



GHSA
SPIRIT AND
SPORTSMANSHIP
CHEER
MANUAL

Revised Spring, 2016

IMPORTANT STATEMENT

It is the responsibility of all cheerleading coaches in Georgia to review the Georgia High School Association (GHSA) Constitution and By-Laws. Guidelines for coaching and the eligibility to coach on the high school level in Georgia are located in the GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, in addition to the eligibility requirements for individual athletes to participate. There is also a special section dedicated to cheerleading that all cheer coaches should review and understand.

All cheerleading coaches should also read and review the National Federation Spirit Rules book for rules that apply to basketball and football cheerleading. Beginning summer, 2016, the National Federation Spirit Rules Book will be available on-line.

The coaching and cheer guidelines in this manual do not intend to take the place of the information and guidelines presented in the National Federation Spirit Rules book or the GHSA Constitution and By-laws. Its purpose, instead, is to draw attention to and emphasize those rules that are most often violated in Georgia, as well as to educate cheer coaches concerning rules that the GHSA has enacted beyond the National Federation Spirit rules book.

SECTION ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

Reference for these rules and requirements can be found in the GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, Section 3, Cheerleading, unless otherwise indicated.

1. The State Cheerleading Coordinator is **Pam Carter** who may be reached at:
pcarters@aol.com
2. Schools may have **only one (1) varsity-level competitive** team.
3. All cheerleaders must:
 - a. Be eligible according to academic standards and applicable transfer rules and must be declared eligible by the GHSA office on the **proper eligibility form**. Coaches are responsible for submitting this information to the GHSA office electronically.
 - b. Have a physical exam on file in the school office **before trying out, practicing, or performing**.
4. All coaches must complete a **yearly GHSA Spirit Rules Clinic and pass the yearly GHSA test for competition and spirit (basketball and/or football) coaches**. The GHSA member schools of coaches who do not meet both these requirements will be fined. This requirement also applies to **all community coaches**, regardless of the sport coached.
5. It is mandatory that every coach in each GHSA sport (including Community Coaches, Student Teachers, and Interns) participate in a free, online course on concussion management prepared by the NFHS and available at www.nfhslearn.com **at least every two years** - beginning with the 2013-14 school year. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 2.68)
6. Each school **must distribute** to every athlete and his/her parent/guardian an information sheet that includes: the dangers of concussion injuries, the signs/symptoms of concussion, and the concussion management protocol outlined in this by-law. This sheet must be signed by the parent/guardian of each athlete and a copy kept on file at the school. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 2.68)

7. Miscellaneous Information:

- a. Beginning and ending dates for practice and the competition season are located at the front of the GHSA Constitution and By-Laws and on the ghsa.net website.
- b. Cheerleading teams are allowed to attend camps after the last day of school until August first.
- c. During the summer (i.e., between the ending of one school year and the beginning of the next) the only restrictions on practices and competition are that all activities must be strictly voluntary, and the “Dead Week” must be observed, as follows: Schools are prohibited from participating in voluntary workouts, camps and/or clinics, weight training or competitions during the week (Sunday through Saturday) in which the Fourth of July falls each year. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 2.69 #3)
- d. Out-of-season practices may be held in preparation for tryouts only. Once tryouts are complete, no practices may be held until school is out. The tryout period for the selection of **all squads** is limited to a maximum of one period of ten consecutive school days between February 1 and the last day students are in school. The term practice here refers to the time spent within the **ten day only** try-out period allowed by the GHSA.
- e. Eligibility for tryouts and participation: **1.** Students must be enrolled at the school in order to try out for that school’s cheerleading program. A student may be enrolled in only one school at a time. (Exception: See By-Law #1:45 (g) addressing eighth graders trying out.) **2.** Enrolled migrant students may try out for a cheerleading team, but may not represent the school at the varsity level during that school year until the migratory sit-out period has elapsed. (Reference: GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 1:60)
3. An academically ineligible student may try out if he/she is passing all courses at the time of the tryout. (Reference: GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 1:50)

8. The GHSA and the NFHS rules state that a student may not cheer with a high school cheerleading team unless he/she is a **bona fide student enrolled at that school**. Specifically this means that children are prohibited from serving as mascots cheering with or standing with the cheer team. (NFHS Rule 2-1-2) All students participating on a cheer team must be eligible, including students dressed as mascots who entertain the crowd. (Exception to this rule: Exhibitions held during half time, pregame, or postgame periods that have been authorized by the school administration. This type of presentation often involves children who attended cheer camps during the summer or who participated in the local Recreational League cheer program, and then are allowed to cheer or perform prior to the beginning of the high school game or during half-time. Their participation must end by the time the game begins or resumes if they perform during half-time.)

9. The participation of college teams or special needs teams as exhibitions at a GHSA contest requires approval by the GHSA.

