

Orange County Youth Football League, Inc.



Cheerleading Coaches Handbook

Cheer Regulations and Rules

OVERVIEW:

With Cheerleading being the demanding physical activity it is, players are expected to follow the rules of the team, town and OCYFL league at all times. The OCYFL rules are primary, towns may increase the strength of enforcement but MAY NOT decrease in any way.

AGE:

All Cheerleaders must be at least 6 years old but not older than 14 by December 1st and entering kindergarten but not 9th grade of the current season. Cheerleaders will be placed on teams according to their grade level.

** Moving down a level – requires a playdown request to the OCYFL Board of Directors for approval.*

- Mighty Mites 6 & 7 years of age * It is at the discretion of the town to allow MM younger than 6 to be on the team.
- Division I: 8 & 9 years of age
- Division II: 10 & 11 years of age
- Division III: 12 & 13 years of age

MASCOTS:

Mascots are allowed to participate in the OCYFL league, provided they are 16+ years of age, hold a badge by the town and are in a mascot uniform.

ORGANIZATION:

- A. The head coach of each team must be at least 21 years of age.
- B. ALL coaches MUST be certified by the chosen program of the OCYFL.
 - a. A high school demonstrator may be used to teach cheers, stunts, etc. However, this individual shall be under the direction and supervision of the Head Coach or Assistant Coach.
- C. Each town shall have a board member called Director of Cheerleading who is an equal voting member of the town's board, and to whom all cheerleading teams report to.

D. Junior Coach must be 9th grade or higher.

Mandatory Cuts:

Mandatory cuts can occur for the following reasons: under the discretion on the town director.

- A. Cheerleader cannot fulfill registration requirements (see your town registration policy).
- B. Absences: A minimum of 75% practices must be attended during the month of August or prior to the first game. From the start of the school year through the remainder of the season, the number of allowed absences will be at the discretion of the individual town.
- C. Cheerleader refuses to abide by league rules.
- D. Once a cheerleader quits, she may not return for that season, for that town or any other town.
- E. A transfer of a family moving will need OCYFL board approval.

Registration:

- A. Registration Form – signed by either parent/guardian.
- B. Medical Release Form – signed by physician that the cheerleader is physically fit to participate.
- C. Proof of Age – a copy of birth certificate.
- D. Parents Code of Conduct – signed by parent/guardian.

Appearance:

- A. All cheerleaders must wear the required uniform as determined by each town in order to cheer that week's game. The uniform is to be worn only at OCYFL organized functions. Anything affixed to uniform or athlete that becomes loose or falls off may become a safety hazard and therefore a penalty may be incurred.

- B. All hair must be pulled back off the face, neck and shoulders in a neat like fashion. High straight pony tail or tight bun. (hair must not be hanging below the shoulders or fall in front of the face).
- C. Nails must be kept at a length appropriate for safe participation. You should not feel tips of nails on your palm. NO false nails and NO nail polish at all while in uniform.
- D. NO JEWELRY IS ALLOWED. With the exception of medical ID tags or medals (which must be taped over and clearly marked), No shoe charms, hair beads and NO JEWELRY MEANS NO additional accessories other than bow.
- E. *ALL piercings MUST be removed. CANNOT be covered with tape or a Band-Aid. NO EXCEPTIONS!!
- F. Makeup is prohibited for all youth functions other than Cheerfest and should be kept to a tasteful minimum. Face Shimmer is allowed, However NO loss GLITTER. Jewels/rhinestones may not be adhered to the participant's body and/or face.
- G. Megaphones, poms and small signs are the only props allowed at any time.

Practices:

- A. Pre-season practice shall not begin until the designated start date of the OCYFL on August 1st.
- B. At least 15 minutes of warm up exercise (to stretch and to limber-up) shall be included prior to practice and games including Cheerfest.
- C. Practices shall not exceed the following:
 - a. No more than 10 hours per week during pre-season, after pre-season practices are limited to 6 hours per week for Mighty Mites and Division One and 8 hours per week for Division Two and Division Three.
 - b. No more than 2 hours of practice may be scheduled on any one day.
- D. Water and bathroom breaks will be given during practices as a squad.
- E. No practice, stunting or participation at games shall be permitted without the head coach or approved certified coach.

