lines,  
slam dunk basketballs, or hit homeruns, does  
NOT mean we can't change the score!*

Game cheerleaders have other things they must have learned to be successful at exciting an unruly crowd. This means they must have learned when it is and is not appropriate to cheer at each specific game. For example, in basketball cheerleaders are not allowed to cheer during free throws and it is inappropriate for cheerleaders to cheer when someone on the basketball or football team has been

injured. Cheerleaders must also have learned what skills and stunts are allowed to be performed on different surfaces. For example, some stunts cannot be performed on a basketball court because of safety reasons.

However, for both types of cheerleading it is important that, even during this thrilling time, the team practice safety and include spotters routinely. Also, it does not matter whether the cheerleader cheers for competition or for games, cheerleading is still about attitude and spirit and neither of these can be left out at any point during the season!

### **End of the Season**

The end of the season is one of the season. At this point, the of emotional and physical struggles reflection. Sometimes coaches will showing the cheerleader their beginning of the season. This goals they have accomplished and it cheerleader and the team has with a self-evaluation form, where much they think they have this time of the season for the evaluation forms about the the cheerleaders' thoughts and staff as a whole.

**Gold medals aren't really  
made out of gold; they are  
made out of hard work,  
sweat, determination, and  
a hard to find alloy called  
guts!**

saddest, yet most fulfilling times of the cheerleader has gone through a variety and has now reached a point of facilitate the reflection process by individual and squad goals from the enables them to see how many of the shows them how much each progressed. Often, this is accompanied the cheerleaders write about how accomplished. It is also not unusual at coaches to ask the squad to fill out cheerleading program in order to hear suggestions about the program and

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The end of the season is also usually marked by a celebration or party where the squad unites for the very last time and reminisces on the past season. During this celebration, the coach will often have fashioned something memorable for the cheerleaders, like a slideshow or a scrapbook. It is also not uncommon for the coach to hand out awards at the end of the season party and these awards can be for almost anything related to cheerleading like: most improved, most encouraging, best jumps, best stunt group, best flyer, best tumbling, best facials, most spirited, etc.

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# Qualities

“Attitude is a little something that makes a BIG difference.”

## Qualities Needed

Cheerleading requires a person to possess a specific set of unique talents and skills in order to be successful in the cheerleading world. Because of this, cheerleading is not right for everyone. Some of these talents can be learned or practiced but others, however, are abilities that come naturally or are innate to the person; if these capabilities are not present, it can prevent a person from being successful in cheerleading.

### Physical Characteristics:

**Stamina:** Cheerleading is a strenuous sport requiring the cheerleaders to perform stunts, jumps, motions, and tumbling while yelling at the top of their voices, and all of this is done without any type of breaks. School cheerleaders do not get a break during the game, nor do they get a break during timeouts, or in between quarters. In fact, these are times when the cheerleaders are required to perform even harder to gain the crowd's attention. Competitive cheerleaders do not get a break either; they give every ounce of their energy to their two minute and thirty second routine, which may not sound difficult, but requires extreme physical and mental strength. Because of this, a person who wants to participate in this sport must have stamina and endurance in order to not only be successful, but to be safe as well.

**Strength:** In cheerleading every squad member must be able to stunt, jump, and tumble. All of these activities are things that can require substantial amounts of strength. A potential cheerleader will not be successful if they are not strong enough to execute these things.

**Flexibility:** Flexibility is important for the aesthetics aspect of cheerleading. The motions and jumps performed by cheerleaders are much prettier and more pleasing to watch when the cheerleaders performing them are flexible. Flexibility is also extremely important for the flyers of stunts, as most of the body positions performed by flyers require them to be able to contort their bodies in ways that only the supplest people can.

**Coordination:** Cheerleaders must perform motions to cheers and music and, in order to be on beat and in sync with the rest of the squad, the members must be coordinated. If one person falls out of sync with the group, it is extremely noticeable and can make a well-performed clean routine, look sloppy and unrehearsed.

### Personality:

**Enthusiasm:** Cheerleaders are constantly required to try new things, work with new people, interact with strangers, and draw attention to themselves at games and competitions. To be successful in accomplishing all of these things, a cheerleader must be enthusiastic and passionate about cheerleading. An indifferent, timid cheerleader will not thrive at trying new things and enticing a crowd, and so enthusiasm is a must for a cheerleader.

*It's all about the smile! If you can mess and still smile, you are a natural born cheerleader. After all, what a cheerleader without a smile?*

**Cheerful:** The job of the cheerleader is to excite and thrill the crowd and crowds are more prone to watch happy, rousing cheerleaders. Therefore, cheerleaders must always have a smile on their face and be jovial even if they are having a rough day. People with gloomy dispositions or pessimistic attitudes are not right for cheerleading as they will not be enticing to a crowd.

**Teamwork:** In cheerleading there is no such thing as an individual moment; every aspect demands that cheerleaders to work together to accomplish their goals. Any cheerleader who is unable to work well with other people, or other members of a group, will hurt the squad and its chances at experiencing a successful season. This means every person considering participating in cheerleading must have the ability to work with other members of team, trying to understand them, listening to them, respecting them and their decisions, caring about them and their problems, and being patient with them.

**Dedication:** Cheerleaders are a team and every piece of cheerleading, from the formations to the stunt groups, requires each member to be present in order for the team to be successful. If one member of the squad misses practice regularly or decides to quit, that can dramatically affect how the squad performs. One person missing can require a formation to change or the development of new stunt group, which can upset of the natural flow of the year and work hard bonding stunts in specific stunt groups all squad member to throw the extremely important for the personality.

**We may make it look easy but, like all sports, it takes hard work and dedication.**

**Work-Ethic:** Cheerleaders must work hard and give their all at every practice and so a good work-ethic is extremely important for a cheerleader. Cheerleading can be a very dangerous sport, with members flipping in the air and stunting together. If one member of a stunt group does not have a good work-ethic, a stunt can fall or a tumbling pass can land wrong, which can result in serious injuries.

**Respect:** Cheerleading is not an individual sport; rather it is truly a team sport with every aspect requiring team members to work together. Because of this, a person will not be successful in cheerleading if this is person is not able to work with others and respect teammates. It is also important for cheerleaders to respect their coaches. Cheerleaders cannot sit and watch themselves perform and so the coaches perform the crucial task of letting the cheerleaders know what looks enticing and exciting, and what aspects need improvement. Cheerleaders must respect the coach and what the coach says if they ever want to advance and motivate a crowd.

**Other:**

**Physically Fit:** Cheerleaders put a lot of strain on every muscle and bone in their bodies. A potential cheerleader must not have any weak body parts or body parts prone to injury, like a bad back or a weak ankle. A cheerleader who is not physically fit will only end up further injuring him or herself, which can lead to devastating, and even lethal, results.

**Eating Habits:** Because of the nature of cheerleading, it is extremely important for cheerleaders to have good eating habits. The first step to creating good eating habits is eating right. The body needs a variety of nutrients and foods to be healthy and



function properly. It is important that a cheerleader have a healthy diet and eat a range of foods to keep the body healthy and strong. The second step to developing good eating habits is eating the right amount. Eating too much can cause a person to become over-weight, which can prove dangerous to a cheerleader as the extra weight can add extra strain to the body making it easier for the cheerleader to get injured. Eating too little can be just as dangerous as eating too much. Food provides nutrients to the body, enabling it to function properly and remain strong. When the food intake is reduced, it is harder for the body to safely perform cheerleading activities, which can increase the risk of serious injury.

*Good Grades:* Cheerleading programs recognize that while cheerleading may be extremely important to an individual, a good education is more important. For this reason, cheerleading programs often require their cheerleaders to maintain a certain GPA, usually a 2.0. Without good grades, a person might not meet the program requirements to participate in cheerleading. Also, cheerleading is a huge time commitment; if a potential cheerleader's grades are not very high before cheerleading, the grades will only suffer after becoming a cheerleader.

## Qualities Learned

Cheerleading is an amazing sport that can teach an individual numerous useful skills that can be beneficial in any area of a person's life. The skills that cheerleading teaches are also required of a potential cheerleader in order to for the cheerleader to be successful. Any cheerleader who is having trouble learning any of these skills will probably find it difficult to adjust to cheerleading and will most likely prove unsuccessful in the sport.

### Life Skills:

*Leadership/Public Relations:* Cheerleaders are spokespeople of the school and, thus, are looked up to by their peers and even by others not associated with their program or school. Consequently, cheerleaders learn to live in the spotlight and learn how to be respectable, highly regarded leaders. Cheerleaders learn public relations by interacting with many types of people in several types of environments, as they are forced to interact with their community through community service, administrators and other important people through events, students through games and pep rallies, and sponsors through fundraising. Because of the many situations cheerleaders are forced to participate in, they learn leadership and public relations and, therefore, are better equipped for success in other aspects of their lives.

**Everything you need to know, you can learn in cheerleading.**

*Confidence:* Cheerleaders frequently command the attention of thousands of fans and huge crowds by performing tough motions, difficult tumbling passes, challenging jumps, and grueling stunt sequences. In order to effectively accomplish these things, a cheerleader must have confidence as a crowd will pay little attention to a timid, shy cheerleader. But cheerleaders

spend so much time in front of crowds that, by the end of the season, any nervous cheerleader will have turned into a confident, poised cheerleader who will apply this confidence into every facet of his or her life.

**Discipline:** Cheerleading entails hours of practice, when there might be something more interesting and exciting going on, high expectations and standards, and countless rules to follow. Since cheerleaders are forced to meet these requirements, by the end of the season, they will have developed an unrivaled type of self-discipline that they will take with them into every situation they encounter.

**Time Management:** Cheerleading is a huge time commitment! Between practices, conditioning, games, and competitions, it is easy for all of a cheerleader's spare time to be spent on cheerleading. But cheerleaders often have other important things that they must spend time on, like school and possibly even part-time jobs. In order for a cheerleader to not only be successful in cheerleading, but in school and work and anything else he or she may be involved in, a cheerleader must learn how to effectively manage his or her time. After completing an entire season of cheerleading, time management skills should come easy to a cheerleader, and he or she should be able to use this skill long after his or her cheerleading days are over.

#### **Physical Characteristics:**

**Endurance:** Cheerleaders devote many, many hours of hard work and practice to their sport and, because of this they develop extreme strength and the ability to use this strength for long periods of time without tiring.

