



## 2009-2010 COA Safety Guidelines

### School and Recreation Cheer

COA's Safety Guidelines comply with the 2009-2010 NFHS Spirit Safety Rules

Updated 6/12/2009

#### Apparel and Accessories

1. Jewelry of any kind (including ear, nose, tongue, facial, and belly button rings, plastic jewelry, bracelets, pins, necklaces, rings, etc.) must not be worn during a performance. It is not acceptable to cover jewelry with an adhesive bandage or tape; jewelry must be removed. Medical alert and/or religious medals, bracelets, or necklaces may be worn, but should be removed from the neck/wrist area and be secured to the body under the uniform with tape. Rhinestones are illegal when adhered to the skin. Temporary tattoos are allowed. (NFHS 2:2:1)
2. Fingernail, including artificial nails, must be kept at an appropriate length (Short, near the end of the fingers) to minimize risk for the athletes. (NFHS 2:2:2)
3. Hair must be worn in a manner to minimize risk for the athlete. Hair devices, if worn, must be secure and appropriate for the activity. (NFHS 2:2:3)
4. Apparel and accessories must be appropriate for the activity involved to minimize risk for the athletes. Athletes must wear athletic shoes (not gymnastics slippers). (NFHS 2:2:4)
5. An athlete in full head and/or body costume must not spot or stunt except for a legal forward roll or cartwheel. (NFHS 2:2:5)
6. Athletes may wear glitter on their face, hair, uniform, costume, or body as long as it readily adheres. (NFHS 2:2:7) Signs and props with glitter do not need to be laminated.
7. Supports, braces, etc., which are hard and unyielding or have rough edges or surfaces must be appropriately covered. An athlete wearing a cast (excluding a properly covered air cast) must not be involved in a stunt. (NFHS 2:2:8)
8. Athletes may use artificial limbs. (NFHS 2:2:11)

#### Bases/Bracers

1. A base shall not assume a backbend, headstand, or handstand position. (NFHS 2:5:1)
2. Bases of extended stunts must have both feet in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface. (NFHS 2:5:2)
3. A bracer must not provide primary support for a top person. (NFHS 2:5:3)
4. In braced partner stunts/pyramids, at least one bracer of each pair must be at shoulder height or below.  
Exception 1: The following extended stunts may brace any other extended stunt:
  - A. Chair
  - B. Multi-base deadman lift
  - C. Multi-base straddle liftException 2: Extensions may brace the stunts listed above and other extensions (except a totem pole.) (NFHS 2:8:3)

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### Dismounts

1. Dismounts to the performing surface from shoulder height or above must have assisted landings. Extension prep is considered shoulder height. (NFHS 2:6:1)
2. For all catch/cradle dismounts, the catcher(s) must have continuous visual contact with the top person. (NFHS 2:6:2)
3. Bases/catchers must not move during dismounts except for safety purposes. For all cradles dismounts, the flyer, must not hold props that are made of solid material and have corners or sharp edges i.e. signs (NFHS 2:6:3)
4. No skill (i.e. toe touch, twist, etc.) without constant hand-to-hand contact with a base(s) shall be performed prior to landing on the performing surface. (NFHS 2:6:4)
5. A skill may be performed to a cradle except on dismounts to separate catchers. (NFHS 2:6:5)
6. A twist to cradle (including a log roll) must not involve more than two complete rotations. When dismounting to a cradle from a side facing stunt, 2 ¼ rotations are permitted. (NFHS 2:6:6)
7. Dismounts from multi-base stunts to a cradle must be cradled by at least two catchers and an additional head and shoulders catcher/spotter. (NFHS 2:6:7)
8. Dismounts from single base stunts to a single base cradle must have an additional catcher/spotter who is responsible for the head and shoulder area of the top person. No additional catcher/spotter is required when cradling a chair or torch. (NFHS 2:6:8)
9. Dismounts to catchers who are not the original bases (with or without the feet of the top person being held) must have at least three catchers, one being a head and shoulders catcher/spotter. Following the pop to release the top person, no skill, (i.e., toe touch, twists, etc.,) shall be performed into the cradle. (NFHS 2:6:9)
10. Dismounts from, or padding through, an inverted position are illegal. Exception forward suspended roll. (NFHS 2:6:10)
11. In dismounts where a bracer is involved after the release of the top person, all the following conditions must be met:
  - A. The top person does not become inverted.
  - B. The top person has at least two bases.
  - C. Each top person and bracer has a separate spotter.
  - D. The loss of contact is a continuous up and down movement.
  - E. The top person's center of gravity remains directly over the bases.
  - F. The top person's weight is not supported by the bracer(s).
  - G. The bracers do not intentionally increase the height of the top person.