Games:

Each town will provide a safe, convenient area to cheer, free of fan interference. All teams must be ready to go within 15 mins of the start time of the game and must be on the field prior the coin toss.

- A. The home team will welcome the visiting team with the “Hello” cheer first.
- B. A coach, not a junior coach, from each team will travel with the team during the “Hello” cheer.
- C. Half time to be shared by both cheer teams, the visiting team will use the field first for their routine.
 - 1. Each team’s performance should not exceed 1:30 for Mighty Mites and 2:30 for D1-D3.
- D. Each team will watch each other’s routine, cheer and support each other.
- E. Remaining time is to be spent with coach regrouping for the next half of the game.
- F. During an injury of a player on either team, all cheerleaders will stop and take a knee while the player is being administered to.
- G. No trips to concession stand or wandering the field during the game or half time. Eating in uniform is highly discouraged by OCYFL but will remain under the discretion of the individual town.
- H. A cheerleader’s job is not only to cheer, it’s to observe the game, get involved, and know where their team stands.
- I. Rain or shine all squads are to cheer at all games.
- J. At the completion of the game congratulatory handshakes by both teams will be done prior to any traditional spiriting.

Camps:

All cheerleaders associated with OCYFL may attend camp as an individual, group, or a team with or without their coach. Camp is defined as a meeting of one or more training sessions provided by an outside organization. Camps are optional and not a requirement to be part of OCYFL.

Cheerfest:

All regular season rules will apply in addition to those set forth by the Cheerfest committee. This is an exhibition ONLY. Usually scheduled for early November.

Any team that does not abide by the current stunt rules at Cheerfest will be referred to OCYFL Board for suspension from coaching.

Cheerfest Routine -2 minutes 30 seconds (2:30) Timing will begin with the first choreographed word, movement, skill, or note of music following the team's entrance to the performance surface. Teams may use a short count and a set prior to the start of the music/cheer. (Example: "5,6,7,8 – Panthers!") Timing will end with the last choreographed word, movement, skill, or note of music preceding the team's exit from the performance surface. Coaches may not delay the start of the routine in order to fix formations. Only registered participants of a team are allowed on the performance surface.

Cheerfest – Timing will start with the first participant to spirit onto the performance surface.

Competitions:

The OCYFL will not sponsor any competition team. There are NO competitions allowed within the regular season. Towns may attend competitions AFTER the full regular season including playoffs and Super Bowl as a private league and must provide their own insurance separate from the OCYFL. The OCYFL rules should be the base rules all follow with careful attention to the competition host's rules.

Infractions:

At the town level:

- At the 1st infraction, Cheer Coaches will be given a verbal warning.
- At the 2nd infraction, Cheer Coach will be given a written warning and a one game suspension.
- At the 3rd infraction, the situation will be referred to OCYFL Board.

Safety and Stunting:

NO STUNTING in bad weather (rain, mud, or high winds).

Casts and Braces:

- A. Participants with a hard cast may not tumble, stunt, or be considered as spotters and are not required to wrap/pad the cast.
- B. Participants wearing hard braces with exposed metal material, such as knee, wrist and elbow braces, are required to wrap/cover the brace with a padded material so that it protects both them and their fellow participants from injury.
- C. Participants wearing a full (medical) boot brace/walking boot may not be involved in stunting or tumbling.

Cheer Shoes:

Athletic closed-toe shoes are required for all participants. Cheer shoes should be worn for stunting purposes.

Mini-tramps, springboards, or any other height increasing apparatus are prohibited (exception: spring floor).

All Cheer participants must be on the performance surface at the start of the routine.

