

2025-26 SPIRIT POINTS OF EMPHASIS

APPLY DURING ALL PRACTICES, PERFORMANCES, AND/OR COMPETITIONS.

KSHSAA RULES

Concussions: Each KSHSAA member school shall require all coaching staff & every student participating in an athletic activity (including spirit activities) to complete a concussion education program.

An athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, contusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. Spirit coaches should refer to the current Concussion Guidelines accessible through our web site under Sports Medicine & Safety (<https://www.kshsaa.org/Public/SportsMedicine/ConcussionGuidelines.cfm>) or the NFHS Spirit Rule Book.

Heat Illness Prevention Education Requirement: On an annual basis and prior to the beginning of fall sports practices, each KSHSAA member school will provide all coaches/directors of its athletic and activities programs (marching band, cheer & dance teams, etc.) with an educational in-service program on prevention of heat illness and proper hydration of participants. Member schools are strongly encouraged to utilize the free “NFHS Heat Illness Prevention” course or an equivalent program for this purpose. Instruction may take place in a group setting or in an individualized manner.

Holding Objects: In Kansas the **top person/flyer is NOT allowed to hold any objects** in his/her hands while airborne (poms, signs, etc.). Holding props during a toss presents risk to participants especially if safety adjustments become necessary.

An inverted top person must not hold objects (poms, signs, etc.) in his/her hands, except during a transition from an inverted position on the performing surface to a non-inverted stunt.

KSHSAA Handbook Rule 48, Section 1, Article 4b: All tosses, including basket, elevator, and single leg tosses that are initiated from waist level and directly release to a cradle catch, are prohibited to minimize the possibility of a serious accident and/or injury. A release to a cradle is legal in Kansas as long as the upward momentum stops or changes direction at shoulder level or above immediately prior to the release, and the release does not exceed 3 feet in height above the tosser’s extended hands. **The “no tosses” rule applies at all times and at all places, including in Kansas and outside of the Kansas borders.**

KSHSAA Rule 7: No cheer/dance participant may practice without a current Physical Examination Form on file in the school office. Physicals are valid from May 1, 2025, to August 16, 2026. Physicals signed prior to May 1, 2025, expire August 17, 2025.

Middle School Participants: The local USD may allow 6th graders to participate as middle school cheerleaders, but they may NEVER be involved in partner stunting of any kind. Middle school and high school students **cannot** stunt together.

Spirit Festivals/Competitions: Member schools may only attend “**KSHSAA Approved Events.**” Check the approved list on the KSHSAA website or call before enrolling (May not be ranked at an in-state festival, clinic or workshop).

GENERAL RULES

Apparel & Accessories: Apparel and accessories must be appropriate for the activity involved to minimize risk for the participants.

- **Cheer team** members must wear athletic shoes (not gymnastics slippers).
- **Dance, drill and pom teams** must wear footwear that is appropriate for the activity involved. At a minimum, footwear must cover the ball of the foot. Exception: Dancers performing on a floor cover may be barefoot.
- When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff.

Fingernails: Fingernails, including artificial nails, must be kept at an appropriate length (**short, near the end of the fingers**) to minimize risk for the participants.

Food: Participants **must NOT chew gum or have candy** in their mouths during practice or performance.

Glitter: Glitter that does not readily adhere to the hair, face, body, uniform or costume is illegal. Glitter may be used on signs, props or backdrops only if laminated or sealed. **Spraying glitter on any hair, body or clothing inside a school building is illegal.**

Hair: The hair must be worn in a manner appropriate for the activity involved. Hair devices, if worn, must be secure and appropriate for the activity (hair should allow for 180-degree vision at all times never getting into eyes). *RATIONALE: This emphasizes that responsibility for minimizing risk belongs to the spirit coach.*

Jewelry: Jewelry of any kind is prohibited (**if you weren't born with it, you can't wear it, tape over it or conceal it**) except for the following: A religious medal without a chain is allowed and must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert medal must be taped and may be visible.