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#### Drops

1. Knee, seat, thigh, front, back, and split drops from an airborne position are illegal unless most of the weight is first borne on the hands/feet or is controlled to absorb the impact of the drop. Front drops from an airborne position are illegal. (NFHS 2:7:1, 2:7:2)
2. Tension drops/rolls are illegal. (NFHS 2:7:3)
3. A handspring/flip over to any drop is illegal. (NFHS 2:7:4)

#### Interruption of Performance

1. In the event the performance of any athlete must be interrupted because of failure of event equipment, facilities, etc., the athlete affected will be allowed to resume their performance from the place where the interruption occurred, or from a point determined to be fair by COA Officials.
2. In the event the performance of any athlete must be interrupted because of failure of the athlete's own equipment or supplies, the athlete must either continue the performance or withdraw from the championship. Same holds true if an interruption is caused by any athlete or their coach(es).
3. In the event an injury causes the performance of an athlete to be interrupted, the athlete must either continue the performance or withdraw from the performance. COA reserves the right to stop the performance due to an injury if it is deemed necessary.

#### Music

1. Eliminate all profanity or other inappropriate language from your music.
2. A safety judge will assess a 10 point penalty per occurrence for inappropriate choreography, music or language. Choreography and music selection should be suitable for family viewing and listening.

#### Organized Entrances, Introductions and Spell-outs

1. Organized introductions, spell-outs, and entrances are considered part of the routine and will be timed as part of the performance.
2. No spirited tumbling entrances are permitted.
3. All athletes should walk onto the floor and immediately start their performance after any pre-placement of legal props.



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### Pendulums and Flatbacks

1. A pendulum is legal provided: (NFHS 2:8:5)
  - A. The top person begins at shoulder height or below
  - B. The top person does not pass through an extended overhead position
  - C. The top person is caught in a face-up or face-down position
  - D. There are at least three stationary catchers who remain in their original positions
  - E. Catchers remain in their original position except for safety purposes
  - F. No one is between the base(s) and the catchers
  - G. The base(s) has constant visual contact with the catchers, therefore all full pendulums require two bases.
  - H. The bases remain stationary
  - I. Only the top person may turn
2. Any pendulum may end in an extension. (NFHS 2:8:6)
3. A half or full pendulum must have a separate spotter on the opposite side of the base(s) from the catchers if the top person is returned to vertical in a straight body position. When a top person is returned to vertical in a straight body position at the end of a pendulum, there must be a spotter who is facing the top person with arms in a ready or extended position. (NFHS 2:8:7)
4. A flatback is legal when: (NFHS 2:8:8)
  - A. A top person in a vertical position is transitioned to a horizontal straight body position between two bases;
  - B. And a minimum of two catchers catch the head and shoulders of the top person.

### Performance Area and Flooring

1. All athletes must start on the Performance floor. Athletes must have at least one foot on the performing surface when the routine starts. For safety reasons, athletes must try to stay on the Performance floor for the duration of their routine.
2. Cheer Teams and Cheer Specialty Divisions will perform on a 54' (across) by 42' (front to back) carpeted floor or similar surface.

### Props and Equipment

1. Flags, banners, signs, pom poms, and megaphones are the only props permitted. Props with poles or similar support apparatus may not be used in conjunction with any kind of stunt or tumbling. When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material, or have corners or sharp edges, team members must gently toss or place the props. (NFHS 2:1:4)
2. Wearable articles (i.e. hats, gloves, sunglasses, and tear away uniforms) are not considered to be hand held props and are permitted.
3. Use of mini-tramps, springboards, spring-assisted floors or any height increasing apparatus is strictly prohibited. (NFHS 2:1:7)

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#### Props and Equipment (continued)

4. Tumbling over or under a prop is illegal. Tumbling with a prop is considered tumbling over a prop, and therefore is illegal (i.e. back handsprings and back tucks with poms are illegal). A forward roll over a prop is legal. (NFHS 2:9:4)
5. Tosses through a prop are illegal. (NFHS 2:10:4)
6. Mascots must use at least one prop and are permitted to use any props except fire, liquids, confetti, glitter, and live animals.

