



NITTANY

YOUTH

SPIRIT

RULES

Adult/ Coaches Code of Conduct

ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT

- F1:** In order to uphold the goals of Nittany Youth and ensure that all participants have the benefit of a safe and fun learning environment, all parents, guardians and other adults and attendees of Nittany Youth events, including but not limited to practices, competitions, and banquets, must behave accordingly in a respectful, courteous and sportsmanlike manner at all times.

- F2:** Any adult who is using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs and/or appears intoxicated at a Nittany Youth event, and/or who is flagrantly rude, attempts to intimidate, verbally abuse, heckles, taunts, ridicules, boos, throws objects and/or uses vulgarity or profane language/gestures with an official, coach, volunteer, staff member, participant or other event attendee, will receive a verbal warning and/or be asked to leave a Nittany Youth event. The member organization may also provide a written warning to the individual regarding the misbehavior. The adult's children may also be removed from the event. Any adult who commits one of the above stated offenses a second time, will be banned from any and all Nittany Youth events for a period of one year from the date of the second offense, and their children may also be removed from the program(s) for that time period.

- F3:** Any adult who physically assaults an official, coach, volunteer, staff member or participant or threatens grave bodily harm may be banned from any and all Nittany Youth events for one year from the date of the offense, and their children may also be removed from any and all Nittany Youth programs for that same period of time. After the ban has expired, if the individual commits another offense of the adult code of conduct, the individual will be permanently banned from any and all Nittany Youth events and the individual's children may also be permanently removed from any and all Nittany Youth programs.

COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

All coaches and cheer participants will abide by a Code of Conduct, which includes the following provisions. If any of these rules are broken, the League shall have the authority to impose a penalty. Coaches shall:

- F1:** Not smoke and/or use smokeless tobacco on the field.

- F2:** Not criticize participants in front of spectators, but reserve constructive criticism for later, in private, or in the presence of squad members if others might benefit.

- F3:** Accept decisions of the judges in competitions as being fair and called to the best ability of said officials.

- F4:** Not criticize an opposing squad, its players, coaches, or fans by word of mouth or by gesture.

- F5:** Emphasize that good athletes strive to be good students that are both physically and mentally alert.

- F6:** Strive to make every spirit activity serve as a training ground for life, and a basis for good mental and physical health.

- F7:** Emphasize that winning is the result of good "teamwork."

- F8:** Not engage in excessive sideline coaching and shall not shout instructions from the sidelines.

- F9:** Together with team officials, be jointly responsible for the conduct and control of team fans and spectators. Any fan who becomes a nuisance and out of control will be asked to leave.

- F10:** Not use abusive or profane language at any time.

- F11:** Not receive any payment, in cash or kind, for services as a coach in Nittany Youth Football & Cheer. This includes any coach, expert, consultant or choreographer, regardless of his/her roster status.
- F12:** Not recommend or distribute any medication, controlled or over the counter, except as specifically prescribed by participant's physician.
- F13:** Not permit an ineligible spirit participant to participate in a game.
- F14:** Not deliberately incite unsportsmanlike conduct.
- F15:** Abstain from the possession and drinking of alcoholic beverages and the possession or use of any illegal substance on both the game and practice fields.
- F16:** Remove from a game or practice any participant when even slightly in doubt about his/her health, whether or not as a result of injury, until competent medical advice is available.
- F17:** Control their fans. Remember, as a team coach you're responsible for your team, and fan reaction will usually be in step with your reaction.
- F18:** Uphold all rules and regulations of Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League.

PART I - THE NITTANY YOUTH STRUCTURE

DEFINITIONS

F1-LEAGUE:

The term "League" has two definitions, each separate and distinct as applicable:

- A. It is a legal term to define a type of League/Conference, **or**
- B. It is a grouping of squads of the same ages (division) into a "league" for scheduling purposes.

A League consists of a minimum of three (3) squads participating in the same Age division.

F2-ASSOCIATION:

Associations are organizations that sponsor and administer one or more teams. They raise monies, buy equipment, recruit coaches, secure fields, etc.

Associations are characterized by specific geographical coverage. In cities, they often adopt commonly understood neighborhood names. In the suburbs, they usually take the town name. In rural areas, an association name may embrace an entire county (or a substantial part of it). An association's recruiting area is approved by its League and is normally consistent with its geographical name.

F3-TEAM:

A team is the universal, basic unit of organization. At minimum, a team consists of a group of participants organized under the direction of a coaching staff in a given Age/Weight division. Each football team may have a maximum of two spirit squads, one cheer and one dance.

F4-DIVISION:

Division has several meanings, the most common of which refers to one of the three (3) Age classifications: Flag (FG), Junior (Jr), Senior (S) The basic ages for each division of play are listed in Rule 1 F:4.

F5-ELIGIBILITY:

A participant is eligible if they meet the criteria under the Age Divisions, has been physically cleared to play and has parental/guardian permission to play.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RULES

- F1:** The rules contained herein ARE REQUIRED to be enforced by each league, conference and federation in Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League.
- F2:** FOR ALL PURPOSES, THE NITTANY YOUTH PLAYING SEASON SHALL BE DEFINED AS AUGUST 1 THROUGH MARCH 31ST, OR THE LAST GAME/COMPETITION, WHICH EVER COMES FIRST. All Leagues, administrative personnel, coaches, players and spirit participants are subject to disciplinary action for violations of Nittany Youth rules and regulations at any time during a stated playing season.
- F3:** NO RULES WILL BE ADDED AFTER MAY 1ST UNLESS IT IS A SAFETY ISSUE.

PART II - NITTANY YOUTH REGULATIONS

ARTICLE 1: POWERS/AUTHORITY OF LEAGUE

- F1:** The League has, among its powers, the obligation and authority to enforce NYFCL rules. In addition, it has the right to make Nittany Youth rules more stringent than those appearing in this book, with the exception of the scholastic fitness requirement.
- F2:** A League may not make rules less strict.

ARTICLE 2: BOUNDARIES

- F1:** An Association is responsible for the establishment of its own boundaries. However, it shall not infringe upon the territorial rights or boundaries of another chartered Association, without that association's approval.
- F2:** Associations must establish boundaries. Boundaries will be set by a defined, readily recognizable format, i.e. town limits, school districts, streets, etc.

ARTICLE 3: DUAL MEMBERSHIP

An Association holding a Nittany Youth charter may enter any one of its teams into membership in any other youth Cheer program (i.e. American Youth Cheer).

ARTICLE 4: WAIVERS OF RULES/CHARTER COMMITTEE

The Charter Committee for Nittany Youth shall consist of the Executive Board. They are responsible for reviewing, granting, suspending or revoking the privileges and conditions of the local league's charter.

- F1:** Waivers regarding a participant wishing to play outside their Association's boundaries, shall only be granted upon a written application executed and verified by the President of the Association, attesting that the waiver sought is based upon good cause and can be shown to be in the best interest of Nittany Youth spirit participants assuring their safety.
- F2:** All waivers expire annually on March 31ST every year.
- F3:** Only waivers which, serve in the best interest of Nittany Youth Cheer will be given consideration.

ARTICLE 5: REGISTRATION

A candidate cannot begin practice with a team until he/she has "signed up." To register, the candidate must sign a standard, locally-supplied form approved by the League. The sign-up fee, if any, may be collected at this time. All coach trainees and teen demonstrators under the age of 18 must be registered/certified in the same manner as all other minors participating in Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League. All candidates must furnish the following:

F1-PARENTAL CONSENT:

A written statement from either a parent or legal guardian, stating that the child has his or her permission to participate. The League or team may supply a standard form for this.

F2-MEDICAL EXAMINATION:

Each Association is responsible for ensuring that every participant has evidence of a current physical examination from any Licensed State Examiner; (i.e. Medical Doctor, Registered Physician Assistant, Registered Nurse Practitioner, etc.) to determine that the candidate is physically fit and there are no observable conditions, which would contra-indicate their participation in cheerleading. Note: If regular school medical examination was performed and the results are releasable to parents, a copy of such a report may be used in lieu of a new examination. It shall be at the discretion of each Association to determine what constitutes "current".

SPECIAL NOTE: A person with a loss of limb may participate provided that the individual has a signed statement of approval from an examining physician and that the use of the limb is no more dangerous to players than the corresponding human limb, and does not place an opponent at a disadvantage.

F3-PROOF OF AGE:

A certified copy of the birth certificate on file bearing the seal of the issuing office of the state of birth is the best guarantee of reliability of claimed date of birth and is form of proof most recommended. Passports are also reliable. Military ID cards are acceptable. Certified wallet-size certificates issued by a state or commonwealth are acceptable. Any other alleged "proof of birth date," including photo copies of "originals," are to be accepted only upon the willingness of the team administration to have its schedule forfeited should fraudulent application later be determined.

