

# **THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH SECRETARIAT FOR EDUCATION**

## **DEPARTMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **CHEERLEADING RULES AND REGULATIONS**

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# **Cheerleading in Catholic Schools**

## **Introduction**

Catholic schools are committed to the development of the whole student. Extra-curricular activities, such as cheerleading, are regarded as an important part of the total learning experience. Catholic school cheerleading activities should foster fitness, leadership, creativity, teamwork, and a spirit of cooperation all within a Christian context.

Cheerleaders and cheerleading competitions should use music and routines that do not violate the high standards of moral behavior inherent in Catholic schools. In other words, cheerleaders, like all Catholic school athletes, should conduct themselves within the teachings of Christ and His Church.

## **A PRAYER BEFORE THE COMPETITION**

Dear Lord,

You have blessed us with many gifts and talents.

We thank you especially for the ability to participate in Cheerleading today

Help us to cheer in a Christ like manner.

Help us to cheer in a way that will foster teamwork.

Help us to cheer to the best of our abilities.

Win or lose, we hope to have fun, make friends and celebrate life.

Amen

**GENERAL RULES FOR GAMES, PRACTICES, CAMPS, PEP RALLIES,  
PERFORMANCES, ETC.**

**I. GENERAL CHEERLEADING RULES - General rules and regulations apply to all Pittsburgh Diocese Catholic elementary schools during games, practices, camps, pep rallies, performances, etc.**

A. The following forms are required:

1. Roster Form – All Pittsburgh Diocese Catholic elementary school cheerleading squads are required to register their cheerleaders by sending the roster form to the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator by **DECEMBER 1 or at the start of your season whichever comes first.**
  - a. Any number of cheerleaders may be on a squad to cheer for football and/or basketball games, etc.
  - b. Competition roster size is limited to 24 girls per squad.
2. Medical Release/Physical Form – This form is provided by your school office and must be completed by the cheerleader’s physician and a copy retained by the coach prior to the start of the cheer season.
3. Stunt/Gymnastic Release Form – This form is provided by the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator and is to be completed by a parent or guardian for any cheerleader on a Diocesan cheerleading squad. A copy of the waiver must be retained by the coach who will also send the squad’s forms electronically via email to the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator by **DECEMBER 1 or at the start of your season whichever comes first.**

B. The Diocesan Cheerleading Rules and Regulations do not govern the items listed below. Each Pittsburgh Diocese Catholic elementary school principal and/or athletic board has its own set of rules governing their school’s athletes. Therefore, each cheerleading coach needs to ask these questions of their principal and/or athletic board and abide by the answers given. Keeping in mind that all athletes should have the opportunity to participate in their chosen activity.

1. When cheerleading practices can begin and end for any cheerleading season
2. Gym times and dates for practices
3. Tryouts for regular season and competition cheerleading squads
4. Cutting cheerleaders from regular and competitive squads.
5. When cheerleading interest letters may be sent to interested participants.

C. No unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches or cheerleaders such as:

1. During basketball games, making noise, cheering, or booing while the opposing team is shooting foul shots.
2. Directing angry insults or name calling towards the opposing team or their affiliates at any sporting events including basketball games, football games, etc.

3. No insulting or disparaging remarks to be included on any social networking sites.

## II. **DANCE AND MUSIC**

- A. All dance moves and music must be approved by the cheerleading coach and **MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE MISSION AND DOCTRINE OF PITTSBURGH DIOCESE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND BE APPROPRIATE FOR FAMILY VIEWING AND AGE GROUP.** Inappropriate dance moves will result in a deduction of points at a Diocesan cheerleading competition.
  1. The following will not be permitted:
    - a. facials - no tongue hanging out, no open mouth facials, no suggestive faces.
    - b. dance - no gyrations of the body in a suggestive manner. This includes but is not limited to chest shimmies, grabbing or touching chest, pelvis, or posterior, hip rolls, body rolls, posterior shimmying, etc.
    - c. music - no bleeping of inappropriate words from a song that has sexually oriented context, profanity, or anything of a vulgar or negative nature. Music should reflect our Catholic values.

## III. **CHEERLEADING COACHES**

- A. All cheerleading coaches and support staff are required to be certified pursuant to Acts 151/34, Protecting God's Children Clearance, and Mandated Reporter Training.
- B. The head coach or any assistant coach cannot be under the age of 18 and **MUST** be listed on the cheerleader roster form sent to the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator. Being listed on the roster form assures that the responsible coaches have all of their clearances. Student coaches under the age of 18 are permitted but cannot coach without a coach above the age of 18 present. Student coaches should also be listed on the roster.