#### Pyramids, Mounts, and Partner Stunts

1. All stunts and/or pyramids are limited to two levels high. Any top person must receive primary support from a base(s) who is/are in direct, weight bearing contact with the performing surface. (NFHS 2:3:1)
2. Tension drops/tension rolls are prohibited. (NFHS 2:7:3)
3. No stunt, pyramid, or individual may move over, or under a stunt or pyramid. (i.e. A stunt/person cannot move under an extension prep.) (NFHS 2:8:1)
4. A top person must not be in an inverted position except for the following:
  - A. During a forward suspended roll
  - B. When beginning a stunt from an inverted position on the performing surface, that goes directly to a non-inverted position shoulder height or below. This stunt must include a base or spotter who protects the head/neck/shoulder area of the top person. This base or spotter must maintain contact with the top person from the inverted position until the top person is no longer inverted. (NFHS 2:8:2)
5. A forward suspended roll is legal provided the following conditions are met:
  - A. The top person begins from the performing surface or from a stunt shoulder height or below
  - B. In multi-base stunts, the top person maintains continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact with two bases/posts.
  - C. In single base stunts, the top person maintains continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact with two posts.
  - D. In suspended rolls from the performing surface, the top person maintains continuous hand-to-hand contact with two bases. (NFHS 2:9:1)
6. A backward suspended roll is illegal (NFHS 2:9:2)
7. In braced partner stunts/pyramids, at least one bracer of each pair must be at shoulder height or below.

Exception 1: The following extended stunts may brace any other extended stunt:

  - A. Chair
  - B. Multi-base deadman lift
  - C. Multi-base straddle lift

Exception 2: Extensions may brace the stunts listed above and other extensions (except a totem pole.) (NFHS 2:8:3)

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#### Pyramids, Mounts, and Partner Stunts (continued)

8. A hanging pyramid is legal provided: (NFHS 2:8:4)
  - A. The base(s) remain stationary.
  - B. Spotters are present for each shoulder stand.
  - C. Base(s) shall maintain constant contact with the suspended person.
  - D. Suspended person is lower than the shoulder stand(s).
  - E. Suspended person's feet are hanging free.
  - F. Suspended person is not inverted.
  - G. Suspended person does not rotate on the dismount.
9. A totem pole is legal provided: (NFHS 2:8:10)
  - A. Each top person leaning forward is stabilized/supported by the stunt directly in front
  - B. No extended stunt stabilizes/supports another top person
  - C. A spotter is present for each extended stunt
10. A swinging stunt is legal provided the following conditions are met: (NFHS 2:8:11)
  - A. The top person is swung in an upward direction.
  - B. The top person is in a face-up position.
11. Suspended splits are legal provided the following conditions are met: (NFHS 2:8:12; 2:8:13)
  - A. There are at least two bases.
  - B. The top person has both hands in constant contact with a base(s).
  - C. When dropping to suspended splits, four bases must slow the momentum of the top person by supporting under her thighs and legs prior to reaching the full split position; or three bases support her under her thighs and legs and the fourth base holds her hands. The top person must have both hands in contact with a base(s) one she reaches the full split position.
12. Single-base split catches or straddle catches are illegal. (NFHS 2:8:14)
13. Tosses to any split or straddle position are illegal. (NFHS 2:10:6)
14. In transitional stunts, physical contact must be maintained between the top person and the base(s) except when all of the following conditions are met: (2:11:1)
  - A. The top person is braced.
  - B. The top person does not become inverted.
  - C. The top person has at least two bases and a spotter/catcher.
  - D. Each bracer has a separate spotter.
  - E. The loss of contact is a continuous up and down movement that is not supported by the bracer(s) and does not pause at the top.
  - F. The top person is not released to a toss



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### Pyramids, Mounts, and Partner Stunts (continued)

15. When the transitional stunt involves changing bases, the new base(s) must be to the side or in front of the person moving the stunt except when the top person remains upright (vertical) throughout the transition to the new base(s) with the person moving the stunt making no more than a half turn to face the new base(s). (NFHS 2:12:2)
16. Tick Tocks are legal with proper spotting and the top person remains vertical. (NFHS 2:11:1)

### Routine Timing

1. Timing for Cheer Teams, Mascots, Crowdleaders, Cheer Individuals Cheer Duets, Cheer Trios and Cheer Quads timing will begin with the first organized movement of a cheer, sideline or dance, the first note of music, the first word of a cheer or sideline, or the building of a pyramid or stunt (i.e. the lifting of or support of another person off the ground). Timing of the performance will stop when the team captain, individual, or coach gives an ending signal. Athletes may do a short spirited tumbling exit without being timed or judged.
2. Timing for Coed Partners, Stunt Groups, and Power Divisions will begin with the first note of music and will end with the last note of music. Once the performance is completed, athletes may do a short spirited exit without being timed or judged.

