

Rules & Regulations 2026

I. General Guidelines

The Cheerleading Worlds competition will follow the most recent version of the USASF and IASF general rules and age grids. Refer to [USASF.net/rules](https://usASF.net/rules) or [IASFworlds.com](https://iasfworlds.com) for details.

II. Competition Area

- Participants must begin and end their routine within the competition boundary.
 - Teams may line up anywhere inside the competition area to begin their routine.
 - The competition area will be determined by the tournament director according to facility size. Approximate floor size will be 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 panels).
 - All skills must originate and be completed within the competition boundary. Lineups, skills or transitions are not permitted outside the competition boundary.
 - The competition boundary is defined as the actual competition floor/spring floor, the carpet bonded foam panels that connect to the spring floor, and any additional border that supports/ surrounds the floor.
- A. A deduction will be assessed per occurrence for an athlete that makes contact outside the competition boundary. The deduction amount will be included in Worlds score sheets that will be posted on TheCheerleadingWorlds.net in early 2026.
 - B. If a sign or prop is thrown outside the performing area, that team will receive a deduction for each violation. Signs or props may be placed or dropped outside the competition boundary by a team member who must remain inside the competition boundary area. All center markers are prohibited.

III. Music and Limitations

- A. Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first. Timing will end with the last movement, last voice, or note of music, whichever comes last.
- B. Routine performance times:
 1. Senior Divisions: 2:30 maximum
 2. IASF Open L5, L6 and L7: 2:30 maximum
 3. IASF Non-Tumble L6 and L7: 2:00 maximum
- C. All introductions (tumbling, entrances, chants, spell-outs, etc.) are considered part of the routine and are timed as part of the performance. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official ending of the routine. **NOTE:** Penalty points will be included with the Worlds score sheets that will be posted on TheCheerleadingWorlds.net in early 2026.
- D. If a team exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed. **NOTE:** The point deduction amount will be posted when the Worlds Score Sheets are posted on TheCheerleadingWorlds.net in early 2026.
- E. Because penalties are severe, it is recommended that all teams time their performance several times prior to attending the competition and leave a several seconds cushion to allow for variations in sound equipment.

- F. All teams at The Cheerleading Worlds may use as many songs in the musical portion of their routine as they like.
- G. Routine music used at The Cheerleading Worlds must comply with applicable copyright law. At Worlds, all teams must provide proof of licensing. This will be reviewed during roster check appointments (see page 18). This may include:
 - 1. proof of purchase from an approved music provider.
 - 2. if using a single song, the receipt from the song's purchase.
 - 3. if using an editor, proof-of-purchase from an approved provider and proof of licensing for all sound effects and voice-overs included in the mix. Editors do not have to be on the preferred provider list but must be able to provide teams these required proofs of purchase and licensing.
- H. Teams may not use Disney themes nor costumes that resemble Disney characters. However, Disney music is acceptable if the music licensing guidelines are followed.
- I. Each team is required to assign a responsible adult who knows the routine and music to stay at the music station during the team's performance. This representative is responsible for starting the music and stopping the music in case of technical malfunction or injury. Please make sure that all devices are fully charged, placed in airplane mode, and the volume is turned up.

IV. Athlete Behavior

- A. Athletes participating in The Cheerleading Worlds are expected to demonstrate the highest levels of sportsmanship, respect and support throughout the entire event. On occasion there have been concerns that not all teams consistently uphold a high standard of decorum during the periods surrounding their performances in the competition venues. Additionally, some club members and fans have also been observed not adhering to the expected standards of conduct when viewing the routines.
- B. When teams are introduced, they are expected to take the floor within a 30-second window and assume the starting position for their routine. At the conclusion of the routine, competitors are expected to exit the performance floor immediately, again within a 30- second window of time.
- C. From the time the team is announced the protocol for entering and leaving the competition floor is expected to reflect a team environment.
- D. Actions that demonstrate excessive boasting, delay competition or reflect poor sportsmanship or unprofessional behavior may result in penalties assessed by event judges. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. **Taunting another team** – verbal or physical actions that bait or engender ill will between teams.
 - 2. **Drawing unnecessary attention to oneself** – such as exaggerated celebrations, high fives, or chest bumps..
 - 3. **Excessive team rituals** – pre/post-competition team bonding activities must take place offstage, not on the competition area.
 - 4. **Public displays of affection** while on the competition floor.
 - 5. **Stepping outside the competition boundary** to approach coaching staff, crowd members and/or other members of the audience.
 - 6. **Excessive celebrations** – prolonged, premeditated or overly physical displays (e.g., athletes jumping on or wrapping legs around others, victory dances, etc.).
 - 7. **Unauthorized floor access** – coaching staff, parents, fans and/or other non-competitors entering the competition boundary before, during or after a performance (unless in the response to an obvious injury). Only competing athletes and competition personnel are allowed on the floor..
 - 8. **Collapsing on the floor without injury** – athletes must remain standing at the conclusion of a routine unless medical attention is clearly required..

