

**CHEER
AND DANCE
PROGRAM
HANDBOOK**



CHEER

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Introduction

Coaching cheerleading is not just about bringing megaphones and pom poms to the field, it is about the physical and mental preparation required to perform with the highest level of safety. The primary mission of this program is to “help people enjoy life by providing a quality park and recreation system.” In addition, your goal is to help develop the basic skills of each participant by instructing them through the proper skill sequential training. As a coach or mentor, you have the opportunity to serve as a positive role model and instructor to young athletes, while providing the life skills and guidance they need to excel.



I. Cheer By-Laws



Rockford Park District Mission Statement
To help people enjoy life by providing a quality park and recreation system.

PROGRAM

Cheer and Dance is comprised of girls ages 5-11 who will cheer for Flag Football of Rockford. There are no tryouts; all cheerleaders cheer, therefore, squads may be of differing abilities. All cheerleaders are coached by a volunteer and high school cheerleader mentors. The purpose of Cheer is to develop, organize, and promote cheerleading activities for our youth participants. Cheer will also encourage good sportsmanship and fun for all our participants.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

- All Cheer rules will be observed and followed at all times by cheerleaders, parents, and guests.
- Participants must attend all practices, games, and other Cheer outings.
- Participants must help with all fundraising activities and/or events.

COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES & PRIORITIES

- To develop and nurture a positive attitude and a positive self-image in all cheerleaders.
- Direct the conditioning and training of each cheerleader to improve their endurance, resistance to injury, physical health, and coordination.
- To treat each cheerleader on the squad equally and with respect.
- To always approach coaching in a positive fashion.
- To encourage; any criticism will be constructive and rendered in a gentle fashion.

PARENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT

- I will reflect good judgment and proper behavior at all Cheer events.
- I will encourage my child to follow all Rockford Park District and Cheer rules.
- I will remember that children learn best by example.
- I will recognize the importance of our coaches and volunteers; they are important to the development of my child's development.
- I will communicate with the coaching staff in a professional effective manner.
- I will be willing to volunteer when needed.
- I know that it is my responsibility to know what is going on with my child's squad. I will always check in with head coach or coordinator at each practice.
- I will not withhold my child from practice as a form of punishment. (If your child is missing practice, it affects the entire squad).
- I will not approach a coach in the middle of practice or games, it is not an appropriate time to discuss any matters. I will e-mail my concerns or contact the coach and/or cheer coordinator before or after practice.

ZERO TOLERANCE RULE

Zero tolerance of unsportsmanlike conduct will be enforced. Abusive language or conduct on the part of any coach, cheerleader, parent, or spectator will not be tolerated, and in extreme cases, Cheer staff and or Rockford Park District staff reserve the right to remove the violator from the park. If the violator refuses to leave the park, Rockford Park District Police will be notified.

UNIFORMS

- Each squad member is responsible for her own uniform.
- Each member will receive a complete uniform with their paid registration, but may need to purchase additional items deemed necessary by the Head Coach and /or the Cheer Advisory Group.
- Uniforms should be kept neat, clean, and wrinkle-free. Alteration must have the prior approval of the Head Coach.
- No part of the uniform may be worn for any activity except performances, unless otherwise directed by the Head Coach. This includes shoes and socks.
- No gum will be permitted at practice or on game day.
- No nail polish or makeup while in uniform.
- No jewelry while in uniform or at practices. This includes earrings and studs.
- Any squad member missing any part of her uniform will not perform that day.
- Hair will always be worn off the shoulders and off the face. There can be absolutely no stragglers hanging in the eyes. This includes games and practices.
- No excessive ponytails; Head Coach and Cheer Coordinator will set rule.

PRACTICES

- All practices will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays at Bloom School Park (2901 Pelham Rd, Rockford)
- Additional practices and meetings may be called at the discretion of the Head Coach.
- Attendance of all practices is required. Our practice time as a team is limited. If you are unable to attend practice, the entire team suffers. If you miss a practice, you are jeopardizing the experience of all the team members. Please be realistic about your ability and your family's ability to make this commitment.
- All squad members should be at practice on time, and remain until the end of practice.
- No practice may be held unless the Head Coach or Cheer Coordinator is present.
- All squad members are to be dressed for practice in appropriate attire.
- Cheer T-shirt must be worn tucked in to practice. Always be clean and modest.
- Shirts and shorts should be loose, but not baggy. Over-large clothes are potentially dangerous, and may cause injury. Tight shirts and shorts or short shorts will not be allowed.
- Absolutely no food or drink at practice or games. Water bottles are encouraged.

GAMES

Attendance at all games is required. A schedule will be given at the beginning of the season.