**Balance:** Successful jumping, tumbling, and stunting use balance regularly in their operations. Cheerleaders perform these things recurrently and quickly acquire balance skills.

#### **Personality:**

**Trust:** Although a little bit of trust is required in order to be a good cheerleader, by the end of a season a cheerleader will have developed true trust for others. Cheerleading is genuinely a team sport and nothing can be accomplished correctly without placing trust in other members of the squad. Stunting requires the different members of the group to trust that they will perform their jobs to the fullest and cheers require members of the group to trust that their teammates are in the right positions, performing the right motions at the right time. Trusting is an important skill that will help cheerleaders become successful in other aspects of their lives also.

Together we stand, together we fall.  
All for one and one for all!

**Criticism:** Any cheerleader who is unable to take constructive criticism will not be a successful cheerleader. Cheerleaders will often receive constructive criticism from both older members of the squad and also from the coaches and so, most will learn how to positively take a critique and apply it in order to better themselves. Criticism is a huge part of life, from athletic activities to relationships to work and learning this through cheerleading will only help cheerleaders later in their lives, wherever their lives may take them.

**Focus:** In practices, games, and competitions, cheerleaders must learn to direct all of their attention to the task at hand, even if they have other issues facing them, in order to perform the activities safely and accurately. Because cheerleaders have to do

this often, it is not surprising that, by the end of the season, they will have learned how to focus on a specific task, whether it is a test, project, or work assignment and will help them prosper in life.

*Respect*: Respect is needed in order to be a successful cheerleader, but it also learned and reinforced through cheerleading. In life respect is also an extremely important quality, and learning this will help a cheerleader be successful in accomplishing whatever goals he or she desires to attain.

### **Are You Cheerleading Material?**

As you have learned above, there are many qualities that you must possess if you plan on transforming into a poised, gifted cheerleader. But how do you know if you encompass these abilities? The quiz below is specifically designed to help you determine whether or not cheerleading is the right sport for you!

1. How long can you run without getting tired?
  - a. 2 miles or more
  - b. 1-2 miles
  - c. less than 1 mile
  
2. How strong are you?
  - a. very strong, I work out 3-4 times a week or more
  - b. fairly strong I work out 1-2 times a week
  - c. weak, I work out once every other week, sometimes every month
  
3. How flexible are you?
  - a. I can contort my body just like the people in the circus
  - b. I almost have my split
  - c. I am nowhere near the ground in my split
  
4. Dancing comes:
  - a. naturally, I'm always on beat
  - b. easily, but I admit I'm not always the best dancer
  - c. with much difficulty, regardless of the type of music
  
5. Even after a long, hard practice my attitude is:

*My boyfriend told me to choose between him and cheerleading, I'm sure going to miss him.*

- a. enthused and energized
- b. tired but still motivated
- c. exhausted and ready to go home

6. How able are you to control your emotions?

- a. very able
- b. sometimes able
- c. not very able

7. How often are you in a cheerful, upbeat mood?

- a. almost always, even if I'm having a bad day
- b. usually, but I have my sad moments
- c. always, unless I'm have a rough day or something bad happens to me, which is almost every day

8. How do you get along in a group setting?

- a. I get along well with and work well with almost everyone
- b. I get along well with and work well with most people
- c. There are many people I don't get along well with or work well with

9. In a group setting, how do you feel about the other members of the group?

- a. I take time to listen to them and understand their points of view
- b. Sometimes I tend to see others points of view
- c. My point of view is usually the best way and so I don't usually listen to others ideas

10. I am:

- a. always dependable
- b. sometimes dependable
- c. usually unreliable

11. How would you describe your day?

- a. busy, but organized, and I give all of my energy to each task
- b. busy, and mostly organized, but sometimes I have to rush tasks
- c. busy and not organized, I often forget things or don't have enough time to complete them

**Cheerleading is more than a sport;  
It's an attitude.**

*As long as you  
step off that mat  
and know that  
you tried your  
best and gave it  
110%, it doesn't  
matter what  
place you get!*

12. How well do you listen to others?

- a. I listen very well to others, just as I would expect them to listen to me
- b. I listen well to others, but sometimes don't worry about what they have to say
- c. others opinions are not very important to me

13. How would you describe your physical condition?

- a. I am healthy, with no physical weaknesses
- b. I am mostly healthy, with very few physical weaknesses
- c. I am easily injured and/or have areas of my body that get injured easily

14. What are your eating habits like?

- a. I try to eat a wide range of foods and just enough to fill me up.
- b. Some days I may miss a meal/add an extra meal to my diet but I still try to eat a wide variety of foods
- c. I often eat too little/too much and my diet barely covers the different areas of the nutrition table

15. In school, what is your grade point average?

- a. 3.0-4.0
- b. 2.0-3.0
- c. 2.0 or lower

Give yourself 1 point for every “a” answer, 0 points for every “b” answer, and take away 1 point for every “c” answer. Add up your points.

*7-15 points*

You have everything it takes to become a successful cheerleader. You possess almost all of the qualities needed, like strength, teamwork, enthusiasm, and dedication, to be a flourishing cheerleader!

*2-6 points*

You may still become the successful cheerleader you wish to be, but it is going to take a little bit more work on your part. Now is the time for you to get organized, and make more time for the gym, and maybe work on your flexibility and coordination.

*1 point or less*

Cheerleading may not come naturally to you but that does not mean your dream of becoming a successful cheerleader is dead. You have a lot of hard work ahead of you, but it is not impossible for you to thrive as a cheerleader. You need to work on teambuilding, work on heading to the gym, increase your flexibility and coordination, and work on gaining that cheerleading attitude and then you might have the chance to become the prosperous cheerleader you desire to be.

**Not every girl can be a cheerleader; it takes a special kind.  
Cheerleaders are full of life and a little bit out of their mind.**

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# The Types of Cheerleading

“Always have a smile on your face; you never know what fan is watching you.”

## Pre-High school

There are many ways for children to get involved in cheerleading at a pre-high school level. There are All Star leagues that accept children who are not yet in high school and many elementary and middle schools also have cheerleading programs that children can participate in. Children can also get involved in cheerleading from a very young age through a national league called the Pop Warner Little Scholars. This organization has a football program, where they teach young athletes to play football, as well as a cheerleading program, where cheerleaders learn to cheer at the football games. The cheerleading program lasts about six months at a time and focuses on cheering at games, not on competitive cheer. Cheerleaders range in age from 5-16 and can learn the basics of cheerleading, including basic motions, jumps, and stunts. Pop Warner does not have separate all-girl and coed teams; anyone who wants to cheerlead will be placed on one squad and that squad will adapt every six months when the squad's members change. Pop Warner does, however, have three different cheerleading divisions: Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced. Unlike other types of cheerleading that have specific division rules, at Pop Warner the coaches of the squads determine what division they believe their team should be classified as. Pop Warner also has a challenger division, which is for special needs athletes.

## High school

High school cheerleading squads usually contain girls and boys of all different levels of experience. Because of this, it is the best time for cheerleaders from every level of experience to join a cheerleading squad. Unlike Pop Warner, whose program only lasts about six months, high school programs last a whole school year and range in age from 14-18 years old. Most high school squads have one, two, or three squads-a freshman squad, junior varsity and/or varsity squad-depending on the size of the high school and the amount of interest students have in the cheerleading program. They also focus mainly on side-line cheering and not on competition.

**Scream loud to excite the crowd!**

High school cheerleaders are a special kind of cheerleader; they embody the unique qualities and attitudes that started cheerleading over 100 years ago. Cheerleaders in high school are the spirit leaders of the school; they decorate the school for games, cheer at pep rallies, and are the ones responsible for keeping school spirit at an all time high.

## All Star

All star cheerleading is rapidly becoming one of the most popular types of cheerleading. These cheerleading squads are one of the only types of squads that do not ever cheer at games for other sports teams. These squads usually practice at a gymnastics



gym and because of this many burnt-out or former gymnasts often turn to All Star cheer when their career in gymnastics is

*Cheerleading Sneakers - \$50; Cheerleading Camp - \$130; Cheerleading Uniform - \$175,  
Coming in First Place at Nationals - PRICELESS*

ending. These cheerleaders are also concerned solely with competing in a two minute and thirty second routine in different competitions throughout the nation based on their division and level. In All Star cheerleading the division is based on the age of the cheerleaders on the squad and the level is based on the difficulty of the cheerleading routine. The division and level rules as according to the Unites States All Star Federation (USASF) are shown below. As can be seen, both males and females in all age ranges can participate in All Star cheer, which is one of the reasons why All Star cheerleading has become so popular.

<b>USASF Level 1</b>			
Tiny	5 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Mini	8 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Youth	11 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Junior	14 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Senior	18 yrs & Younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
<b>USASF Level 2</b>			
Mini	8 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Youth	11 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Junior	14 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Senior	18 yrs & Younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
<b>USASF Level 3</b>			
Mini	8 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Youth	11 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Junior	14 yrs & younger	No Males	5 - 36 members
Junior Co-Ed	14 yrs & younger	1 or more Males	5 - 36 members
Senior	18 yrs & Younger	No Males	5 - 36 members
Senior Co-Ed	18 yrs & Younger	1 or more Males	5 - 36 members

<b>USASF Level 4</b>			
Youth	11 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Junior	14 yrs & younger	No Males	5 - 36 members
Junior Co-Ed	14 yrs & younger	1 or more Males	5 - 36 members
Senior	18 yrs & Younger	No Males	5 - 36 members
Senior Co-Ed	18 yrs & Younger	1 or more Males	5 - 36 members
<b>USASF Level 4.2</b>			
Senior	18 yrs & Younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
<b>USASF Level 5</b>			
Youth	11 yrs & younger	Female/Male	5 - 36 members
Junior	14 yrs & younger	No Males	5 - 36 members
Junior Co-Ed	14 yrs & younger	1 or more Males	5 - 36 members
Senior Open* (See Special Tumbling Restrictions Below)	18 yrs & Younger	Limit 0 - 4 Males	5 - 36 members
Senior	12 - 18 yrs old	No Males	5 - 36 members
Senior Limited Co-Ed	12 - 18 yrs old	1 - 4 Males	5 - 36 members
Senior Semi-Limited Co-Ed	12 - 18 yrs old	5 - 12 Males	5 - 36 members
Senior Unlimited Co-Ed	12 - 18 yrs old	5 or more Males	5 - 36 members
<b>USASF International Divisions</b>			
International Open	14 yrs & older	No Males	5 - 24 members
International Open Co-Ed	14 yrs & older	1 - 12 Males	5 - 24 members
<b>Special Needs</b>			
Special Needs	Any Age	Female/Male	Unlimited
<b>USASF Level 6</b>			
Open	17 yrs & older	No Males	5 - 24 members
Open Co-Ed	17 yrs & older	1 or more Males	5 - 24 members