## IV. **GAMES**

- A. ALL cheers **MUST** be of a positive nature and "promote school spirit."
- B. For any games – home or away – a head coach or assistant coach **MUST** accompany and oversee the cheerleaders.
- C. While cheering at home games, cheerleaders should know where to sit/stand for the safety of the cheerleaders and players.
- D. While cheering at away games, cheerleaders should follow the guidelines of the host school.

## V. **MOUNTING/TUMBLING RULES**

- A. All cheerleading routines are to be performed on wood gym floors, mats, grass, or rubberized track. No stunts higher than elevator level are permitted on wood gym floors without a mat.
- B. No stunts or gymnastics are permitted to be performed on wet ground or during inclement weather.

- C. Mounts must not exceed the height of 2 people fully extended.
- D. Cheerleaders on the junior varsity squads and pep squads are not permitted to be extended.
- E. Basket tosses are not permitted at any level.
- F. Front spotters are not necessary but can be used if the coach feels the stunt is sturdier/safer with an additional spotter.
- G. No twisting tumbling or front tucks are permitted.

### **COMPETITION SPECIFIC RULES AND REGULATIONS**

#### **I. ROSTERS AND REGISTRATION**

- A. If cheerleading squads in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have not sent their roster to the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator first, then those squads cannot register with a host school for a Diocesan competition nor are they permitted to compete at the posted Diocesan cheerleading competitions. Rosters are due to the Diocesan Coordinator by **JANUARY 1** of each school year.
- B. Generally, Junior Varsity may consist of cheerleaders in 4th-6th. Varsity may consist of cheerleaders in 6th-8th grades.
  - 1. No cheerleader may cheer on more than one squad.
  - 2. No grades may not be split between Junior Varsity and Varsity squads.
  - 3. Fourth & fifth graders may not compete on a varsity squad unless there is no younger squad available in which to participate or if there are older girls on the team which require the team to be in the varsity division (See #4).
  - 4. Squads will compete in the division in which the oldest team member falls. For example, a squad with 4th and 5th graders and one 7th grader would compete as a varsity squad.
  - 5. Third graders may be added to a junior varsity squad at the discretion of the head coach. No one under 3rd grade may compete on the junior varsity squad. Third graders are never permitted on the varsity squad.
  - 6. Substitution of cheerleaders is not permitted. Alternates are not permitted.
    - a. When submitting a competition cheerleading roster to the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator or to the host school, include all of the cheerleaders on your squad even though they may not all be competing at all competitions. If you take a cheerleader off your roster for one competition and then put them back on for the next competition, that is considered a substitution which is illegal.
  - 7. For the safety of the cheerleaders, only 24 cheerleaders are permitted on a competition squad. However, if you have more than 24 girls on your competition squad(s), you may have a mount team and a non-mount team in the same age

category. There is no limit on the size of an exhibition squad, developmental squad, or pep squad.

8. Each competition squad must attend at least two posted Pittsburgh Diocese Catholic elementary school cheerleading competitions for the current cheerleading season before they can compete at the Diocesan Cheerleading Tournament. However, attending a public school cheerleading competition is not a qualification for attending the Diocesan Tournament.
9. Registration fees for attending:
 

Regular season cheerleading competition .....	\$ 8.00 per cheerleader
Diocesan Championship.....	\$ 9.00 per cheerleader
Exhibition at regular season and Diocesan .....	\$ 2.00 per cheerleader
Pep Squad at regular season and Diocesan .....	\$ 2.00 per cheerleader
10. When you RSVP you are attending a Diocesan competition, you are responsible for payment at the time of registration and will be charged regardless of if your team ends up competing that day. Registration is not complete until all payments and forms have been received.
11. Warm up times will be assigned by the host school prior to the competition day, and the order will be in the reverse order of registrations received.

## **II. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. A prayer must be said together before the start of all regular season cheerleading competitions and the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship. The National Anthem is recommended.
- B. Not permitted:
  1. heavy make-up
  2. jewelry on any part of the body
  3. bright nail polish
  4. fake nails - Long nails must be trimmed.
  5. glitter on body, face or hair
  6. hair ties on wrists
- C. Pompoms and signs are permitted to be used.
  1. When discarding poms or signs, team members must gently toss or place them so they are under control.
  2. Once the use of the sign is complete, **DO NOT THROW** the sign from the stunt. You should hand the sign down to a person on the ground who then should **LAY** the sign back on the ground, or, **DROP** the sign beside the base where it will not interfere with your dismount.
  3. Tumbling with poms is permitted with the exception of front and back handsprings.
- D. Requirement per the Pittsburgh Diocese – Mats must be used for all routines performed at regular season cheerleading competitions and the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship. Six (6) mats are required.

