



2026 WVSSAC Game Day Invitational Rules & Regulations

SECTION I: SCHOOL REPRESENTATION

A. PARTICIPATION AND FEES

The total number of participants for a school team is determined by counting all spirit-leading participants including cheerleaders, dancers and flag corps members. Up to two mascots can be added to your routine and must be registered with the team. Mascots will not count toward the total number of participants allowed but may impact scoring. Mascots and flag corps members cannot be involved in the execution of technical cheer skills such as stunts and tumbling. The use of a live band and/or drum line to supplement the Game Day environment is not permitted. No twirlers permitted.

Schools are responsible for registering their squad in the appropriate division based on classification.

Each school team will be allowed to enter one (1) school team division. The following divisions have been identified in which schools must participate in their appropriate division.

<u>TEAM DIVISIONS*:</u>	<u>TEAM FEE:</u>
Small Varsity Game Day 5-15 participants, 2 coaches	\$150
Medium Varsity Game Day 16-19 participants, 2 coaches	\$150
Large Varsity Game Day 20-23 participants, 2 coaches	\$150
Super Varsity Game Day 24-30 participants, 2 coaches	\$150

***WVSSAC reserves the right to alter divisions based on the total number of registered teams in each division. A minimum of 10 teams must be registered in a division for that division to be stand-alone, or the division may be combined with another.**

****Additional participants, alternates, or coaches over the max number allowed by classification must pay the admission fee and purchase a ticket for admittance.**

B. SCHOOL REPRESENTATION AND TEAM PARTICIPATION

The school team will consist of students that meet the eligibility requirements according to the WVSSAC Rules and Regulations Handbook.

1. One team per school will be allowed to enter the WVSSAC Game Day Invitational.
2. All participants must be eligible students at the school in which they represent and must be listed on the cheer eligibility form.
3. The individual students representing a school team may vary in the qualifying round categories provided each performance does not exceed the maximum number of participants.
4. For teams advancing to the finals, participants that enter the floor must remain the entire length of the final's performance. Substituting individuals on and off the floor for the different sections of the final round is not permitted.
5. It is the school coach's responsibility that each team member, coaches, parents, and other people affiliated with the school conduct themselves appropriately.



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6. School teams must refrain from taunting, bragging, or suggestive expressions or gestures as well as discrimination of any nature.
7. **All individuals must adhere to the rules and regulations of the hosting facility.**

C. UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

1. Traditional game day uniform is required.
2. All National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) and WVSSAC uniform rules apply.
3. School teams must display an overall appearance conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school regarding grooming, traditional and appropriate attire, conservative make-up, and uniformity.
4. **PROPS:** The use of signs, poms, flags, rally towels, and megaphones are allowed and encouraged for performances. The use of additional props is not permitted. The use of flags on poles is not permitted by top persons while in stunts.
 - a. Props should be used for their intended purposes and should only be used to enhance—not distract from—the crowd leading efforts of the team.
 - b. Props may not be embellished or altered. Electric and/or battery-operated props are not permitted.
 - c. While using props—specifically, participants may not make contact outside the competition performance area with the props. (Exception: flags)
 - d. Props may be placed outside the performance area when not in use. Participants may not leave the performance area to retrieve or place a prop.

D. COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Approximate floor size will be 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 strips).
2. The WVSSAC Game Day Invitational will comply with the NFHS competition surface rule.
3. Team members must remain on the performance surface at all times during the routine.
4. Signs or props may be placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area.
5. Once announced, teams will enter the performance area with all props. Presetting props is not permitted.

E. MUSIC

1. Schools must use recorded marching band music for the Fight Song and Band Chant categories. Schools are highly encouraged to use their actual school fight song and band chant music. Teams must avoid the use of overly produced or highly synthesized music which could result in a penalty. Voiceovers and sound effects are not permitted.
2. All use of music must be compliant with U.S. Copyright Laws.
3. *Neither the WVSSAC nor Varsity Spirit is responsible for obtaining any necessary permission or licensing of the recorded music used by a school team during the WVSSAC Game Day Invitational.*
4. Fight Song /Band Music
 - a. If a high school marching band records their school's **original** fight song, they will need to get the school's permission to use the song and recording.
 - b. If a team legally acquires a recording of a band playing a popular recording from an authorized provider (iTunes, Amazon, etc.), the song can be used if no edits are made to the music.