## College

College cheerleading is one of the most unique types of cheerleading as it is the only type of cheerleading that involves both side-line cheering and also competitive cheer. Unlike All Star cheer, whose main goal is to compete in as many competitions as

possible, colleges are only allowed to compete at one national competition, either that of the National Cheerleading Association (NCA) or that of the Universal Cheerleading Association (UCA). These two organizations even require the squads competing to sign a form stating that they will only compete at that particular competition and no others for the entire year. The age group of college cheerleaders is roughly 18 and older and most colleges have at least two teams - an all-girl team and a coed team. Some colleges even offer scholarships for cheerleading and so cheerleading at this level is typically not for the novice cheerleader. Some schools have very rigorous tryouts and only accept cheerleaders that can meet their high expectations. For these reasons college cheerleading has even been called the most elite level of cheerleading! Like All Star cheerleading, college cheerleading is also divided into different divisions as determined by the organization in which they are competing against, either the NCA or the UCA. The NCA's divisions are shown below. It is important to note that the UCA has their own divisions, although they are similar to those of the NCA.

*WE CHEERLEADERS ARE PREPPY, HAPPY, AND WE GET FRONT ROW SEATS TO THE GAME!*

**NCA**

Every member of every squad representing a school must meet NCA's current eligibility requirements. Teams from the same school can enter the same division; however only the top scoring team may advance to finals should scores warrant.

Division IA	Teams competing with more than 4 males from Div. IA (FBS) football schools.
Division I	Teams competing with more than 4 males from Div. IAA (FCS) football schools, or do not have football and compete in Div. I basketball.
Division II	Teams competing with more than 4 males from Div. II, III and NAIA schools.
NAIA Large Coed	Teams from NAIA schools that have qualified through regional qualifier competitions competing with more than 4 males.
Small Coed IA	Teams competing with 1-4 males from Div. IA (FBS) schools.
Small Coed I	Teams competing with 1-4 males from Div. IAA (FCS) football schools, or do not have football and compete in Div. I basketball.
Small Coed II	Teams from NAIA schools that have qualified through regional NAIA qualifier competitions competing with 1-4 males.
NAIA Small Coed	Teams from NAIA schools that have qualified through regional NAIA qualifier competitions competing with 1-4 males.
Junior College	Teams competing with more than 4 males from Junior College and Community College schools.

All Girl Division IA	Teams competing with NO males from Div. IA (FBS) schools.
All Girl Division I	Teams competing with NO males from Div. IAA (FCS) football schools, or from Div. I basketball schools.
All Girl Division II	Teams competing with NO males from Div. II schools.
All Girl Division III	Teams competing with NO males from Div. III, NAIA, Junior College & Community College schools.
NAIA All Girl Division	Teams from NAIA schools that have qualified through regional NAIA qualifier competitions competing with NO males.
Coed Intermediate	Intermediate teams competing with 1 or more males regardless of school size or sports classification.
All-Girl Intermediate I	Intermediate teams competing with NO males from Div. IA (FBS), IAA (FCS) and Div. I schools (skill restrictions apply).
All-Girl Intermediate II	Intermediate teams competing with NO males from Div. II, III, NAIA, Jr. College & Community College schools (skill restrictions apply).
International	International teams will compete in divisions based on school enrollment, number of males, and skill restrictions. 20,000 or above - Coed IA, Small Coed IA, AG I, Coed Int., AG I Int. 10,000-20,000 – Coed I, Small Coed I, AG I, Coed Int., AG I Int. 5,000-10,000 – Coed II, Small Coed II, AG III, Coed Int., AG II Int. Less than 5,000 – Coed II, Small Coed II, AG III, Coed Int., AG II Int., Two-Year Schools – Coed Jr. College, Small Coed II, AG III, Coed Int., AG II Int.

Teams are limited to a maximum of twenty participants plus one mascot, and must have a minimum of ten participants. The mascot may NOT participate in any technical skill (example: stunts, pyramids, tosses or tumbling) and may not serve as a spotter during the performance. Motions, jumps and dance are allowed. Individuals may not compete on more than one college cheer team at any given event. Violation of these rules will result in a .5 deduction per violation.

#### Number of Male Participants vs. Female Participants On Large Coed Teams

Following are the new restrictions for the maximum number of male participants:

- 8 - 9 total participants = 5 maximum males
- 10 - 11 total participants = 6 maximum males
- 12 - 13 total participants = 7 maximum males
- 14 - 15 total participants = 8 maximum males
- 16 - 17 total participants = 9 maximum males
- 18 - 19 total participants = 10 maximum males

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20 total participants = 11 maximum males

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## **Professional**

Professional cheerleading, although called cheerleading, is very different from all of the previous types listed before. Professional cheerleading is side-line and performance cheerleading for a professional sports team, usually football or basketball. The main difference between professional cheerleaders and other cheerleaders is that the professional cheerleaders' main focus is dancing and performing showy moves. Motions, movements, and flexibility are the main focus of professional cheerleaders and jumps, stunts, and tumbling, although not entirely ignored, are not very important in the professional world.

## **STUNT**

STUNT is the newest type of cheerleading that was created by the USA Cheer organization in 2010 as a way to meet the Title IX's definition of a sport. Experts have been debating whether or not cheerleading should be classified as a sport for years and STUNT is the newest initiative to finally enable cheerleading to be considered a sport by the NCAA. Unlike traditional side-line cheerleading, STUNT is only for competitive cheerleaders and was derived from the All Star type of cheerleading. Because of the push to get STUNT to be considered a true sport, it is set up very similar to the games in other sports. STUNT consists of four quarters – Quarter 1: Partner Stunts, Quarter 2: Jumps & Tumbling, Quarter 3: Tosses & Pyramids, Quarter 4: Team Performance, which is a two minute and thirty second routine - where cheerleaders compete head-to-head with other squads and also in brackets. Each game lasts about 45 minutes, with a halftime in between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters. Teams earn points throughout each quarter and are then ranked, and just like in most other sports, the team with the most points at the end of the game and/or tournament wins. As of now, STUNT is a spring sport and currently only has college level teams participating.

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# Rules

“If you work hard and play by the rules, you can achieve anything.”

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The governing bodies of cheerleading, which include the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administration (AACCA) and the United States All Star Federation (USASF) are the founders of general safety rules and competition rules. However, these rules can be applied differently for the different cheerleading programs.

### **Pre-High School Rules**

Athletes participating in cheerleading at the pre-high school level do not have a governing body of cheerleading dictating rules to them. At this level, the rules are usually dictated by the cheerleading program and/or by the state the cheerleading program is located in. While there are no specific set of rules for cheerleading programs at this level, pre-high school cheerleading programs will often follow the rules of high school programs in the area to prepare the cheerleaders for high school cheerleading, or will even follow the safety rules created by the AACCA. The Pop Warner Little Scholars organization has created its own rulebook for practices, games, and safety. This rulebook states what is and is not allowed in their three different divisions (Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced) and what skills must be learned in order to advance to the next level. This rulebook can be accessed on the web site of Pop Warner, under the Cheerleading Overview Section. Pop Warner also has modified rules for their challenger division, which is for special needs children. The web site to access the rulebook is listed at end of this chapter.

### **High School Rules**

Like pre-high school programs, high schools also do not have a specific set of rules created by a governing body of cheerleading to follow. Because of this, each program and/or state creates its own rules about practices, games and safety for the cheerleaders and coaches to follow. Since some cheerleading programs have different divisions, including Freshman, Junior Varsity, and Varsity, there are usually different rules for each of these divisions. However, with the growing popularity and participation in high school cheerleading, the AACCA decided it was important to create a set of safety rules for school cheerleaders, which most schools choose to follow or choose to use to create their own set of safety guidelines. The web site to the AACCA School Cheer Safety Rules is listed at the end of this chapter.

### **All Star Rules**

All Star programs have extensive rules created for them to follow; the main reason for this is because All Star programs are focused solely on competition and, thus, must all have a set of standardized rules to follow to enable judges to evaluate the squads fairly and objectively. All Star programs are divided first into different levels (1-6), and then divided again based on the age of the participants and the number of male cheerleaders on the team. The rules, however, are only divided into

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different levels and each cheerleading program must follow the rules associated with their level. Like in pre-high school cheerleading, each program may pick which level they believe they are qualified to compete in, but after choosing a level, they are forced into the category they belong in based on age and the number of males on the squad. The rules for the different cheerleading levels were created by the USASF and cover all aspects of cheerleading including general safety requirements, general tumbling, standing/running tumbling, stunts, pyramids, dismounts, and tosses. These rules may change every year and may be accessed at the web site listed at the end of this chapter.

### **College Rules**

Like All Star cheerleading, college cheerleading also has numerous rules created for them to follow, if not more. College cheerleaders are the only cheerleaders that not only perform side-line cheerleading but compete in national championship competitions as well. Because of this, they have to follow both competition rules and also side-line rules. While side-line rules sound like they should be simple, they can be extensive and extremely detailed; side-line cheerleaders follow a specific set of rules for each sport they cheer for, including football, and basketball. College cheerleaders also have mascot guidelines they must obey. The competition rules are similar to that of All Star cheerleaders; there are general safety rules, tumbling rules, and stunting rules. The NCA has compiled an extensive rulebook for college cheerleaders, which includes the AACCA's safety guidelines and this rulebook can be found at the end of this chapter.

### **Professional Rules**

Professional cheerleaders are not associated at all with the NCA, UCA, AACCA, or USASF. Instead, they belong to their own leagues, like the NBA Cheerleading League and the NFL Cheerleading League. These leagues, however, are not responsible for creating rules for them to follow. The only rules professional cheerleaders must follow are those of their specific squad and coaches. Most of these rules are requirements to attend specific events and conferences, but there are no published safety rules or general professional sports rules.