ARTICLE 6: VOLUNTARY CUTS

A participant shall be considered a voluntary or "self-cut" participant when he/she simply no longer shows up at practices or games of his/ her own free will.

While voluntary cuts are not charged to any squad for the purpose of these regulations, a coaching staff may attempt to disguise its cutting pattern by arranging practices in such a way as to discourage participants of lesser ability into quitting on their own. While these practices are not common, they have been known to occur and are considered intentional avoidance of the rules and regulations and are, therefore, punishable as a result of a hearing by the individual association.

If a team or spirit squad loses 20% or more of its assigned participants prior to certification, it is mandatory that the association investigate the causes for the participants voluntarily leaving the team or spirit squad, and take whatever appropriate action may be needed. The results of this investigation shall be reported to the League and the League shall have final authority as to whether appropriate actions were taken.

ARTICLE 7: CERTIFICATION

F1: Certification is that process whereby the squad or association will file with the League of which it is a member, a complete roster of players for the regular season schedule.

F2: A certified copy of each roster will be forwarded by the League to NYFCL by the announced deadline. This is a certified roster in that the League has accepted the information at a pre-season session with its teams, based upon information submitted, and the teams are restricted to these participants for the balance of the season.

F3: This will be accomplished on the official Nittany Youth roster form, or on any form developed by a League, providing that the form is approved by Nittany Youth.

- F4:** Certification must be completed prior to the opening game of the regular League schedule. The procedures for accomplishing certification are discussed hereafter. To be certified onto a team, a participant shall qualify under the following:
- A. Eligibility according to residence shall be decided by the League when the candidate resides in an area other than that authorized for the association by the League.
 - B. Each association shall attempt to assign a first-time participant to the lowest age division for which he/she is qualified.
 - C. Once certified for a particular age division, a participant shall not be permitted to recertify to a lower division without the written approval of the NYFCL Board.
 - D. Ages shall be verified by birth certificate as specified in Article 6, F3.
 - E. Associations will require a new picture of a cheer participant at least every two (2) calendar years.

ARTICLE 8: AWARDS

F1: In compliance with the "team" concept and in view of the ages of Nittany Youth participants, no participant will be singled out as "best base," "best flyer," "most valuable participant," etc., for the presentation of a special award. Such adulation should be given to an athlete after his/her Nittany Youth days, if he/she justly deserves it by performance at the High School level. Individual awards may be presented, but must be given to all team members.

F2-SPECIAL NOTE FOR PLAYERS: Awards for individual performances displayed on the uniforms are prohibited (i.e., no stars, hatchets, footballs, etc.). The only decal allowed is the team logo and/or an official Nittany Youth logo.

ARTICLE 9: CHARGING ADMISSION

No mandatory admission shall be charged to participating spirit squads, or coaching staff members of a team playing any Nittany Youth game, whether it be a regular season game, post-season game, post-season bowl game, League playoff game. Donations may be solicited at the gate. However, admission may be charged at any NYFCL sponsored Cheer Competition. In addition, a fee may be charged for any individual competitions taking place during an NYFCL sponsored competition.

ARTICLE 10: PROTESTS

F1: Only protests involving the eligibility of a participant shall be considered.

F2: Protests are decided in accordance with the administrative procedures of the League.

F3: Teams, and Associations have the responsibility to communicate protests as soon as they are known to exist. Notification must occur no later than one week following the incident. Failure to protest within the one week timeframe may result in denial of the protest.

ARTICLE 11: MANDATORY BACKGROUND CHECKS

F1: As a condition of service to a Nittany Youth league, all Coaches, Board of Directors' members and any other persons or volunteer workers who have repetitive access to or contact with spirit participants, must complete and submit an official "Nittany Youth Volunteer Application" to the NYFCL Board. Annual background checks must be completed prior to the applicant assuming his/her duties for the current season, and should be submitted to the Association President prior to the start of the current season. Refusal to submit a fully completed "Nittany Youth Volunteer Application" annually must result in the immediate dismissal of the individual or denial of participation for the applicant.

F2: Each Association shall require and be responsible for enforcing all league and association personnel to annually submit to the Association President a fully completed official "Nittany Youth Volunteer Application," prior to the applicant assuming his/her duties for the current season. The Volunteer Application must include

signed permission from the applicant allowing the Association to perform the necessary background check. The official "Nittany Youth Volunteer Application" shall only be modified in order to comply with local, state, provincial or national laws. Each League shall also require and be responsible for enforcing that an Officer of each member Association complete and submit an official Nittany Youth "Association Confirmation of Compliance with Background Checks" affidavit. Each League is required to file an official Nittany Youth "League Confirmation of Compliance with Background Checks" affidavit annually with the NYFCL Board. All volunteer applications, Association affidavits must be maintained by the League for a minimum of one year.

- F3:** No Association shall permit any person to participate in any manner, whose background check reveals a conviction for, or guilty plea to, any crime involving or against a minor. In addition, other charges and convictions may be an indication of an unfit volunteer, and therefore an Association may prohibit any individual from participating as a volunteer if the Association deems the individual unfit to work with minors, as long as the Association applies the same criteria uniformly for all individuals seeking to volunteer.
- F4:** Each Association must require that all Volunteers undergo a background check screening which at minimum includes a check of the records for the state in which the volunteer resides. Beginning in 2005, if an Association utilizes only a state sex offender registry check, that Association must also perform a national database or a Federal background check search, such as those offered by rapsheets.com, the National Center for Safety Initiatives, or the FBI, unless prohibited by law. If a local organization becomes aware of information, by any means whatsoever, that an individual, including, but not limited to, volunteers, players and hired workers, has been convicted of or pled guilty to any crime involving or against a minor, the league must immediately contact the applicable government agency to the accuracy of the information. Upon confirmation of a conviction for, or guilty plea to, a crime against or involving a minor, the league must prohibit the individual from participating in any manner.

Due to the fact that Nittany Youth has no direct operational control over the selection of volunteers, each League shall be required to indemnify and hold harmless Nittany Youth against all legal actions based upon allegations arising from a failure to enforce all or part of this regulation. Failure to comply with all or part of this regulation may result in the suspension or revocation of the league charter, the removal of league and/or association volunteers, ineligibility for participation in regional and national play, and as well as significant legal liability.

PART III-ENFORCEMENT POLICY

POLICE POWERS/HEARINGS & APPEALS

All Nittany Youth organizations- Associations, and Teams, will be called upon from time to time to do the following:

- A. Resolve disputes between member organizations and individuals.
- B. Take action to enforce NYFCL rules and regulations.
- C. Discipline both adult and juvenile members.

NOTE: NITTANY YOUTH DOES NOT HANDLE APPEALS. Each Association is advised to set up its own tribunal to handle matters in a timely fashion at the local level. WARNING: Failure to do so could result in being taken to court.

MINIMUM MANDATED PENALTIES

Minimum mandated penalties for specific offenses are required to assure that punishment for the most serious infractions will occur on a uniform basis.

F1-ADULT OFFENSES:

- A. ENDANGERMENT OF JUVENILES: Suspension for one (1) year, to permanent suspension upon repeated offense.
- B. TEACHING PROHIBITED TECHNIQUES: Suspension for one (1) year, to permanent suspension upon repeated offense.
- C. FIGHTING: Suspension for one (1) year, to permanent suspension upon repeated offense.
- D. CHEATING: Suspension for one (1) year; permanent suspension upon second offense.
- E. THREATS: Suspension for one (1) year; permanent suspension upon second offense.
- F. GAMBLING ON GAME OUTCOME: Suspension for one (1) year.

- G. LACK OF COOPERATION/ OBSTRUCTION: Suspension until compliance is achieved.
- H. FALSIFICATION OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION: Suspension for one year, to permanent suspension for repeat offense. This would include, but not be limited to, parental consent, medical examination and proof of age.

Upon suspension of any penalty provided herein, an accused shall be placed on probation, among the general conditions of which shall be: (1) that the accused be and remain of good behavior and that he strictly enforce all rules and regulations of Nittany Youth;

F2-JUVENILE OFFENSES:

Fighting, intimidation, or disrespect for authority shall be cause for ejection from a game/competition. Any participant ejected from any game/competition for cause shall be ineligible for participation in their next game/competition. A second ejection during the same season shall be cause for removal from the squad for the balance of that season.