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- c. A team cannot use a recording of their band playing a popular song (a cover) or other music without the proper permission or the band becoming a preferred provider.
- d. See Varsity.com/music for more information about preferred providers.

F. HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

1. WVSSAC rules require cheer and spirit performances to be in accordance with safety standards prescribed by the National Federation High School Spirit Rules and WVSSAC Cheer/Spirit Safety rules.
2. The WVSSAC requires annual education and training for all spirit head coaches on concussions and sudden cardiac arrest.
3. School participants must comply with all WVSSAC rules, regulations, and policies.
4. Any student participating in a WVSSAC member school cheerleading program, suspected of having a concussion must comply with the concussion guidelines set forth by the WVSSAC.

SECTION II: PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Teams will be evaluated on their ability to lead the crowd, proper skill incorporation and execution, and performance, motions, and overall routine. Game Day practicality is heavily emphasized. Performances should be prepared as they would be for sideline crowd-leading at a school sporting event.

A. GAME DAY ROUTINES

The competition will consist of a Qualifying Round followed by a Final Round for teams that advance. Performances include three Game Day sections. In the Qualifying Round, each of the sections —Band Chant, Crowd Leading and Fight Song is **timed and scored separately** on the respective score sheet for each. No situational cue is given in the Qualifying Round. There should be no “organized” entrances when taking the floor for any of the performances. **Teams cannot build stunts or execute skills off the performance floor prior to the beginning of the routine—all skills must be executed DURING the routine and on the mat.** Spirited interaction between each section is encouraged to promote a game day feel, but **only skills executed in each individual performance impact scoring.** Mascots and flag runners must enter the floor with the team and should be used to lead and engage the crowd.

1 - Band Chant:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Marching band music or drum cadence performance that encourages crowd interaction.
- Should have emphasis on crowd appeal, visual appeal, and practicality.
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** Teams will be announced, take the floor, and timing will begin with the first beat of music or organized movement. To clearly mark the end of the Band Chant, music should end, then teams should show spirit. **Teams are discouraged from adding any words or organized movement following the end of the Band Chant music.**
- No stunts or tumbling are permitted in this section. Jumps and kicks are allowed.

2 - Crowd Leading:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Sideline leadership that encourages a crowd response
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** Timing begins with the sound of a BUZZER, which will occur ***within 10 seconds***



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following the completion of the team's BAND CHANT routine and while the team is spiriting on the floor. A team should wait for the buzzer to sound and then execute its Crowd Leading performance.

- There will **not** be a buzzer to signify the **END** of this section.
- Skill restrictions:
 - No basket, sponge or elevator tosses allowed (cradles are considered dismounts, not tosses). Coed and "quick" tosses are permitted.
 - No inversions
 - No twisting release dismounts from stunts
 - Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches
 - No running tumbling. Standing tumbling is limited to one tumbling skill at a time. A back tuck is the most elite standing tumbling skill allowed.

3 - Fight Song:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Traditional school fight song performed to recorded marching band music
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** **Within 10 seconds of the completion of the Crowd Leading Section** and while the team is spiriting on the floor, the coach or team representative will be responsible for starting the Fight Song music. Timing for Fight Song will begin with the first beat of music or organized movement, whichever comes first.
- Added or "Incorporated" skills (stunts, jumps and/or tumbling) are a component of the fight song score sheet. Up to three **CONSECUTIVE** eight-counts should be incorporated with stunts, tumbling and/or jumps. The three 8 counts of added skills (incorporation) can take place at any point in the routine and can (but does not have to be) repeated once if desired. **IF** repeated, the incorporated skills must repeat **exactly as initially performed**. Exception: Repeated skills that must dismount to the floor during the routine to meet the 8-count restriction rule, may end "up" at the end of a routine. To properly count any incorporation, start counting the 8-counts with the "dips" of the added skill(s)—the dip to jump, dip to tumble, dip of top person to load stunt, etc.).
- **REGARDLESS OF WHEN THE MUSIC ENDS**, counting of incorporated 8 counts will continue until the
- **routine** is complete or the skills are completed and back on the ground.
- Teams are discouraged from adding extended crowd leading sections following the completion of the Fight Song music.
- Skill restrictions:
 - No basket, sponge or elevator tosses allowed (cradles are considered dismounts, not tosses)
 - No inversions
 - No twisting release dismounts from stunts
 - Single-leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches
 - No running tumbling
 - Standing tumbling is limited to one skill at a time. A back tuck is the most elite standing tumbling skill allowed