### **STUNT rules**

STUNT, which was created to meet the Title IX's definition of a sport, is extremely different from the other types of cheerleading. While all of the cheerleading elements, which include stunting, jumps, tumbling, and routines, are incorporated into this type of cheer, STUNT uses them in a completely original way and, therefore, has its own set of rules and guidelines. STUNT requires two teams to compete head-to-head, like a traditional basketball or football season in a four quarter match. The difference between STUNT and other sports is that every quarter in STUNT has a different set-up and different rules.



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Since, USA Cheer, along with other professionals and experts in both the fields of cheerleading and Title IX, invented the sport, they have also created the rulebook with detailed guidelines about STUNT, including the specific rules of each quarter among other things, which can be accessed through the web site at the end of this chapter. STUNT does, however, follow the safety guidelines created by the AACCA.

### Web Sites

Pop Warner Little Scholars Rulebook

<http://www.popwarner.com/cheer/pop.asp>

AACCA School Cheer Safety Rules

[http://aacca.org/content.aspx?item=Safety/2010-11\\_School\\_Cheer\\_Rules.xml](http://aacca.org/content.aspx?item=Safety/2010-11_School_Cheer_Rules.xml)

USASF All Star Rules

<http://ism.infinityprosports.com/Uploads/458//Member%20Documents%20/CheerRules.pdf>

NCA College Rules

[http://nca.varsity.com/pdfs/college\\_sgb.pdf](http://nca.varsity.com/pdfs/college_sgb.pdf)

STUNT Handbook

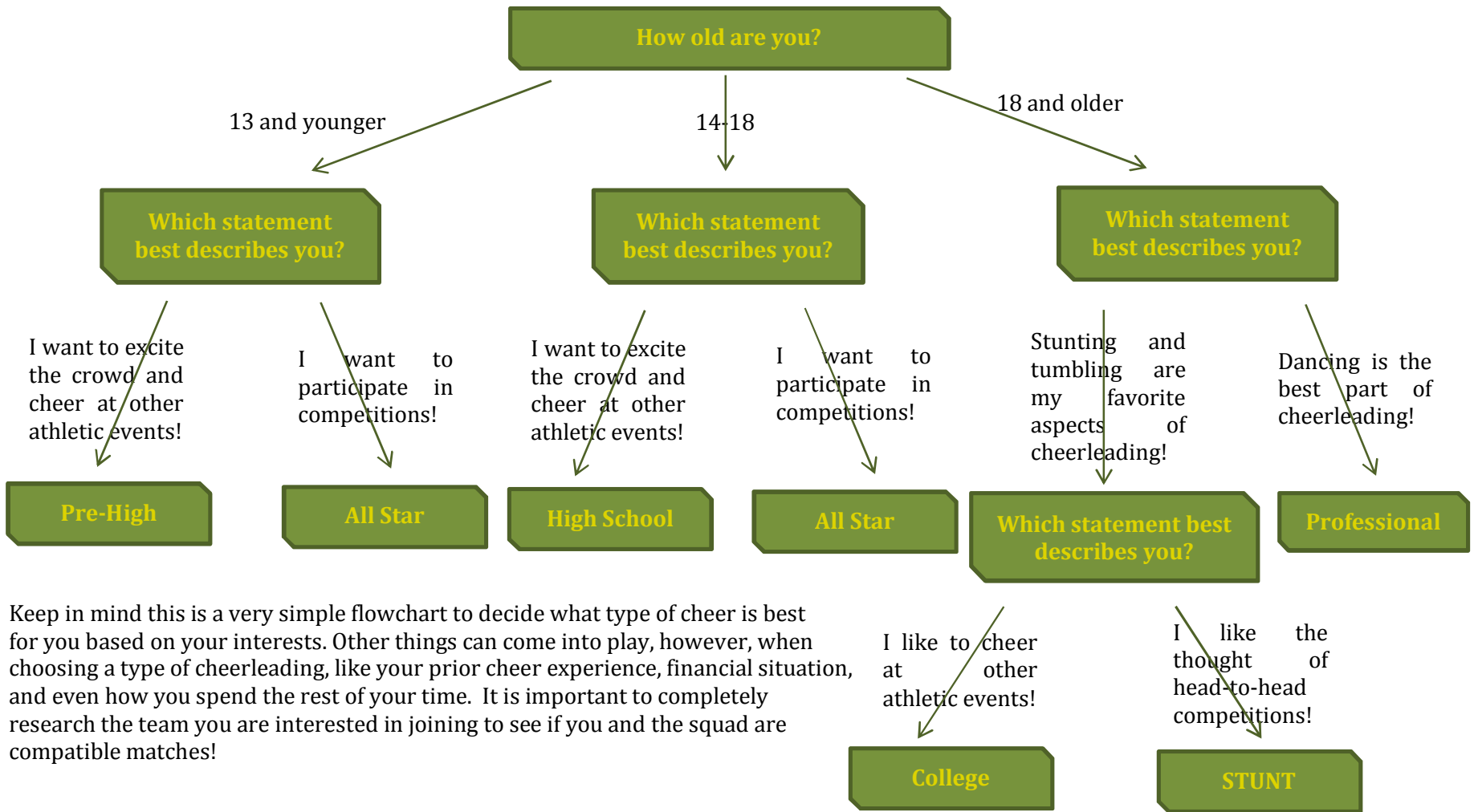
<http://stunt.vicid.net/images/images/1/0/handbook2010.pdf>

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# Where Can I Cheer?

“The Cheerleading Challenge – Early morning practice, late night practice, weekend practice, summer-long practice, short skirts, bare legs, freezing rain, and your team is losing by 32... And you keep cheerleading!”

You have now learned about the different types of cheerleading and the rules associated with each and have also decided you want to participate in this phenomenal sport, but where do you start? Here's a simple flowchart to determine which type of cheerleading is best for you:



Keep in mind this is a very simple flowchart to decide what type of cheer is best for you based on your interests. Other things can come into play, however, when choosing a type of cheerleading, like your prior cheer experience, financial situation, and even how you spend the rest of your time. It is important to completely research the team you are interested in joining to see if you and the squad are compatible matches!

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## **How To Find a Squad If You Chose:**

### **Pre-High School**

You have a couple different options as a pre-high school cheerleader. You can cheer for:

Your middle school or elementary school, if they have a cheerleading squad,

The Pop Warner's League, which is a national league with squads in almost every community, or

Community League, if your community has organized cheerleading squads

### **High-School**

Your options are similar to those of the pre-high school cheerleader. A high school cheerleader can cheer for:

Your high school, although high schools often have tryouts which you will have to prepare for in order to make the team

The Pop Warner's League, although they only take cheerleaders ages 5-16

### **All Star**

If you want to be an All Star cheerleader, you have only one option:

An All Star cheerleading program

While this seems like you have limited options, in reality, there can be many All Star programs in your area. All Star squads, because there are different divisions they can participate in, may have extremely difficult skill requirements and tryouts and, so, if you are interested in All Star cheerleading, it is important for you to find a program that matches your abilities.

### **College**

Like All Star cheerleaders, you also only have cheerleading option:

Your college

Unlike in high school when you were forced to go to the school in your district, you are in charge of choosing which college you want to attend. While it is important to choose a college that matches your academic goals, you may also choose a college that has a cheerleading program you wish to participate in. Like in All Star cheerleading, however, remember that college cheerleading programs have different divisions, which may require them to have difficult skill requirements. This makes your research on the program incredibly important as you must find a program that matches your abilities.

### **Professional**

To be a professional cheerleader, you must cheer for either a football team or a basketball team, and, therefore, you have as many options as you do teams. In your quest to find a professional team to cheer for, however, it is important to choose a team whose practices and events are close to your home and also do not conflict with your schedule.

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## STUNT

Compared to all of the other types of cheerleading, as a STUNT cheerleader you have the most limited number of options. STUNT is being considered as an NCAA Emerging Sport and, so, you can only participate in this sport through a college, and only a college that has a STUNT program. As of now, only 20 colleges participate in STUNT and these colleges are: Adams State College, Cal Poly State, California Baptist University, Framingham State University, Georgia Southern University, Methodist University, Morehead State University, Morgan State University, North Carolina State University, Sam Houston University, San Diego State University, Slippery Rock University, Stonehill College, Temple University, Texas A&M, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Louisville, University of North Carolina, and West Virginia University.

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# The Basics

“Cheerleading makes people think differently; suddenly a liberty isn’t just a statue, the pyramids aren’t just something you find in Egypt, and jumps are more than just a game of leap frog.”

Although you have now learned that there are many different types of cheerleading, there are some aspects of cheerleading that are the same regardless of which type of cheerleading you are learning about; these are what cheerleaders call the basics, and there are basics in motions, jumps, tumbling, and stunts. Below are descriptions and pictures of these basic aspects so you can become familiar with them and learn the cheerleading lingo.

## Motions

Motions are the most important aspect of cheerleading. Not only do they make a routine, cheer, or dance unique and uniform among a squad, but they are also what makes cheerleading look sharp and clean. The motions below are motions every cheerleader knows and practices to perfection. (Pictures of some of the motions are shown next to the motion names.)

**Arm Motions-Basic:** These are the basic motions that are incorporated into every aspect of cheerleading including, jumps, cheers, stunting, and even at times tumbling.

*Clean:* Arms straight down at sides.

*Clap:* Arms bent with hands meeting together in front of the chest.



*Touchdown:* Arms parallel and straight reaching up and vertical above the shoulders.



*Low Touchdown:* Touchdown except arms reaching down and vertical below the shoulders.



*Table top:* Arms down at sides with elbows bent and hands in front of chest.

*Overhead:* Arms straight up with hands touching above head.

*Low:* Arms straight down with hand touching in front of hips.



*High V*: Arms straight up reaching diagonal over shoulders in the shape of a large v. Shoulders relaxed.



*Low V*: Arms straight down reaching diagonal under shoulders in the shape of a large v. Shoulders relaxed.



*T*: Arms straight and horizontal to shoulders. Arms parallel to the ground and shoulders relaxed.



*Broken T*: T motion except elbows are bent inward with hands placed in front of shoulders.



*Hands on Hips*: Elbows bent and facing away from the body with hands placed on hips.

**Arm Motions-Hard**: These motions combine some of the basic motions listed above in order to form slightly harder arm motions.