### Sportsmanship

1. If a COA Official observes unsportsmanlike behavior from anyone (including coaches, athletes, parents, and fans), that official has the right to assess a **10 point** penalty against the associated team, program, or specialty division athlete. Multiple sportsmanship infractions can result in disqualification and disbarment from future COA events.

### Spotting

1. A spotter may help control the building of, or dismounting from, a stunt, but must not provide primary support for the top person. (NFHS 2:4:1)
2. A spotter must be in the proper location with the appropriate body position to help minimize risk to the top person. (NFHS 2:4:3)
3. A spotter must remain visually focused on the head-and-shoulder area of the top person, except when it is necessary to briefly check other stunt personnel. (NFHS 2:4:4)
4. A spotter's arms and hands must be in one of the following positions:
  - A. Hands grasping the wrist(s)/forearm(s) of the base(s)
  - B. Hands touching or grasping the ankle(s)/lower leg(s) of the top person
  - C. Arms lifted or extended toward the top person's head and shoulders (if not touching either the top person or the base).

Note: it is not necessary for the arms to be completely straight, but they must be in a "ready" position. (NFHS 2:4:5)

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#### Spotting (continued)

5. A spotter's torso cannot be under a stunt. (NFHS 2:4:6)
6. A person is not considered a spotter if hand position includes: (NFHS 2:4:6)
  - A. Grabbing the sole of the foot of the top person.
  - B. Grabbing the hand(s) of the base(s) beneath the top person's foot.
  - C. Placing the torso underneath the stunt
7. A spotter is required for stunts in which the supporting arm(s) of the base(s) is fully extended above the head except for the following (NFHS 2:4:7)
  - A. Chair
  - B. Russian lift
  - C. Torch
  - D. Double-base split catch
  - E. Triple-base dead-man lift
  - F. Triple-base extended suspended splits
  - G. Double base vertical T-lift
  - H. Triple Base Swedish Fall
8. A separate spotter is required for each top person in a single based double cupie. A cupie is an extended stunt. (NFHS 2:4:7)
9. Spotters are not permitted to assist in tumbling skills.

#### Tosses

1. In all tosses (NFHS 2:10:1)
  - A. The top person must be directed vertically and be caught by the original bases.
  - B. Athletes must not pass over or under other Athletes
  - C. The catchers and spotter must remain in their original positions unless making adjustments for safety purposes.
  - D. The top person must not become inverted (shoulders below waist)
  - E. The top person must not hold objects in her/his hands (i.e. poms, signs, etc.) Exception: Load-in tosses. (previously called "tosses into partner stunts" or "toss to hands, etc.")
2. Basket tosses or any type of multi-based toss must not involve more than four tossers, including the person who may set or "load" the top person.
  - A. One of the tossers must be behind the top person during the toss.
  - B. The top person must be cradled by at least two of the original tossers and have a separate head and shoulders spotter who was one of the original tossers. (NFHS 2:10:3)
3. Tosses through a prop are illegal. (NFHS 2:10:4)

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#### Tosses (continued)