F3-TEAM AND ASSOCIATION OFFENSES

- A. FAILURE TO KEEP FAITH WITH JUVENILES & PARENTS is defined as any deliberate practice of a team or association, which placed the health, welfare and safety of juveniles in jeopardy, or exploits or treats them in such a manner that the juvenile becomes a "tool" of the team.

To file this charge, the violation must result from team or association policy, and not be an aberration of one individual. This implies that the practice is carried out by order of, or with the knowledge of, the officership, and no steps are taken to end it.

MINIMUM PENALTY: Probation of the organization coupled with permanent suspension of its president and all others who participated in the practice. Upon a second offense, suspension of the organization until all officers are removed.

- B. FIGHTING/RIOTING/INCITEMENT TO RIOT: Game related: forfeiture of the game for first offense; forfeiture of the season for second offense within the same season. Scrimmage-related: at the discretion of League.

PART IV – NITTANY YOUTH SPIRIT RULES

Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League (NYFCL) has established one (1) set of spirit rules for all spirit participants. In addition to the general regulations found in Parts I-IV in this book, all Nittany Youth Cheer League Spirit Squads shall follow the rules outlined in this section. The term "Spirit" includes all squads. This section incorporates the current rules of the National Federation of State High School Associations, the National Spirit Group and existing Nittany Youth Cheer League rules/limitations. No rules will be added after August 1 unless it is a safety issue.

SPIRIT ORGANIZATION

LEAGUE LEVEL

- A. The League shall have a Cheer Commissioner (or Vice-President or applicable local title) who is a non-voting member on the League Board.
- B. The Cheer Commissioner (as defined in A above) shall chair all League spirit meetings, occasionally held separately from the football meetings.
- C. The League Cheer Commissioner is responsible for arranging cheer coaches certification/training and the NYFCL Cheer Competition.
- D. The League Cheer Commissioner is responsible for certifying all association cheer rosters and maintaining copies of said rosters.
- E. The League Cheer Commissioner must participate in a valid NYFCL endorsed Spirit Coaches' Education Training Program.

ASSOCIATION LEVEL

- A. Each association shall have a Cheer Commissioner, to whom all association spirit personnel report.
- B. Each association shall have an association board member to be called the Cheer Commissioner (or whatever other term is locally applicable) who is an equal voting member of the association board and responsible only to that board.

- C. The Association Cheer Commissioner must participate in a valid NYFCL endorsed Spirit Coaches' Education Training Program.

COACHES' REQUIREMENTS, SQUAD LEVEL

A squad's coaching staff is in complete charge of the squad whenever it is together at practice or on the playing field, traveling as a group to and from practice sessions, games and competitions, or together for any squad function, such as a banquet or community event. The coaching staff is under the direction of the Head Coach; other coaches are called Assistant Coaches. The following applies to all coaches:

- A. The staff positions for a spirit squad are as follows:
1. The Head Coach of each spirit squad must be 21 years old by the start of the season, August 1.
 - a) The Head Spirit Coach has final responsibility for his/her actions, those of his/her assistant coaches, spirit participants, and staff.
 - b) The Head Coach will determine the assignments of the Assistant Coaches with Coordinator's approval.
 - c) Every squad shall have at least one adult volunteer as head coach (21 years old or older). After the first 12 participants (including mascots) there must be an assistant volunteer coach (18 years old or older) for every 12 participants. The number of adult volunteers shall, therefore, determine the maximum squad size (one 21 year old or older head coach - maximum 12 participants; 13-24 participants must have one 21 year old or older head coach and one 18 year old or older assistant volunteer coach, etc.)
 - d) All Head Coaches must participate in a valid NYFCL endorsed Spirit Coaches' Education Training Program. It is also highly recommended that each Association send as many assistant coaches to the training program as possible. Exceptions may be approved at the League level.
 2. An Assistant Coach must be at least 18 years of age or a high school graduate.
 3. Teams/squads are permitted to carry a maximum of three (3) Coach-Trainees, who must be a minimum of 16 years of age.
 - a) All coach trainees under the age of 18 must be certified in the same manner as all other minors participating in the Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League (i.e., parent permission, physical, proof of age, photo ID).
 - b) Coach-Trainees must also follow the guidelines for a student demonstrator listed below in 4b through 4g.
 4. Each squad is permitted to carry up to two (2) Student Demonstrators. Please follow all guidelines listed below:
 - a) A Student Demonstrator must be at least 14 years old.
 - b) A Student Demonstrator for a cheer squad must have had at least two seasons prior cheer experience.
 - c) The Student Demonstrator must only work with squads that are younger than his/her current age. The oldest girl on the squad that the student is assisting must be at least two years younger.
 - d) A rostered cheerleader may not also serve as a Student Demonstrator.
 - e) Student Demonstrators must be under the direct supervision of the Head Cheer Coach.
 - f) Student Demonstrators must be rostered as part of the coaching staff of the squad with which they are volunteering.
 - g) All student demonstrators under the age of 18 must be certified in the same manner as all other minors participating in the Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League (i.e., parent permission, physical, proof of age, photo ID).
The Student Demonstrator may be used to demonstrate moves, techniques and may teach words to cheers. He/she is not allowed to coach or conduct a practice.
- B. Coaches are to be selected by methods approved by Association rules and/or by-laws.
- C. Coaches do not make squad or League policy. Rather, they carry it out. However, on the playing and practice fields, the coaching staff is in complete charge and shall not be interfered with except in cases of rules violations and any other conduct deemed by higher authority to be contrary to the welfare of youth.
- D. Each Association shall establish its own rules regarding the placing of coaches with sons, daughters or siblings within its own boundaries. Further note: All participants and/or mascots must be placed in an age appropriate division.
- E. Coaches Code of Conduct - Reference D12, beginning of NYFCL Rulebook. Coaches shall not receive any payment, in cash or in kind, for services as a coach in the Nittany Youth Football and Cheer League. This includes any coach, expert, consultant or choreographer, regardless of his/her roster status.

- F. Once approved for coaching, a coach is automatically terminated at the close of each season. To coach the following year, the same Association approval is required. Any violation of the rules committed by a coach during the season, even though the hearing is not held until after the close of the season, is still under the jurisdiction of the sponsoring association and/or League.
- G. The NYFCL season begins August 1st and runs to the last game, competition or March 31st of the current season, whichever comes first.

FORMATION OF SQUADS

Tryouts of any kind within NYFCL Spirit Squads are prohibited. Other means used to ascertain the level whereby a participant is placed on a squad are acceptable. Not more than **30** participants shall be assigned to a spirit squad at the start of pre-conditioning on August 1 or the later starting date of the association, whichever comes first. If an Association has more than one squad in a division, squads must be divided evenly in ages and size. In addition every cheer squad is required to participate in the NYFCL sponsored Cheer Competition.

TYPES OF NITTANY YOUTH CHEER LEAGUE SPIRIT DIVISIONS

1. TRADITIONAL SQUAD

A team is the universal, basic unit of organization. At minimum, a team consists of a group of participants organized under the direction of a coaching staff in a given Age division. Each football team may have one primary cheer squad. For all purposes, the NYFCL playing season shall be defined as August 1st to March 31st.

- a) Not more than thirty (30) participants may be certified to a squad roster.

2. FLAG CHEER

- a) Not more than thirty (30) cheerleaders may be certified to a squad roster. Mascots are not included in the total count of thirty (30).

AGE DIVISIONS

- 1. The ages of all spirit participants in the program shall correspond to the overall ages that the League is permitting for players, unless League rules dictate that the ages of the spirit squad shall correspond to the playing ages of the squad with which they are associated.

AGE SCHEMATIC

<u>Division Name</u>	<u>Ages</u>
FLAG	5 - 6 - 7
JUNIOR	8 – 9 - 10 (7 yr olds w/ 2 + years of experience)
SENIOR	11- 12- 13 (10 yr olds w/ 2+ years of experience)

- 2. A squad, regardless of the ages of its spirit participants, must be rostered, certified and registered in the same age division as the football team with which it is associated (e.g., it cannot cheer at senior games and compete as a junior cheer squad).
- 3. The participant's age on July 31 of the current year shall be the participant's age for the coming season.

