



2025-2026 Cheerleading Terms and Conditions

Changes and items of clarification from last school year to this school year are highlighted. Some sections have been reorganized/renumbered in an effort to better organize the information in the IESA Cheerleading Terms and Conditions.

I. CHEERLEADING SEASON CALENDAR

Cooperative Agreement Due	November 11, 2025
Entry Deadline	October 31, 2025
Final Entry Deadline	December 1, 2025
Online Roster Deadline	January 14, 2026
Competition Date	February 11, 2026

The IESA Recommended Cheer Season would need to be adopted by each member school's board.

- Mandatory No Contact Period – Monday following the IESA Cheer Championships through March 31st.
- April/May – Tryouts allowable
- June/July – Camps / Open Gyms allowable – can't be made mandatory
- Monday Week 4 of IESA Calendar – Season Begins

II. ENTRY FEES AND DIVISIONS

A. Entry Fees

1. Schools must pay an entry fee of \$80 per division by the entry deadline. Schools can enter a maximum of one squad per division.
2. Late entry fees are doubled after the entry deadline but will be waived for schools designated as new members or for current member schools entering this activity for the first time.
3. Entries received after the final entry deadline will not be accepted.
4. Entry fees will be refunded only upon request prior to the entry deadline.

B. Divisions

1. Game Day Cheer Division
 - a. 1:15 time limit for entire performance
 - b. Athletes must enter side or back corner (similar to a timeout in basketball)
 - c. All skills (stunts, pyramids, jumps, tumbling) must be performed inside the competition area.
 - d. Props must be carried on/off the competition area like a basketball timeout.
 - e. Props may NOT be set up in advance.
 - f. **Objects CAN be thrown/placed outside the competition area.**
 - g. MUST INCLUDE BOTH a cheer and a chant.
 - h. Poms and Signs MUST BE USED.
 - i. Megaphones/Flags/Mascot are optional but encouraged.
 - j. A mascot would count as a member of the squad.
 - k. NO MUSIC allowed during the GAME DAY CHEER Division.
 - l. No tosses (sponge or basket)
 - m. **Airborne twisting tumbling skills are permitted only on grass (real or artificial), a mat or a rubberized track, with the exception of round-offs and aerial cartwheels. – NOT PERMITTED ON A GYM FLOOR AND WOULD NOT BE LEGAL.**
 - n. One division (squads with 5-25 members)
2. Routine Division
 - a. Music is required.
 - b. 1:30-3:00 minute time limit for entire performance.

- c. Music portion may not exceed two (2) minutes.
 - d. The “normal” full routine setup is music, followed by the cheer/sideline, and concludes with music.
 - e. Three divisions: (5-25 squad members in all divisions)
 - 1A Routine (smallest 1/3 of the enrollment of the schools participating).
 - 2A Routine (middle 1/3 of the enrollment of the schools participating).
 - 3A Routine (largest 1/3 of the enrollment of the schools participating).
3. No changes in division are allowed after the final entry deadline date.
 4. A mascot is considered part of the squad and will count towards the maximum number of members allowed if he/she participates and is part of the squad’s performance.
 5. If a school participates in both the Game Day Cheer and Routine divisions, it is recommended that different elements be used in each performance.

III. STUDENT AND COACH ELIGIBILITY

- A. **A student must be eligible under all the eligibility rules and conditions of competition of the IESA. These rules and conditions are outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of the IESA Handbook and include but are not limited to:**
 1. Scholastic Standing - IESA By-Law 2.040
 2. Residence and Transfer - IESA By-Laws 2.050 and 2.060
 3. Participation Limitations - IESA By-Law 3.040
 4. Age Qualifications - IESA By-Law 3.050
 5. Physical Examination - IESA By-Law 3.060
 6. Amateurism - IESA By-Law 3.070
 7. Participating Under an Assumed Name - IESA By-Law 3.080
 8. All-Star Participation - IESA By-Law 3.100
 9. Penalty for Violating Rules – IESA By-Law 5.100
- B. **To serve as a head coach, assistant coach, unpaid volunteer coach, or in any coaching capacity, the individual must meet the IESA requirements outlined in IESA By-Law 2.110.**
 1. A maximum of 3 coaches may be listed on the entry form by the online roster deadline. All coaches must meet the IESA coaching certification to receive a wristband for the state competition. The coach wristband permits a coach entry into the State Final Venue for warm-ups and into the coaching box for the competition.