*Bow and Arrow*: One arm in a T motion and the other arms in a Broken T motion.





*Punch*: One arm in a Touchdown and the other arm in a Hands on Hips.



*Diagonal*: One arm in a High V and the other arm in a Low V. There is a right and a left diagonal depending on which arm is in the High V.



*L*: One arm in a Touchdown and the other arm in a T. There is a right and a left L depending on which arm is in the T.

*Check Mark High*: One arm in a High V and the other arm in a Hands on Hips.

*Check Mark Low*: One arm in a Low V and the other arm in a Hands on Hips.

*X*: Elbows bent and at hips with arms crossing in front of chest and hands in front of opposite arm shoulder.

*High X*: Arms like a Touchdown except cross each other above head.

*Low X*: Arms like a Low Touchdown except cross each other in front of hips.



*Left K*: Left arm in a High V and right arm crossed over body to left side in a Low V.



*Right K*: Right arm in a High V and left arm crossed over body to right side in a Low V.

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**Hand Motions:** These hand motions can be used in conjunction with the arm motions to create unique and distinct visuals for the audience.

*Blade:* Fingers straight and together.

*Clap:* Hands together in blades.

*Clasp:* Hands together and wrapped around each other.

*Spirit/Spider:* Fingers straight except stretched apart.

*Pail:* Hands in fists with thumb on top of fingers.

*Candlestick:* Pail hands with the inside of hands facing each other, as if holding a candlestick.

*Buckets:* Pail hands with the thumb facing downward.

**Leg Motions:** Like the hand motions, these can be used along with the arms motions and hand motions to create a variety of thrilling cheerleading motions.

*Clean:* Legs and feet together

*Ready:* Legs shoulder width apart.

*Wide:* Legs apart and past shoulder width.

*Side Lunge:* Legs wide. One leg bent with knee directly over ankle and the other leg straight. Feet should be perpendicular to each other.

*Front Lunge:* One leg stepped forward in front of body and bent with knee directly over ankle. Back leg is straight and feet are perpendicular to each other.

*Kick:* One leg kicked up in front of chest and the other leg is straight and remains on the ground.

*Pony:* Feet together. One knee is slightly bent with foot on tiptoe and the other leg is straight with foot completely on the ground. Then switch so the bent leg is straight with foot completely on the ground and the straight leg is slightly bent at the knee with foot on tiptoe. Repeat.

*Hitch:* Legs together but one leg is raised with foot meeting the knee of the leg remaining on the ground.

*Both Leg Kneel:* Legs and feet together but both knees on the ground. May sit back on feet or remain upright.

*One Leg Kneel:* One knee is on the ground directly under body. The other leg is in a wide position with knee bent and foot directly below knee.

*Sit:* Legs are on ground with knees bent. One leg is bent with knee facing diagonally and other leg is bent with knee directly in front of body. The foot of leg with the diagonally facing knee is placed right next to the other leg's knee, whose foot is diagonal to the body. Butt, legs, knees, and feet should all be completely on the ground with nothing overlapping, nor touching.

## Jumps

Jumps are often used in cheerleading chants, dances, and routines. When done correctly, they give cheerleading an appearance of difficulty while also drawing attention from the audience. (Pictures of some of the jumps are shown next to the jump names.)

### Jump Preparation

Jumps can be one of the hardest aspects of cheerleading. Luckily, if they are performed correctly they can become much easier. Before a cheerleader can do any jump, whether it is a toe touch, herkie, or even just a straight jump, a cheerleader must perform the prep motions. These prep motions, which are just arm motions that are combined with the act of jumping, have the ability to help the cheerleader jump as high as possible, which makes performing a jump much easier. To perform a prep: Start with arms in a High V. Then, swing both arms in a circular motion towards the inside, making sure they cross overhead, while bending the knees and preparing to jump. Continue to circle arms all the way around, while leaping into the air and manipulating body to form the positions of the jumps described below.

### Basic Jumps:

*Straight Jump:* To perform a straight jump: Keep legs together and bring arms to T motion.



*Tuck Jump:* To perform a tuck jump: Keep knees together and bring them to chest as close as possible, being carefully to keep chest straight up and not lean forward while arms are in a High V.



*Spread Eagle:* To perform a spread eagle: Put legs in a wide motion while arms are in a High V. The body will look like an X if done correctly.



*Double Hook:* To perform a double hook: Legs must be pulled up under the body and bent or hooked the same way, as if in a cheer sit position while arms are in a High V.



*Herkie:* To perform a herkie: One leg is kept straight and is kicked up with knee facing upward and other leg is bent with knee facing downward. The arm on the side with the kicked leg is in a touchdown and the other arm is in a hands on hips. The chest is also up.

### Medium Jumps

*Banana Jump:* To perform a banana jump: Bend legs and kick them up behind while back is arched and arms are bent and reaching behind as well. Often the head is bent backwards too.



*Front Hurdler:* This jump is similar to a herkie however the chest is bent and the arm positions are different. To perform a front hurdler: One leg is straight and is kicked up toward chest with the knee facing upward and other leg is bent with knee facing downward. The arms are straight with hands in fists and one arm is on each side of the kicked leg (the leg is kicked up between the outstretched arms). Head faces the foot of the kicked up leg.



*Toe Touch:* A toe touch is similar to a spread eagle except in a toe touch the hips are rolled and the legs are brought up to the chest and the arms are also in different position. To perform a toe touch: Keep head and chest up and keep legs straight while bringing them up to chest in a straddle position. Knees are faced to the back and arms are in a T position.



**Pike Jump:** To perform a pike jump: Keep legs straight, but together, and bring legs up to arms, which must be parallel to the ground. Chest is parallel to legs as well. Keep head facing up.

### Hard Jumps

**Around the World:** The around the world jump is a mixture of the pike jump and the toe touch. To perform an around the world: Begin the jump as if performing a pike jump, but in the middle of the jump swing legs outward to the toe touch position. Arms follow the legs and also go from the pike position to the toe touch position.



**Double Nine:** The double nine is similar to a pike jump except the arms and legs are in a slightly different position; they are in the shape of a nine. To perform a double nine: Perform a pike jump except one leg is bent with the foot touching the knee of the straight leg. The arms are in the same position as the legs, with one arm being bent and the hand at the elbow of the straight arm. Like in a pike, the head is facing up.

**Double Jump:** A double jump is simply two jumps in a row without any type of pause. The arms may still swing again but there is no break between the jumps. A double jump can be any combination of jumps, whether both are the same type of jump or different jumps.

**Power jump:** The power jump is not really a separate type of jump but rather a harder way of performing jumps. It is a separate version of the prep and can be performed with any type of jump. To perform a power jump: Do not swing the arms to jump; instead, simply spring into the air, using only the muscles in legs to gain height.

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## Tumbling

Tumbling originated from gymnastics and was then brought to cheerleading in order to further impress and amaze the crowd. Tumbling, although one of the hardest and most dangerous aspects of cheerleading, is fun and exciting to watch when performed correctly. Because of its dangerousness, however, tumbling should never be attempted without a spot, as this can result in serious injuries.

*Standing Tumbling:* Standing tumbling is when cheerleaders tumble without any kind of power up beforehand; they simply stand and use the muscles in their legs and the momentum from their arm movements to jump, and this propels them to do flips and other kinds of tumbling.

*Running Tumbling:* While standing tumbling is done without any kind of power up, running tumbling provides cheerleaders with more power to perform their tumbling tricks. In running tumbling, a cheerleader may take a couple steps or run and follow this with a power up, usually either a round-off or a front handspring, both of which give the cheerleader more power and height, enabling them more easily perform other tumbling tricks after the power up.

### Tumbling Tricks-Basics

*Cartwheel:* Start standing in a front lunge position. Jump forward placing both hands on the ground and kick legs over body, twisting body slightly as this is done. Feet should land one at a time, with both feet ending on the floor facing starting position. The cartwheel is done in a straight line from start to finish, meaning both hands need to be sideways on the ground and not placed forward directly in front of body.

*Round-Off:* Start standing in a front lunge position. Jump forward placing both hands on the ground sideways (like in a Cartwheel) and kick legs over body, twisting body slightly as this is done. Feet should land together at the same time and should face starting position. Like the cartwheel, the round-off is also done in a straight line.

*Back Handspring:* Start standing with feet and legs together. Jump up while arching back backwards throwing arms behind head so body will rotate into an upside-down position. Place hands on ground behind feet while kicking legs up backward over the body. Land with feet and legs together. Body should not twist at all during this but should remain straight with legs together at all times.

*Front Handspring:* Starting standing with feet and legs together. Jump up and throw arms forward so body will rotate into an upside-down position. Place hands on the ground directly in front of body and kick legs over hands and body. Land with feet and legs together. Body should not twist all during this but should remain straight with legs together at all times.

*Aerial:* Perform a cartwheel except hands may not touch the ground.

*Back Tuck:* Start standing with feet and legs together. Jump up in a tuck position while swinging arms back. Body should rotate backward in the air with feet and legs coming up over body and ending behind body. Body should untuck once feet are

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behind body. Land with feet and legs together. Hands should never touch the ground but should be used to pull knees in to chest to tuck into a tight ball in the air.

*Front Tuck:* Start standing with feet and legs together. Jump up in a tuck position while throwing arms forward. Body should rotate forward in the air with feet and legs coming up over body and ending in front of body. Body should untuck once feet are in front of body. Land with feet and legs together. Like in the back tuck, hands should be used to pull knees to chest to tuck into a tight ball in the air and should never touch the ground.

**Tumbling Tricks-Hard:** These tumbling tricks are usually done in running tumbling, not from standing, and are usually preceded by a back handspring or a round-off

*Double Back Handspring:* Two back handsprings in a row without a pause in between.

*Jump, then Tumble:* Start with a cheerleading jump, usually a toe touch, and then a tumbling trick, usually a back handspring or a tuck with no pause in between.

*X-Out:* Similar to a tuck except in the middle of tuck legs untuck, straighten, and separate so body is in an X shape and then legs are squeezed together and arms are brought down to sides. Land with feet and legs together.

*Layout:* Similar to a tuck except body remains in a straight line while flipping without being pulled in a tuck position. Body is instead open and with legs straight. Land with feet and legs together facing starting position.

*Full:* Similar to a layout except in the air body does a full 360 degree twist. Land with feet and legs together facing starting position.