#### E. Music

1. IPOD's and Smart Phones may be used to play music at the competitions; however, the smart phones need to be placed in Airplane Mode to prevent incoming calls during the playing of your music. Music must be checked during warm-ups.
2. In the event of music interruption, the squad should continue to perform as usual. The coach should advise his/her squad what to do in this case. It is suggested that the cheerleaders or head coach count the routine. Only in this situation, should a head coach count a routine. It will then be determined by the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator the nature of the interruption. If the music failed due to a malfunction of the host school's equipment or human error (other than the coach/squad representative playing the music), the squad will be allowed to perform the routine again from the beginning. If the music failed due to the malfunction of the coach's or school representative's phone, Ipod, etc. or human error of the coach or school representative playing the music, the squad may not perform again.

F. Score sheets will be given to the head coach after the awards ceremony.

G. High School back spotters are mandatory for all Diocesan competitions.

1. These spotters should be present for warm-ups and the actual competition.
2. These spotters should be in a position to catch a falling stunt to avoid injury to the falling cheerleader.
3. These spotters should not touch or assist a stunt unless it is evident that a skill is failing.
4. These spotters should be aware to avoid interfering with the flow of routines.

H. In the event of an injury or illness during a performance, the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator has the right to stop a routine. The squad will be permitted to perform the routine again from the beginning. If able, the injured/ill athlete should remove herself from the performance floor at the time of injury/illness. The injured/ill athlete must be evaluated by the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator, the head coach, medical personnel (if present), and at least one parent or guardian. It will then be determined if the injured/ill athlete may return to perform with the squad. Anyone with a suspected concussion will not be allowed to perform.

I. In the event of a tie at a regular Diocesan cheerleading competition, there will be no tie breaker and the event will end in a tie.

J. In the event of a tie at the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship, the contest cheer will be the tie breaker. If the contest cheer is also a tie, the squad with the least amount of deductions will be the winner.

K. Competitions must be videotaped by the host school for use by the judges, if necessary. Judges have the right to review the video at any time during a competition.

- L. To be eligible to host a Diocesan competition, the school must have competed the previous year in the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship.
- M. The host of the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship is determined by the winner of the previous year's varsity division. The host of the tournament will alternate between the mount and non-mount winner every other year. In the event that there is no mount or non-mount winner or the winner is unable to host, then the other respective winner will host.
- N. Team trophies and individual awards will be given for 1st place, 2nd place, and 3rd place. All other competing teams shall receive a team trophy. Individual awards for competing teams placing 4th place or lower are at the discretion of the host school. Any non-competing squads shall receive individual awards but no team trophy.

### **III. SPORTSMANSHIP AND CONDUCT**

- A. As a courtesy to all competing squads, we ask that everyone remain seated and refrain from talking during each performance.
- B. Show your support by applauding as the cheerleaders enter and exit the floor and responding to the team's call back cheer. Please advise your fans that while they may cheer on their teams, they should not be cheering over top of the music or squad's cheer. Fans' loud cheering can impede the judges ability to judge accurately. No noise makers are not permitted to be used by spectators during a performance. They can only be used as the squad enters and exits the floor.
- C. Coaching from the sidelines either by voice, signs, or movement of any kind will not be permitted by any parents, coaches or fans. A 2-point deduction will be given on the safety judge score sheet per infraction for coaching from the sidelines. This includes but not limited to:
  - 1. Signs in the audience prompting the cheerleaders to smile
  - 2. Hand gestures prompting the cheerleaders to smile
  - 3. Hand movements that follow the choreography of the dance and/or cheer
  - 4. Counting from the sidelines
- D. Unsportsmanlike conduct by cheerleaders, coaches, and fans will not be tolerated and will result in a 2-point deduction.
  - 1. All participants and spectators agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship and Catholic morals throughout competitions and to exhibit a positive attitude towards others.

### **IV. COACHES**

- A. No student coaches will be permitted to be involved in any discussions at the regular season cheerleading competitions or the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship.
- B. Head coaches and assistant coaches are required to attend the coaches' meeting prior to the start of each competition.
- C. Only one (1) head coach is permitted to sit next to the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator or timekeeper when their squad is performing.