SECTION TWO: COACHING FOR SAFETY

A guide to understanding the liabilities, duties,
and responsibilities of coaching

COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

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

NINE LEGAL DUTIES OF COACHES

1. Properly plan the activity
 - a. Sequence activities
 - b. Know the progressions of safety, keep records, and follow the progressions
 - c. Have a master plan for practice
2. Provide proper instruction
 - a. Inform athletes of your expectations
 - b. Provide proper training and instruction for all activities
 - c. Explain the rules and make sure athletes understand them
3. Provide a safe physical environment
 - a. Inspect sites (gym, field, performance surface) to make sure it is appropriate
 - b. Use the appropriate surface as expected (floor, grass, mats, field, concrete, etc.)
 - c. Provide a place safe from hazard

4. Provide adequate and proper equipment
 - a. Inventory at the end of season and replace equipment as needed
 - b. Make sure equipment is set up appropriately
5. Match the athlete to his/her ability
 - a. Watch for size, weight, age, maturity, and mental state when selecting positions for athletes
 - b. Be realistic when setting expectations for athletes
6. Evaluate your athletes for injury and the ability to participate
 - a. Have CPR and First Aid Training for emergencies
 - b. Be able to evaluate an injury and determine the immediate needs of the athlete
 - c. Have an **EMERGENCY PLAN** in place and review the plan with team members
7. Supervise all activities closely
 - a. Be present
 - b. Be attentive
 - c. Be where you can control the situation
8. Warn all athletes of inherent risk
 - a. Provide information for both parents and athletes
 - b. Use **INHERENT RISK FORMS**
 - c. Review the inherent risk form with both athletes and parents and obtain signatures stating both the athlete and parent understand the information presented.
 - d. Make sure parents and athletes understand the rules and the risk
9. Provide emergency assistance
 - a. Know First Aid and CPR
 - b. Be ready to respond and prepare others to also respond
 - c. Keep a list of contacts and phone numbers posted
 - d. Have a plan

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

NOTE: The nine legal duties listed above apply to all coaches, regardless of sport. These nine legal duties are a vital part of athletic risk management and the prevention of injuries. It is acknowledged that regardless of the excellence of any risk management program, injuries cannot be totally eliminated. The coach must be a trained individual who is committed to the safety of each and every individual athlete, to consistency in the program, and to competent and appropriate management of the team. Coaches are obligated to follow the nine legal duties of coaching.

SECTION THREE: SPORTSMANSHIP

It is the responsibility of the basketball/spirit cheer coach to ensure that his/her school's cheerleaders adhere to and practice the following guidelines which promote good sportsmanship and proper behavior in the gym and at the football field. At no point should any coach place the value of winning above the importance of instilling the highest ideals of character in the athletes with whom he/she works. Cheer coaches should share the following guidelines with cheerleaders, parents, and fans so as to promote positive cheerleading.

The following rules of good sportsmanship are reviewed here for the purpose of emphasizing the GHSA and NF expectations regarding proper behavior of cheerleaders in the basketball gym.

1. Taunting is defined as to degrade in a sarcastic, insulting or jeering manner; to mock for the purpose of embarrassing an opponent. Taunting, and similar acts are example of poor sportsmanship. The GHSA Constitution and By-Laws state: "It shall be the responsibility of a member school to use every means at its disposal to impress upon faculty, students, team members, coaches and spectators the values of sportsmanship in preparation for the management of interscholastic contests. Contest officials have the authority to have any and all individuals removed from the confines of the contest whose behavior has become a distraction and/or a hindrance to the administration of the event. This may include, but is not limited to, verbal and visual gestures." (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, Sec 2.70)

2. Spirit teams should cheer in a positive manner in support of their team, not "against" or "at" the opposing team or opposing cheerleaders in an aggressive manner. (Examples: "Miss it, miss it!" or "Oh yea, you walked, you walked....")

3. Cheers which solicit an aggressive response are inappropriate. (Examples: "We got spirit, how about you?"; "Air Ball, Air Ball"; "Tick Tock, Look at the clock!", "You traveled, you traveled, you got caught!").

4. It is strongly recommended that basketball cheerleaders be positioned at opposite ends of the gym to eliminate face-to-face cheering and to avoid the perception of one squad cheering "against" the other.

5. Cheerleaders should not point to, laugh at, or cheer “at” the opposing team, the opposing cheerleaders or the opposing fans, but instead, should lead their fans in cheers of support for their own team.
6. When a free throw is in progress cheerleaders should be quiet – no cheering, no stomping, and no kicking the bleachers in an attempt to distract the player of an opposing team.
7. Cheerleaders should neither draw attention to the mistakes of individual players nor attempt to intimidate players or fans of the opposing team through words, actions, or cheers.
8. Cheerleaders should behave in a respectful and quiet manner with regard to any injured player on the basketball floor, kneeling quietly until the player has recovered or been removed from the court.
9. When time expires at the end of a basketball game, all cheering should cease. Cheerleaders on the winning team should not continue to cheer beyond the game, as this promotes the perception of the winning team “gloating” over the losers.
10. Spirit cheerleaders should educate students and fans in order to promote appropriate sportsmanship and proper behavior by providing appropriate leadership before, during, and after games.
11. Obnoxious behavior should not be encouraged or permitted under the guise of supporting one’s team.
12. Opposing players, coaches, administrators, officials, and fans should be treated with the utmost respect by cheerleaders. At no time shall a cheerleader approach an opposing coach, game official, administrator, or player in order to criticize. Cheerleaders, as representatives of their team, should not use social media to degrade or criticize opposing players, cheerleader, coaches, or fans after the game.
13. Cheerleaders should work to shift negative crowd attention caused by a disturbance in a positive manner, thus allowing a school administrator or security personnel to address the issue.