- If the squad member has to miss a game for any reason other than illness, a 1-week notice is required in order for the reason to be considered by the Head Coach as excused (unless it is a family emergency). If it is not an emergency or illness and a week's notice has not been given, it will then be automatically considered an unexcused absence.
- All cheerleaders will be expected to arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of their first scheduled game.

Cheer By-Laws Continued ...

- The squad members will arrive at games in like clothing - that is, uniform shell or other matching cheer clothes approved by the Head Coach, and tennis shoes. We want the look of a team as well as an attitude of unity at all times.
- Uniforms at games: Poms, shell, skirt, bodysuit or uniform briefs, uniform socks, uniform shoes, and your hair tied in order to cheer at a game. If you are missing a piece or pieces, and you are unable to obtain or borrow them, you will be sitting out that game. If there is a squad ribbon, you need to wear that on your ponytail.

BEHAVIOR THAT WILL INCUR DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

- Displaying poor sportsmanship at a game
- Talking while the coaching staff is instructing
- Not having a COMPLETE uniform for games and outings
- Profanity, emotional scenes, or other inappropriate behavior at practice or games
- Chewing gum, eating, or drinking (other than water) at practices or games
- Wearing jewelery at games or practices
- Late to games or practice
- Not paying attention at practice or game
- Disrespect of team members or coaching staff
- Excessive unexcused absences for practices and/or games
- Hair not pulled back or hair/bangs in face
- **WHENEVER THE COACH DEEMS AN INFRACTION HAS OCCURRED**



II. Cheer Agreement and Values



CHEER AND DANCE CORE VALUES

- Fundamentals
- Sportsmanship
- Hard work
- Teamwork
- Respect
- Healthy living

PARENTAL AGREEMENT

I agree and give permission for my daughter, _____, to participate in Cheer. I have read the information sheets and Cheer By-Laws. I understand the commitment and responsibilities my daughter is willing to undertake. I will support the coach and the Cheer By-Laws, and agree to help her abide by the commitments required of a cheerleader.

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

CHEERLEADER AGREEMENT

I, _____, understand the requirements and commitments involved in Cheer, and I agree to abide by the requirements and commitments, rules, and regulations set forth in the Cheer By-Laws

Cheerleader's Signature

Date

COACH'S SIGNATURE _____

III. Terminology

- **Captain** – a squad member who is chosen to be the leader of the squad.
- **Chant** – a short, simple yell, usually with movements, which is repeated several times; a chant is usually performed on the sidelines and is often referred to as a “sideline”
- **Cheer** – a longer yell that involves motions and sometimes stunts, pyramids, jumps, or tumbling. A cheer is usually performed on the field or court.
- **Choreography** – the set arrangement of steps and movements.
- **Coach** – a person who instructs or teaches squad members.
- **Execution** – performance of a stunt or routine; also, how a stunt or routine is performed.
- **Megaphone** – a funnel-shaped device used to amplify and direct a coach’s or squad member’s voice.
- **Motion** – a set position of a squad member’s arms and hands.
- **Pom** – a handheld ball of strips of plastic or metal connected by a handle.
- **Routine** – a continuous show of cheers, chants, and dance steps.

IV. Guidelines for Introducing Basic Skills

Teaching basic cheerleading skills requires more than just having performed the skill yourself. Although it’s helpful to have performed the skill, teaching it successfully requires patience and instruction. Even if you have never performed the skill before, you can still learn to teach successfully with the useful acronym IDEA: Introduce the skill, demonstrate the skill, explain the skill, and then attend to the participants practicing the skill.

Step 1: Think small initially. Try not to overwhelm the athlete with too much at once.

Step 2: Break skills into small steps

Step 3: Develop one component of a skill at a time

Step 4: As squad members become more proficient at a skill, reinforce them only occasionally, and only for the best examples of the skill behavior

Step 5: Watch for and correct skill deterioration (weakening)

Step 6: Go back to the basics of a well-learned skill if you see a squad member displaying regression over a period of time

V. Basic Skills

A. Clap & Clasp Motions



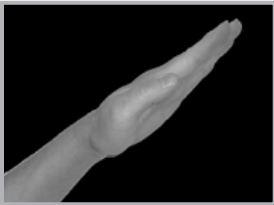
Clasp— hands are clasped at chin level, with the elbows in. Notice the elbows are tight to the body.

Overhead clasp— arms are straight above the head in a clasp and slightly in front of the face; elbows are locked.

Clap— hands are in blades (palm facing palm) at chin level with the elbows in.

B. Blade Motion

Motions with blade hands are meant to be sharp and clean. These motions show precise placement and technique when performed properly.