MASCOTS

- A. The use of mascots is at the discretion of the Association.
- B. However, the following shall apply:
 - 1. There shall be no tryouts for mascot.
 - 2. A mascot must be at least five (5) years old.
 - 3. A mascot must be certified and copies must be with each book. Effective with first game, they are locked in.
 - 4. The number of mascots permitted per squad shall be left to the discretion of the League. However, a squad cannot consist solely of mascots.
 - 5. Mascots may not compete in Cheer Competitions with their squad that is being scored. They can participate in an exhibition performance.
 - 6. A mascot can participate with the spirit squad at football games.
 - 7. A mascot cannot and will not perform any stunts or any other activity limited to cheer squads with the exception of crowd participation sidelines/chants. Crowd participation sidelines or chants are

small spirit segments (i.e., NYFCL, Let's Go! or N Y F C L, Yell It, N Y F C L!) that entice the crowd to participate in supporting the football team. A mascot can perform these segments of cheer on the sidelines or as part of the halftime routine but cannot perform any stunts or other activity limited to cheer squads.

8. All mascot spirit rules also apply to mascots for flag spirit squads.

STUNTING CHARTS

LEVEL 1: Flag Cheer Squads

Standing Tumbling	No flight skills with the exception of a round off. Both hands must be in contact with the floor. Back and front handsprings are not allowed. Front rolls, back rolls, front walkovers, back walkovers, cartwheels, handstands and round offs are allowed.
Running Tumbling	No flight skills with the exception of a round off. Both hands must be in contact with the floor. Front rolls, back rolls, front walkovers, back walkovers, cartwheels, handstands, back handsprings, front handsprings and round offs are allowed.
Partner Stunts	No extended stunts allowed. Single leg stunts are allowed below shoulder (prep) level. Flyer can not leave original bases. Twisting load-in skills not allowed.
Cradles	No cradles, step outs only.
Release Moves	No release moves allowed.
Tosses	No tosses allowed.

<p style="text-align: center;">Cradles</p>	<p>Only basic cradles (full turn allowed) are allowed from stunts. Twisting, arch, toe touch, pike, tucks, etc. are allowed. Cradles may not land in prone position (on stomach). Anything other than a straight pop off must be caught in a cradle position.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Pop and Sit Sweep Cradles Side Facing One Leg Stunt at Prep Level Dismounting with a full Twist Cradle, i.e., Arabesque at Prep Level Cradle Reloads</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Release Moves</p>	<p>No release moves allowed other than a basic cradle or pop off to the ground. (A release is a stunt free of contact or surface. A transition may be a release.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Basic Cradle Pop to Basic Cradle</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Pyramids</p>	<p>Pyramids must follow partner stunt and cradling rules and are allowed up to two (2) high with the following exceptions: extended stunts with partner on one leg must be braced on both sides by a prep level stunt. The connection to prep can be hand or foot and must be established at or below prep level. Prep level partners must have both feet in bases hands. Partners/Flyers must maintain contact with a base at all times and may not lose contact with a prep when changing position.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Two Extension Preps and a Full Extension in the Middle (any variations of these types of stunts) Three Two Leg Extensions Connected 2 Outside, Prep Level, Legs Hitched to a Prep Extended Stunt with Partner on One Leg Braced on Both Sides by a Prep Level Stunt Dismount (from one leg stunt) should be an obvious part of the cradle. If dismount is an obvious free standing release (from one leg extended stunt) then there will be a deduction. Shoulder Stand Leg Hitch Totem Pole (Basic) Full Extension, Sponge, Straight Ride Cradle</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Tosses</p>	<p>Basket tosses are allowed (i.e., basket toss grip). Sponge tosses must be caught in a cradle. Partner/Flyer must be cradled by original bases. Flipping (front or back), traveling, or twisting tosses are not allowed. The only tosses allowed are straight rides.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Full Extension, Sponge, Straight Ride Cradle</p>

GENERAL SQUAD MANAGEMENT

SPORTSMANSHIP/CONDUCT

- A. All participants and coaches agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship beginning August 1 and throughout the regular and post-season events. The head coach of each squad is responsible for proper conduct of squad members, coaches, and any other persons affiliated with the squad.
- B. A participant, coach, substitute, trainer or other squad attendant must not commit an unsporting act. This includes, but not limited to, acts or conduct such as:
 1. Disrespectful addressing or contacting a game official or competition judge or gesturing in such a manner as to indicate resentment.
 2. Using profane or inappropriate language or gestures.
 3. Baiting or taunting an opponent intended to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances including on the basis of race, religion, gender or national origin.
 4. Using tobacco or smokeless tobacco.

COACHES' RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Spirit squads should be placed under the direction of a knowledgeable coach.
- B. The spirit coach or other knowledgeable, rostered adult representative (21 years or older) must be in attendance at all practices, games and functions.
- C. The coach should be knowledgeable in first aid techniques and emergency procedures. Coaches should develop an emergency plan for dealing with injuries at practice/games. Participants should be made aware of these procedures.
- D. Coaches should remain up-to-date on all new techniques, progressions, and safety regulations by attending conferences/clinics and rules meetings. The staff includes the head coach, assistant coaches, coach trainees, and a specialized, trained person affiliated with the squad in the medical area (i.e., physician, paramedic, specially trained volunteer/athletic trainer).
- E. The coach must establish a line of communication within the association's spirit squads, the football personnel and the League Cheer Commissioner.
- F. The Head Spirit Coach has final responsibility for his/her actions, those of his/her assistant coaches, staff, squad participants, etc.

GENERAL SQUAD REQUIREMENTS

- A. The coach should approve all cheers, chants, posters, music and other spirit activities of the squad. Inform squad that all new skills must first be reviewed and approved by the coach prior to performing them. Vulgar/Suggestive movements, words or music, as well as inappropriate language by any participant(s) are prohibited: this includes excessive hip thrusting, inappropriate touching, slapping or positioning to one another, etc.
- B. Cheerleaders are not allowed to remove clothing or utilize tear-away uniforms.
- C. Proper progression and spotting techniques shall be used until stunts are mastered. It is highly recommended that matting be used until stunts are mastered.
- D. Advisors/coaches must recognize the entire squad's particular ability and limit the squad's activities accordingly.
- E. All cheerleaders should receive proper training before attempting any form of partner stunts or pyramids. Training in proper spotting techniques is mandatory for all squads.
- F. All practice sessions should be held in a location suitable for the activities of cheerleaders, i.e., use of tumbling mats is highly recommended, away from excessive noise and distractions, free from obstruction, etc. Stunts (mounts, pyramids and tumbling) shall be modified to be appropriate to the performing surface/area. The spirit surface, location, and weather conditions should be taken into consideration before engaging in physical activity.
- G. Warm-up and stretching should precede and conclude all practice sessions, pep rallies, games, competitions, and other physical activities. Reference Practice Rules.
- H. All spirit squads should develop a conditioning and strength-building program.
- I. Accessories, apparel, and hair-style should be conducive to safe practices and performances. Reference participant rules on nail length for those assisting/instructing/spotting a stunting squad for the safety of the participants. It is highly recommended that all rostered staff members, coach trainees and demonstrators who participate in teaching, spotting and catching stunts in practice should follow the same rules for nails due to the same safety concerns.

- J. Participants are not permitted to chew gum or have candy in their mouths during practices and performances.
- K. The use of mini-tramps, springboards or any apparatus used to propel a participant is prohibited.
- L. If it is detected that a participant is bleeding, has an open wound or an excessive amount of blood on the uniform, the participant must stop performing to receive proper treatment.
- M. When a participant is rendered unconscious or apparently unconscious, the participant shall not be permitted to resume participation without written authorization from a physician (MD/DO).
- N. It is highly recommended that the rostered coaching staff does not stunt with the squad or an individual member during a game or performance. It is the squad's time to shine and enjoy working with each other as a group.
- O. A coach must not permit a squad member to participate if in the judgment of the coach, the participant does not conform to NYFCL rules.

PRACTICE

- A. **DEFINITION:** To prevent possible bending of the rules and as a protection for children, practices are defined as a formal gathering of rostered coaches and participants where formal instruction and review occurs, where one or more of the following activities take place:
 1. Viewing of fundamentals film
 2. Group conditioning
 3. Individual skills sessions
 4. Group skills sessions
 5. Cheers, sidelines, chants, dance, music, etc.
 6. Stunting, Jumps, Gymnastics, etc.
 7. Camps/Clinics

As can be seen, a so-called "party" at a coach's home, where films are shown, or where squads are talked about, can be deemed a practice session, as can a "party" at a parent's home where one or more coaches are present. Use of a practice location is not required to satisfy the definition of a "practice session." Each Association is directed to establish a policy with respect to home videos and/or films of games or competitions and the viewing thereof.

Nittany Youth Football & Cheer League strongly recommends that Associations discourage "parties/practice sessions" at coaches' homes. All the activities/practice sessions that are referenced above, must include a minimum of (2) two coaches in attendance the entire session.