14. Every cheer team has the right to a safe environment in which to cheer without harassment from opposing fans. Cheerleaders should have a designated place to sit/stand during a game. Spirit cheer coaches should seek the game manager or security personnel if the situation becomes volatile or dangerous.

15. It is strongly recommended that cheer coaches be prepared to greet visiting cheer coaches and teams with a handout of the GHSA and NF rules and guidelines, in addition to specific rules enacted by their regions. (See forms section of this manual for an example.)

Sportsmanship statement from the NFHS Spirit Rules Book

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

SECTION FOUR: APPAREL

1. Spirit cheerleaders must be dressed uniformly. Teams should not mix junior varsity and varsity uniforms on the sidelines.
2. Please be aware that the uniform restrictions issue will be revisited by the GHSA cheer committee in August, 2016. It is highly recommended that teams do not purchase any non-traditional type of uniform for either competition or spirit cheerleaders to wear in performance. Performance is defined as ballgames, pep rallies, public appearances, and competitions. This restriction includes any part of the uniform that might be either partially or completely backless, that might resemble the type of uniform that a volleyball team wears (brief, spandex athletic shorts, and sleeveless, vee-neck, spandex shirts to match), or that might be viewed as short shorts for male cheerleaders. All other restrictions continue to apply - no sequins, rhinestones, glitter. Check the National Federation Spirit Rules book for current restrictions. When the issue is revisited in August, 2016, all restrictions passed by the GHSA Executive Committee will be effective immediately. This recommendation is made in order to aid teams/coaches in making the best use of funds for uniforms. Questions about appropriate uniforms should be directed to Pam Carter at pcarters@aol.com.

3. Piercings, jewelry, and glitter are all prohibited by both the National Federation and the GHSA. This rule applies to all cheerleaders in all situations in Georgia. (Note: It is not sufficient to place a band-aide over a piercing to disguise the presence of a piercing, earring, etc. A religious medal without a chain is allowed and must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert medal must be taped and may be visible.)
4. When standing at attention, a cheerleader's apparel must cover the midriff.
5. Fingernails, including artificial nails, must be kept short, near the end of the fingers.
6. Hair must be worn in a manner that is appropriate for the activity involved. Hair devices and accessories must be secure.

SECTION FIVE: DANCE AND MUSIC

1. Cheers, chants, and dance motions should be free of suggestive motions and/or words. Motions should not contain sexual overtones, draw unwanted crowd response, or appear suggestive or vulgar. It is the responsibility of the spirit basketball coach to review all cheers, chants, and motions for inappropriate words or motions.
2. Music played at games for dance routines, during timeouts, and in pre-game warm-ups should be screened for inappropriate lyrics, vulgarity, and sexual implications prior to its use. It is the responsibility of the spirit coach to review all music.

SECTION SIX: SIGNS

Run-throughs (also called break-thrus) and game signs prepared by cheerleaders for both the football field and the basketball gym should reflect support of one's own school and team in a positive manner, and should not be aimed "at" an opponent through the use of negative expressions. Prohibiting inappropriate signs from being posted in the gym and on the football field can greatly diminish negative sportsmanship from spectators, fans, and students. The spirit cheer coach is responsible for determining that game signs and crash-thrus meet the requirements of good sportsmanship.

SECTION SEVEN: CHEERING FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL

Note: Unless specifically denoted B (basketball) or F (football), these rules apply to both sports. Note key: National Federation Spirit Rules Book (NF); Section (Sec); Article (Art)

1. **(B) EFFECTIVE 2016-2017: Cheerleaders at basketball games are restricted from performing “stomp” cheers/dances in the stands. “Stomp” cheers/dances may be performed on the gym floor. (Reference: GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION MINUTES, STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, April 18, 2016)**
2. Practice and performance surfaces and areas must be suitable for spirit activities, i.e. appropriate surface/area, reasonably free from obstructions and excessive noise. Stunts and tumbling must be modified to be appropriate for the surface and/or area and in relation to other participants. (NF: Sec 1, Arts 4 & 5)
3. **(B)** Participants must not warm up stunts or tumbling on the court or sideline area during player warm-up if an alternate site is available. If no appropriate alternate site is available, the coach must take reasonable precautions to minimize risk to participants. (NF: Sec 1, Art 9)
4. A participant who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on his or her uniform, or his blood on his/her person, shall be directed to leave the activity until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform or body is appropriately clean, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to participate. (NF: Sec 1, Art 13)
5. An athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as a loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. (NF: Sec 1, Art 14)
6. **(B)**
 - a. The throwing of souvenirs (such as small basketballs, t-shirts, etc.) into the stands is prohibited in the basketball gym. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws Section 2 G #2)
 - b. No artificial noise-makers (including megaphones, air horns, vuvuzelas, or thunder sticks) are allowed in the gym during basketball games. Noisemakers are subject to confiscation by school officials or game security. (Exception:

Megaphones appropriately used by cheerleaders are permitted if allowed by contest officials.) (NF: Sec 1, Art 11)

- c. School bands are prohibited from playing while the game is in progress; **the home school is responsible for enforcing this rule.** (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, Section 2, G, #5.)
 - d. Displays of unsportsmanlike conduct directed toward the opposing team or game officials will not be tolerated and may result in expulsion from the game. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, 270)
 - e. Please see additional rules and guidelines in the GHSA By-Laws and Constitution.
7. **(B)** During Basketball Quarterfinals, Semi-finals, and Finals (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws Section 2 #3)
- a. Schools are limited to a maximum of sixteen (16) cheerleaders in uniform at court side.
 - b. Cheerleader shall not occupy spectator seating and shall be in designated courtside areas.
 - c. Mascots must be members of the student body.
 - d. **(B)** Participants must remain outside the playing area during a thirty-second or less timeout in a basketball game. (NF: Sec 1, Art 10)
 - e. **(B)** At basketball games, support/spirit squads may perform stunts and/or tumbling that are allowed by NFHS Spirit Rules without mats. Note: National Federation rules dealing with safety are to be followed at all cheerleading practices and performances. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, Sec. 3 F)
 - f. **(B)** Cheerleaders are restricted from standing/cheering/jumping in the area at the end of the basketball court during the time a game is in progress unless they are more than eight (8) feet from the boundary line of the basketball court. This includes cheerleaders in an "L" shape with part of the team on the sideline and the other part of the team on the end boundary line. The host school is responsible for enforcing this rule. (GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, Section 2, G, 1 a and b)
 - g. **(B)** Participants may not tumble or cheer while the ball is in play in basketball or volleyball. (NF: 2-1-8; Art 1, Sec 8)

- h. Cheerleaders should not create a shoulder sit, a shoulder stand, or any other partner stunt in order to provide support/stability for the crash-through sign the team runs out and runs through at the beginning of a game. (NF: 2.1.5 Situation D)
- i. Cheerleaders should quietly stand at attention during the playing of the National Anthem.

Note: All coaches should remember that individual school systems and regions may establish more restrictive rules to govern activities in their gyms or at their games. Visiting cheer teams, led by their coaches, should respect these rules and follow the dictates of individual schools or regions. It is the responsibility of the spirit cheer coach to understand and adhere to the rules of each gym his/her team enters for the purpose of spirit cheering.

SECTION EIGHT: SCENARIOS

General Cheer Scenarios

1. A cheerleader is cheering while chewing gum.

Ruling: Cheerleaders **may not** chew gum or eat **during practice or performance.**

2. An elementary-aged student from a local school, dressed in a cheer uniform, stands on the sidelines with the cheer team.

Ruling: To be eligible to participate or perform with a high school sports team, an individual must be a **bona-fide student** of that school, enrolled fulltime in grades 9-12 and must meet all eligibility requirements of the GHSA.

3. A cheer team which does not stunt or tumble wears small post earrings during the game.

Ruling: According to the National Federation Rules Book and the GHSA Cheer Manual, **no jewelry is permitted during practice or performance,** regardless of the team's intent to stunt or tumble. Religious medals and medical alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal with a chain must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert medal must be taped and may be visible.

4. A cheerleader loses her balance and falls during a performance and is momentarily unconscious. Her mother comes down from the stands and sits with her child. Within

ten minutes, the mother assures the coach the girl seems to have recovered and she can go back to cheering.

Ruling: The athlete may not return to the game until she is cleared by an appropriate health care professional. Parents may not make this decision in place of the health care professional.

5. A cheerleader comes to practice with newly pierced ears and tells her coach that she cannot remove the posts in her ears because the piercing will then “close up.” When contacted, the cheerleader’s mother indicates that she is willing to sign a waiver releasing the school and coach of all responsibility if the cheerleader is injured or hurt in the area of her ears/head.

Ruling: The cheerleader may not practice or perform until the posts in her ears are removed. Cheerleaders may not wear jewelry at any time during a practice, performance, or public event. The mother’s willingness to sign a waiver is not a factor and should not be considered as a condition of participation. Post and spacers are defined as illegal by the NFHS. It is not acceptable to cover the piercings with band-aides, as covering up the violation does not make the violation acceptable.

