

**2026 OHIO ATHLETIC COMMITTEE  
CHEERLEADING STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS  
INFORMATIONAL HANDBOOK**



**Ohio Athletic Committee Cheerleading State Championships  
Marysville High School  
800 Amrine Mill Road  
Marysville, OH 43040**



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***Information for the 2026 OAC Cheerleading State Championships is derived from the OHSCCA Best in the State. For questions, please contact Chelsea Sonnhalter at [Cheer@ohioathletics.com](mailto:Cheer@ohioathletics.com).***

## **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**EVENT:** Ohio Athletic Committee Cheerleading State Championships

**LOCATION:** Marysville High School

**DATE:** January 11, 2026

## **EVENT DIRECTORS**

Welcome to OAC's Junior High and High School Cheerleading State Championships, hosted by the Ohio Athletic Committee. We're proud of all of Ohio's cheerleaders, especially these athletes who have decided to compete at this year's event. We hope that you enjoy this year's event, and while doing so, remain respectful of all of the competition staff, athletes, coaches, and fans.

We are always searching for ways to improve our OAC events, and welcome your respectful comments and suggestions. Your feedback is critical to our continuing efforts to offer top value competitive events for these athletes. The feedback survey is available anytime by email at [info@ohioathletics.com](mailto:info@ohioathletics.com).

On behalf of the Ohio Athletic Committee, I'd like to thank you for your continued support of Ohio cheerleading.

James Guerra  
President, Ohio Athletic Committee Board of Trustees

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I'd like to thank you for participating in the OAC Cheerleading State Championships! We are looking forward to another exciting event. OAC strives to make this championship memorable for everyone. We'd like to thank Marysville High School for being our host for the 2026 event!

Competition t-shirts, sweatshirts, and many other items will be available to purchase from Gameday Sportswear. Don't forget to buy your athlete their own State Championship t-shirt.

Good luck to all of the athletes that are competing today! Have fun, and do your best!

Kathy Noble  
Event Director, Ohio Athletic Committee Cheerleading



# PARTICIPATION & ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

## **EVENT PARTICIPATION**

Ohio Athletic Committee's Cheerleading State Championships is an open competition, requiring no qualifier to participate. This event is open to all Ohio Junior High and High Schools.

- Athletes must be a current student of the official school spirit squad.
- Athletes must attend the school they are representing.
- Cheer for **one** sideline/competition season or be a current member of the team i.e., football/basketball/volleyball (exception: males participating in other sports).
- All High School teams are eligible to compete. Varsity team members may include any participants from your sideline school team including, freshman, JV, or Varsity members.
- Teams must abide by the division and/or squad size (see Divisions).
- No All-Star teams are eligible to compete.
- Participants may compete with up to three (3) teams at OAC. Athletes may not be listed on more than three rosters.

## **REGISTRATION FORMS**

Due to the close proximity of the holidays and unpredictable weather conditions, **all registration forms must be completed and postmarked by December 20, 2025**. We recommend that you register as soon as possible, as we may reach capacity before the deadline. Once we reach capacity, registration will close online and will be posted on our website.

Please make checks payable to Ohio Athletic Committee and sent to:

**PO Box 1153  
Sandusky, OH 44871**

Upon signing the entry form, you have agreed that you have read, understood, and agreed to the competition rules and regulations, awards, penalties, and accept its content.

## **REGISTRATION FEES**

### **Traditional Routine**

- Registration: \$25.00/athlete. Due by December 1, 2025.
- Late Registration: \$30.00/athlete. December 2, 2025 - December 20, 2025

### **Game Day Routine**

- Registration: \$20.00/athlete. Due by December 1, 2025.
- Late Registration: \$25.00/athlete. December 2, 2025 - December 20, 2025.

### **Minimum Team Fee**

- Traditional Routine: \$250.00/team (10 or less athletes). Due by December 1, 2025.
  - Late Registration, \$300.00/team. December 2, 2025 - December 20, 2025.
- Game Day Routine: \$200.00/team (10 or less athletes). Due by December 1, 2025.
  - Late Registration, \$250.00/team. December 2, 2024 - December 20, 2024.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY, CHANGES & REFUNDS**

The following cancellation policies shall apply:

- Cancellations prior to December 8, 2025 will receive a Full Refund.
- Cancellations between December 9 and December 31: Funds will be applied to OAC 2027 Event.
- There are absolutely No Refund after December 31. There will be no exceptions.
- There are absolutely No Refunds for teams or participants that no-show to the event.



## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

If OAC chooses to cancel an event due to inclement weather, and it is not rescheduled, you will receive a full refund. Otherwise, if the facility is open, the event will proceed. No refunds will be made for teams that choose not to attend.