- B. Pre-season practice shall not begin until August 1 (or later). The actual date will be determined in accordance with climate and other factors determined by the League in establishing a common starting date for all squads within its jurisdiction.
- C. All practices must be attended by one person holding a Red Cross Community CPR and First Aid Certificate, or its equivalent, if not by a volunteer physician or EMT (such as a parent of one of the participants).
- D. **BEFORE LABOR DAY:** No team or squad may schedule more than ten (10) hours of practice per week before Labor Day. A week is defined as seven (7) consecutive calendar days. Not more than 2-1/2 hours of practice may be scheduled on any one day. Note: Practice is up to ten (10) hours per week. It is not mandatory for a squad to practice the full ten (10) allotted hours.
- E. **AFTER LABOR DAY:** Practices after Labor Day weekend are limited to six (6) hours per week. A week is defined as seven (7) consecutive calendar days. Practices after Labor Day weekend are not to exceed 2 hours per day. Note: Practice is up to six (6) hours per week. It is not mandatory for a squad to practice the full six (6) allotted hours.
- F. **BREAKS:** Break time is not counted against the ten (10) or six (6) hours per week or 2-1/2 or 2 hours of allowed practice time.
- G. **WARM-UP & WARM-DOWN:** At least ten (10) minutes of warm-up exercises (to stretch and to limber-up) shall be included prior to spirit practice, with a maximum of thirty (30) minute warm-up period prior to games and competitions. Warm-up and stretching should precede and conclude all practices, games, performances, and competitions.
- H. No additional practice for post-season play shall be authorized beyond the hours of practice per week currently authorized by these rules.

- I. No practice, or participation at games/competitions, shall be permitted without the minimum number of rostered adults specified above.
- J. The spirit surface should be taken into consideration.
 - 1. Practice sessions shall be held in a location suitable and reasonably free of obstructions and excessive noise, etc.
 - 2. Stunts shall be modified to be appropriate to the performing surface/area. Stunting should be performed only when there is adequate space and lighting and where surfaces are not wet, icy or uneven.
 - 3. When it is detected that a participant is bleeding, has an open wound, or an excessive amount of blood on the uniform, the participant shall stop performing to receive proper treatment.
 - 4. When a participant is rendered unconscious or apparently unconscious, that participant shall not be permitted to resume participation without written authorization from a physician.
- K. **EMERGENCY PLAN**
 An emergency plan is a necessary tool in preparing your spirit squads for the upcoming season. All Head Coaches are required to discuss a general emergency plan with their staff. The Head Coach should then discuss and review these procedures with assistant coaches, participants, volunteers and parents. The following are a few suggestions:
 - 1. An Emergency Medical Authorization Form should be on hand for each participant at all times.
 - 2. Prepare a list of local emergency numbers in addition to calling 911: Rescue Unit/Ambulance, Fire Department, Police Department, Hospital, etc.
 - 3. Prepare and appoint specific roles for each staff member or volunteers in case of emergency. The following are a few emergency duty suggestions: Assess the injury, remove the remaining squad, secure the area, contact emergency numbers and parents, assist emergency personnel in preparation of transportation to medical facility, travel to facility with patient, prepare an incident report, etc.
 - 4. Practice your plan at the beginning of the season and review periodically (i.e. location of exits, location of readily available emergency phones, directions to the nearest hospital, etc.)
- L. **CAMPS**
 In addition to the general regulations regarding camps, the following shall apply to spirit participants:
 - 1. The term "camp" shall be defined as meaning one or more training sessions provided by an outside organization. The term "clinic" shall be defined as meaning one or more training sessions provided by the League or Association as one or more practice sessions for instructional purposes for all spirit participants.
 - 2. No NYFCL organization or personnel associated within shall require or mandate that an NYFCL football team or spirit squad, in part or in whole, with or without coach(s) attend a football or spirit camp. There shall be no exceptions. However, an NYFCL team or spirit squad, in part or in whole MAY attend a camp if they so choose to provide the following conditions are met:
 - a) Coach or other affiliated squad personnel does not make it MANDATORY.
 - b) Camp provides as part of its services an accident insurance plan for camp participants.
 - 3. In addition, camps/clinics may be held by the association prior to August 1 if the following requirements are fulfilled:
 - a) Clinics of Association level must be administered/instructed by rostered coaches of said Association.
 - b) The event must be open to the entire league.
 - c) Coach or other affiliated squad personnel does not make it MANDATORY.
 - d) Camp provides as part of its services an accident insurance plan for camp participants.
- M. **PARTICIPANT APPAREL**
 - 1. Jewelry of any kind (i.e., post earrings, friendship bracelet, watch, necklaces, rings, pins, body piercings, etc.) will not be worn at practices, games or competitions, except religious or medical medals, which must be secured to the body (without a chain) with tape under the apparel.
 - a) Cheer participants are not permitted to wear ornaments/decorations on their shoes/sneakers that would hinder the safety of a stunting squad (i.e., yarn pom-poms, ribbons/bows, bells, etc.)

- b) Situations: A participant is wearing (a) jewelry in the naval (b) a stud spacer in the tongue (c) fish line through the holes in the naval (c) tape over earrings (d) jewelry or stickers adhered to the faces. RULING: All are illegal.
Exception: One team-oriented tattoo allowed at games and pep rallies, and competitions.
- 2. Fingernails, including artificial nails, shall be kept at a length appropriate for safe participation. The appropriate length for all members of a stunting squad means the nails are not visible beyond the fingers when viewed from the palm side of the hands. Further note: Nail polish is prohibited at practices, games and competitions.
 - a) It is highly recommended that all rostered staff members who participate in instruction and spotting of partner stunts should follow the same rules for fingernails.
- 3. For stunting squads, all squad members shall wear their hair pulled back, away from the face, and off the shoulders.
 - a) For stunting squads, Hair Ribbons/Bows must also be pulled back and away from the face.
 - b) Hair Beads are prohibited for spirit participants. The beads may interfere with the safety of other squad members while performing in practice, games and competitions.
 - c) Bobby Pins are permitted.
- 4. Uniform - Participants shall wear apparel (uniform, costume, shoes, etc.) that is appropriate for the activity involved. Uniforms should be properly fitted to each participant. Appropriate undergarments should be worn at all times. (i.e., improper/revealing uniform fit/coverage, bikini briefs, lack of under-garments, extreme length of skirt, etc.)
 - a) MALE CHEERLEADER:
Top - Sweater, Shell, T-shirt, Polo, etc.
Bottom - Short, Pant, Sweat Pant
Sneakers, Socks
Megaphone
 - b) FEMALE CHEERLEADER:
Top - Sweater, Shell, T-shirt, Polo, etc.
Bottom - Skirt, Short, Sweat Pant, Bloomers, Tights
Poms
Sneakers, Socks
Bow/Ribbon
 - 1) No sequin letters on a uniform. All approved letters must be securely placed on the uniform.
 - 2) Megaphones are considered a prop.
 - 3) Gloves may be worn at games and/or practices provided no stunting is involved.
- 5. Uniform and Practice Apparel - Coaches should not permit loose, slick, or baggy clothes which are not appropriate for stunting squads. Also, apparel with buttons, zippers, or snaps should not be permitted.
- 6. Standard poms (i.e., plastic, vinyl, metallic, etc.) are an optional item of the basic cheer uniform.
- 7. Glitter is prohibited for cheer squads. Glitter/ Shimmer to hair, face, body, costume and uniform is prohibited. Glitter may be used on signs and props if laminated or sealed. Participants must cover any visible, non-team oriented, body art/body tattoos (i.e., band-aide).
- 8. Non-Team oriented tattoos, facepaint, hair mascara, etc. are prohibited for cheer squads.
- 9. Make-up is permitted. It is the responsibility of the Head Coach to advise the participants on appropriate use of make-up for a youth squad.
- 10. Supports, braces, etc. which are hard and unyielding or have rough edges or surfaces shall be appropriately covered. A participant wearing a cast (excluding a properly covered air cast) shall not be involved in a stunt. Further Clarification: This rule was referenced from the NFHS Football Rules Book and should be adhered to for spirit participants as follows: Hard, abrasive unyielding substances on the hand, wrist, forearm or elbow of any participant must be covered on all exterior sides and edges with closed cell, slow recovery foam padding. NFHS

Football rules require no less than (1/2) inch foam padding or an alternative material. NFHS Spirit does not reference a thickness; therefore, we recommend that you refer to the participant's advising physician or medical training staff for the recommended thickness that is appropriate for that child and their injury. The rationale is to protect the other members of the squad from being accidentally struck by an uncovered hard cast. Any questions concerning casts should be referred to the NYFCL Cheer Commissioner in writing.