A proper blade motion is made with the hands held open with fingers extended and together, thumbs flat.

Here are some examples of **incorrect** blade motions:

1



2



3



1. This is incorrect. The fingers are curved up, not flat.

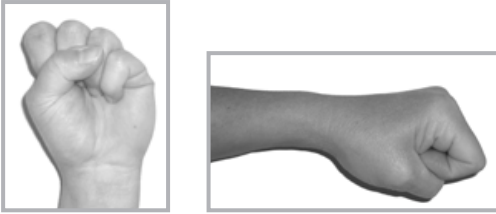
2. This is incorrect. The fingers are curved down, not flat.

3. This is incorrect. The thumb is not flat.

V. Basic Skills Continued ...

C. Proper Fists

A proper fist has the five fingers curled into the palm tightly and the thumb is curled over the fingers so it does not show.



Here are some examples of **incorrect** motions:

1



2



3



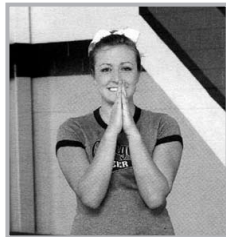
1. This is incorrect. The fingers are not tightly curled.
2. This is incorrect. The thumb is extended over the fingers.
3. This is incorrect. The wrist and fist are hyper-extended.

D. Basic Cheer Motions

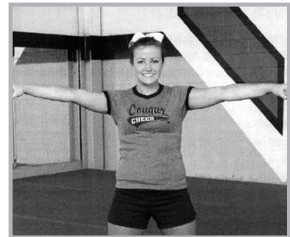
The following are the basic motions that are used in most cheers. Pay special attention to the hand positions for each motion.



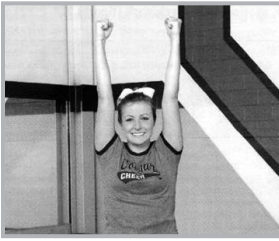
Clasp



Clap



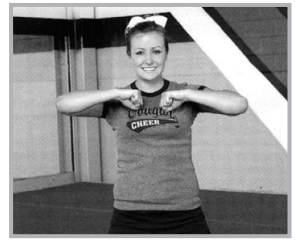
"T" Motion



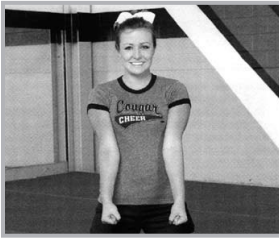
Touchdown



High "V"



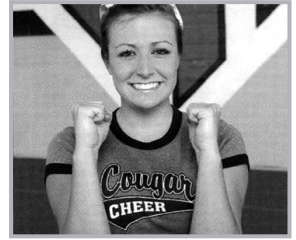
Broken "T"



Low Touchdown



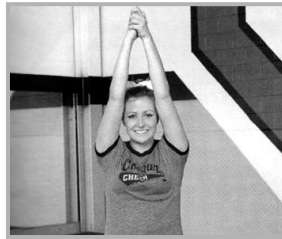
Low "V"



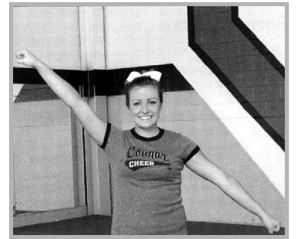
Daggers



Half Touchdown



Overhead Clasp



Diagonal



"L" Motion



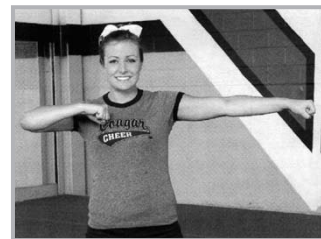
"K" Motion



Punch



Muscle Man

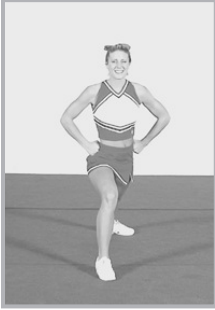


Bow and Arrow

V. Basic Skills Continued ...

E. Lunges

Lunges are visual body additions to motions. They should be performed with tight body positioning and wide stances. Whether performing the side or front lunge, the torso is straight and facing the crowd.



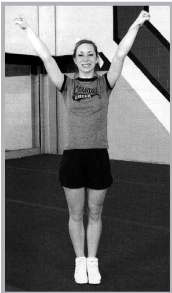
Front Lunge — the lead leg is bent with the knee positioned **directly over the ankle**; the back leg is straight. Feet should be perpendicular to each other; the front foot is pointed to the front while the back foot faces the side. It is important to keep the knee directly over the ankle as this protects the knee. If the knee is positioned over the toes, undue stress is placed on the knee.