*Double Full:* Similar to a full except body spins twice in the air. Land with feet and legs together facing starting position.

## Stunting

Stunt sequences and pyramids are some of the most interesting and sensational aspects of cheerleading to watch, and also some of the most difficult aspects to perform. In a stunt, cheerleaders are raised above ground level, making them extremely eye-catching to the audience. Nonetheless, stunting is the most dangerous aspect of cheerleading and is responsible for the most injuries, and, thus, should never be practiced without a spot.

**Basic Stunt Terms:** A stunt always consists of more than one person and because of this is it important to understand the specific terms and jobs for each person in a stunt group.

**Base:** The cheerleader who lifts, holds, and supports the flyer and is also responsible for catching the flyer from a dismount or cradle. There are usually two bases in every stunt.

**Main Base:** The term only applies for stunts where the flyer is on one leg. The main base has most of the flyer's foot and weight, as the stunt usually happens overhead. The main base usually places one hand under the heel of the flyer's foot and the other under the toes.

**Side Base:** The term only applies for stunts where the flyer is on one leg. The side base supports the foot of the flyer usually by placing one hand under the middle of the flyer's foot and the other on top, ensuring it is secure and does not turn to the side or lose balance.

**Back Spot:** The cheerleader who stands behind the stunt and is responsible for supporting the weight of the flyer and catching the head and neck of the flyer from a dismount or cradle.

**Front Spot:** The cheerleader who stands in front of the stunt and is responsible for making sure the flyer does not fall forward. This position is not essential to any stunt but provides extra support for the bases and extra safety for the flyer.

**Spotter:** The cheerleader who is not actually part of the stunt group, but stands around for safety reasons in case the flyer should fall.

**Flyer:** The cheerleader who is raised into the air and is responsible for keeping the balance of the stunt, performing clean motions, and safe dismounts or cradles. The flyer is usually very flexible and is usually one of the smallest girls on the squad.

**Level of the Stunt:** The level of the stunt is just height of the stunt. There are two levels that almost every stunt can take place in.

**Chest Level:** The bases perform the stunt with arms bent and at chest level.

**Extension Level:** The bases perform the stunt with arms straight above their heads.

### Loading Into a Stunt – Basics:

*For a Two Legged Stunt:*



**The back spot:** The back spot stands with legs in a Ready position and arms holding the flyer's waist. As the bases push the flyer's feet into the air the back spot also pushes the flyer's waist up. As the flyer is being pushed into the air by the bases, the back spot grabs the flyer's ankles and helps the stunt reach the level desired.

**The bases:** The bases stand in Ready positions with knees bent and facing each other. Their arms are close to their sides, with elbows bent and hands ready to hold the flyer's foot. The main base will have the flyer's foot in hand at the beginning of the stunt and the side base will wait to catch the flyer's foot after the stunt has started. Once the stunt starts, the side base catches the flyer's other foot and then, together, the bases push the flyer into the air to the correct level.

**The flyer:** The flyer stands with one leg on the ground and the other leg in the main bases hand. The flyer's hands are each on one of the bases' shoulders, with elbows bent. As the stunt starts the flyer lifts body up, holding own weight using arms. While holding the body up, the flyer puts other foot in the side base's hands. After the side base has the other foot, the flyer pushes off of the bases shoulder and stands up with weight and balance on both legs, being sure to keep body tight and hips square or even.

#### *For a One Legged Stunt:*

**The back spot:** The back spot's job is the same as in a two legged stunt except at the end of the stunt the back spot will only be holding one ankle of the flyer.

**The main base:** The main base has the same job as in a two legged stunt also.

**The side base:** The side base starts in a Ready position and also grips the flyer's foot that the main base is holding, usually with the right hand placed under the flyer's foot and the left hand placed on top of the flyer's foot. Once the stunt starts, the bases both push the one foot into the air to the correct level.

**The flyer:** The flyer starts in the same position as a two legged stunt with one foot in the hands of the bases and the other on the ground and hands on the bases' shoulders with elbows bent. As the stunt starts the flyer pushes off of the shoulders of the bases and stands up with weight and balance on the leg that is being held by the bases, being sure to keep body tight and not let loose leg throw off the balance.

#### *For a Basket Toss:*

**The back spot:** The back spot starts in a Ready position with hands on the flyer's waist. Once the flyer is loaded onto the basket and can support own weight, the back spot reaches under the bases hands and helps launch the flyer into the air. As the flyer is coming back down, the back spot gets ready to catch the flyer the same way the back spot would catch a cradle.

**The bases:** The bases start in a Ready position with knees bent. Each base takes the right hand and grabs the wrist of own left hand. Then each base grabs the other base's right hand with own left hand. Once this is completed the result should look similar to a basket. After the basket is created, the bases hold it at waist level, low enough for the flyer to step on top. Once the

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flyer is loaded onto the basket and can support own weight, the bases launch the flyer into the air letting go of the wrists as the flyer leaves the basket. As the flyer is coming back down, the bases get ready to catch the flyer the same way they would catch a cradle.

**The flyer:** There are two different ways for the flyer to load into the basket: 1) One foot at a time: After the bases have created the basket by locking wrists the flyer places one foot on top of the basket while the other is still on the ground and places hands on the bases' shoulders with elbows bent. The basket dips and the flyer places other foot in the basket while holding self up with arms on the shoulders of the bases. 2) Two feet together: After the bases have created the basket by locking wrists the basket dips and the flyer lifts self into the air with weight on the flyer's arms on the shoulders of the bases and places both feet onto the basket. At this point the flyer needs to be in good body position, with weight equally split between arms and legs and knees bent. The seat of the flyer, however, should never fall below the knees. As the bases launch the flyer into the air, the flyer should also jump and push off of the bases as hard as possible in order to reach maximum height, as this is the goal of a basket toss. Once feet leave the basket the flyer swings arms up and squeezes body tight until reaching the top of the throw. It is at the top of the throw that the flyer may perform tricks. As the flyer starts descending, the flyer should get body into a cradle position and stay tight until caught.

**The front spot:** Once the flyer is loaded onto the basket and can support own weight, the front spot reaches under the bases hands and helps launch the flyer into the air. The front spot is an optional position for a basket but is often used as to ensure the flyer goes high enough into the air to impress the audience.

### **Loading into a Stunt-Tricks:**

**Elevator:** Instead of a regular load where the flyer starts with one foot in the stunt, the flyer starts with both feet on the ground and just places hands on the shoulders of the bases. The bases dip and prepare to catch the flyer's feet or foot, depending on the stunt, as the flyer jumps into the air, with weight on arms, and then places the feet or foot into the bases hands.

**Ball Up:** The flyer starts to load normally, however, instead of standing up into the stunt out of the load, the flyer is launched into the air in a ball position. Once the flyer reaches the top of the throw, then the flyer stretches body into a standing position, while squeezing body tightly, and lands in a one legged stunt usually at an extension level.

**Full Up:** The flyer starts the load normally, however, as the bases push the flyer into the air, the flyer does a 360 degree spin, while bases keep holding the flyer's feet, before landing in the stunt. However, the bases are the ones that do most of the work for the full up; and the flyer is not responsible for the 360 degree spin. The main base holds the flyer's foot in a special kind of grip, called the full up grip, and propels the stunt into the air while spinning the flyer.

**Double Up:** This is the same as a Full Up, except the flyer does two 360 degree spins before landing in the stunt.

**Rewind:** This is similar to a Ball Up except instead of just tucking into a ball in the air, the flyer does something similar to a Back Tuck. However, while tucking, the flyer stands up without actually standing down, and is then caught by the bases.

**Handstand:** The flyer starts in a handstand and snaps out of it, bringing feet quickly back towards the ground and chest back up. As the flyer is snapping out of the handstand, the bases catch the flyer's feet or foot, depending on the stunt, and continue pushing the flyer into the air to the correct level.

**Backhand Spring:** The flyer does a backhand spring and as the feet come over the head and are about to land, the bases catch the flyer's feet or foot, depending on the stunt, and continue pushing the flyer into the air to the correct level.

**Two Legged Stunts:** In each of these stunts, the flyer stands in the air on two feet. The bases each hold a foot of the flyer and the back spot holds either the flyer's ankles or waist unless stated otherwise. (Pictures of some of the stunts are shown below.)

**Thigh Stand:** The flyer stands feet apart on the thighs of the bases, who are standing in side lunges. The bases are also holding around the flyer's knee while the back spot is holding the flyer's waist.

**Shoulder Sit:** The flyer sits on top of the base or back spot's shoulders while the base or back spot holds the flyer's knees.

**Chair:** The base or back spot extends arm overhead with spread palm and the flyer sits in the base or back spot's hand in a hitch position. The other arm of the base or back spot holds the flyer's straight leg.

**Shoulder Stand:** The flyer stands on top of the base or back spot's shoulders while the base or back spot holds the flyer's ankles.

**Prep:** The flyer stands feet apart in the air with arms usually in a High V.

**Cupie/Awesome:** The flyer stands feet together in the air with arms usually in a High V.

**Split:** The flyer sits in a straddle while the bases each hold the flyer's thigh and calf and the back spot holds the flyer's seat.



Whitler Redskins Jr. Midgels Mascots



**One Legged Stunts:** In each of these stunts, the flyer stands in the air on one foot. The bases hold the foot the flyer is standing on and the back spot holds either the flyer's ankles or waist unless stated otherwise. (Pictures of some of the stunts are shown below.)

**Liberty:** The flyer stands in a hitch position with arms in a High V.

**Torch:** The flyer stands in a hitch position except hitch leg faces the side while body faces forward with arms in a High V.

**Heel Stretch:** The flyer kicks one leg up and holds it in a High V position with other arm also in a High V.

**Bow and Arrow:** The flyer kicks one leg straight up next to head and holds it with opposite hand. The other arm is in a T motion, but placed in front of kicked up leg.

**Arabesque:** The flyer kicks one leg up, but behind, so leg is parallel to ground while keeping chest and head up. Arms are in a T motion.

**Scale:** The flyer kicks one leg up, but behind, grabs shin of kicked leg, and pulls it up to a High V position with other arm also in a High V.

**Scorpion:** The flyer kicks one leg up, but behind, grabs foot of kicked leg with both hands, and pulls it as high overhead as possible.

**Needle:** The flyer kicks one leg straight up in the air while reaching down to ankle of un-kicked leg and pulling chest to un-kicked leg.