Code of Conduct - Actions taken will be under the discretion of an event official

- A. Routines must be appropriate for family viewing.
- B. Appropriate choreography and music **MUST** be used. Teams using excessive vulgar or suggestive movements, words or music will be penalized the following year.
- C. Tear away uniforms and/or removal of clothing is not allowed.
- D. Uniforms and make up should be age appropriate and suitable for family viewing.
- E. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited. (loss glitter)

Poms and Props

- A. Props are limited to banners, flags, megaphones, and signs/light up signs.

- B. All poms and props brought on the performing area must be used during the routine.
- C. In stunting divisions, hiding poms or props anywhere on the body or uniform is prohibited. Poms attached solely to the wrist are considered the same as all other poms in regard to pom rules.
- D. The use of poms and props is prohibited during tumbling, partner stunt/pyramid building, tosses, dismounts and all stunt transitions that require the use of hands. Example: Extension Prep, Sponge to Extension Prep with poms in hands would be considered ILLEGAL, performing a Cradle with poms would also be considered ILLEGAL.
- E. Once stunt is fully built, flyers may obtain and use poms and props and then transition to another stunt that does not require the use of hand(s). Example: Once secure in an Extension Prep, poms may be handed to a flyer; the flyer may then transition to an extension with poms in hand. Exceptions are not limited to this example.
- F. Bases/back spotters may not hold poms or props in their hands if the hands are the primary support for the top person during stunting. Example: A back spotter grabbing the sign from the flyer in Extension Prep would be illegal.
- G. Front spots may hand or be handed poms or props from flyers provided the front spot is not actively building or dismounting the stunt at the time of hand off.

YOUTH CHEER GENERAL SAFETY RULES

Jumps

- A. Participants are permitted to jump over another participant on the performance surface with or without contact.
- B. Partner assisted jumps are allowed provided the supporting athlete controls the jump and maintains contact from start to finish.
- C. Airborne skills that drop/transition directly to the performance surface are not allowed. Weight must be borne on the hands or feet.

Tumbling

- A. All tumbling must originate from the ground level.

- B. Spotted/Assisted Tumbling is an allowable skill. However, any skills of these type will not be considered a part of tumbling difficulty.
- C. Partner tumbling is prohibited.
- D. Participants are prohibited from tumbling over, under or through stunts or pyramids. Participants are prohibited from any form of tumbling over/under individuals.
- E. Tumbling oriented load-ins to stunts, dismounts, and transitions (such as Cartwheels, Round Offs, and Walkovers) are permitted:
- F. Must follow inversion rules
- G. 7 Rebounding from tumbling skills into stunts/stunt transitions is limited to cradle, load-in, and below prep level group-based stunt ONLY. If rebounding into a single based below prep level stunt, an additional spotter is required.
- H. 3/4 flips and 1 1/4 flips are prohibited.
- I. Tumbling exception: tumbling with poms in hand is only permitted when executing a Forward/Backward Roll.

Stunts/Dismounts/Pyramids/Release Moves/Inversions

- A. Stunts may not travel over another individual and/or stunt. (Exception: Double Based Vertical T-Lifts may travel over a single Nugget with or without contact to the Nugget.
- B. Must never pass over, under or through other stunts and/or pyramids. Individuals are permitted to jump over other participants on the performance surface.
- C. (Division 2/3) Single leg extended stunts may be braced to other extended level stunts.
- D. In all dismounts, catching base(s) MUST physically assist (re-catch the flyer to control/slow down descent) the flyer to the performance surface.
- E. (Division 2/3) Superman transitions cannot invert at any point, may not intentionally travel and may only originate from prep level or below stunts or the load in position.
- F. Pendulums

