

**2025-26**

**COMPETITIVE  
CHEER  
MANUAL**

**South Carolina High School League**

**P. O. Box 211575**

**Columbia, S. C. 29221**

**803-798-0120**

**[www.schsl.org](http://www.schsl.org)**

## GENERAL

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1. The South Carolina High School League will sponsor a championship in each classification that has at least twelve of its schools participating. If this requirement is not met, schools may enter the tournament of the next higher classification.
2. The National Federation Spirit Rule Book and the High School League Competitive Cheerleading Manual will be used for all High School League competitions.
3. The varsity head coach must attend a South Carolina High School League sponsored rules clinic.
4. All coaches must be CPR & AED certified. All coaches must verify with their principal completion of the online courses “Concussion in Sports”, “Heat Illness Prevention”, “Sudden Cardiac Arrest” and “Protecting Students from Abuse” found on [NFHSLearn.com](https://www.nfhslearn.com) .
5. The High School League requires that all competitive cheer coaches take the Cheer and Dance Safety Certification course offered online at NFHSLearn.com. Certification is good for four years.
6. All classifications are allowed a maximum of 24 team members on the mat.
7. **Members of the competitive team must have been a member of a support cheerleading squad during the year.** All participants must be listed and properly certified on an eligibility report to the High School League. The performing cheerleaders may be anyone certified on the eligibility report. Substitutions may be made at any time.
8. Competitive season ends when a team is eliminated from a qualifier or the state competition. The High School League Executive Committee must approve any exceptions.

## ORDER OF COMPETITION

The SCHSL will conduct a random draw to determine the order of competition for all statewide qualifiers.

The SCHSL will conduct a random draw to determine the order of competition at the state finals for classes AAAA & AAA. Class AAAAA, the order will be based on the teams' finishing positions at the qualifiers.

## QUALIFYING REGULATIONS

AAAAA - I A statewide qualifier will be held on November 13, 2025 at White Knoll High School

The top 12 teams and any ties at 12 will advance to the state finals.

AAAAA - II A statewide qualifier will be held on November 11, 2025 at Spring Valley High School.

The top 12 teams and any ties at 12 will advance to the state finals.

AAAA A statewide qualifier will be held on November 15, 2025 at Lexington High School.

The number of teams who qualify for the state finals will be 3/4 of the total number of teams who compete at the statewide qualifier. The number cannot exceed 16 to advance to state.

AAA/AA/A TBD

## STATE COMPETITION REGULATIONS

1. A matted surface with seven strips will serve as the competitive area. The routine must be performed within the boundaries of the competitive area.
2. A Maximum of four coaches and competitors are permitted in the competitive area. **(Which includes playing music, parade of teams and any warm-up areas).**
3. Teams will be called to the competitive area by the announcer prior to their performance. Three teams will be announced each time - "Performing", "On-Deck", and "In the Hole."
4. A practice/warm-up area will be available. Schools should furnish their own equipment and music for use in the practice/warm-up area.

## UNIFORMS

1. All team members must be dressed in the approved school uniform. 5 points will be

deducted per uniform violation (10 point maximum).

### NFHS Spirit Rules

Rule 3 - Article 4: When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff.

Situations and Rulings - Rule 3, Section 1

3.1.4 Situation: Cheerleaders are wearing uniforms that have sheer, "see through" material around midriff. **RULING:** Illegal

### INJURY

1. The host school is responsible for the availability of medical services. First aid and medical supplies should be made available in case of injury. The tournament director is responsible for emergency medical telephone numbers such as paramedics. Ideally, a physician should be present or on call.
2. If an injury occurs during the routine, the head coach, judge or SCHSL official may stop the competition until the injured person is removed from the competitive area. A team with an injured person may be given the opportunity to perform the entire routine at the end of their classification competition.
3. Using the professional judgment of the medical personnel at the site, any athlete showing signs of a concussion will not be allowed to return to competition.
4. Contestants, who are bleeding, have an open wound, or an excessive amount of blood on the uniform may not participate in any event until appropriate treatment has been administered.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please see the SCHSL By-Laws and Rules and regulations found on the website for the important information on the following:

- Academic Eligibility of Athletes (By-Laws - Article III Student Eligibility)
- Scouting (By-Laws - Article IV - Section 4)
- Sportsmanship (Rules and Regulations page 19)
- Mandatory Competitive Cheer Clinics for Coaches (Rules and Regulations page 3)
- Open & Closed Season (Rules and Regulations page 9)

# JUDGES

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## REQUIREMENTS

Judges must be registered and certified with the S. C. High School League.

Safety judges will use the National Federation Spirit Rule Book as the official rules of competitive cheer.

Judges will be assigned through Arbiter for all regular season competitions and region competitions.

The SCHSL will assign judges and timers for all qualifiers and the state finals.

All decisions of the judges are final.