FINAL ROUND - Teams with the highest cumulative scores from the Qualifying Round will advance to the Final Round. Point breaks will be reviewed and considered. The number of teams advancing to the Finals will be determined based on the number of teams participating in the Qualifying Round in each Conference. The Final Round will be preceded by a designated warm- up.



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Each FINAL ROUND performance will have an overall maximum performance time limit of three (3) minutes in which the Game Day sections will be performed in the following order:

1. Band Chant
2. Crowd Leading *Beginning with Situational Response* (see description below)
3. Fight Song

The entire performance will be executed in continuous order, like the Qualifying Round. To continue the feel of a Game Day environment, **spirited crowd-leading interaction between each section is encouraged.**

SITUATIONAL RESPONSE: To imitate the Game Day environment, each team will respond to a situational cue given by the announcer, as heard at a football or, by request only, basketball game. Following the completion of the Band Chant, the announcer will give each team a game scenario indicating an offense or defense situation. Teams should show their definitive understanding of the situation with an OFFENSE or DEFENSE crowd-leading response, which will begin the Crowd Leading section of the State Championship performance. Teams should focus on crowd effectiveness, motion technique and skills relevant to game day. A general response would not meet the criteria. **INTERFERENCE:** Coaches and/or athletes not on the performance floor may NOT assist or direct the squad (either verbally or nonverbally) with the situational response.

SITUATIONAL RESPONSE: Each team will respond to audio cues by a game announcer, as heard at football and basketball games. To imitate the Game Day environment, audio cues will include an announcer-lead situational cue to which the team will show a definitive OFFENSE or DEFENSE response. A general response would not meet the criteria.

B. SCORES AND RANKINGS

1. In the qualifying round, each team will be scored by multiple judges in each category. The cumulative scores from the three categories will determine which teams advance to finals.
2. The official results and team placements will be determined by the cumulative scores from the FINALS round only. Qualifying round scores will not carry over to determine final team standings. If a tie occurs in the Final Round, the process for breaking the tie will be:
 - a. Tie Breaker A: Crowd Leading Score from the Final will be utilized to break the tie
 - b. Tie Breaker B: the Fight Song Score from Final will be used
 - c. Tie Breaker C: the cumulative total of the Qualifying Round Scores will be used
3. A Time and Deduction sheet will be given to the coach following each performance.
4. Scores and rankings will be available only to coaches as follows:
 - a. Qualifying round - score sheets will be made available to all teams following the qualifying round.
 - b. Final round scores and rankings will be posted on the WVSSAC website after the competition.
5. The judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the WVSSAC Game Day Invitational score sheets.
6. **All scores and judges' decisions are considered final. There is no process for protest.**

C. TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Timing will begin with the first group movement, voice, or beat of music, whichever comes first.
2. Acknowledging the potential variance in sound system and timing devices, a three (3) second allowance is given for the Qualifying Round. Judges will issue deductions as follows:



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- 3 points for a time of 1:04-1:08
 - 5 points for a time of 1:09-1:13
 - 7 points for a time of 1:14+
3. In the State Championship Round, a five (5) second allowance is given for the Qualifying Round. Judges will issue deductions as follows:
- 3 points for a time of 3:06-3:10
 - 5 points for a time of 3:11-3:15
 - 7 points for a time of 3:16+
4. It is recommended that all teams practice and time performances prior to competition to allow for variations in sound equipment.
5. Introductions and exits:
- a. All team breaks, rituals, and traditions need to take place backstage before a team is in the “on deck” or next to performing position.
 - b. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures (i.e. teams must refrain from chest bumps, hugs, and handshakes)
 - c. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team’s performance.
 - d. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official end of the routine.