Basketball Cheer Scenarios

6. A cheer team does a “stomping” cheer in the stands at the beginning of a basketball game.

Ruling: At the spring, 2016 meeting of the GHSA Executive Committee a rule was passed prohibiting cheer teams from “stomping” in the stands. Stomping cheers are allowed only on the gym floor.

7. A home team completes a chant. The opposing cheer team starts the same chant as a rebuttal. This “echoing” the cheers of the visiting cheerleaders happens several times.

Ruling: This is not appropriate sportsmanship; “echoing” the same chant immediately after the opposing cheer team has completed that chant is prohibited.

8. A player is at the free throw line, ready to shoot, when the opposing cheerleaders yell, “Miss it, Miss it” at the player to disrupt his free throw.

Ruling: Cheerleaders should be quietly standing at attention while players of either team are shooting. Spirit teams should cheer in a positive manner and in support of their own teams. It is inappropriate to cheer “against” or “at” the other team or to cheer in an aggressive manner. (Example: “Miss it, miss it!” or “Oh yea, you walked, you walked....”)

9. The cheerleaders and the fans boo and yell degrading comments at an opposing player who fouls a home team player.

Ruling: Obnoxious behavior should not be encouraged or permitted under the guise of school spirit. Opposing players, officials, and fans should be treated with respect and dignity. If inappropriate crowd behavior exists, assistance should be obtained from a school administrator or game manager.

10. The Basketball Boosters' Club has purchased a box of small souvenir basketball balls, and those are thrown out to fans during half time.

Ruling: The throwing of souvenirs (such as small basketballs, t-shirts, etc.) into the stands is prohibited. Spirit items of this type may be given out at the end of the game as fans exit the gym.

11. A gym has only three feet surrounding the outside of the playing court. The cheer coach of the visiting team positions her team in that area.

Ruling: This is not an appropriate place for cheerleaders to stand and cheer. Cheerleaders are restricted from the area at the end of the court during the time a game is in progress unless they are more than eight (8) feet from the boundary line of the court. This includes cheerleaders in an "L" shape with part of the cheer team on the sideline and part of the cheer team on the end line. The host school or tournament director is responsible for enforcing this rule. In this case the cheerleaders would sit or stand in the bleachers.

12. A cheer squad is prepared to perform a dance routine, and runs out at the first full time out to perform.

Ruling: A full time out of one minute is not adequate time to perform a dance routine. Appropriate situations for routines are pregame and half-time only. Cheerleaders should be aware of times outs and the signals referees use to denote either a half (30 seconds) or a full time out (one minute.) Professional courtesy dictates that the cheer coach should inform the basketball coaches of both teams of the plan for cheerleaders to dance at pre-game or at half-time of the game.

13. A local company gives a school souvenir megaphones imprinted with its logo. Cheerleaders give those megaphones to fans as they enter the gym.

Ruling: No artificial noise-makers (including megaphones, whistles, thunder sticks, etc.) are allowed in the gym during basketball games. (Megaphones appropriately used by spirit cheerleaders are permitted if allowed by contest officials.)

14. Cheerleaders place a game sign with the words "Pluck the Falcons!" on the gym wall above the stands.

Ruling: This is an inappropriate sign and should not be displayed. Signs should reflect support of one's own school and team, and should not be aimed "at" an opponent. Prohibiting inappropriate signs from being posted can greatly diminish negative sportsmanship from fans and students.

15. An opposing player shoots an air ball, and fans and home cheerleaders immediately begin the "air ball" chant in an attempt to embarrass the player.

Ruling: This is inappropriate and an example of poor sportsmanship. The NFHS and GHSA disapprove of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean others under any circumstances including on the basis of race, religion, gender or national origin.

16. The visiting cheer team is clearly positioned beyond the 8 foot boundary line of the basketball court, but the referee tells the team to move from that area and instead be in the stands to cheer.

Ruling: Referees are in charge of the game and the gym, and may direct cheerleaders as they see necessary. Cheerleaders and cheer coaches must be mindful that a referee can assess a technical foul against their team for lack of cooperation or failure to follow the referee's directions.

17. A basketball cheer coach receives a flier from a nearby school, inviting her basketball cheer squad to join other local squads in a pre-season day (i.e. early November) of competition designed to sharpen their cheer skills. The flier indicates that concessions will be available as a fund-raiser for the home cheer squad, the competition is free and there is no admission charge for spectators.

Ruling: This is illegal. Cheerleaders may not participate in a competition during the school year that is not sanctioned by the GHSA, regardless of its intent as a fundraiser, whether admission is charged or not, or whether teams are charged a fee to compete or not.

Football Cheer Scenarios

18. A team is stunting on a track in light rain.

Ruling: This is illegal; no teams may stunt in the rain. Prior to the performance of any skill, the immediate environment for the activity should be taken into consideration including, but not limited to the proximity of non-squad personnel, performance surface, lighting and/or precipitation. Technical skills should not be performed on concrete, asphalt, **wet**, or uneven surfaces, or surfaces with obstructions.