Regular Season: A minimum of three judges, a deduction judge and a safety judge will be assigned for all competitions.

Qualifiers & State Finals: Five judges, two deduction, two safety judges, and two timers will evaluate performances at the qualifiers and state finals. High & low scores will be dropped.

### Fees: Judges

1 - 10 teams \$85.00 per judge plus mileage

11 + teams \$5.00 per each additional team per judge

Mileage is 55 cents per mile to each officials with a minimum of \$11

Spotters \$50 per competition

## REMINDER

### ALL CLASSES

Notification of Entry form is due by **OCTOBER 24, 2025**

This form will be posted on the League website under forms in October.

[www.schsl.org](http://www.schsl.org)

# ROUTINE EVALUATION

## ROUTINE REQUIREMENTS

The length of the routine shall be a maximum of 2 minutes-30 seconds (2:30). Teams may begin from any position on the mat (at least one foot must be on the mat at the start of the routine). Timing of the routine will begin with the first musical sound, movement, or word of any team member and will stop with the last musical sound, movement, or word of any team member.

Props are not allowed except for poms, signs, flags not on a pole, and megaphones. A prop is an object that can be manipulated or used as a base (except an unfolded flat mat). Non-team members may place poms on the competitive area before routine begins but may not assist during the routine.

Competition cheerleaders are prohibited from using liquid chalk, or any foreign substance on their hands or legs while competing. Any cheerleader that has a foreign substance on their hands or legs will be subjected to a safety violation.

## MUSIC

Performance Music must be licensed to participate in the state qualifier. The proof of purchase will be uploaded on the intent to participate form for the state qualifier. A list of music providers can be found on [usacheer.org/music](http://usacheer.org/music).

Music must be furnished by the participating schools, be production-quality, be well labeled, and be presented to the sound technician at the competition. Schools must have backup music available. Working with the sound technician, the coach/representative for the team is responsible for starting and stopping the music during the routine. In the event your routine is interrupted due to failure of host equipment, facilities, etc., you may restart your routine from the beginning of the routine. (SCHSL officials reserve the right to stop a performance due to injury). **Any adult operating the music must have been issued a High School League pass. Only one adult may be present at the table to play music. If a student operates the music, she/he may have another student accompany them.**

**All music must be licensed, and proof of licensing will need to be presented prior to competitions.**

## TIME INFRACTIONS

Time infractions occur for overtime of competition. A five-point deduction will be assessed for a time infraction.

Two timers will be used, and the lowest time is recorded.

Timers must be adults.

## **SCORING**

Deductions will be made for the following:

Safety violations	15 points each occurrence
Boundary violation	5 points for each occurrence (10 pt. max.)
Improper uniforms	5 points for each occurrence (10 pt. max.)
Starting routine -both feet off mat (in stunt or pyramid)	5 points
Time infractions - overtime of routine	5 points

**Unsportsmanlike conduct** by any team member/coach minimum 5 points per judge

## **TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURE**

1. Regular Season
  - a. The judges will discuss, and the head judge will break the tie
2. State Finals
  - a. All judges' five judges' scores will be totaled.
  - b. If a tie still remains, co-champions will be named

# COMPETITIVE CHEER 2025-26 YEAR OUTLINE

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July 31, 2025	First Practice
Seven Days Prior to first meet	Eligibility Due
August 15, 2025	First Competition
Number of Contests Permitted	Eight (8) per school (6 Sub-varsity)
October 24, 2025	Due: Notification of Entry (all classes)
November 11, 2025	AAAAA - II Statewide Qualifier @ Spring Valley
November 13, 2025	AAAAA - I Statewide Qualifier @ White Knoll
November 15, 2025	AAAA @ Lexington High School
TBD	AAA/AA/A
November 22, 2025	State Finals - Colonial Life Arena
Last Competition - March 1, 2026	Closed Season <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Cannot practice – cannot do any skill training</b></li><li>● Can continue to condition and strength train</li><li>● Can coach an outside team (75% rule must apply)</li><li>● Can use school facilities and/or equipment if coaching an outside team</li></ul>
March 1 -March 31, 2025	Open Season <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Can practice</li><li>● Nothing mandatory</li></ul>
<b>April 1, 2026</b>	Physicals are valid through the upcoming school year
<b>May 1 - May 31, 2026</b>	Open Season <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Can Practice</li><li>● Can have tryouts (Only with students enrolled at your school or feeder middle school)</li><li>● Rising 7<sup>th</sup> graders may participate in May</li><li>● Nothing mandatory</li></ul>

June 1 - July 25, 2026

Open Season

- Can practice
- Can participate in 10 days of school competition & team camps (days spent at camp count toward the 10 days)
- Nothing mandatory

June 28 – July 4, 2026

**DEAD WEEK - No Activities of any kind**

July 26 – July 29, 2026

Closed Period

- Cannot practice and/or attend team camp(s)
- Can continue to condition and strength train