SECTION III: INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCE

A. UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

1. 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 will be directed by contest officials to STOP the routine.
2. If directed to stop a routine in the Qualifying Round, the team will perform the impacted section again as directed and will only be evaluated from the point where the interruption occurred.
3. If directed to stop a routine in the Final Round, the team will perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated only from the point where the interruption occurred.

B. FAULT OF TEAM

1. In the event a team’s routine is interrupted because of failure of the team’s own equipment, team operator error, or a team member leaving the performance area, the team must either continue the routine or withdraw from the competition. **Once a performance has begun, a coach is not permitted to stop a routine for any reason other than an injury.**
2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform later. 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.

C. INJURY

1. All participants must follow the UIL safety regulations identified in this document. **The only people that may stop a routine for injury are a) competition officials, or b) the school HEAD coach from the team performing.**



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2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform later. If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed later, the spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team will perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated only from the point where the interruption occurred.
3. The injured participant that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless the competition officials receive clearance from the on-site medical personnel and the school head coach of the competing team.
4. Any injured participant suspected of having a concussion is required to follow the WVSSAC Concussion Policy regarding the treatment of concussions and must be removed immediately from the competition.

SECTION IV: INTERPRETATIONS AND RULINGS

A. RULES & PROCEDURES

Any questions about the competition rules or procedures will be handled exclusively by the team's school coach and directed to the Competition Director. Such questions should be asked prior to the team's competition performance.

The WVSSAC Game Day Invitational Rules Committee will consist of a designated Competition Director, Head Judge, and WVSSAC staff. The school team and school coach must abide by all decisions made by the judges and Rules Committee. Any interpretation of the WVSSAC Game Day Invitational rules and regulations or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Rules Committee.

B. AWARDS

Team awards will be given to both the championship and runner-up team in each division.

C. JUDGING PANELS

Judges will be provided by Varsity Spirit, and they will be responsible for scoring each school's performance according to the Game Day competition score sheets.

- **Head Judge** - The Head Judge is responsible for overseeing the entire Judging Panel that consists of Panel Judges, Point Deduction Judge, and Safety Judge. The Head Judge will also fill out his/her own score sheet for each performance.
- **Panel Judge** - Panel Judges are responsible for scoring each team's performance based on the Game Day score sheets. Each Panel Judge will fill out a score sheet for each performance.
- **Safety Judge** - The Safety Judge is responsible for administering all safety violations, time violations, and boundary violations.
- **Judging Coordinator/Quality Judge**
- **ALL JUDGES' DECISIONS ARE FINAL. THERE IS NO PROCESS FOR PROTEST.**

D. DISQUALIFICATION

Any team that does not adhere to the terms and procedures of the WVSSAC Game Day Invitational rules and regulations defined in this document will be subject to disqualification from the competition and will automatically forfeit any award.



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E. DEDUCTIONS

Deduction points will be subtracted from the final score. The following is a **sample** of potential rule infractions and point deductions. Teams should refer to the Time and Deduction Sheet for each performance on any deductions given.

Area	Specific Examples	Deduction Points
Participant Allowance (Section I, A)	Exceed maximum participants	Disqualification from contest
Music Licensing (Section I, E)	Failure to meet licensing requirement	Disqualification from contest
NFHS Spirit Rules and WVSSAC Safety Rules	Utilization of skill or stunt not permitted by rules	5 points per rule violation
Time Limit* *Window to allow variance (Section II, C)	Each violation	Qualifying Round: 3 points for a time of 1:04-1:08 5 points for a time of 1:09-1:13 7 points for a time of 1:14+ *3 second window considered above State Championships: 3 points for a time of 3:06-3:10 5 points for a time of 3:11-3:15 7 points for a time of 3:16+ *5 second window considered above
Time Limit (Section II, C)	Excessive celebration or organized entrance or exit	1 point
Performance Floor (Section I, D)	Any team member stepping with both feet outside the designated performance area	.5 Half of one point