# **CHEER EVENTS & DIVISIONS**

**\*\*Please be sure to submit a music release form.**

There is a 36-member limit on all Junior High and High School teams. No cheerleader may represent more than one school team. Ohio Athletic Committee (OAC) reserves the right to separate, combine, or close divisions based on registrations.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- All competing teams will be judged with score sheets and rubrics created by the OHSCCA board.
- **Junior High Cheer Events**
  - Building/ Non-Building/ Non-Tumble Non-Building/ Game Day (Building and Non-Building)
- **High School Cheer Events**
  - Building/ Non-Building/ Non-Tumble Non-Building/ Game Day (Building and Non-Building)
- Awards will be given to the top 3 teams in each cheer event, and a trophy will be given for first place.
- An event banner and champion gift will be given to the highest scoring team in each division.
  - High School Large Traditional
  - High School Medium Traditional
  - High School Small Traditional
  - Junior High Traditional
  - High School Game Day
  - Junior High Game Day

## **SCHOOL DIVISIONS**

High School enrollment is based on the number of females in the school. You can check on enrollment numbers by visiting the OHSAA website and use the "School Directory" feature found below.

**<http://officials.myohsaa.org/Outside/SearchSchool>**

High School divisions may be combined based on registered teams. There must be three teams per division before combining.

**\*\*New High School Division Breakdowns for 2026!**

- **High School Small:** 175 females and under registered in grades 9-11.
- **High School Medium:** 176-450 females registered in grades 9-11.
- **High School Large:** 451+ females and under registered in grades 9-11.
- **Junior High Large:** TBD
- **Junior High Small:** TBD
  - Junior High Small and Large will be broken down based on the sizes of each registered team. Divisions will be divided so that equal numbers of teams are participating in each division. Numbers will be announced at the close of registration.



## GUIDELINES FOR COMBINATIONS/SPLITS

OAC provides guidelines for COMBINING and/or SPLITTING teams in the best interest of providing a competitive environment. Whenever possible, there should be at least three teams in any given division. However, where there are not permissible combinations thus having a situation where there is only one team.

### When To Combine

- There must be three teams per division or they will be combined.
- After the combination, OAC must follow the mandatory split guidelines if applicable.

### Prohibited Combinations

- Teams of different Cheer Events **will not** be combined into one (i.e. Building vs. Non-Building).
- High School and Junior High teams **will not** be combined into one.

### When To Split

- If there are 10 or more teams in any of the Cheer Events, it will be split further by team size within the previous splits. OAC may use a name such as "Group A" or "Group B" to denote the split and must clearly define the number of competitors permitted on the team for each of these particular groups.
  - Numbers will be determined upon registration and teams will be notified of the division change following the closing of registration.
- If any athletes are dropped/added to the roster after January 2, the groups will stay combined or split.
- If there are nine teams or less in a particular group, it will not split into Group A and Group B.

## OAC EVENT INFORMATION

### MUSIC COPYRIGHT/MUSIC STATION

- Coaches must confirm that they have read and understand the USA Cheer "Music Copyrights Educational Initiative" and to OAC Cheer that all sound recordings used in their teams's music shall only be used with written license from the owner(s) of the sound recordings. ***Please include a copy of your Proof of Purchase or Certificate of Authenticity.***
- For the most up-to-date music copyright information, visit the "Music Copyrights Educational Initiative" webpage at [www.usacheer.org/music](http://www.usacheer.org/music).
- If you have questions, please email [info@usacheer.net](mailto:info@usacheer.net) for guidance.
- Each team should have a responsible adult remain at the music station that knows the routine and music. Athletes and/or alternates are not permitted.
- All teams must provide their own device for use on the event provided sound system. Music must be recorded at the correct tempo on a device. **NO CDs.**
- Make sure that all devices have a headphone jack to connect to a sound system. They must be fully charged, volume turned up, and placed in airplane mode.
- Due to greater room for technical error, you must have a back-up of your music available.

### PERFORMANCE ORDER

A block schedule will be shared with all coaches on BAND (our coaches communication app) approximately three to weeks prior to the event. All performance order updates will also be shared on BAND. The final performance order will be shared the week of the event. If any changes take place, we will let you know. We encourage you to not print or post any schedules to your school until the word "FINAL" appears on the performance order.



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## **WARM-UP**

Each team will receive an official warm-up time. Teams are encouraged to report to the practice area no sooner than 10 minutes prior to this time. All teams will receive a 5 minute warm-up per section (2-3 sections). To ensure that all teams receive their full warmup time, please enter/exit the warm-up mats quickly.

## **PERFORMANCE AREA**

- All teams will perform on a 42 feet deep by 54 feet wide non-spring floor (9 strips).
- Participants must start on the competition floor with at least one foot on the ground.
- Props may be placed off the mat. These include poms, megaphones, flags, banners, and signs.
- OAC complies with NFHS and USA Cheer surface ruling that school-based programs may not compete on a spring floor.

