



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS RULES AND REGULATIONS

SECTION I: SCHOOL REPRESENTATION

A. TEAM PARTICIPATION

Each OHSAA member school will be allowed to enter one team and is responsible for registering its team in the appropriate division based on OHSAA Divisions. Division placement is based on the [school enrollment reported \(EMIS\)](#) and used for classifying the seven (7) OHSAA Football Divisions. Teams participating in the Junior High Division, must be comprised of 7th and/or 8th graders. *Note: The OHSAA reserves the right to combine or add high school divisions at the Spirit State Championships based on actual participation.*

Initial divisions, participation number allowances, and team fees are as follows:

SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISIONS:

	<u>FEE:</u>
Division I	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Division II	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Division III	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Division IV	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Division V	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Division VI	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Division VII	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00
Junior High	Maximum of 30 participants, 2 alternates, and 4 coaches/school personnel \$350.00

****Additional participants or alternates over the max number allowed by division must be registered with the team. For these athletes, a spectator fee will be automatically added to your invoice.**

The total number of participants for a school team is determined by counting spirit-leading participants including cheerleaders, dancers, and flag runners. 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** may participate but cannot be involved in the execution of stunts. Mascots executing any jumps or tumbling must do so in accordance with the National Federation of State High School (NFHS) Spirit rules. **Flag Runners** may not perform cheerleading “technical” skills including stunts, jumps and tumbling. The use of live band, drum line or twirlers to supplement the Game Day environment is not permitted.

School personnel and admin can be included in your four allotted coach/school personnel wristbands included on your registration and in the team fee. Participating school Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors, or any additional school personnel (including bus drivers) NOT included on the team registration should utilize the comp codes (4 per school) or purchase a spectator ticket for admittance.

The school team will consist of students that meet participation requirements:

1. One team per member school will be allowed to enter the OHSAA Spirit State Championships.
2. All participants must meet eligibility requirements as determined by their respective school and must be designated by school officials as spirit representatives for participation purposes.



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

3. To maximize opportunities for participation, substitution of athletes is permitted in the Qualifying Round. (Different spirit leaders may be used in each of the individual performances: Band Chant, Crowd Leading and Fight Song.) However, teams advancing to the State Championship round, participants that enter the floor must remain for the entire length of the final performance. Substituting individuals on and off the floor for the different sections of the State Championship Round is not permitted.
4. **It is the responsibility of the school coach that each team member, coaches, parents, and other persons affiliated with the school conduct themselves in the appropriate manner and follow all OHSAA rules. Any rule violation could result in team disqualification. Be mindful of all behavior at the music table.**
5. School teams must refrain from taunting, bragging, or suggestive expressions or gestures as well as discrimination of any nature.

B. UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

1. Traditional game day uniform is required.
2. All National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) 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, make-up, and uniformity.
4. **ALTERNATES** - *Alternates must be dressed in matching school cheer uniform or team warm-up. Alternates dressed in clothes other than cheer uniform/team warmup will need to purchase a spectator ticket and enter as spectator.*
5. **PROPS:** The use of signs, poms, flags, 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 be place outside the performance area when not in use. Participants may not leave the performance area to retrieve or place a prop. (See C.3 below).
 - c. While using props—specifically megaphones—participants may not make contact outside the competition performance area with the props. (Exception: flags)

C. COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Approximate floor size will be 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 strips).
2. The OHSAA Spirit State Championship will comply with the NFHS competition surface rule.
3. Props may be placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area. See **Section IV, E** for deduction for out of bounds. Once announced, teams will enter the floor with all props. Presetting props is not permitted.

D. MUSIC AND PROOF OF LICENSING

1. Schools must use recorded **marching band music** for the Fight Song and Band Chant elements. 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.**



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

2. All use of music must be compliant with U.S. Copyright Laws.
3. *Neither the Ohio High School Athletic Association nor Varsity Spirit is responsible for obtaining any necessary permission or licensing of the recorded music used by a school team while the OHSAA Spirit State Championships.*
4. Fight Song / Band Chant Music
 - a. If a high school marching band records their school's **original** fight song, they will need the school's written 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 (other than for timing purposes).
 - c. **Music from streaming sites (YouTube, Apple Music Subscription) does NOT meet licensing requirements and cannot be used for the purposes of this competition.**
 - d. A team cannot use a recording of their band playing a popular song (a cover) or other music without the proper permissions (such as a compulsory license).
5. Coaches will be required to provide proof of licensing, during team registration check-in at the event.