- E. Teams will be assessed a point deduction for any unsportsmanlike, unprofessional, disrespectful and/or unsupportive behavior. The amount of the penalty will be determined by the competition officials. **NOTE:** Penalty points will be included with the Worlds score sheets that will be posted on TheCheerleadingWorlds.net by early 2026.

II. Athletic Performance Standards

- A. **Appropriate Choreography** — Judges reserve the right to assess warnings and/or deductions when a team's choreography does not meet the appropriate standards.
1. All facets of a performance/routine, including both choreography and music selection, should be appropriate and suitable for family viewing and listening.
 2. Examples of inappropriate choreography may include, but are not limited to: mocking the use of a gun to display violence against a person/people and/or the promotion of gun violence of any type; movements such as hip thrusting and inappropriate touching, gestures, hand/arm movements and signals; slapping; positioning of body parts; and positioning to one another.
- B. **Music Guidelines** — Music or words unsuitable for family listening, which include, but is not limited, to swear words and/or connotations of any type of sexual act or behavior, drugs, explicit mention of specific parts of the body/torso, and/or violent acts or behavior. Removing improper language or words from a song and replacing with sound effects or other words may still constitute "inappropriate".
- C. **Appropriateness of music or movement** — If there is any question or uncertainty about the appropriateness of music or choreography, coaches should assume it is inappropriate and remove it to avoid placing their team in an unfortunate situation..
- D. **Makeup** — If worn, makeup should be uniform and appropriate for both the performance and the age of the athlete. Face/eyelid rhinestones are not allowed. False eyelashes are allowed but may not be decorated in rhinestones or additional jewelry.
- E. **Bows** — Bows should not be excessive in size (acceptable bows are generally no more than 4" in width) and should not be a distraction to the performance. Bows should be worn in a manner to minimize risk for the athletes, should be adequately secured and should not fall over the forehead into the athlete's eyes, or block the view of the athlete while performing.
- F. **General Uniform Guidelines** — No risqué, sexually provocative or lingerie-looking or inspired uniform or garments allowed. All uniform pieces should adequately cover the athlete and must be secured to eliminate any possible wardrobe malfunction. Appropriate undergarments must be worn. In addition to the following guidelines, athletes also must consider that a combination of uniform pieces may also deem a uniform appropriate or inappropriate. ALL garments must properly cover the athlete and the athlete's undergarments during the routine.
1. **Uniform/Skirt Guidelines** — When a skirt is worn as part of the uniform, briefs under the skirt are required. The skirt must fully cover the hips. The skirt must completely cover the briefs and must fall 1 inch below the briefs (regular and boy-cut briefs). When shorts are worn as part of the uniform, there must be a minimum of a 2-inch inseam.
 2. **Uniform Top Guidelines** — Uniform tops must be secured by straps or material over at least one shoulder or around the neck (tube tops are not allowed).
 3. Visit USASF.net for more information about Athlete Performance Standards (APS).
- G. **Coverup Guidelines** -- Athletes with non-full top uniforms must wear t-shirts or other suitable cover ups over their uniforms unless they are in warm-up areas, traveling as a group directly to or from warmups, or on the performance stage.

VI. Spotter Policy on Competition Floors

The Cheerleading Worlds WILL provide spotters for all competition floors for ALL divisions. All teams during this time MUST use the provided spotters on the competition floor.