**Transitions:** Stunt sequences are where more than one stunt is performed consecutively without the flyer returning to the ground. Because more than one stunt is being performed in a row, the bases and flyers are often forced to move around to different formations and positions. In order to get to the new formations and positions cleanly, and also in an exhilarating way, many transitions are used.

**Squish:** The bases each hold a foot of the flyer at waist level and the back spot holds the flyer's seat. The flyer is bent over supporting own weight on the shoulders of the bases and knees are slightly bent.

**Retake:** The stunt starts in the air and then goes into a Squish without any pauses.

**Double Take:** The stunt starts in the air, goes into a Squish, then launches back into the air into a new stunt without any pauses.

**Show and Go:** The stunt starts from the ground or a Squish, then the bases push the flyer into an extension (can be one-leg or two-leg) for a short period of time, usually 2 counts, then comes back to the ground or a Squish. Often this is done while moving from one spot to the next for dramatic effect.

**Rainbow:** The stunt starts from the ground or a Squish, and then, the bases push the flyer into an extension. Once the flyer reaches the full height, the flyer arches back and falls backwards and the bases move behind to catch.

**Tick-Tock:** While in a one legged stunt the bases pop the flyer into the air and the flyer switches stunting leg while in midair.

**Leap Frog:** The stunt starts usually in a Squish and the bases pop the flyer into the air behind the back spot's head. The bases then move to catch the flyer in a Squish or a cradle.

**Reload:** After a cradle, the bases pop the flyer out of the cradle and into a load position and go right into the next stunt. This is often used to connect two separate stunts cleanly and attractively.

**Barrel Roll:** After a cradle, or with the flyer in a cradle position, the bases pop the flyer out of the cradle and into the air. The flyer stays flat in the air and spins 360 degrees before being caught again in a cradle position by the bases.

**Dismounts:** After a stunt or stunt sequence is performed there must be a safe, but clean, way to bring the flyer back to ground level. This is called a dismount.

**Walk Off:** The bases reach one hand up to the flyer and the flyer reaches down and grabs bases' hand. The bases pop the flyer off, while still holding hands of flyer and also reaching for flyer's underarm. The back spot guides the flyer by the waist slowly to the ground. The flyer remains standing upright, places arms in a T motion while still holding the bases' hands, squeezes legs and feet together, and lands with both feet on the floor.

**Assisted Front Tuck:** This is the same as a walk off except before the flyer gets into the walk off dismount position, the flyer flips forward in the air before landing on both feet.

**Cradle:** The bases pop the flyer into the air while the flyer turns body to face forward, pulls legs and feet together, squeezes body into a pike or hollow body position, and places arms in a T position. The bases hold arms out and catch flyer's back and upper legs while back spot holds arms out and catches flyer under arms.

**Full Twist:** This is the same as a cradle except before the flyer gets into a cradle position, the flyer does a 360 degree spin in the air.

**Double Down:** This is the same as a cradle except before the flyer gets into a cradle position, the flyer does two 360 degree spins in the air.

**Basket Tosses:** A basket toss is very different from a one legged or two legged stunt. In a one or two legged stunt, the objective is for the flyer to hit some type of body motion or position in the hands of the bases while maintaining complete control and balance. The basket toss, however, is similar to a giant cradle. In a basket toss the goal is for the flyer to hit some type of body motion or position in midair after the bases have flung the flyer as high as possible. It is important for the flyer to always take these steps in order reach full height and also perform a safe basket toss: 1) ride to the top of the toss in a pencil

I don't just pick girls up,  
I make them *fly!*



or tight position, 2) hit the body motion or position at the height of the toss, which is right before the flyer starts to fall back down to the bases, and 3) perform spins and/or bring body into a cradle position on the way back down to the bases. (Pictures of some of the baskets are shown below.)

*Star*: The flyer kicks one leg back up as high as she can, while other leg is diagonally downwards from kicked leg. Arms are in a High V. After reaching the Star position, flyer returns to cradle position and is caught by the bases.

*Star Twist*: The flyer reaches Star position in the air and spins 360 degrees before returning to cradle position.

*Pike*: The flyer forms a Pike position in the air and returns to cradle position.

*Tuck*: The flyer performs a Back Tuck in the air and returns to cradle position.

*X-Out*: The flyer performs an X-Out in the air and returns to cradle position.

*Layout*: The flyer performs a Layout in the air and returns to cradle position

*Toe Touch*: The flyer forms a Toe Touch position in the air and returns to cradle position.

*Pretty Girl*: The flyer put legs in a Liberty position with one arm in Hands on Hips and the other arm in a Broken T except with the hand behind the flyer's head in the air and returns to cradle position.

*Pretty Girl Twist*: The flyer forms a Pretty Girl position in the air and spins 360 degrees before returning to cradle position.

*Kick*: The flyer kicks one leg up in front to a Heel Stretch position and then returns to cradle position.

*Kick Twist*: The flyer forms a Kick position in the air and spins 360 degrees before returning to cradle position.

*Kick Double*: The flyer forms a Kick position in the air and does two 360 degree spins before returning to cradle position.



**Pyramids:** There are many different combinations and variations of pyramids. A typical pyramid is achieved by mixing several different one legged and two legged stunts together and adding transitions. The end result of a pyramid is usually a symmetrical design with many flyers in the air all around the center flyer, but all of them connected somehow. There are specific rules to follow in regards to pyramids also. Only some types of cheer, like college and certain divisions allow 2 ½ high pyramids so some of the stunts shown below might not be performed at all levels of cheer. Below are pictures of many different types of pyramids, but keep in mind the variations are endless!



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# Dangers

“In other sports if you miss all you drop is the ball.”



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## Most Common Injuries

Cheerleading is one of the most dangerous sports an athlete can participate in; in fact, a study done by the National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research estimated that college cheerleaders accounted for 70% of all serious injuries in the past 27 years. Some research even concludes that cheerleading may be a more dangerous sport than football, although this is debated among researchers. Injuries in cheerleading arise when a cheerleader makes a mistake and these injuries can be fatal. However, when done correctly with the proper techniques and precautions, cheerleading can be an incredibly safe sport.

The most common injuries that occur in cheerleading are sprains, which affect tendons and ligaments, and strains, which affect muscles. In cheerleading, the most common sprains and strains happen in the ankle, wrist, knee, and back areas of the body. These injuries can be quite painful to the cheerleader, and if not treated quickly and correctly can even lead to permanent damage in these areas. Once a cheerleader gets a sprain or strain it is best to see a doctor to get an x-ray so the doctor may assess the degree of the injury. However, if the injury is very mild it can be treated at home. The best treatment for a sprain is to ice the injury in 20 minute periods (20 minutes with ice on the injury, 20 minutes with ice off of the injury) for up to 4 hours as this will reduce any swelling. The injury must also be elevated and bandaged to prevent the injury from continuing to swell and bruise. It is also important for the cheerleader to rest the part of body that is injured for at least a day, and possibly more if pain and swelling has not subsided. Once the swelling has stopped, the sprain must continue to be soaked 3 times a day (20 minutes in warm water followed by 20 minutes in icy water) for a couple days until the sprain is healed. It is important to note that while this treatment may heal a sprain or strain, seeing a doctor is still the best solution to these problems.

While sprains and strains are the most common types of injuries, there are other common injuries that may affect cheerleaders as well. Fractured ankles, pulled groins, rotator cuff injuries, whiplash, and concussions are other common injuries that are prone to cheerleaders, and some of these injuries can lead to devastating results. The best treatment for any of these types of injuries, or any other injury a cheerleader may acquire, is to see a doctor. If the injury is to the back, neck, or head of the cheerleader, the cheerleader should *never* be moved unless a trusted, knowledgeable person has assessed the situation and given permission as movement can cause paralysis or other serious injuries.

## Less Common Injuries

While the injuries listed above are the most common ones found in cheerleading, there are many different types of injuries that can arise through its participation. While the most common injuries have been listed above, there are still other injuries that are somewhat common in the world of cheerleading. These injuries include broken collarbones, broken ankles, slip discs,

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and broken necks. These injuries are much more serious than the other injuries mentioned and are extremely painful to cheerleader injured. The only treatment of these types of injuries is to receive medical attention immediately. Like above, if the injury involves the back, head, or neck, the one injured should not be moved unless permission has been given by knowledgeable person.

### **Why is Cheerleading so Dangerous?**

One of the main reasons why cheerleading is so dangerous is because it has not technically been considered a sport and, thus, it lacks the safety requirements and regulations that have been established in other sports. Other sports require coaches and athletes to undergo special safety training designed specifically to advise coaches and athletes how to best prevent injuries and also inform them of techniques that can be used to minimize the risk of injury. Although some types of cheerleading, like college cheerleading for example, require the coaches to be AACCA, first aid, and CPR certified, not all types of cheerleading require this type of certification. Uneducated advisors are dangerous for an injured cheerleader; a common occurrence is that a cheerleader gets injured but the coach underestimates the degree of injury, causing the cheerleader to accidentally injure themselves further. For example, a cheerleader throws a tumbling pass, but lands badly on her ankle. She tells her coach about the pain her ankle is causing her and the coach thinks that it is just a simple ankle sprain, as that is one of the most common cheerleading injuries. The cheerleader and coach, therefore, treat the injury as they would an ankle sprain. The injury, however, is not responding to treatment and after a couple days the cheerleader decides to seek direction from a doctor, who informs her that she has a fractured ankle, not a sprained ankle. This ankle injury has now gotten worse and will take longer and be more complicated to heal, and if bad enough might never heal properly.

Other sports also have physical trainers educated specifically for that particular sport, enabling the injured to not only receive treatment quicker, but to receive proper treatment as well. Because of the lack of physical trainers who have been educated specifically for cheerleading and its injuries, what often happens is that an injury occurs and the cheerleader is forced to go elsewhere for treatment. This makes the injury go untreated until the cheerleader can find someone knowledgeable enough to treat the injury, and the longer it takes for an injury to receive treatment, the worse the injury may get.

### **Prevention**

There are many different ways to prevent injuries in cheerleading and the safest of squads are the ones that use all, or most, of the prevention techniques listed below.

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*Mental Preparation:* Research has showed that when a cheerleader uses visualization, or mentally envisions him or herself performing a routine or specific sequence flawlessly, the cheerleader is more apt to actually execute the routine or specific sequence without error, and as mentioned above, it is errors that cause injuries.