19. Cheerleaders in a shoulder stand with bracers hold the “run through” poles as the football team crashes through in a dramatic entrance at a Friday night game.

Ruling: This is illegal. The close proximity of other participants makes stunting in this situation unsafe.

20. A cheer team creates a Homecoming crash thru sign featuring graves marked with school names and a caption announcing those schools as “killed” by the home team in the course of the season.

Ruling: Use of this sign is illegal. Spirit leaders and their coaches are in a position to preview spirit signs that may be posted for their school’s games, when such signs are allowed. Prohibiting inappropriate signs from being posted can greatly assist the administration in helping students, fans, and spectators to understand the purpose of positive signage, which is to create and maintain an appropriate and positive crowd atmosphere.

21. Cheerleaders are busily putting up signs on the fence when the band begins playing the National Anthem; they hurriedly continue in order to be ready for the kick-off.

Ruling: This is inappropriate. Cheerleaders should stand quietly at attention during the playing of the National Anthem.

SECTION 9: FORMS

The forms included in the section are provided to coaches as a courtesy of the GHSA. These forms include the following:

- The GHSA High School Emergency/Activity Medical Emergency Authorization Form
- GHSA Concussion Information Sheet and Parent / Athlete sign-off section
- The Inherent Risks Consent Form and Parent / Athlete sign-off page
- Welcome to our gym handout for Basketball Season

Remember forms can also be found on the GHSA website on the cheer page. They will be found by clicking on the “forms” link.

**High School Athletic / Activity Medical
Emergency Authorization Form**

Student _____
Print Last First

School _____ **Grade** _____

Sport _____ **Coach** _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Home Phone: _____

() _____ Please indicate best way to contact.

Mother's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mother's Email: _____ Cell: _____

Father's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Father's Email: _____ Cell: _____

Other Contact: _____

Name and Relationship: _____

STUDENT INFORMATION

Date of Birth: _____ Physician: _____

Physician's Phone #: _____

Allergies: _____

Epipen? Yes ____ No ____ Where will it be? _____

Inhaler? Yes ____ No ____ Where will it be? _____

Chronic Illness? _____

Regular medications? _____

Date of last Tetanus Imm: _____

Hospital or facility where I prefer my son/daughter be taken in an emergency:

(Name and Location of facility)

CONCUSSION HISTORY

List of date(s) of any previous concussions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(You are required to report any concussion(s) sustained that are not listed or are sustained during the season, including those that occur during a GHSA activity/event, and concussions occurring outside of the school or school activities.)

MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION/CONSENT

Insurance Company: _____

Policy / Consumer No. _____

I, _____ authorize all medical, surgical, diagnostic, and hospital procedures as may be performed or prescribed by a treating physician for _____ if I cannot be reached in an emergency.

Date _____ Signature _____

(Legal Parent or Guardian)

Address: _____



CONCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

Symptoms may include one of more of the following:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Headaches ✓ Pressure in the head ✓ Nausea or vomiting ✓ Neck pain ✓ Balance problems or dizziness ✓ Blurred, double, or fuzzy vision ✓ Sensitivity to light or noise ✓ Feeling sluggish or slowed down ✓ Feeling foggy or groggy ✓ Drowsiness ✓ Change in sleep patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Amnesia ✓ “Don’t feel right” ✓ Fatigue or low energy ✓ Sadness ✓ Nervousness or anxiety ✓ Irritability ✓ More emotional ✓ Confusion ✓ Concentration or memory problems (forgetting) ✓ Repeating the same comments

Signs observed by teammates, parents and coaches include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appears dazed ✓ Vacant facial expression ✓ Confused about assignments ✓ Forgets plays ✓ Is unsure of game, score, or opponent ✓ Moves clumsily or displays incoordination ✓ Answers questions slowly ✓ Slurred speech ✓ Shows behavior or personality changes ✓ Can’t recall events prior to hit ✓ Can’t recall events after hit ✓ Seizures or convulsions ✓ Any changes in typical behavior or personality ✓ Loses consciousness



CONCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussions should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leave the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often fail to report symptoms of injuries. Concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key to student-athlete's safety.

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to the activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. It is clear that the athlete should not return until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and received written clearance to return to play from the health care provider.

As a parent you are responsible for informing your child's coach if you think that your child may have a concussion. Remember it is better to miss one game than miss the whole season. And when in doubt, the athlete sits out.

Review current information concerning concussion on the NFHS website and the <http://www.cdc.gov/concussionsinyouthsports/>

I have reviewed the Concussion Information Form and understand the seriousness of this issue.