- a. Pendulum transitions must start from prep level or below and return to an upright stunt/load- in/ground position.
 - b. One Spotter is required in front of the catchers during all pendulum transitions.
 - c. Two Bases are required (must remain stationary) plus two additional catchers (must remain stationary) 1 on each side of a Pendulum or stunt that moves away from the vertical axis (i.e. Shooting Star, Shoot Outs, etc.).
- G. Stunts transitions must never be released to the prone position (face-down/stomach).
- H. Stunts may not brace/touch any other flyer while simultaneously released from the bases (ex. two flyers performing Tic Tocs next to one another may not brace during the release move).
- I. Superman transitions may not be braced to any other stunt/transition.
- J. May not cradle from any stunt in which the base(s) have a knee on the ground.
- K. Release moves may not involve changing bases.
- a. In pyramids involving release moves that require a bracer for legality (ball ups, braced flips, etc.), contact between the flyer and the original bracer(s) must be maintained throughout the entire release move transition until the flyer makes contact with the original bases.
 - b. In all pyramids that require a bracer, contact between the flyer and the bracer must be maintained throughout the entire stunt/transition.
 - c. All downward inversions are **ILLEGAL** unless an exception is stated in the Division Rules Grid for that division.
 - d. All inversions require 2 bases and 1 spotter.
 - e. Inversion skills where the flyer transitions from the inversion directly over the back spot to the load in position or directly from the inversion to a shoulder sit on the back spot, requires an additional spotter.

Tosses (Division 3)

- A. May never intentionally travel.
- B. Must be caught in a Cradle by the original bases and are limited to up to 4 bases (total base count includes back and front spotters).

Example: 1 main base, 1 secondary base, 1 back spotter and 1 optional front spotter.

- C. Must never become inverted at any point during the toss.

Spotters

- A. Must be in direct contact with the performance surface.
- B. Continuous Back Spotter
- C. Not required for Knee Stands, Thigh Stands, Shoulder Sits, Double-Based Non-Extended V-Sits, and Below Prep Level Stunts (exception: Required for single based stunts in which the flyer performs a Rebound entry).
- D. (Division 2 & 3) Required at head/shoulder area for all Barrel Rolls
- E. (Division 1 ONLY) All Extended V-Sits and Swedish Falls require an additional spotter who is not connected to the stunt.
- F. Required for all stunts, release moves and tosses prep level and above (exceptions: may transition from/to back spot of a group-based stunt to Shoulder Sit, Flatbacks with at least 3 bases, vertical/horizontal T-Lifts). In Flatbacks with 3 bases, one base must be supporting the head, neck, and shoulders of the flyer.
- G. Required for all below prep level stunts where the primary bases are not using their hands/arms to directly support the flyer (example: flyer standing on the backs of the bases).
- H. Must not step underneath the stunt to hold the feet (soles) of the flyer's shoes without the help of an additional back spotter located directly behind the stunt. Exception: One hand may go under a foot of the flyer in prep level and below stunts.
- I. Must never pass through the vertical plane of the stunt. The back spotter's torso may never pass under a stunt or the flyer's body (example: walk under and/or through a stunt).
- J. (Levels 2-3) During 1/2 twist transitions from prep level or below to a cradle position, the flyer and at least one base or back spotter must maintain contact throughout the transition and an additional spotter is required at the head and shoulders of the flyer to catch the Cradle.
- K. Must be positioned directly behind or to the side of the flyer when the flyer is facing the back spotter and stops in or power presses at a prep level or above

stunt/stunt transition. (Example: Reverse Extension Prep 180 to Extension Prep would require an additional spotter during the Reverse Extension Prep).

L. Spotter for Single Based Stunts

M. Required for a single-based partner stunts at prep level and above.

- a. Must be positioned directly behind or to the side of the flyer.
- b. Must not step underneath the stunt to hold the feet (soles) of the flyer's shoes (exception: may place one hand under the foot with other hand on the ankle at prep level and below provided the spotter is positioned to the side of the flyer and they do not cradle).
- c. May not change roles between being a base and a continuous spotter when stunt is prep level or above.
- d. (Levels 3 & 4) Must be positioned to catch with one arm under the head and shoulders of the flyer to assist with the cradle.

Bases

- A. Must be in direct contact with the performance surface.
- B. Must never assume a Back Bend, Headstand or Handstand position while basing a stunt.
- C. Two required during a pyramid transition when the flyer is completely released by the bases while remaining braced (Division 2/3) exception: single based release moves are allowed if the flyer remains vertical).
- D. Two bases required in all Split Stunts.