

# 2025-26 Cheerleading

## Governance

1. The National Federation Spirit Safety Rules must be followed during all cheerleading activities including practices, games, performances and competitions.
2. IHSAA Rules of Competition must be followed at all in-state cheerleading competitions.

## Purpose

The primary role of cheerleaders is to serve as a support group for the interscholastic athletic program of the school. Cheer teams should strive to boost school spirit, promote good sportsmanship, develop positive crowd involvement and help student participants and spectators achieve the educational objectives of the total interscholastic program.

## Competition / Performance

Cheerleading includes athletic competition and performances that are accepted secondary roles of cheerleaders. They can effectively promote school spirit when included at appropriate times and serve to develop skill, teamwork and self-confidence. Competition and/or performance activities must not interfere with the cheerleaders' primary role, which to serve as a support group for the interscholastic athletic program.

## Eligibility

1. **Competitive Cheer:** Members of cheer teams that participate in competition are subject to IHSAA eligibility rules 8-1 through 8-15, except Rule 8-4, Amateur Status, Rule 8-5, Awards, and Rule 8-11, Outside Competition. Non traditional students must comply with IHSAA Rule 8-16.
2. **Sideline Cheer:** Members of cheer teams that do not compete must be regularly enrolled students of the school at the time of participation. Non traditional students must comply with Rule 8-16.
3. **All cheerleaders** must have a physical examination on file with the school as outlined in IHSAA Rule 13 prior to the first practice of the season.
4. **All cheerleaders:** Tryouts/auditions are not allowed prior to the third Monday in April the spring proceeding the school year.

## Contact Limitations

Cheer teams must comply with IHSAA Rule 17-1-3 (summer programs) and 17-2-4 (no-contact period).

## Competition Rules & Regulations

1. Competitions:
  - a. In-state cheer competitions must follow both the NFHS spirit safety rules and the IHSAA competitive cheer rules.
  - b. In-state competitions sponsored by anyone other than member schools must be sanctioned by the IHSAA.
  - c. No high school team may participate as "exhibition only" at any competition unless they are the host school of the competition.
2. Season: Idaho cheerleaders may attend competitions only between November 1 and the completion of the state tournament. Any competition after the state tournament

requires permission of the principal or superintendent and the IHSAA.

3. Number of Competitions: No school or individual may enter more than four competitions during the season. Exceptions: a district-qualifying competition and the state championships do not count towards the allowed number of competitions.

4. Competition Classifications:

6A: 1400 & over	4A: 699-350
5A: 1399-700	3A: 349 & under

Contiguous classifications may be combined at the tournament manager's discretion if fewer than three schools enter a division. Combining schools that are not in contiguous classifications requires approval from those schools.

5. Team Categories:

- a. Team Sizes: A maximum of 24 team members (including mascots) are allowed on the floor in show cheer, sideline and pom divisions.
- b. Coed: In the show cheer division, teams with one boy may elect to compete in either the coed or all-girl category. Teams with two or more boys must compete as coed. In sideline cheer and pom divisions, coed teams and all-girl teams compete together.

6. Divisions of Competition: All Idaho invitational competitions must offer show cheer, sideline cheer and pom divisions. Additional divisions of competition are permitted – see Specialty Divisions below. **\*NOTE: Props, poms, megaphones, signs, banners, etc...cannot contain glass, have an outside power source or have lights.**

**Show Cheer:** Time: 2:30 max. Routine must contain at least one cheer or chant and a musical segment of at least 45 seconds, but not greater than 2:00. Permitted: partner stunts, pyramids, tosses, tumbling, jumps, dance, poms, megaphones, signs and banners (see \*NOTE above).

**Sideline Cheer:** Time: 1:00 max. This routine should emphasize crowd involvement. Routine must include a minimum of one continuous two-jump series performed by the entire team in unison. Permitted: Traditional cheer props (poms, signs, flags, banners and megaphones), standing tumbling (limited to single skill at a time), stunts that are prep level or below, and multi base extended stunts (limited to extensions, liberty hitches and basic liberties without any variations as listed in the NFHS rules book definition).

Not Permitted: Music, running tumbling, basket tosses, inversions, twisting or spinning dismounts or load-ins, load-ins that are airborne (i.e. toss to hands, toss to stunt), cradle dismounts, pyramids of three or more braced stunt groups, extended partner stunts, cheer boxes, non-traditional or theatrical type props including 3-dimensional signs (see \*NOTE above).

**Pom:** Time: 1:00 max. Routine should include a variety of motions, dance and transitions. Music is required for the

entire routine. Poms (see \*NOTE above) must be used throughout a majority of the routine and by a majority of the team members. Permitted: vocals, jumps, kicks, leaps, turns, and non-airborne tumbling. Not permitted: airborne tumbling, stunts, pyramids, tosses, and other props of any type.