11. Eyeglasses MUST be secured by a sport band while performing to ensure safety (i.e., eyeglasses shall be secured to the head and under the hair with a sport band). Note: Eyeglass bands must not be knotted or have beads on it. No access strap can be hanging. Strap must lay flat against head.
12. It is highly recommended that wrist tape, tumbling wraps, wrist supports, etc., be approved by and maintained under the direct supervision of a trainer, doctor and/or medical staff. The primary use of wrist aides is to provide support or assist in the healing process of an injury. A wrist aide is not to be used as a uniform accessory for effect.
13. All of the above items 1 through 11 pertain to all events NYFCL and Non-NYFCL events (i.e., football games, jamborees, performances, competitions, etc.)
14. National Federation of State High School Associations - Rule for 2006
When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff. Exception: costuming worn by teams in character or novelty routines. This rule will be effective with the 2006-07 school year.
RATIONALE: This rule establishes a standard of dress consistent with other NFHS rule books.

SQUAD ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

A. MANDATORY CUTS

Participants who tryout and make a school squad for winter sport programs of the current season and are members of an NYFCL squad will be permitted to simultaneously participate in NYFCL and said school squad.

Please note: The following requirements are taken from Mandatory Cuts, Part II, Article 8 as follows:

Any participant must be cut who:

1. is found to have signed up as a result of parental pressure or tells squad management he/she does not really want to cheer.
2. attempts to intimidate fellow participants in practice by word and/or physical deed. No refunding of fees shall be required.
3. is an extreme discipline problem (and then, only with the concurrence of the Association Board).
4. refuses or cannot furnish the four (4) required items - Parental Consent, Medical Examination, Proof of Age, and Current Photo.

B. REGARDING INELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

Forfeiture of all competitions in which the ineligible participant was a member of the squad shall be the penalty applied to the squad involved. There shall be no exceptions.

1. There are three (3) unequivocal definitions of an ineligible participant, from which there are no appeals:
 - A. Overage or underage.
 - B. Residing outside of legal boundaries without mutual agreement of appropriate Leagues and/or associations.
 - C. Falsification of data concerning any of the above.

2. Participation in bowl games may also be prohibited upon recommendation of the League and approval of the NYFCL Board.

C. DROPS AND ADDS

1. A squad may add participants to its certified roster as long as said roster was certified below the maximum number permitted, or to replace those originally certified and no longer on the squad for any valid reason.
2. Each League shall establish its own Drops & Adds cutoff date, but no spirit participant may be added to any roster after the first Monday of October of the current season.

D. NO ALL-STARS

1. All-Star squads are prohibited in Nittany Youth Football and Spirit. Any organization found to play a game(s) with All-Star players, or perform cheer at a competition or exhibition event with All-Star Spirit Participants, from different rosters of regular season teams or squads will have its charter revoked.

NYFCL SAFETY GUIDELINES

1. SPOTTING

- A. A Spotter is a person who is in direct contact with the performing surface and may help control the building of, or dismounting from, a mount. This person(s) shall not provide the primary support; meaning the mount or pyramid would remain stable without the spotter(s).
- B. The primary responsibility of a spotter is to watch for safety hazards and be in a position to prevent injuries with special emphasis on the head, neck and shoulder/back areas.
- C. Spotters are required until a stunt, mount, pyramid and tumbling skill is mastered.
- D. An inattentive spotter is not considered a spotter.
- E. The spotter must have hands up and maintain constant visual contact at all times with the top person/flyer/partner (from shoulder height and above). The spotter should not be looking at the crowd or making motions during the performance of the stunt (i.e., the spotter may not be involved in another aspect of the performance at the time of the stunt that would prohibit him/her from spotting the stunt properly).
- F. A spotter's torso cannot be under a stunt.
- G. A person is not considered a spotter (front/back) if the hand position includes:
 1. Grabbing the sole of the foot of the partner or
 2. Grabbing the hand(s) of the base(s) beneath the top person's foot.
- H. A spotter can hold/grab the ankles of the flyer/partner/partner and/or the wrists of the bases. Exception: A spotter may grab the sole of the foot as long as the other hand is on the ankle.
- I. Spotters are recommended for all partner stunts. Continuous spotters are required for all stunts which are a shoulder stand, extension prep or higher (see also Extended Stunts). A spotter is required for all stunts in which the base(s) arms are fully extended above the head except: Chair, Russian Lift, Torch, Triple-Based Dead Man Lift, and Double Base Vertical T-Lift.

2. GAMES

- A. Stunting shall not take place while the ball is in play.
- B. Stunting shall take place only on a suitable surface.
- C. Basket tosses shall not be permitted on the football field or during a game. Basket tosses are reserved for competition venues only.

3. DISMOUNTS

- A. Definitions:
 1. Dismount - The release of the top person to land in a cradle or on the performing surface. Either landing is considered the end of the stunt.
 2. Backward Dismount - The top person dismounts backwards, with or without the feet being held, to catchers who are not the original bases to the performing surface from a stunt. Backward dismounts to different bases are prohibited.

3. Cradle Catch - A catch when the catchers, with palms up, catch the top person in a face-up position, by placing one arm under the back and the other under the thighs of the top person. A cradle catch is considered the end of a stunt.
- B. All dismounts from shoulder height or above (extension prep is considered shoulder height) must have assisted landings.
- C. For all catch/cradle dismounts, the catchers shall have continuous visual contact with the top person.
- D. No skill (toe touch, twist, etc.) without constant hand to hand contact shall be performed prior to landing on the performing surface (i.e., a toe touch dismount is allowed) when performed to a cradle. It may not be performed to the performing surface.)
- E. Where two bases (multi-based stunt) are involved, cradle dismounts are allowed only if the original bases (who initiate the cradle), plus an additional head and shoulders spotter catch. Backward and cradle dismounts to different bases (fireman's catches, fallbacks, and pendulums that do not progress back to upright) are prohibited.
- F. Dismounts from single base stunts to a single base cradle must have an additional catcher/spotter under the head and shoulder area of the top person. (Exception: No additional spotter is necessary when cradling a chair or torch unless the torch is considered fully extended.)
- G. Non-extended stunts (single and multi-based) may dismount directly to the cheering surface with at least one spotter (can be original base(s)) assisting on the landing, must be hands on. Extended stunts (single and multi-based stunts) may dismount to the cheering surface with at least two spotters (can be original bases) assisting on the landing, must be hands on. Proper progression and safety procedures must be taken in mastering this skill at the youth level. Safety is the main concern in dismounting and must be properly supervised.
- H. Twist cradle dismounts are permitted.
 1. Full Twist Cradle - Prior to attempting a full twist cradle, it is highly recommended that a stunt group master a pop cradle from an elevator (prep position) and an extension. The twist cradle can be used to dismount from most partner stunts including elevator, extension, heel stretches and arabesques.
 2. Under no circumstances shall Twist Cradles be executed when there is not a matted area. (Ex. On the sidelines or at half time of football games.)
- I. Forward face-down dismounts are prohibited.
- J. Inverted dismounts are prohibited. A forward three quarter roll out of a stunt is not permitted. It is considered head-over-heels or an inverted position and therefore prohibited.

4. DROPS - Change to Federation

- A. Definition: Knee, Seat, Thigh Drops - Dropping to the knee(s), seat or thighs) onto the performing surface/floor from a jump or stand without first bearing most of the weight on the hands/feet which breaks the impact of the drop.
 1. When dropping on two knees you must put hands down first. Hands must go down not just fingers.
 2. If a squad goes down on one knee, it can be done without hands if and only if it is controlled. It is recommended that hands go down first in every case to insure that a participant does not over-exaggerate a move while performing and drops uncontrolled to the floor.
 3. Drop to a jazz sit is considered a seat drop, and is prohibited.
- B. Body drops ("dead falls," or dropping directly onto the floor) are prohibited.
- C. "Flying" or "suicide" splits (going into a split off the ground, and landing in said position, with the inner parts of the upper legs and/or thighs striking the ground first) are prohibited.
- D. Front Drop - dropping to the horizontal, facedown position on the performing surface is prohibited.
- E. A handspring/flip over to any drop is prohibited.
- F. A Tension drop is a pyramid/mount in which the base(s) and top(s) lean in formation until the top leaves the base without assistance. Tension drops are prohibited.