## **TIME LIMITATIONS/ENTRANCES**

- Each routine must include a cheer section that may include a cheer and/or chant or combination of both. **The music portion must not exceed 1:45. Total time limit is 2:30.**
- Formal entrances which involve dance, technical skills, and all traditions/chants are not permitted. Athletes should enter the performance area in a timely fashion.
- Time will begin with the first choreographed movement or note of music, whichever is first. Timing will end with the last choreographed movement.
- **If a team exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed for each violation.**
  - 1-Point Deduction: 3-5 seconds over.
  - 2-Point Deduction: 6-8 seconds over.
  - 3-Point Deduction: 9-10 seconds over.
  - 5-Point Deduction: 10 or more seconds over.
- Acknowledging the potential variance caused by human reaction speed and sound system time variations, judges will not issue a deduction until 3 seconds over the allowed time.

## **SCORING AND RANKINGS**

- Coaches will receive copies of the violations sheet following their performance, and judges score sheet following the awards ceremony. Rankings will be shared to all coaches on BAND by the end of the performance day (Sunday).
- All ties at the competition will be broken.
- If a tie occurs at the competition, the total points from "Overall Performance" on the score sheet will determine the winner. If this results in a tie, the overall score of the head judge will determine the winner.

## **JUDGING CRITERIA**

- Judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the OAC Cheer score sheet.
- Each team will be evaluated on a 100-point system. Each section will be combined for the final score.
- There will be 5-6 judges at the competition, including the head judge.
- Judges scores will be compiled to determine the overall team score. For more information on score sheets, visit [www.ohioathletics.com/cheer](http://www.ohioathletics.com/cheer).

## **JUDGES ASSIGNMENT**

- Judges for the events will be appointed at the sole discretion for the OHSCCA based on qualifications. Judges will be trained on rubrics, definitions, and scoring scales.
- Former coaches must be 3 years out of high school coaching and cannot judge within the former conference or have affiliation with any team within division judging.



## **RULES AND PROCEDURES**

- Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the competition will be managed exclusively by the teams coach and will be directed to the Competition Director.
- Such questions should be made prior to the teams competition performance.

**Please note**, due to the fast pace of today's routines, it may be possible that some deductions or safety violations during our OAC event may be missed. We do our best to prevent this from occurring. This does not mean that they are legal, and that your team will not be called for them during another event.

# **RULES/VIOLATIONS**

## **SAFETY GUIDELINES**

As a coach, it is your responsibility to be knowledgeable of and to adhere to the Safety Guidelines.

- Teams must comply with NFHS rules ([www.nfhs.org/activities-sports/spirit](http://www.nfhs.org/activities-sports/spirit)).
- All coaches for building teams must be USA Cheer (AACCA) certified and follow USA Cheer (AACCA) guidelines. Visit their website for more information ([www.usacheer.org/safety/rules](http://www.usacheer.org/safety/rules)).
- **Up to a 5-Point Deduction:** Tumbling over/under/over legal rotations/dive rolls/knee drop violations.
- **1-Point Deduction:** Signs or props may be safely placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area. Props may not be thrown (become airborne).
- The Ohio Athletic Committee **WILL NOT** be responsible for any injury as a result of a performance.

## **UNIFORMS**

**Violation of any below will result in a 5-point deduction.**

- Uniforms must cover the midriff when standing.
- Must have an element that is identifiable to your school - colors, logo, letters, mascot, etc.
- No jewelry.
- No face or body glitter.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

**Violation of any below will result in a 5-point deduction.**

- Participants agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanships throughout the competition with positive presentation upon entry and exit from the performance area, as well as throughout the routine.
- The coach of each team is responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents, and other persons affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly.
  - Routine choreography should be appropriate and entertaining for all audience members. Suggestive, offensive, or vulgar choreography is not allowed.
  - Inappropriate choreography, uniforms, makeup and/or music may affect the judges overall impression and/or score of the routine.

## **DISQUALIFICATION**

- OAC does not disqualify; however, failure to follow the rules will result in penalties.



## INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCE

### **UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES**

- If, in the opinion of the competition officials, a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of competition equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the competition rather than the team, the team affected should STOP the routine.
- The team will perform the routine again in its entirety, but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.

### **FAULT OF TEAM**

- In the event a team's routine is interrupted because of the failure of team's own equipment, the team must either continue the routine or withdraw from competition.
- The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time.
- If decided by officials, the team will perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated ONLY from the point of where the interruption occurred.