DATE: _____

Athlete Printed Name

Signature

Parent/Legal Guardian Printed

Signature



INHERENT RISKS CONSENT FORM

Athlete's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ Sport: _____

We accept and understand that the sport/activity of **cheerleading** involves certain inherent risks, dangers and hazards that may cause serious personal injury, including death, severe paralysis or brain injury necessitating long term care and significantly impairing enjoyment of life or life activities. We accept and understand that the above-described injuries and other injuries, including but not limited to: concussions; serious neck and spinal injuries potentially resulting in complete or partial paralysis; brain damage; blindness; serious injury to all internal organs; serious injury to all bones, joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons; contusions; dislocations; sprains; strains; and fractures, may occur as a result of participating in this sport/activity. We accept and understand that certain activities such as tumbling and stunting carry with them a greater inherent risk of injury.

1. We understand that the inherent risks of this sport/activity cannot be eliminated without jeopardizing the essential qualities of the activity/sport. We have reviewed all of these risks and we understand and appreciate them and still desire to participate in the activity.

(Student Initial)_____ (Parent Initial)_____

2. We certify that (Student Name) _____ has no medical or physical conditions which could interfere with or compromise his/her safety in participating in this activity.

(Student Initial)_____ (Parent Initial)_____

3. I authorize qualified emergency medical professionals to examine, and in the event of an injury or serious illness, to administer emergency medical care to the above-named student.

(Parent Initial)_____

4. In the event it becomes necessary for school district staff to obtain emergency medical care for the above-named student, we understand that neither the staff member nor the school district assumes financial liability for the expenses incurred because of the accident, injury, illness and/or unforeseen circumstances.

(Student Initial)_____ (Parent Initial)_____

5. I certify that my household has sufficient medical insurance to facilitate any necessary medical care or resultant care for any injury that may be sustained by the above-named student.

(Parent Initial)_____

Having read and initialed the statements above, I acknowledge that I have read these documents and fully understand the risks associated with participating in the voluntary school athletic program. By signing below I certify that I have read the above information concerning CONCUSSIONS and INHERENT RISK and understand the possible risk. I still wish to allow my child,

_____, to participate in the sport of _____
_____. By signing below I am certify that I understand the content of the forms and give my permission for my child to participate.

Parent Signature

Date

Having read and initialed the statements above. I acknowledge that I have read the documents concerning CONCUSSIONS AND INHERENT RISK and fully understand the risk involved. I, _____, understand that the sport of _____ and my participation are under the guidance of a certified coach and that I must follow the rules and directions when an injury occurs. I have read the statements and still wish to participate in this program.

Athlete's Signature

Date

No copies will be accepted. The original signatures must be submitted prior to practice beginning and prior to participation in the sport.

Sample "Welcome Form" for coaches to use during Basketball:



Welcome to our Gym! In the interest of safety and sportsmanship, the cheerleaders for tonight's game will follow sportsmanship guidelines from the Georgia High School Association and invite your squad to do the same:

- ☐ Both spirit teams will cheer in a positive manner for our teams and neither squad will cheer "at" or "against" one another.
- ☐ There will be no aggressive motions or words (i.e. pointing at the scoreboard) directed to the opposing team or cheerleaders.
- ☐ All cheerleaders are asked to remain quiet when any player is on the free throw line. At the end of a game, cheerleaders will behave in a positive manner.
- ☐ Specifically there will be no chants or displays of poor sportsmanship.
- ☐ Obnoxious behavior will not be permitted under the guise of school spirit.
- ☐ Spirit cheerleaders should behave as role models for all fans.
- ☐ Cheer and dance motions performed by spirit cheerleaders should be free of vulgarity and sexual implication.

The following **National Federation and Georgia High School Association** spirit rules will be followed at _____ High School events per administrators.

- ☐ No jewelry will be worn while cheering.
- ☐ No mascots (small child) will be allowed; only eligible high school students should be cheering/dancing/representing their school at tonight's contest.
- ☐ Uniforms will fit properly with no midriffs showing. Constant adult supervision should be available when a cheer team is warming up.
- ☐ Cheer coaches are responsible for ensuring that practice areas and surfaces are appropriate for warming up / practicing stunts or cheers.
- ☐ Constant adult supervision is necessary during warm-up and in game situations. Please see one of our administrators, coaches or cheer captains to find out where the visiting cheerleaders should cheer.
- ☐ Please know that we welcome you to our gym. Please do not hesitate to let tonight's game administrator, cheer coach, or athletic director know if you need assistance of any kind.

****** During the Quarterfinals, Semifinals and Finals, schools are limited to a maximum of sixteen (16) cheerleaders in uniform at court

SECTION 10: TRY-OUTS

REMINDER

Out-of-season practices may be held in preparation for tryouts only. Once tryouts are complete, no practices may be held until school is out. The tryout period for the selection of **all squads (including Varsity Competition, Varsity Spirit, Junior Varsity Competition and Junior Varsity Spirit)** is limited to a maximum of **one period of ten consecutive school days** between February 1 and the last day students are in school. The term **practice** refers to the time spent within the **ten day only** try-out period allowed by the GHSA.