5. PENDULUMS & FLATBACKS

A. Definitions:

1. **Pendulum:** A stunt in which the top person in a layout position falls forward and/or backward away from the bases to the required number of catchers while maintaining constant hands-to-feet/legs contact with the bases. It is not a dismount.
2. **Flatback:** A horizontal, face up position of a top person between two or more bases. When a top person is transitioned from a vertical position to a horizontal (flatback) position, two separate head and shoulders catchers are required. It is not a pendulum or a dismount.
3. Pendulums are permitted, provided:
 - a) It is performed from shoulder height or below; a pendulum may not begin in an extended position.
 - b) It doesn't pass through an extended overhead position; Pendulums must progress to the upright position.
 - c) The top is caught in a face-up or facedown position.
 - d) There are at least four catchers (on each side of a full pendulum).
 - e) The catchers remain in original positions.
 - f) No one is between the bases and catchers.
 - g) The base(s) have constant visual contact with the catchers (full pendulum & half pendulums require two bases).
 - h) The bases remain stationary.
4. Only the top person in a pendulum may turn.
5. A pendulum may end in an extension.
6. A Half Pendulum requires two bases and a separate spotter on the opposite side of the bases from the catchers in order to have constant visual contact with the catchers.
7. Side Pendulums are prohibited.
8. Flatback is a horizontal, face-up position of a top person between two or more bases (i.e., floor to flatback, cradle to flatback, flatback-reload to prep, etc.) These instances require two bases and one continuous back (head-shoulder) spot. These above-mentioned examples are permitted in Nittany Youth with continuous contact.

6. PARTNER STUNTS & PYRAMIDS

A. Definitions:

Stunt - Any tumbling skill, toss, mount or pyramid.

Mount - Any skill in which one or more persons are supported by one or more persons.

Pyramid - Multiple mounts.

1. **Base** - A person who is in direct weight bearing contact with the performing surface and provides primary support for another person. A base shall not assume a back-bend, headstand or handstand position.
2. **Flyer/partner/partner** - A person who receives primary support from another person.
3. **Bracer** - A person who stabilizes a stunt by direct contact with a top person. The stunt would remain stable without the bracer.
4. **Two High Pyramid** - All individuals in the pyramid mount who are not in contact with the performing surface (top) must be primarily supported by one or more individuals who are in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface(base).
5. **Totem Pole** - A multi-based stunt which creates a tiered appearance by connecting stunts of increasing height, one behind the other.

B. All mounts and/or pyramids are limited to two persons high, meaning the top person receives primary support from a base(s) who is in direct, weight-bearing contact with the performing surface.

C. A participant shall not move under or over a mount or pyramid. Further clarification:

1. No spirit participant shall stand, kneel, sit or lie on anyone who does not have at least one foot on the ground.

2. Partner stunts and pyramids may not pass over, under or through other partner stunts and pyramids.
 3. Individuals may not pass over or under other individuals. (Example: A leap frog performed on the floor (ground level) is prohibited (i.e., passing over an individual without constant contact.) Further note: A Leap Frog Stunt is permitted as a Transition Stunt with constant contact. Reference Transitional Stunts.)
 4. Partner stunts/pyramids may not pass under or over an individual(s). Individuals may not pass over, under or through a partner stunt/pyramid.
- D. Hanging mounts are prohibited.
- E. Collapsible pyramids are prohibited.
- F. Totem Poles are permitted provided that each person leaning forward is stabilized/supported by the stunt directly in front, and that no extended stunt stabilizes/supports another top person.
1. A spotter is present for each extended stunt in a totem pole pyramid.
- G. Suspended Splits
1. Split mounts are prohibited.
 - a) Single and Multi-Based suspended splits are prohibited (i.e., split catch).
 2. A spirit participant shall not be held in a split position off the floor by one or more persons at any time.
 3. A spirit participant in a split position must not support any additional weight.
- H. Suggested Partner Stunt Progressions: (Recommendations for Progressions)
1. These progressions are general in nature, and do not attempt to list every skill. All spirit stunts should be learned according to accepted progressions, which means lower to higher and from easy to more complex.

Partner Stunt Progressions

Step-up Drills
 Double Base Thigh Stand
 Double Base Shoulder Stand
 Single Base Shoulder Stand
 Extension Prep, Step Off Dismount
 Cradle Drills
 Extension Prep, Cradle Dismount
 Press Extension, Return to Shoulders
 Cradle Dismount
 Press Extension, Cradle Dismount
 Full Extension, Step-Up Liberty
 Ground-Up Liberty
 Skills to Cradles (i.e., toe touches, twists, etc.)
 Basket Toss Drills
 Basket Toss Skill Execution (i.e., toe touches, twists, etc.)

Dismount Progressions

Step off Drill
 Shove Rap/Bear Hug
 Cradle Drills (i.e.,
 Fall Back, Rebound
 into Cradle Catches,
 Extension Prep Cradles,
 Prep Twist Cradles
 Extended Twist Cradles, etc.)
 Front Spot Assisted Full Down
 Full Down (Single Twist)

2. Recommendation: Every stunt should be done to a count so that everyone in the stunt has the same timing. Every position in the stunt (flyer/partner/partner, bases, back spotter) should understand their responsibilities in the stunt prior to building/mounting to include climbing, spotting, arm motions/movements and dismounting.
- I. Swing-up/down to a double-based elevator and/or extension prep is prohibited.
- J. Backbends which support any additional weight are prohibited.
- K. Free falling flips or swan dives from any type of stunt are prohibited.
- L. 360 Elevator is permitted as long as constant contact is maintained. This stunt is a variation on the double take in which the flyer/partner/partner does a full turn in the air in between stunts while staying in contact with the bases.
- M. Table Top - A stunt in which the partner is standing on the back of the base(s) who is leaning forward (i.e., Base Kneeling on the floor - A stunt where the base kneels on the floor and a flyer/partner/partner stands on the back of the kneeling base is permitted. Although at least one foot of the base is not on the ground, the base position has support evenly distributed on the ground.)

7. EXTENDED STUNTS - QUESTION SHOULDER HEIGHT AND ABOVE

- A. Definitions:
1. Extended Stunts: The supporting arm(s) of the base(s) is/are fully extended above the head. Most extended Stunts require a spotter.
 2. Extension: A stunt in which the supporting arm(s) of the base(s) is/are fully extended above the head, and the top person is standing with both feet in the hand(s) of the base(s). Each foot of the extended partner must be supported by at least one hand that is not supporting the other foot. All extensions require a spotter.
- B. All double based extensions and extension preps must have a continuous spotter. The spotter must be positioned behind the stunt, may help support the stunt, but may not be underneath the stunt or be a primary support for the stunt (i.e., the spotter should not cross the plane of the partner when viewed from the side, if she does, another person must be spotting from behind).
- C. Dismounts from all multi-based extended stunts to a cradle require at least two catchers and a separate head spotter, assisting in the cradle, at the head and shoulder area of the flyer/partner. Exception: no spotter is required when cradling a chair or a torch. Must cradle to the original bases and back spotter.
- D. Extensions in which the partner/flyer has both feet in both hands of their base(s) may brace each other. All extended stunts require a spotter.
- E. If a person in a partner stunt or pyramid is used as a brace for an extended stunt, the brace must not be supporting a majority of the top person's weight.
- F. A Straddle Sit, sometimes called a V-Sit, can be double based or triple based. The hands of the bases are fully extended. The flyer/partner/partner is lifted into a sitting straddle position with legs open in front (knees facing up.) A spotter is required on stunts in which the supporting arms of the bases are fully extended (i.e., double based = 2 bases and one spotter, triple based = 3 bases and one spotter.)
1. Situation: A participant is transitioned from a cradle-catch to a triple-based, fully-extended straddle sit with a separate spotter; legal if constant contact is maintained.
- G. Single Based Extended Stunts are allowed if the flyer/partner is centered directly over the base. You must have one spotter and it must cradle to the single base person and the spotter. The spotter cannot be a primary support for the flyer/partner or be under the flyer/partner/partner. The spotter must also be positioned (either beside or directly behind the stunt) to protect the head/shoulders of the flyer/partner.
- H. Single-Based Double Heel Stretch (2 Flyers/1 Base(s)), Single-Based Double Awesome (2 Flyers/1 Base(s)), etc. are prohibited per NYFCL rules. Reason: The top person/flyer/ partner does not have both feet in both hands of their bases.