## V. JUDGES

- A. All judges must be approved by the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator.
- B. The judging staff will be made up of at least 3 qualified judges and at least 1 safety judge. One judge from each posted regular season cheerleading competition will be selected to judge at the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship. However, if any judge from the posted regular season competitions is not in compliance to judge at the Diocesan Championship, the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator will procure another qualified judge.
- C. JUDGES DECISIONS ARE FINAL.
- D. No contact with the judges will be permitted. Do not talk with the judges before, during or after any cheerleading competitions or the Diocesan Cheerleading Championship.
- E. If the judges need to talk with one another due to a rule being broken, then the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator must be present and a video reviewed, if necessary.
- F. Half points may be given on a score sheet.

## VI. ROUND I - CHEER/DANCE

- A. If a squad competes for the first time as a mount or non mount division, they must remain in that division for the remainder of the cheerleading competition year – unless directed otherwise by the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator.
- B. In the event that more than five schools are competing in one division, the divisions may be broken down into “small” (12 cheerleaders or less) and “large” (13-24 cheerleaders). This will be determined by the Diocesan Cheerleading Coordinator based on the number of small and large teams within that division.

### 1. DIVISIONS:

- a. **Mount** – continuous performance of a cheer/dance with a time limit of no longer than 2 ½ minutes with 1 point deducted for 1-5 seconds over time and 2 points deducted for 6 seconds or more over time. Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first. **Incorporation of below is mandatory:**
  - i. Prep and perform a squad jump in unison.**
  - ii. Floor pattern change**
  - iii. Stunt or mount done per Mounting Rules guidelines**
- b. **Non-Stunt / Non-Mount** - continuous performance of a cheer/dance with a time limit of no longer than 2 ½ minutes with 1 point deducted for 1-5 seconds over time and 2 points deducted for going 6 seconds or more over time. Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first. **Stunts or mounts are not permitted. This includes skills, tricks, etc. in which any athlete is providing support to another athlete off the performance surface. Tumbling is permitted. Incorporation of below is mandatory:**

**i. Prep and perform a squad jump in unison.****ii. Floor pattern change**

- c. **Exhibition** – No requirement on number of cheerleaders or grade level and may consist of kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Squads will perform a cheer/dance with a time limit of no longer than 2 ½ minutes. Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first.
- i. Kindergarten through 5th grade must follow the rules for Junior Varsity squads.
  - ii. Grades 6 through 8 must follow the rules for Varsity squads.
  - iii. Tumbling is permitted.
  - iv. For the Diocesan Championship – Exhibition squads will only perform Round I – Cheer/Dance.
- d. **Pep Squads** – No requirement on number of cheerleaders and may consist of kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Squads will perform a cheer/dance with a time limit of no longer than 2 ½ minutes.
- i. Kindergarten through 3rd grade must follow the rules for m Junior Varsity squads.
  - ii. Tumbling is permitted.
  - iii. For the Diocesan Championship – Pep Squads will only perform Round I – Cheer/Dance.

**VII. MOUNT/STUNT**

- A. **Mount/Stunt** – Any skill in which a top girl is supported above the performance surface by one or more persons. Also referred to as a mount. All support people MUST have both feet on the ground.
1. One group of four (4) or more girls is MANDATORY and consists of two (2) bases (one on each side), a back spotter, and a top girl. An optional front spotter may be used without penalty.
  2. Mount scores are based on Execution and Difficulty of the mount/stunt. (See Score Sheet for details)
  3. Any 2 or 3 person stunts can be incorporated as long as the stunt does not exceed shoulder level. The only exception to this rule is a shoulder stand.
  4. Stunt Group Requirements to receive maximum difficulty points:
    - a. 4 – 12 girls require one stunt group
    - b. 13 – 24 girls require at least 2 stunt groups. Both groups must perform the stunt in order to receive the difficulty points.
- B. **Mount Bobble** – top girl bends legs, minor wobble, uses arms to steady oneself = 0.5 point deduction
- C. **Mount Minor Fall** – falling top girl lands on her feet; mount fails to execute = 1-point deduction
- D. **Mount Major Fall** – falling top girl falls to the performance surface anytime during a stunt, transition, or dismount and any part of the top girl

other than feet hit the ground; top girl lands on the base or spotter who drops to the performance surface; skills in which the event (high school) spotter is the primary catcher/saves athlete while falling = 2-point deduction

#### E. ALLOWABLE DISMOUNTS

1. **Cradle Catches** – within cradle catches there may be a slight “pop” from bases. Dismount should result in a direct catch with 2 bases and a back spot catching the top girl. Full downs are permitted. Cradling while holding signs or pompoms with a hard, plastic handle is not permitted. You may cradle while holding soft pompoms.
2. **Bump Downs** – A bump down consists of a slight dip from the bases or no dip from the bases to bring the top girl back to her original load in position.
3. **Pencil Drop** – Releasing the top girl’s feet so she can land feet first on the cheering surface while supporting her arms (bases) and waist (back spot).