Eligibility for tryouts and participation, according to the GHSA Constitution & By-Laws:

- 1.** Students must be enrolled at the school in order to try out for that school's cheerleading program. A student may be enrolled in only one school at a time. (Exception: See By-Law #1:45 (g) addressing eighth graders trying out.)
- 2.** Enrolled migrant students may try out for a cheerleading team, but may not represent the school at the varsity level during that school year until the migratory sit-out period has elapsed. (Reference: GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 1:60)
- 3.** An academically ineligible student may try out if he/she is passing all courses at the time of the tryout. (Reference: GHSA Constitution and By-Laws 1:50)

Suggestions for Tryouts

- Plan a meeting for all parents/guardians and potential cheer candidates well before the actual tryout clinic is to begin in order to share all necessary paperwork, to secure all signatures from both athletes and parents, and to communicate the specifics of the tryouts expectations, as well as the anticipated number of individual cheerleaders to be selected for each squad. It is appropriate at this time to announce all financial obligations and fund-raisers, the summer and pre-season practice schedule, and dates for future parent meetings. The next year school calendar, the football schedule, and a tentative competition schedule might also be made available to parents and athletes in this "orientation" meeting. The date and time of this initial meeting should be advertised well in advance in daily announcements, and via the school's website and social media. *Remember: Parents/Guardians always appreciate information provided in advance!*
- Coaches must check to be sure each cheer candidate is eligible according to GHSA requirements for tryouts **before the tryout clinic begins**. Check the GHSA Constitution and By Laws for eligibility requirements of student athletes.

- Coaches must check to be sure each cheer candidate has a current physical on file with the school's athletic department. Those without a current physical form are required to obtain a physical on the required GHSA physician's form (available on the GHSA website under FORMS) **before participating in the tryout clinic**. After receiving the completed physical form back from the cheer candidate, coaches are reminded to check the physical form to ensure that the physician has indicated that the individual is cleared for all sports without restrictions and that the form is properly signed and dated by the physician, the cheer candidate, and the parent of the cheer candidate.
- Remember to check the national testing schedules and inform parents not to register students on those dates that you plan to compete. Competition schedules cannot be arranged to accommodate athletes testing.
- Other forms which require parental and student signatures, as well as relevant medical information, **before tryouts begin** include the **Inherent Risk Form**, the **High School Athletic / Activity Medical Authorization Form**, and the **GHSA Concussion Information & Sign-Off Page**. These forms are available in Section 9 of this manual. **The signed Concussion Information Sheet should be kept on file.** *It is essential that parents be given a copy of the concussion information sheet in order to have available the symptoms and signs of concussions if necessary.*
- Create a judging sheet to use as you evaluate your athletes during tryouts. Confer with other coaches assisting with tryouts. Follow all safety rules related to tumbling and stunting. (See the National Federation rules book for safety in stunting and tumbling.)
- Before final team selections are made, confer with all cheer candidates the possibility of not making the team, and explain the benefits that trying out one year will have for the next year's tryout. Remind all candidates that making the cheer team is a time for compassion and concern for those candidates who were not successful.
- There are many veteran coaches across the state willing to help rookie coaches during the tryout process. Access the Georgia Cheerleading Coaches' Association website for members of the leadership team who will be of valuable assistance in your process.

Coaches' Questions about Tryouts

1. Can I use my 10 day tryout period, announce my team and then three weeks later cheer at the spring football game?

Response: Your team may cheer at the spring game, but they may not practice in preparation for the spring game. The GHSA rules state that once tryouts are complete, no practices may be held until school is out. A better idea is to plan your ten day tryout period to conclude on the day of the spring game, teaching game cheers and chants as your tryout material so that your “new team” is prepared to cheer at the spring game.

2. I am planning my tryouts during the school year, possibly early spring. May I use graduated cheerleaders from my program to return to campus to teach tryout material during the ten day tryout period?

Response: No, a graduated cheerleader from your program is considered “**outside help**” and it is illegal to use outside help during the school year. You may, however, use your senior cheerleaders to teach tryout material. They remain **bona-fide students** of your school and therefore are eligible to assist in teaching material for tryouts.

3. May I have cheer tryouts after school is out?

Response: Yes, the GHSA does not require tryouts to be held during the school year.

4. May I use “outside judges” to come to my school and judge my cheer tryouts?

Response: Yes, but these “**outside judges**” **may not demonstrate or teach tryout material, or conduct your tryouts in any way.** Their only role should be to judge for a limited time (i.e., two hours on one day) your cheer candidates as they perform previously learned tryout material.

5. May I use one ten-day period to conduct tryouts for my spirit team and a separate ten-day period to conduct tryouts for my competition team?

Response: No, the GHSA allots one period of ten consecutive days between Feb. 1 and the last day of school for selection of all cheer squads at Georgia high schools. Practice for tryouts (i.e. learning the tryout material) is also included in this one ten day period of consecutive school days allotted for tryouts.



**This book compiled and produced under the direction of
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