VII. Spotter Policy in Rehearsal Areas

- A. Teams must follow the level rules and have the required team member spotters in place during the execution of skills while in the rehearsal area.
- B. USASF/Club Divisions — The Cheerleading Worlds will have event spotters available upon request in all rehearsal areas. The Cheerleading Worlds WILL NOT require event spotters to be used in the rehearsal areas. USASF/Club division teams may choose to provide their own spotters in the rehearsal area (referred to as additional spotters), request to use The Cheerleading Worlds event spotters or elect not to use spotters in the rehearsal. The use of provided spotters or additional spotters is not mandatory and will be at the discretion of the USASF division team coach or club owner. Additional spotters must meet the requirements as listed in item VII D below.
- C. IASF Divisions — The Cheerleading Worlds will provide spotters in the rehearsal areas, upon request, for all teams competing in the International Level 5, 6 and 7 divisions. Teams may also elect to use additional spotters. Additional spotters must meet the requirements as listed in item VII D3 below. Teams are required to confirm the request for spotters and or confirm their own spotters in the registration form.
- D. Additional Spotters—Definition: Individuals on the rehearsal floor provided as a safety precaution to spot certain elements of a routine during rehearsal only. Additional spotters:
 - 1. must meet the eligibility requirements to enter the warm-up room.
 - 2. should only be used during the stunt, pyramid, and/or basket toss sections. Additional spotters are provided by the team for added safety and should stand at the back of the floor when not spotting those sections.
 - 3. should not touch, assist, or save skills being performed. Additional spotters should only be used to prevent a fall to the rehearsal floor.
 - 4. should be dressed so that they are presentable, professional, and distinguishable from the performing athletes. Team-provided additional spotters should not wear clothing similar to the performing team's uniform.
 - 5. should not dress or act in a manner that distracts from the athletes and their performance.
 - 6. should be at least 18 years old and familiar with spotting the skills of the performing team.

NOTE: To provide the safest competitive environment, teams should not attempt skills beyond their ability level.

VIII. Interruption of Performance

- A. Unforeseen Circumstances
If, in the opinion of the competition officials, a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the competition equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the competition rather than the team, the team affected or competition officials may stop the routine. The degree and effect of the interruption will be determined by the competition officials. 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 where the interruption occurred. The spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials.

B. Fault of Team

1. In the event a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the team's own representative, is non-injury related, equipment and/or music related, the team must continue the routine.
2. The degree and effect of the interruption will be determined by the competition officials and a possible penalty will be assessed. 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 where the interruption occurred. The spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials.

C. Injury

1. The only individuals that may stop a routine for injury are: competition officials, the club owner/head coach from the team performing, or an injured individual.
2. The 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 the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. If permitted to perform again the team must (pending the injury's impact on the routine) perform the routine again in its entirety, but will be evaluated ONLY from the point where the interruption occurred.
3. If a team needs to re-perform a routine but fails to do the routine in its entirety, (example: throwing a back tuck instead of the full twist thrown in the original performance) then this team may receive a penalty at the discretion of competition officials.
4. The injured athlete that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless:
 - a. The competition officials receive clearance from: first, the medical personnel attending to that athlete, the parent/guardian (if present) and then the head coach/director of the competing team.
 - b. If the medical personnel do not clear the athlete, the athlete can only return to the competition if a parent or legal guardian in attendance signs a return to participation waiver (excluding a suspected concussion).
 - c. In the event of a suspected concussion, the athlete cannot return to perform without clearance from a licensed medical professional that has training related to head injuries (medical doctor or designated official specifically trained in concussion management), even with a waiver from a parent or legal guardian. We encourage you to be familiar with suspected concussion laws applicable in the state where the competition is being held.

IX. How to Handle Procedural Questions

Any question concerning the rules or procedures of the tournament will be handled exclusively by one designated representative of the team (i.e. club owner/director, coach or captain) and will be directed only to a competition official. Such questions should be made prior to the team's competition performance. Any questions concerning the team's performance should be made to a competition official immediately after the team's performance.