IV. COMPETITION RULES AND IESA EXCEPTIONS TO NFHS RULES

- A. **The National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) Spirit Rules Book will be followed for the state competition.**
 1. The IESA has adopted the following exceptions to the NFHS Spirit Rules Book:
 - a. All tosses (sponge and basket) are prohibited. For the purpose of clarification, a quick toss is permitted because the top person's feet begin with contact on the performing surface. See NFHS Spirit rule 1 for specific definitions.
 2. Any squad in violation of safety regulations or any NFHS Spirit Rules Book major infraction will be assessed a deduction for each infraction as outlined in the technical scoresheet.
- B. **The IESA Cheer administrator has the authority to adjust both the competition schedule and the warm-up schedule as needed.**
- C. **Prior to Competition**
 1. Required Online Forms
 - a. Entry Form
 - i. All members of the cheerleading squad must be current members of the official school spirit squad and must attend the school they are representing.
 - ii. The cheerleading entry form must be completed for each division entered by the online roster deadline; **only the squad members and coaches listed on the entry form are permitted to enter into the state competition areas as team personnel.**
 - b. Squad Photos and Cut Lines

- i. Picture instructions - <http://www.iesa.org/documents/general/IESA-ProgramPhotoInstructions.pdf>
 - ii. Schools competing in both divisions will need to submit a photo and cut line for each division.
 - iii. The program will state "Photo Not Available" if a photo is not submitted.
2. A schedule will be posted after the final entry deadline and will be dependent based on the number of registered squads in each division.
3. In lieu of a mandatory coaches' meeting on the day of the competition, schools will be sent a "Welcome to State" video/packet in January and schools are responsible for viewing this video prior to their arrival at the state competition.
4. On the day of competition, when the performance time is in 5 minute increments each squad will have ten (10) minutes of warm-up time on the tumbling strips and ten (10) minutes on a mat that is the same size as the competition mat (42' x 54'); when the performance time is in 4 minute increments each squad will have eight (8) minutes of warm-up time on the tumbling strips and eight (8) minutes on the full mat. This warm-up time will be approximately 10 to 20 minutes before the actual performance time and will take place in the designated state final venue area.
5. The Association assumes no responsibility for the payment of copyright, royalty, or any other fees connected to the performances of any material in the cheer competition. Schools must adhere to and be in full compliance with U.S. copyright laws.
 - a. Music must be downloaded on a digital device (iPhone, iPad). It is the coach's responsibility to start and stop the music. (In Dropbox is not downloaded to the device)
 - b. Coaches are permitted to test music during the designated time prior to the start of Session 1 and after the conclusion of Session 1 Awards.

D. During Competition

1. Personnel selected by the IESA will be responsible for judging all performances. Their decisions are final and cannot be protested.
2. Time will start with the first organized word, motion, or sound of music and will end with the same. There will be a deduction from the total score if the time limit is not met. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official end of the routine. The ending of the routine should be held for a few seconds and safely dismounted with no excessive celebration.
3. Squads may line up anywhere inside the competition area. The competition area will be 42' x 54' (9 strips).
 - a. Participants must start on the mat in the competition area with at least one foot on the ground. There will be a deduction per judge if a school fails to start their performance with at least one foot on the ground.
 - b. Participants can step on the edge of the mat, but if he or she steps off the edge (i.e. foot/shoe makes contact with the floor) or outside the mat boundary lines, it is considered out of bounds. There will be a deduction per incident per judge if a participant steps outside the boundary lines.
 - c. Participants can step on the boundary lines.
4. Each squad's presentation must include at least one cheer or sideline chant.
5. The musical portion of a routine division performance must not exceed two (2) minutes.
 - a. Band cheers will be considered part of the musical portion.
 - b. Squads exceeding the music time limit will be assessed a deduction from the total score.
6. Signs used during the Routine Division of the competition may be placed on the competition mat prior to the performance and such signs may be placed on or off the mat without penalty.
7. Signs for the Game Day Cheer division must be brought out to the mat with the athletes.
8. Interruptions
 - a. If, in the opinion of the tournament officials, a squad's routine is interrupted because of failure of the tournament equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the tournament rather than the squad, the head official should stop the routine. The squad will be allowed to present its routine from

the place in the routine where the interruption occurred. The degree and effect of the interruption will be determined by the tournament officials.