4. Tosses into a stunt are legal provided the following conditions are met: (NFHS 2:10:8)
  - A. The toss does not significantly exceed the height of the intended toss.
  - B. The top person does not land in a loading position for another toss.
5. Once a top person is tossed to a stunt, the top person cannot be tossed again without first dismounting to a cradle or the performing surface. (NFHS 2:10:8)
6. Toe/leg pitches to a jump or tumbling skill are illegal. (NFHS 2:10:5)
7. Tosses to a split or straddle position are illegal. (NFHS 2:10:6)
8. A twist that occurs during a toss must not involve more than two complete rotations. (NFHS 2:10:7)
9. Helicopter tosses are legal provided all the following conditions are met:
  - A. The rotation in the horizontal plane is not greater than 180 degrees.
  - B. The top person does not twist.
  - C. The top person is in a face up position.
  - D. There are at least four bases who serve as both tossers and catchers.
  - E. At least one catcher must be in position to support the head, neck and shoulder area.  
This person(s) must be in position at the beginning of the toss and may not be involved in any other skill.  
(NFHS 2:11:2)
10. A swan dive is illegal. (NFHS 2:11:6)
11. A log roll is legal provided it does not involve more than two rotations and the top person is not in contact with a person in another stunt. (NFHS 2:11:3)
12. In a single-base log roll, the top person: (NFHS 2:11:4)
  - A. Must initiate the rotation toward the base.
  - B. Must begin and end in a face-up position.
13. In multi-base log rolls: (NFHS 2:11:5)
  - A. With fewer than four catchers, the top person must begin and end in a face-up position.
  - B. With four catchers, the top person may be caught in a face-up or layout position; or face-down in a layout position.



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#### Transitional Stunts

1. In transitional stunts, physical contact must be maintained between the top person and the base(s) except when all of the following conditions are met: (NFHS 2:12:1)
  - A. The top person maintains hand-to-hand/arm contact with at least one bracer during the entire loss of contact with his/her base(s).
  - B. The top person does not become inverted.
  - C. The top person has at least two bases EXCEPT THAT a single-base tick tock is permitted when the top person remains upright (vertical) throughout the stunt.
  - D. Each top person and bracer has a separate spotter.
  - E. The loss of contact is a continuous up-and-down movement.
  - F. The top person's center of gravity remains directly over the bases.
  - G. The top person's weight is not supported by the bracer(s).
  - H. The top person is not released to a toss.
  - I. The bracers do not intentionally increase the height of the top person.
2. When a transitional stunt involves changing bases; (NFHS 2:12:2)
  - A. The new base(s) must be to the side or front of the person moving the stunt.
  - B. The base may make no more than a half turn (180 degrees) as they take the top person to the new base(s). The top person must remain in an upright (vertical) position throughout the transition.

#### Tumbling/Rolls

1. Double cartwheels are prohibited. (NFHS 2:8:2)
2. A forward suspended roll is legal provided the following conditions are met: (NFHS 2:9:1)
  - A. It begins from a stunt shoulder height or below.
  - B. In multi-base stunts, the top person maintains continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact with two bases/posts.
  - C. In single base stunts, the top person maintains continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact with two posts.
  - D. The bases control the top person's dismount to the performing surface or cradle.
3. Backward suspended rolls are illegal (NFHS 2:9:2)
4. Suspended rolls from a basket toss positions, pitch, or toss are illegal. (NFHS 2:9:3)
5. Tumbling over/under/with/on a prop is illegal. Tumbling with a prop is considered tumbling over a prop, and therefore is illegal (i.e. back handsprings and back tucks with poms are illegal). Exception: A legal forward roll over a prop is legal. (NFHS 2:9:4)
6. Tumbling over/under an individual is illegal. (NFHS 2:9:4)
7. A forward roll is illegal from an airborne position, (i.e., jump or dive). (NFHS 2:9:5)



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#### **Tumbling/Rolls (continued)**

8. A flip into a mount or cradle is illegal. However, the person performing a gymnastic skill may (without hip over head rotations) rebound from his/her feet into a cradle. (NFHS 2:9:6)
9. A flip performed on the performing surface must not involve more than one complete hip over head rotation or more than one complete twist. (i.e. A double back or front flip and a double twisting back or front flip are illegal). (NFHS 2:9:7)
10. Spotters are not permitted to assist in tumbling skills. This includes toe and leg pitch flips. (i.e. Team in connected circle, every other person flipping with assistance from others is illegal). (NFHS 2:8:2)

#### **Twists**

1. A twist performed on the performing surface (jump-twist-land) must not involve more than two complete rotations. (NFHS 2:13:1)
2. A twist performed to a cradle must not involve more than two complete rotations except, when dismounting to a cradle from a side facing stunt, 2 ¼ rotations are permitted. (NFHS 2:13:2)
3. A twist performed during a tumbling pass must not involve more than one complete rotation. (NFHS 2:13:3)

#### **Vaults**

1. Vaults which do not involve hip over head rotation are legal. (NFHS 2:14:1)



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