### **INJURY**

- The only person that may stop a routine for the injury are any of the following:
  - Competition officials OR
  - The coach from the team performing OR
  - The injured individual
- Competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform at a later time. If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed at a later time, the spot in the schedule where re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team must perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated ONLY from the point of where the interruption occurred.
- The injured participant that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless:
  - Competition officials receive clearance from, first, the medical personnel, the parent (if present), THEN the head coach of the competing team.
  - If the medical personnel does not clear the participant, the participant can only return to the competition if a parent or legal guardian in attendance signs and return to participation waiver.
  - Any athlete who exhibits signs or symptoms consistent with concussion should be removed from the activity at that time and should not be allowed to return to activity that day. The athlete should not return to activity on a subsequent day until evaluated by and receives written clearance for such participation from a qualified physician (MD or DO specifically trained in concussion management).

## GAME DAY

**GAME DAY ROUTINES: THIS IS SPECIFICALLY TO SHOWCASE YOUR GAME DAY SPIRIT AND CROWD LEADING SKILLS. THERE ARE NO RUBRICS FOR GAME DAY ROUTINES.**

**Game Day (Building and Non-Building) will not be combined.**

Teams may add up to one (1) mascot in their Game Day Routine. The mascot must enter the floor with the team and should be used to raise crowd energy and participation. The mascot is not allowed to be involved in any stunts/technical skills and/or tumbling and should position themselves away from skills being performed. The mascot will not count towards the total number of participants allowed.





## **GAME DAY INFORMATION**

1. The Game Day Championship showcases what traditional cheerleading is all about- leading the crowd! Teams will be evaluated on their ability to lead the crowd, proper Game Day skill incorporations/ performance, motion/dance, and overall routine.
2. The performance will follow this order: Band Chant, Situational Sideline, Cheer, followed by the Fight Song. Performances may not exceed three (3) minutes.
3. The incorporation of stunts, jumps, and tumbling are only allowed during the Fight Song, Sideline, and Cheer. To receive points in this category, be sure to incorporate a skill in each element.
4. All team breaks, rituals and traditions need to take place prior to entering the mat.
5. The use of crowd leading tools such as signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones is required.
6. Stunts are not allowed as a transition before or between sections. This would include the team's entry to the floor.
7. Fight Song incorporation is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts of stunts and/or tumbling. If the Fight Song repeats, the incorporation will only be allowed both times if it is repeated the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill and continue until either the incorporation is complete or the end of the third 8-count.
8. The Band Chant should have an emphasis on crowd appeal and practicality- No stunting or tumbling is permitted, however jumps and kicks are allowed.
9. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures. Stunts are not allowed during the team's entry to the floor or any time prior to starting the performance. Example: stunts, running of the flags, chest bumps, hugs, handshakes, etc.
10. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official ending of the routine.
11. In between elements, teams must always return to the performance surface.
  1. Teams may kick, jump, or tumble but may NOT stunt between each element (there are four elements: Band Chant/ Sideline/ Cheer/ Fight Song).
  2. However, we do not recommend tumbling before the Band Chant because if the coach starts the music as someone is tumbling, it could count as tumbling during the band chant which is not allowed.
12. Following completion of the Band Chant, teams should show their definitive understanding of an offensive or defensive crowd-leading response. You will be assigned to compete with an offensive or defensive response when entering in the warmup room.
13. Each section will be combined for the final score.
14. Each section should have a beginning and end. Note: Spirited crowd leading interaction between each section is encouraged to continue the Game Day feel. Stunts are not allowed as a tradition before/between sections, this would include the teams entry to the floor and any time prior to starting the performance.
15. Traditional Game Day uniform is required.

## **GAME DAY SKILL(S) RESTRICTION**

- No tosses (basket, sponge, or elevator) are allowed.
- No inversions are allowed.
- No twisting released dismounts are allowed.
- No running tumbling is allowed.
- Single leg stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
- Standing tumbling is limited to one tumbling skill and a back tuck is the most elite tumbling skill allowed. Examples: Standing full is not allowed. Rippled single back handsprings would be allowed. Jump tumble (single skill) would be allowed.
- Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures. (Example: running of the flags, chest bumps, intricate handshakes). Stunts are not allowed during the teams entry to the floor or any time prior to starting the performance.
- In between elements, teams must always return to the performance surface. Teams may kick, jump, or tumble but may NOT stunt.
- During the Band Chant, only kicks and jumps are permitted.



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For any clarification or interpretation of the above safety guidelines, please email [OHSCCA@gmail.com](mailto:OHSCCA@gmail.com) and state that you are attending the 2026 OAC Cheerleading State Championships.

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**ALL TEAMS ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN, DETACH, AND RETURN  
THE BOTTOM SECTION OF THIS FORM.**

We have reviewed the Informational Handbook with the entire team and we hereby accept this information as a fair and integral part of the competition and agree to adhere to the rules, policies, and procedures contained herein.

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**SCHOOL**

**DATE**

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**DIVISION/CHEER EVENT**

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**CITY/STATE**

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**COACH SIGNATURE**

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**ADVISOR/PRINCIPLE SIGNATURE**