Dancers/Drill/Pom only exception – Wearing “hard” jewelry is illegal, except when such items are securely affixed to a costume or the hair.

Performance Surfaces: Performing surfaces must be suitable and free from objects. When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material, or have corners or sharp edges: 1.

A top person may not release the props to the ground. 2. A person on the ground must gently toss or place the prop on the ground.

Supports/Braces: Supports, braces, etc., that are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production do not require any additional padding. Supports/braces that have been altered from the manufacturer's original design/production must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than one-half-inch thick if the participant is involved in partner stunts, pyramids or tosses. A participant wearing a plaster cast or a walking boot must not be involved in partner stunts, pyramids or tosses.

NFHS 2025 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Dance Rewrite: In an effort to expand on the resources available for dance teams, the 2025-2026 NFHS Spirit Rules Book includes a major overhaul of the dance rules section. The rewrite includes expanded dance specific terminology/definitions in addition to new situations. It is a priority to continue to emphasize and expand the similarities and differences in the sports of cheer and dance.

Turning in Data to State Association and NFHS: It is imperative for coaches and administrators to inform the state association office/the NFHS office of any emergency situations (cardiac, concussion, catastrophic, etc.) as we continue to collect data and evaluate safety protocols. Risk minimization remains a top priority for all activities. Clear and timely reporting ensures appropriate measures are taken to protect participants, staff and spectators while strengthening the overall safety standards of all spirit groups. NFHS continuously evaluates safety standards and provides opportunities for feedback through surveys and questionnaires. Your input plays a crucial role in shaping policies that enhance risk minimization.

Sportsmanship: Spirit participants should strive to boost school spirit; promote good sportsmanship; develop good, positive crowd involvement; and help student participants and spectators achieve the most worthwhile educational objectives of the interscholastic program. Spirit leaders can effectively neutralize negative environments at any interscholastic contest.

Copyright: Spirit coaches and schools should be conscientious and follow all U.S Copyright Laws when incorporating music into their spirit programs. There are many companies that will assist in securing copyright compliance. Coaches should exercise due diligence to protect programs against costly fines and potential lawsuits when using copyrighted music. Be sure to take the NFHS Learn Course for Copyright Compliance for Cheer and Dance coaches at www.nfhslearn.com/copyright.

RULES DURING GAME TIME

Artificial Noisemaker Limitations: Artificial noisemakers (including megaphones, cow bells, thunder sticks, air horns, sirens, etc.) are not to be used and bands are not to play (including

beating of drums) **while the game is in progress**, indoors or outdoors. If the host school administration questions the safety or appropriateness of any noise maker, it shall not be permitted. Please refer to the KSHSAA Music Manual relating to when bands can play.

By policy of the KSHSAA Executive Board, use of fireworks, cannons, air concussion cannons, hand-held explosives, and other devices, is not permitted at any KSHSAA postseason athletic event. Member schools have the authority to determine if they permit such devices at their regular season events.

Basketball

- Spirit participants must remain outside the playing area during a **30-second time-out** in a basketball game.
- Spirit participants must not stand behind the free throw lane extended during a basketball game. *RATIONALE: The rules minimize the risk for cheerleaders and players because of the fast pace of the game.*

Stunts During Game Time: Stunts shall not be performed during a basketball or volleyball game when the ball is in play, including free throws in basketball or just prior to the serve in volleyball.

Warm-Up: Spirit participants must not warm up stunts on the court or sideline area during player warm-up if an alternate area is available. If no appropriate alternate area is available, the coach must take reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of participants.

SPIRIT COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Spirit Coaches are responsible for Safety & well-being of all participants.
 - Assessing the progression of individual & team readiness
 - Prudent Coach requires adequate skills & preparation
 - Responsible for appropriate practice/performing conditions
 - Heat & Hydration
 - Injuries-recognition & treatment (have a plan)
 - Coach must attend all practices – “Liability Issues”
 - Team limited to performing stunts within coaches’ knowledge
 - Communication between coaches, administration, parents & participants is critical and necessary.