#### F. VARSITY MOUNTING

1. Any 2 or 3 person stunts can be incorporated as long as the stunt does not exceed shoulder level. Shoulder stands must consist of 3 people (1 base, 1 spotter, 1 top girl).
1. Flat backs (on back) and Supermans (on stomach) are permitted for Varsity Level Only.
2. Anytime the bases arms are fully extended, there must be 2 bases and 1 back spotter with the option of adding 1 front spotter.
3. Release stunts, full twisting stunts, and inverted stunts are permitted.
4. Any cheerleader on the varsity squad shall follow the varsity mounting rules.
5. Connected stunts are permitted.
6. With all stunting, safety is of the utmost importance. Coaches should use sound judgment trying/competing new stunts.

#### G. JUNIOR VARSITY MOUNTING

1. Any 2 or 3 person stunts can be incorporated as long as the stunt does not exceed shoulder level.
2. Shoulder stands, extended seated mounts, extended flat backs or superman stunts are not permitted.
3. Stunts are not permitted to extend above shoulder level. No extended stunts.
4. Release stunts, full twisting stunts, and inverted stunts are permitted at the elevator/prep level only.

5. Elevator/prep level stunts should consist of a top girl, a back spotter, and 2 bases with the option of adding 1 front spotter.
6. Connected stunts at the elevator/prep level are permitted.
7. Third graders are permitted to participate in stunts in any capacity as long as the coach believes they have the ability and skill to do so safely.
8. With all stunting, safety is of the utmost importance. Coaches should use sound judgment trying/competing new stunts.

### **VIII. GYMNASTIC AND TUMBLING**

- A. PERMITTED DURING PERFORMANCE: Cartwheels, forward rolls, backward rolls, round-offs, front walkover, front handspring, back handspring, back walkovers, aerials, back tucks and layouts.
- B. NOT PERMITTED DURING PERFORMANCE: half or full twisting layouts, arabians, or other twisting tumbling and front tucks
- C. Series tumbling is permitted.
- D. A clear pathway must be maintained during execution. No tumbling on edges of mats. You may not tumble over, under or through partner stunts, pyramids or individuals.
- E. No limit on number of cheerleaders or passes.
- F. No tumbling for entrances or exits off the floor.
- G. Out of bounds penalty will be assessed if a cheerleader tumbles, lands, or steps out of bounds with at least one body part. = 0.5 point deduction
- H. Any form of gymnastics into another cheerleader will result in a 1-point deduction.
- I. Any gymnastics skill that is not executed safely and the athlete lands in a compromising position will result in a 1-point deduction.

### **IX. JUMPS**

- A. Landings from all jumps must bear weight on at least one foot.
- B. Toe touch jump to the seat, knees, or landing with both feet back, or to a push up position is prohibited.
- C. Consecutive/Connected/Double Squad Jumps are defined as continuous body movement between jumps with no more than 1 count separating each jump.

### **X. ROUND II (CONTEST CHEER) – DIOCESAN CHAMPIONSHIP ONLY**

- A. The Contest Cheer (Round II) is performed by all competing squads at the Diocesan Championship ONLY. After all competing squads have performed their Cheer/Dance (Round I), they will then go back onto the floor following the same squad rotation and perform the Contest Cheer and immediately leave the floor.

- B. The routine will be a cheer choreographed and performed using the Cheer Words provided by the Diocesan Championship host school. The Contest Cheer permits direct comparison of the competing squads. The Contest Cheer **must contain:**
1. MOUNT DIVISION
    - a. Squad jump – prepped and performed in unison
    - b. Stunt or mount
    - c. Floor pattern change
  2. NON-MOUNT DIVISION - Stunts or mounts are not permitted
    - a. Squad jump – prepped and performed in unison
    - b. Floor pattern change
  3. PEP / DEVELOPMENTAL / EXHIBITION DIVISIONS – NOT PERMITTED to perform the Contest Cheer (Round II)
- C. The Contest Cheer Words must not be changed in any way and must be said in the order given.
- D. A 1-point deduction will be given for each word change violation.
- E. Additional directions will be provided on the Contest Cheer Words Form that will be included in the Diocesan Championship invitation.