- b. In the event a squad's routine is interrupted because of failure of the squad's own equipment, the squad must either continue the routine or withdraw from the competition.
- c. In the event that an injury occurs during warm-up or during the team's scheduled competition time and the athlete is no longer able to participate, the head official and tournament management shall determine the time for the team to feed back into the warm-up and competition order.
 - i. This time should not exceed 30 (thirty) minutes from the time of injury in the warm-up area or on the competition mat.
 - ii. Tournament officials reserve the right to stop the routine if an injury occurs.

E. After Competition

1. Awards

- a. All four divisions will receive a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophy and medals regardless of the number of schools enrolled in that division.
- b. All teams in a division are called to the competition mat – only the top 3 will be announced in reverse order.
- c. A school representative will be asked to read the names of the participating athletes for the medal presentation.

2. Within 1 hour of the conclusion of the awards ceremony, the head coach will be emailed a pdf. of their results.

- a. Included in the email will be the scores from the scoring judges, the tech judges, and the overall division results sheet with all teams' scores.
- b. The head coach will have 48 hours to email the IESA Cheer Administrator to ask for clarification on a score.
 - i. No scores are changed because of this email communication.
 - ii. At no time will a video review take place as the judges' scores are final and cannot be protested.

3. Clerical or team scoring errors may be corrected up to 48 hours after the conclusion of the competition. After this time, all team standings will be final.

V. JUDGING CRITERIA

A. The judges will score the squads according to the judging criteria on a 100-point system. The total accumulated point value will be averaged against the number of judges and technical deductions will be taken from the average score. In keeping with the proper role of cheerleading, emphasis will be placed on practicality of material. Majority is defined as half plus one.

1. Communication (15 points in Game Day Cheer, 10 points in Routine)

- a. Game Day Cheer - 5 points for practicality of material in routine (use of signs, effectiveness of cheer and sideline chant words) and 10 points for voice inflection, eye contact, facial expression.
- b. Routine - voice inflection, eye contact, facial expression

2. Fundamental Skills (45 points in Game Day Cheer, 50 points in Routine)

- a. Game Day Cheer - 15 points for motions (strong, sharp, arm levels, synchronization), 10 points for tumbling, 10 points for jumps, and 10 points for partner stunts/pyramids.
- b. Routine - 10 point for motions (strong, sharp, arm levels, synchronization), 10 points for tumbling, 10 points for jumps, 10 points for partner stunts, and 10 points for pyramids

3. Group Techniques (20 points) - 10 points for synchronization (group timing in motions, stunts, tumbling, jumps, and dance) and 10 points for formations and spacing (use of the floor, formation changes, and symmetrical spacing)

4. Overall Effect (10 points) - crowd appeal (choreography, continuity, transitions, and visual effect)

5. Sportsmanship (10 points) - the style the cheerleaders demonstrate, the squad should be enthusiastic about the material but should refrain from taunting or bragging gestures that are inconsistent with the squad's ability to lead the crowd in support of the athletic team.

B. For the Routine Division, a rubric will be implemented, and a copy of the rubric is available online.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS

- A. The IESA is not responsible for lost or stolen items. There is no security in the State Final Venue and schools are responsible for all of their belongings; at no time may squads bring their own tumbling or warm-up mats into the State Final Venue.
- B. Spectators and coaches will be allowed to videotape in the stands provided they remain seated and do not obstruct the view of the judging panels and the entrances/exits to the exhibit hall. For the safety of the competitors, flash photography is not allowed.
- C. Doors for spectators will open approximately one hour before the start of the competition.
- D. Admission:

Cash ticket prices: \$15.00 per person (subject to change due to venue fees)
 5 and under are free.

A fee will be charged when using a credit card for ticket purchases.

- E. All spectators must sit in the bleachers, or the chairs provided - seating on the floor outside of the competition mat is NOT permitted and spectators are not allowed on or near the competition area.
- F. All teams will be photographed prior to their performance by Event Pro Photography. Photo plaques will be available for individuals to purchase on the day of the contest.