Examples include:

- a. **Clementune** – provide team's invoice from camp, show the music being used in app.
 - b. **Authorized Provider (iTunes, Amazon, etc.)** – provide proof of purchase for the single song being used.
 - c. **Music Provider** – provide a printed copy of proof of licensing.
 - d. **Recording of your school's original fight song** – A letter granting permission for the team to use the fight song on school letterhead is enough. It should be signed by your program's administrative supervisor.
 - e. **Recorded Band Music playing a SINGLE Musical Composition** – If your school band has recorded a song for your cheer or dance team to utilize during competition or performance, you will need to show a Compulsory License or Mechanical License that allows you to use the recording of the song.
 - i. If your Band Director cannot provide this for you, please follow the instructions on the [Quick and Easy Licensing document](#)
 - f. If a team does not have the required paperwork, they will be given the option to count the routine verbally or perform to an approved track of music or a track with counts.
 - g. If a team does not have the required paperwork and chooses not to count the routine verbally or perform to the approved track of music or a track with counts, the team will be disqualified from the competition and not be allowed to perform.
6. ***A coach or team representative MUST remain at the music table to push play and manage the music. This representative is responsible for pressing "play".*** Should an adult choose not to stay at the music table for the duration of the routine, and a malfunction occurs, teams may or may not be permitted to perform the routine again. Team representatives at the music table are prohibited from using props and should not be a distraction from the team performance.
 7. All coaches must bring their own DONGLE adaptor to connect it to the aux cord attached to the sound systems provided in the practice room.



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

E. HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

1. OHSAA rules require cheer and spirit performances shall be in accordance with safety standards prescribed by the [National Federation High School Spirit Rules](#).

F. ADDITIONAL SAFETY PROCEDURES

To promote a higher level of safety for competing participants, spotters will be provided on **the performance floor (only)**. If desired, schools may provide additional spotters in warm up areas only.

OHSAA Spirit State Championships will provide additional spotters that follow the listed guidelines:

1. Should only be used during stunts. Additional spotters are present for added safety and will stand at the back of the floor when not spotting those sections.
2. Will not touch, assist, or save skills being performed. Additional spotters will only be used to prevent a fall to the competition floor.
3. Are not allowed to count or coach while on the floor.
4. Will be dressed so that they are presentable, professional, and distinguishable from the performing athletes.
5. Will be identified by experience and be familiar with spotting.

Note: Teams should not attempt skills beyond their ability level.

SECTION II: PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Teams will be evaluated on the practicality of Game Day material, the ability to effectively lead and engage the crowd, proper skill incorporations (including stunts, jumps, and tumbling), performance, motions, dance, 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. Routines should not appear overly choreographed or utilize unnatural, overly aggressive, distracting crowd-leading techniques. **To maximize scoring potential, routines should adequately utilize time allowances for each element.**

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.** Mascots and flag runners must enter the floor with the team and should be used to raise crowd energy and participation.

A. GAME DAY FORMAT

The competition will consist of a Qualifying Round followed by a State Championship Round for teams that advance.

Performances include three Game Day elements. In the Qualifying Round, elements—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.



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

QUALIFYING ROUND - Each of the three Qualifying Round performances (Band Chant, Crowd Leading, and Fight Song) will be completed by an individual team in a **SINGLE** trip to the performance floor. Each Game Day element will follow the guidelines as described below and will be **timed and scored as individual performances**. Spirited interaction between each element is encouraged to promote a game day feel, but **only skills executed in each individual performance impact scoring**. Teams will be announced and take the floor, then execute the **BAND CHANT** performance first. Following the Band Chant, the team will **STAY** on the floor, show spirit and within 10 seconds the **BUZZER** sound will be heard, which will indicate the time has started the **CROWD LEADING** section. Following completion of the Crowd Leading performance, the team will **STAY** on the floor, show spirit then get set for their **FIGHT SONG**. Timing for the Fight Song will begin with the first beat of music or organized movement.

1 - Band Chant:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Marching band music or drum cadence performance that encourages crowd interaction.
- Should have emphasis on crowd 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 engages a crowd response
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** Timing begins with the sound of a **BUZZER**, which will occur **within 10 seconds** following the completion of the team's **BAND CHANT** routine and while the team is spiriting on the floor. Timing begins immediately when the buzzer sounds, and the team should 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.



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

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) be repeated once if desired. Because many fight songs repeat, the incorporated skills can be repeated once if desired. **IF** repeated, the incorporation must repeat **exactly as initially performed**. 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 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

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND - Teams with the highest cumulative scores from the three Qualifying Round elements will advance to the State Championship Round. The number of teams advancing to State Championships will be determined based on the number of teams participating in the Qualifying Round in each division. The State Championship Round will be preceded by a designated warm-up session.

Each STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND performance will have an overall maximum performance time limit of three (3) minutes and 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 a continuous order, like the Qualifying Round. To continue the feel of a Game Day environment, **spirited crowd-leading interaction between each section is encouraged.**



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

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, a 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. The Situational Response replaces the buzzer from the Qualifying Round.

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.