### **Specialty Divisions**

Specialty divisions may be offered at all invitational competitions. Tournaments should specify, in the initial invitation, which specialty divisions will be offered and provide guidelines for those events. Specialty divisions:

1. May include events such as stunt group.
2. May be offered as "open" classifications.
3. Must follow all NFHS and IHSA rules.

Point of Emphasis: Competitions who offer individual skills/tricks contests must follow all Idaho guidelines and NFHS safety rules. If participants perform illegal actions, they will be immediately disqualified and the competition may be referred to their District Board of Control for further fines or sanctions.

### **Specialty Division Guidelines**

The following specialty division guidelines are provided to ensure consistency from competition to competition:

1. Stunt Group: a) Time limit 1:00 max; b) Routine should include a variety of stunts with emphasis on technique, transitions and creativity; c) Music is required for the entire routine; d) Tumbling, jumps, chants, megaphones, poms, sign, or banners are not permitted; e) Max 5 participants.
7. Routine Modification Limits: Teams shall not significantly change choreography or music for any routine between district and state without written permission of the IHSA.
8. Scoring: All Idaho competitions will use adjusted total points (penalties deducted) to determine the winners of each division. Ties will be broken using judge preference.
9. Score sheets: IHSA technical score sheets and routine score sheets must be used for show cheer, sideline cheer, pom and stunt group divisions.
10. Routine Timing: Routine timing starts with the first beat of the music or when performance begins. Timing ends with the last beat of the music or when a final position is hit if the music has already stopped. A five-second grace period is allowed.
11. Opponents: High school cheerleaders (9-12) may not compete with or against non-high school cheerleaders. (i.e., 8<sup>th</sup> graders, all-star squads)
12. Matting: All sites must provide an appropriately matted (at least 40'x40') competition area. Warm-up areas must include adequate matting for warming up stunts.
13. Out of Bounds: Stepping/tumbling off the mat during performance is illegal (*"off the mat" means: any part of body actually touching the floor beyond the mat*). Placing props (ie. poms,

signs, etc.) off the mat is legal prior to performance; placing or gently tossing props off the mat during performance is legal provided the performer does not go off the mat to do so.

14. Technical Judging: All competitions must provide Idaho-certified technical judges who are given no other responsibilities. Competitions in which no team is larger than 12 members may use two technical judges. Otherwise, three technical judges are required.
15. Rule Violations During Competition: Violation of NFHS safety rules and/or IHSA rules of competition will result in technical deductions from that routine's score. Repeated intentional violations of NFHS safety rules or IHSA rules of competition will result in disqualification of that routine.
16. Music Copyright Verification: Teams are required to upload proof of appropriate music copyright licensure on the NFHS database for all competitive routines prior to the first competition. Non-compliance will result in the team being ineligible for competition.

### **Tumbling Restriction at Basketball / Volleyball Games**

Cheerleaders / Mascots are not allowed to tumble past half-court at basketball and volleyball games.

### **Safety Violations at Non-Competition Events**

If a cheerleading team is observed violating an NFHS Spirit safety rule during non-competition cheerleading activities:

1. The coach/administrator who observed the violation will notify the IHSA administrator or the district interpreter.
2. The IHSA (or dist. interpreter) will review the allegation and notify the principal and coach of the team in violation.
3. If a second violation is reported and confirmed, a referral will be made to the District Board of Control. The Board of Control will determine what action, if any, will be taken. Recommended penalties include "benching" (squad not allowed to cheer) or "grounding" (no stunting) for a designated period of time.

### **Dress Standard**

Idaho cheerleaders are expected to wear uniforms that are appropriate for participation at the high school level.

1. When the participant is standing at attention and throughout the majority of the routine, no part of the buttocks, breasts, or midriff shall be visible.
2. Single-shoulder uniform tops are not permitted.

### **Coach/Advisor**

1. Cheer head coaches/advisors must be certified to teach in Idaho or have completed the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching course.
2. All coaches/advisors must complete a first aid and CPR course from a school district recognized provider, as outlined in IHSA Rule 3-2.
3. All coaches/advisors are strongly encouraged to complete the USA Cheer Safety and Risk Management course and to attend available professional education training in both spirit program administration and technical development.

4. All coaches (includes head coaches, directors, assistant coaches, and volunteers of all IHSAA activities) are required to complete the St. Luke's online Concussion Course, the NFHS online Sudden Cardiac Arrest course and the NFHS online Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention course upon hiring and on even numbered years prior to the first day of practice. IHSAA Statewide Review dates: 2026-27, 2028-29, etc.
5. All head coaches must take the NFHS online Understanding Music Copyright course upon hiring.

**Rules Clinics / Technical Judge Training**

1. Coaches must participate in an online rules clinic or attend a rules clinic in his/her district. District Boards of Control may fine schools whose coaches do not meet this requirement.
2. Technical judges must be certified by a regional technical coordinator.
3. Regional technical coordinators will assign technical judges at all competitions held in their region.
4. Routine judges will be trained prior to the state tournament.