*Shoes:* Shoes are a good protection for feet and ankles as they provide the necessary support to keep feet and ankles safe. This is especially important for the ankles because ankles are one of the most injured body parts in cheerleading. Shoes also make stunting a much safer endeavor. Bases can get a much more firm grip on a flyer's shoes than they could on a flyer's barefoot. Shoes can also prevent cheerleaders from slipping, especially on hard surfaces.

*Mats:* When a mistake occurs, mats make it safer and less likely for the cheerleader to get hurt, or get hurt seriously. It is much safer for a cheerleader to fall onto a soft, squishy mat than it is for a cheerleader to fall on a hardwood floor.

*Stretching and Warming Up:* Stretching loosens the muscles and warming up prepares the body for physical activity. It is more probable that an injury will occur when the body is thrown into strenuous activity without any type of physical preparation beforehand.

*Strength Training:* Errors, which lead to injuries, are more likely to happen when the cheerleaders try to perform tasks that they are not quite strong enough to execute properly. Stunts, tumbling, and jumps are all much safer when they are done with strong, capable cheerleaders.

*Spotters:* A spotter is a person who stands by a stunt or tumbling pass, but does not actually participate, and is ready to jump in and help if a mistake ensues. A spotter may stand alongside a tumbling pass ready to catch the tumbler before they fall or even push them higher into the air so the tumbler has time to safely complete the pass. A spotter may also stand near a stunt ready to catch the flyer should the flyer start to fall. In stunts, however, one spotter may not be enough; flyers can fall to the left, right, back, front, or anywhere in between and one spotter standing behind the stunt may not have the time to reach the front of a stunt to catch a flyer falling to the front.

*Knowledge:* The other techniques are extremely important to preventing injuries to the cheerleaders, but the most effective method of preventing injuries to cheerleaders is knowledge. Coaches should learn and follow safety guidelines and should be well informed about the types of injuries and treatments that are common to cheerleaders, but should be knowledgeable about the rare injuries that befall cheerleaders as well. The coaches should also share all of this information about safety and injuries with the cheerleaders. Cheerleaders may be more prone to make better decisions when performing tasks if they are more aware of the consequences. Coaches should also make it a necessity to stay up to date with safety information. New techniques and information about safety released by the major cheerleading associations can make practice not only more safe, but more effective too.

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# Is Cheerleading a Sport?

“It doesn’t matter what people think about cheerleading. If it’s something that you love to do that’s all that counts.”

## The Debate

Experts have been debating whether or not cheerleading should be classified as a sport for many years and they have very strong opinions about the topic. Experts, however, are not the only people that have strong opinions about it; in fact, the classification of cheerleading as a sport is widely debated by everyone, including athletes, your peers, and even many other people you may know, and some of them have very good arguments in support of their cause. Below are some arguments used by both sides of the debate.

### Yes, Cheerleading Should Be Classified as a Sport

*Cheerleaders work just as hard and are just as athletic as any other sport, if not more.* This is one of the most widely used arguments in favor of cheerleading. Many people who are not associated with the cheerleading world do not realize the hard work and effort that goes into a simple cheer or stunt and they believe that cheerleaders just jump around, waving pom poms. While this is partly true, as cheerleaders at games are required to jump around, waving pom poms to get the crowd excited and involved, this is not the only activity that cheerleaders participate in. What other people may fail to realize is that most of the aspects of cheerleading, like one simple tumbling pass or even one simple stunt, require extreme strength and athletic ability.

*Cheerleading needs to be classified as a sport because even though cheerleaders are athletes, they are being denied their rights as athletes.*

As of now, cheerleading is not considered a sport to the schools and, therefore, most schools do not allocate funds to it, even though the school's other sports may receive a great deal of money. This means that the other athletes of the school may receive many perks, like scholarships and early registration, but cheerleaders may not. However, cheerleaders are athletes too, and are important to their school; they are the school's ambassadors and by denying their sport, they also deny their chances to receive the benefits that they deserve.

*Classifying cheerleading as a sport will be profitable to the economy and the school.* It is widely known that athletic events are some of the most profitable events a school, or organization, can be a part of; they draw in large crowds who are willing to spend money not only on tickets, but on food and game day paraphernalia as well. Classifying cheerleading as a sport would mean that there would be state and national championships, which would not only help the economy, but would bring money in to the school as well.

Cheerleading is not an extracurricular activity. It is a sport, a sport of academic discipline.

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*Cheerleading is a dangerous athletic activity and it needs to be classified as a sport so it will be safer.* College sports are governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and this organization provides rules and regulations that all sports are required to follow in order for the athletes to practice their sport safely. As of now, cheerleaders basically are not forced to follow any guidelines except those imposed on them by competitions. While the AACCA promotes safety and distributes these safety guidelines, they have no control over whether or not the cheerleading squads actually follow these rules. The NCAA, however, has power to stop athletes and whole teams from participating in championships and even regular games if they fail to abide by the rules.

*The goal of a sport is competition; cheerleading is extremely competitive.* Cheerleading is a sport because at cheerleading competitions, cheerleaders are in direct competition with other squads for the title of champion. The competitions have strict rules and requirements that teams must obey and they also have a fair judicial system that is used to score or rank the teams in order to determine who performed the best. Because cheerleading teams compete with one another just like any other sport, cheerleading should also be considered a sport.

#### **No, Cheerleading Should Not Be Classified as a Sport**

*Most cheerleaders have only one competition and only perform at games for the rest of the season and some teams do not attend competitions at all.* Many cheerleading squads can only afford to attend one competition, if any, and may work hard all season perfecting their routine for that one competition. But one competition does not make up for a whole season where there are no competitions at all. Side-line cheerleading has no competition and is not a sport, and if cheerleaders are performing side-line cheers for basically the whole season, then cheerleading should not be considered a sport. Cheerleaders should have to compete in as many competitions as they perform on the side-lines at games in order for it to be considered a sport.

*Cheerleading should not be considered a sport because it would impose on the sport many regulations that would end up being harmful to cheerleading as a whole.* If cheerleading became a sport the government or governing body of sports would impose rules about practices and travel restrictions, among other things. Changing rules about practice and travel might make cheerleading safer to participate in, but may also restrict what a cheerleading team is allowed to do or where a team is allowed to go. If cheerleaders are not able to travel to competitions, they are not competing and therefore, cheerleading is not a sport.

*Sports cannot consist of co-ed teams; they must be all male or all female teams.* Athletic activities that are considered a sport are not allowed to have both males and females performing together; it is either a male sport or a female one. Cheerleading, however, often uses both males and so cheerleading cannot be considered a sport because of this.

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### **Why Cheerleading is Not Yet a Sport**

Unfortunately regardless of what side of the debate you support or disagree with, it has been decided by a Connecticut judge that cheerleading is not a sport according to both the Title IX definition of a sport and the Women's Sports Foundation definition of a sport. According to Title IX, a sport must have "coaches, practices, competitions during a defined season, a governing organization, and also must have competition as its primary goal." (Eaton-Robb, Pat) The Women's Sports Foundation defines a sport as "1. A physical activity which involves propelling a mass through space or overcoming the resistance of a mass, 2. "Contesting" or competing against/with an opponent, 3. Governed by the rules which explicitly define the time, space and purpose of the contest and the conditions under which a winner is declared, 4. Acknowledged primary purpose of the competition is a comparison of the relative skills of the participants." (AACCA) Cheerleading does not fit either definition as it fails to have competition as its primary goal, which is a main part of both definitions. Remember that cheerleading began by a group of students yelling at a football game and while it has evolved over the years to become a grueling sport involving competitions, the purpose of cheerleading is still the same - it is an athletic activity that supports other athletic activities, not one that focuses on competitions. While this may seem unfair to All Star squads, who only compete in competitions, they are their own entity and do not benefit or lose from the classification of cheerleading as a sport.

### **What Is Being Done?**

Since cheerleading cannot be classified as a sport as it is, where does it belong? Marching bands, dance teams, and drill teams, which are similar to cheerleading in terms of category, all belong to a group called an athletic activity and the AACCA believes this is where cheerleaders belong as well. This category recognizes participants in these activities as athletes and so they can still receive the benefits of a student athlete without technically participating in a sport. This means they may receive scholarships, be covered by the school's insurance, and funding for a reasonable amount of competitions.

While being considered student athletes can be important and beneficial to the cheerleading community, USA Cheer has devised a way to allow cheerleading to be classified as a sport and this is through the creation of STUNT. USA Cheer teamed up with cheerleading coaches and experts and also with experts of Title IX to create a cheerleading activity that would meet all of the definitions of a sport, and, thus, STUNT was started. As of now, STUNT is still not considered a sport but is in the process of being considered as an NCAA Emerging Sport. Once the NCAA classifies STUNT as an Emerging Sport, the next step is to see if STUNT passes the Title IX requirements, which would enable STUNT to be classified as a sport. This would be an incredible victory for the cheerleading world and would be the first time in its history that cheerleading has been considered a sport.

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# Final Thoughts

“Cheerleading is not just something you can stop doing; it gets into your blood and stays with you for the rest of your life.”



You have now been completely immersed in the world of cheerleading and have learned basically everything there is to know about it. You know how many different types of cheerleading there are and the rules for each, you know what it takes to be a successful cheerleader and what life skills you will take away from cheerleading when you've finished, you have learned the lifestyle of a cheerleader, the dangers cheerleaders face at every practice and even the basic techniques used in cheerleading; in essence, you are a cheerleading expert!

Before you read this book, you might not fully understand what it meant to be a cheerleader, but through this book you have learned how cheerleaders are the ambassadors of their schools and the representatives of school spirit. What I hope you take away from this book is a new found respect for the people involved in the cheerleading world and for everything that they do. I hope you understand and appreciate the huge amounts of time cheerleaders give up simply for the benefit of the football team and the basketball team. Cheerleaders are selfless, unique, and talented individuals and regardless of what type of cheerleading they participate in, I hope you can respect their sport and their lives. So, the next time you attend a football game and see the cheerleaders shocking and astounding the crowd, remember what how hard it was for them to get there and appreciate their dedication, because otherwise, how boring would football be!

**I trade sweat for strength.  
I trade doubt for belief.  
I trade cheerleading for nothing!**

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