X. Interpretations and Rulings

Any interpretation of any aspect of these Rules & Regulations or any decision involving any other aspect of the tournament will be rendered by the Worlds Competition Rules Committee. The Worlds Competition Rules Committee will render a judgment in an effort to ensure that the tournament proceeds in a manner consistent with the general spirit and goals of the tournament. The Rules Committee will consist at minimum of the Tournament Director, Head Judge, the USASF Rules Committee Chair and/or a tournament official designated by the Chair. The Tournament Director may appoint additional qualified members to those listed above to be members of the Worlds Competition Rules Committee.

Finality of Decisions

By participating in this championship, each team agrees that the decisions by the judges will be final and will not be subject for review. Each team acknowledges the necessity for the judges to make prompt and fair decisions in this competition and each team therefore expressly waives any legal, equitable, administrative or procedural review of such decisions.

XI. Sportsmanship

All participants agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship throughout and following the tournament. The directors, coaches and club owners of each team are responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents and any other persons affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly. Severe cases of unsportsmanlike conduct are grounds for disqualification as explained in this document above.

XIII. Deductions and Disqualifications

Any team violating The Cheerleading Worlds Rules & Regulations will incur a deduction for each infraction (including athlete behavior violations as outlined in Section IV). Teams failing to follow competition rules will be disqualified, forfeiting eligibility for prizes or awards. Additionally, they may forfeit the opportunity to participate in The Cheerleading Worlds the following year and may be required to repay any funds received through a 2026 bid.

XIV. Scores and Rankings

- A. Individual judges' score sheets are for the exclusive use of each particular judge. Each judge has the responsibility and authority to review and submit their final scores and rankings prior to the final tally of the scores in a particular division. Scores and rankings will be available only to club owners and coaches at the conclusion of each division.

B. In the event of a tie

1. **USASF Senior Divisions** will NOT break ties for teams advancing to the next round or final placements, including Bronze, Silver and Gold. Instead, the placement will reflect the tie. For example, if two teams are tied for 2nd place, the standings will be listed as: 1st, 2nd, 2nd, 3rd.
2. If **USASF Senior Division** teams are tied when moving on to the next round or the finals, they will perform in the opposite order from their previous round performance.
3. **IASF International Open Divisions** will NOT break ties for finals placements including Bronze, Silver and Gold.
4. **IASF International Open Divisions** WILL break ties for teams moving into finals. In such cases, these steps will be followed until the tie is broken:
Step 1: The team with the least amount of total performance error deductions will win the tiebreaker.
Step 2: The team with the highest total score adding up the stunt/pyramid score sheet and the tumbling/ jump scores will win the tiebreaker.
Step 3: Technique-only scores (does not include combination difficulty/technique categories scores such as dance) on each score sheet will be added and the highest total will win the tiebreaker.
Step 4: A panel including the head judge, competition officials, etc. will review both routines and select a winner of the tiebreaker.

XV. Tournament Facility

The competition is scheduled to be held at ESPN Wide World of Sports® Complex. The tournament officials shall have the right to alter the time and location of the competition in the event changes become necessary due to final registration, inclement weather, facility problems or other situation deemed by the tournament officials to be essential to the success of the championship.

XVI. Appearances, Endorsements, Publicity

All teams winning titles, awards or prizes agree to have all appearances, endorsements, and publicity approved through the USASF office.

XVII. USASF Logo Usage

Teams will not be allowed to use the USASF logo or The Cheerleading Worlds logo on items or apparel including banners, rings, bows, t-shirts, etc.

XVIII. General Safety Rules and Routine Requirements

The Cheerleading Worlds follows USASF and/or IASF cheerleading rules and guidelines, depending upon the division. Rules clarifications MAY be made during the season. The Cheerleading Worlds 2026 will follow the most recent posting of the USASF and IASF rules. Please refer to [USASF.net](https://usASF.net) or [IASFworlds.com](https://iasfworlds.com) for any changes.

XIX. Penalties

A penalty will be assessed at the discretion of competition officials to any team violating any of the specific rules as stated at TheCheerleadingWorlds.net. This deduction does not apply to violations mentioned above that are designated a lesser point value. If you have any questions concerning the legality of a skill, please visit [USASF.net](https://usASF.net) or [IASFworlds.com](https://iasfworlds.com).