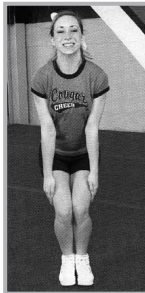
Side Lunge — the lead leg is bent with the knee positioned directly over the ankle; the back leg is straight. Feet should be perpendicular to each other; the foot of the bent leg is pointed to the **side**; the foot of the back leg points to the front.

F. Basic Jumps

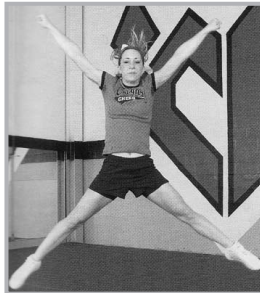
Start with legs together and arms down at sides. To begin the jump, lift arms into a high V position (see photo). Bend knees and swing arms down and across the front of the body and push off through the balls of the feet. Execute the jump position at the peak of the jump, keeping the head and chest high. Arms should hit a sharp, strong high V or T motion. Toes are pointed. Land jump in clean position (see photo) with arms at sides, feet together with knees bent.



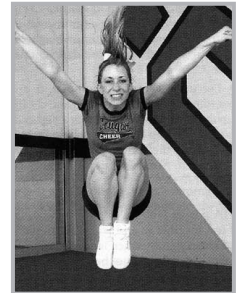
Beginning Jump



Ending Jump



Spread Eagle or Star



Tuck

VI. Characteristics of Cheers & Sidelines

With any cheer or sideline, it is important that you teach the words first. Words are the most important part; after mastering the words, then proceed to add the motions. Here are some characteristics to help you distinguish the difference between a cheer and a sideline.

Cheers

- Best used for incorporating motions, jumps, and tumbling
- Have definite beginnings and endings
- Performed primarily during a break in play (example: time-out)

Sidelines

- Used most often when the ball is in play
- Used to motivate the players and increase crowd participation
- Squad captain usually communicates “last time”
- Repeats itself (words or phrases are repetitive)

VII. Sample Cheers and Sidelines

Cheers

You might be good at basketball
You might be good at track,
but when it comes to football
You might as well step back
you might as well step back!
(Repeat)

Move it and groove it
Let's get our team into it!
You got to shake your hips from side to side
Shout it out with NFL pride!

Ten yards, ten more yards,
For our team, it's not hard!
Give me a T-O-U-C-H-D-O-W-N!
Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!

Raise the roof, let's go, let's go
Raise the roof, let's score one more
NFL (PAUSE) let's go let's go
Raise the roof once more

VII. Sample Cheers and Sidelines Continued ...

Sidelines

NFL flag,
is here to compete.
Come on,
fans,
get up on your feet!

Block that score!
Block that score!
Zero yards,
Zero yards,
Not one more!

We want another one
Just like the other one
We want more
We want to score!

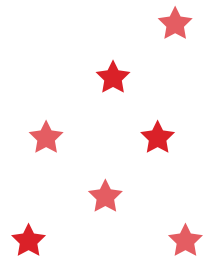
VIII. Coaching Tips & Strategies

- Build a professional relationship. Simple joint activities will help to develop rapport. Take cues from the participants as to how close they wish this relationship to be.
- Concerns for participants are your greatest asset as a coach. A coach should work to build a relationship of mutual confidence. Keep in mind that what you do communicates as much as what you say.
- Empathy is an important quality for a coach to have. Understanding participants, their background, and acknowledging possible cultural differences will help you accept them as they are. Many participants have been judged according to stereotypes of character, ability, and intelligence.
- Be a careful listener, and listen patiently. Give the participant time to get to issues they find sensitive or embarrassing.
- **Do not focus only on a participant with the most talent. Your job is to see the strengths of each individual and to coach all equally regardless of ability.**
- Nurture self-sufficiency. Your goal is not to “clone” yourself, but to encourage confidence.

- Be a learning facilitator. If you have a participant who does not understand the information well enough to ask the right questions, show them, or have another coach show them how to accomplish the task.
- Be constructive. Critical feedback is essential to spur improvement, but do it kindly and temper criticism with praise when deserved.
- Do not be overbearing. Avoid dictating choices or controlling a participant's behavior.
- Let participants solve problems on their own. When necessary, foster an atmosphere that encourages participants' participation in problem solving.

VIII. Five Rules for Effective Mediation

1. Get conflicts out in the open
2. Never take sides
3. Be aware of barriers to conflict resolution
4. When possible, employ a "win - win" strategy
5. Help to assure that each person's personal integrity is maintained





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