B. SCORES AND RANKINGS

1. In the Qualifying Round, each team will be scored by multiple judges in each of the three elements. The cumulative scores from the three elements will determine which teams advance to the State Championship Round. In the event of a tie, when comparing cumulative scores, the Crowd Leading score from the Qualifying Round will be utilized to break the tie.
2. The State Championship results, and team placements will be determined by the cumulative scores from the STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ONLY. Qualifying Round scores will NOT carry over to determine final team standings. However, if a tie occurs in the State Championship Round, the cumulative total of the Qualifying Round scores will be utilized to break any ties. In the event of a tie when comparing cumulative Qualifying Round scores, the Crowd Leading score from the Qualifying Round will be utilized.
3. A Time and Deduction sheet will be given to the coach following each performance.
4. Scores and rankings will be available only to the school representative designated as head coach as follows:
 - Qualifying Round – Score sheets will be made available to all teams following the Qualifying Round.
 - State Championship Round – Score sheets will be distributed following the completion of the State Championship Round awards ceremonies.
 - Comprehensive scores and rankings will be posted on the OHSAA website following the conclusion of the competition.
5. The judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the OHSAA Spirit State Championship score sheets.
6. **All scores and judges' decisions are considered final. There is no process for protesting scores.**

C. TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Timing will begin with the first group movement, voice, or beat of music, whichever comes first. Timing will not include the team spiring, rallying, or unchoreographed individual skills performed during rally.
2. Acknowledging the potential variance in sound system and timing devices, judges will not issue a deduction until their stopwatches shows a time of three (3) seconds over the time limit for the Qualifying Round and five (5) seconds over the time limit for the State Championship Round.
 - a. Three (3) point deduction for 1-5 seconds over, Five (5) point deduction for 6-10 seconds over and Seven (7) point deduction for 11 seconds and over.
3. It is recommended that all teams practice and time performances prior to competition to allow for variations in sound equipment.



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

4. 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 perform position.
- b. NO CHOREOGRAPHED or “ORGANIZED” entrances or exits: 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) before and after the performances.
 - i. No “tumbling” in.
 - ii. Stunts are not allowed during the team’s entry to the floor or any time prior to starting the performance.
- c. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team’s performance. Any team in violation will receive a ONE-point deduction.

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 the competition officials to **STOP** the routine.
2. If directed to stop a routine, 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 NFHS/OHSAA safety regulations identified in this document. **The only persons that may stop a routine for injury are a) competition officials, or b) the school HEAD coach from the team performing.**
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 may 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 a concussion is required to follow the [OHSAA Concussion Policy](#) regarding the treatment of concussions and must be removed immediately from the competition.



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

SECTION IV: INTERPRETATIONS AND RULINGS

A. RULES & PROCEDURES

Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the competition will be handled exclusively by the school coach of the team and will be directed to the Competition Director. **Such inquiry should be made prior to the team's competition performance.**

The OHSAA Spirit State Championship Rules Committee will consist of a designated Competition Director, Head Judge, and designated OHSAA staff. The school team and school coach must abide by all decisions made by the judges and Rules Committee. Any interpretation of the OHSAA Spirit State Championship Rules and Regulations or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Rules Committee.

B. AWARDS

Each division will receive the following awards:

1. The top two teams will be awarded and designated as such with a 2nd place runner-up trophy, and a 1st place Championship trophy.
2. The top scores in each of the Qualifying Round elements—Band Chant, Crowd Leading, and Fight Song—will be recognized as “Best of Category”.

C. JUDGING PANELS

Judges will be provided by the OHSAA, and they will be responsible for scoring each school performance according to the OHSAA competition score sheets.

1. **Head Judge** – A Head Judge is responsible for overseeing a designated panel of judges. The Panel Head Judge will also fill out his/her own score sheet for each performance.
2. **Panel Judge** - Panel Judges are responsible for scoring each team's performance based on the OHSAA score sheets. Each Panel Judge will fill out a score sheet for each performance.
3. **Safety Judge** - The Safety Judge is responsible for administering all safety violations, time violations, and boundary violations.
4. **Quality Judge** - The Quality Judge is responsible for overseeing the entire Judging Panel that consists of Head Panel Judges, Panel Judges, and Safety Judge.
5. **ALL JUDGES' DECISIONS ARE FINAL. THERE IS NO PROCESS FOR PROTEST REGARDING SCORING, DEDUCTIONS OR JUDGES FEEDBACK.**

D. DISQUALIFICATION

Any team that does not adhere to the terms and procedures of the OHSAA Spirit State Championship rules and regulations defined in this document will be subject to disqualification from the competition and will automatically forfeit any award.

E. DEDUCTIONS (CHART ON NEXT PAGE)

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



2025 OHSAA SPIRIT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Area	Specific	Deduction Points
Participant allowance (Section I, A)	Exceed maximum participants; Competes in the wrong conference or division	Disqualification from contest
Music licensing (Section I, D)	Failure to meet licensing requirement	Disqualification from contest
NFHS Spirit Safety Rules (Section I, E, 1)	Utilization of skill or stunt not permitted by NFHS Safety rules	5 points per rule violation
Time limit* *Window to allow for variance (Section II, C)	Each violation	3 points for 4-8 seconds over limit 5 points for 9-13 seconds over limit 7 points for 14 seconds or more over limit *3 second window considered above
Time limit (Section II, C)	Excessive celebration or organized entrance or exit	1 point
Performance floor (Section I, C)	Any team member stepping with both feet outside the designated performance area	.5 Half of one point
Procedure or General Rule Violation (not a safety violation)	Team exceeds 8-count allowances in Fight Song Team adds stunts or tumbling in Band Chant Team's music includes VOICE OVERS or SOUND EFFECTS	3 points per rule violation