8. POP/SWEEP/TOSS

- A. Definitions:
1. Pop: A controlled pushing motion upward by a base(s) to increase the height of the top person or release the top to a cradle catch.
 2. Sweep: A controlled pushing motion forward by a base(s) to release a top person to a cradle catch.
 3. Toss: A throwing motion by a base(s) to increase the height of the top person with the top person becoming free of contact with the base(s). Tosses are permitted as of August 1, 2004.
 - a. A Basket Toss is a stunt in which two or more bases form a basket with their arms and throws the partner into the air, catching the partner in a cradle. Under no circumstances shall Basket Tosses and Twist Cradles be executed when there is not a matted area. (Ex. On the sidelines or at half time of football games.)
 1. All tosses must be performed from ground level bases.
 2. Basket tosses 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 flyer during the toss.

- b. The flyer 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.
- 3. In all tosses:
 - a. The top person must be directed vertically.
 - b. Participants must not pass over or under other participants.
 - c. The catchers and spotter must remain in their original positions unless making adjustments for safety purposes.
 - d. The flyer shall not become inverted (head below waist).
- 4. Tosses into stunts are allowed (i.e., toss to hands, toss to extension, toss to chair, etc.) The toss shall not significantly exceed the height of the intended stunt.
- 5. The flyer in a toss must not land in a loading position for another stunt. Once a flyer is tossed to a stunt, the flyer cannot be tossed again without first being cradled or going to the performance surface.
- 6. Tosses through a prop are prohibited.
- 7. Toe and thigh pitches to a jump or tumbling skill (including a suspended roll) are prohibited.
- 8. Tosses to a split or straddle position are prohibited.
- 9. A twist that occurs during a toss must not involve more than two complete rotations. Reference Category Descriptions for further details.
- 10. Half Helicopters are permitted. Helicopters (Full) are prohibited.
- 11. A swan dive is prohibited.
- 12. The flyer in a toss must not drop the head backward out of alignment with the torso (eyes are not looking forward).
- 13. 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. Reference Category Divisions for further details.
- 14. In a single based log roll, the top person
 - a. Must initiate the rotation toward the base.
 - b. Must begin and end in a face-up, pike-cradle position.
- 15. In multi-base log rolls
 - a. With fewer than four catchers, the top person must begin and end in a face-up, pike-cradle position;
 - b. With four catchers, the top person may be caught in a face-up, facedown position, and/or in a pike-cradle or layout position. This is an exception to the swan dive and dismount rules.

9. TRANSITIONAL STUNTS

- A. In transitional stunts, physical contact must be maintained between the top person and the base(s).
- B. When the transitional stunt involves changing bases, the new bases 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 bases with the person moving the stunt making no more than a half turn to face the new bases.
- C. The following stunts are permitted in NYFCL:
Shoulder-sit to extension prep, extension and Piggy-back to extension prep, extension. Remember that constant contact and proper spotting techniques must always be maintained. In both stunts, the main base becomes the back spot in the progression/transition of the stunt. Also, note that a youth squad may need an additional back spot until the main base can safely assume the continuous back spot position. It is recommended that an additional spot be in place to insure the safety of the stunt and continuous spotting.
- D. A leapfrog stunt (Up & Over) is permitted as long as constant contact is maintained and proper spotting is in place.

10. INVERTED POSITION

- A. Definitions:
 1. Inverted Position is when the person's head is below his/her waist (i.e., Chorus line flip.)
 2. Handstand - An inverted, straight body position in which the arms are extended and beside the head, and the hips are over the head and shoulders
 3. Legal Forward Roll - A roll beginning from a squat position with hands on the performing surface.
- B. The top person in a partner stunt may not be in an inverted position (head below the waist) at any time during the building, transition, execution or dismount.

11. TUMBLING

- A. Definitions:
 1. Tumbling - Includes rolls (forward, backward), inverted extended skills (i.e. cartwheel, handstand, walkover, front/back handsprings, etc.) and flips.
 2. Forward Roll - A roll that begins from a position with the hands on the performing surface.
 3. Aerial - A stunt performed free of contact with a person or surface.
 4. Flip - An aerial stunt involving head-over-heel rotation in a tuck, pike or layout position.
 5. Twist - An aerial stunt involving rotation perpendicular or parallel to the performing surface.
- C. Stunts or tumbling skills should be limited or modified to be appropriate to the performing surface, area or situation. Proper matting should be used when needed (or appropriate).
- D. Tumbling skills that exceed one flipping rotation and/or one twisting rotation are prohibited (no double backs or double fulls.) Please refer to the category guide for complete details on permissible twisting skills at the Novice, Intermediate and Advanced Levels of competition.
- D. Tumbling with poms is prohibited.
- E. All gymnastic stunts must originate from ground level. The person performing a gymnastic stunt(s) may rebound (without hip over head rotation) from his/her feet into a cradle.
- F. Participants may not tumble over or under individuals or over, under or through partner stunts or pyramids.
- G. Spotted or assisted tumbling is prohibited. Toe pitches and leg pitches are prohibited. All tumbling must originate from and land on the performing surface (i.e., chorus line flips would be illegal.)
- H. A forward three quarter flip to the seat is prohibited.
- I. The use of springboards and mini-tramps is prohibited.
- J. Dive rolls are prohibited.
- K. Double Cartwheels are prohibited. A double cartwheel is a stunt where two partners perform cartwheel(s) while holding each other's thighs, waist, etc. (i.e., Head Over Heels Rotation).

12. USE OF POMS

- A. The use of poms is prohibited during tumbling, partner stunt/ pyramid building, transitions which require the use of hands and all dismounting. Mounting and/or dismounting with poms in hand is prohibited. A person up in a stunt may be handed poms, but they must be discarded before dismounting.
- B. Hiding poms anywhere on the body or uniform is a safety issue and therefore, is a point deduction.
- C. Please reference these additional Competition Guidelines for Use of Poms:
 1. Stepping on poms may interfere with the safety of the performance and therefore, is a point deduction. A participant may kick a pom out of the way or step over a pom as long as they do not step or slip on the pom.
 2. A competition spotter can move poms out of the way if the spotter cannot safely reach/spot a stunt/pyramid. Prior to competition, the officials must reinforce that pom-poms are the participants' responsibility.
 3. All pom-poms brought on the competition floor must be utilized during the routine. There is not a minimum or maximum number of pom-poms required for your performance.

13. USE OF SIGNS

- A. The use of hand signs is permitted in sideline/half-time cheers and in competition cheers. The signs must be placed outside of the football playing area (i.e., bench area, coaches box, 25-25 yard lines.) The use of signs creates crowd participation and enthusiasm.
- B. The use of signs is prohibited during tumbling, partner stunt/ pyramid building and transitions that require the use of hands in mounting and dismounting. Further clarification: Mounting and/or dismounting with signs in hand is prohibited. A person up in a stunt may be handed signs, but they must be safely discarded before dismounting.

COMPETITIONS

1. NYFCL Spirit Squads may enter competitions ONLY as follows:
 - A. A competition or event sponsored by an NYFCL organization, a group of NYFCL Associations or a NYFCL bowl festival, which occurs during the accepted NYFCL season and follows all NYFCL safety rules.
 - B. A competition or event sponsored by a non-NYFCL organization if it follows all NYFCL safety rules, occurs during the accepted NYFCL season, and notice in advance is given to the NYFCL Board.
 - C. All squads in the NYFCL must participate in the annual NYFCL Cheer Competition.
2. Competition among squads shall be limited to squads from the same division of play competing against one another.
3. There shall be no cutting from the regular season roster for competition, nor shall substitutions be permitted, unless there is a written medical reason.
4. No squad shall engage in more than one (1) competition per week; said competition shall count as one practice or as the game for that week.
5. The sponsoring organization of an open competition may not limit the size of the squads invited to said competition. Note: This does not imply financial responsibility of the sponsoring organization for an unlimited number of spirit participants.
6. Ideally, judging should be done by qualified, objective and impartial parties. If and when it becomes necessary to utilize as a judge an individual from an organization participating in the competition, it is imperative that judges be drawn from other participating organizations as well, to discount as much as possible any local (or regional) bias.
7. In an NYFCL Bowl festival, as well as in any NYFCL "invitational" competition, particulars regarding judging (including how performances will be evaluated, etc.) will be sent in writing by the host to all participants not later than one month before the event.
8. NYFCL Spirit Squads may accept a squad award for their achievement in a competition.
9. When competing, a squad may not use the name of another squad's town any time during the routine. Squads may use generic mascot names (i.e., nicknames – Tigers, Rams, Bears, etc.). Words in the routine shall not be aimed at other squads, but an example of what gets positive crowd response at games. A squad's performance at competition shall be an extension of what the squad does at games, supporting its team and squad.
 - A. **ROUTINE TIMING**
 1. Each cheer squad will perform a choreographed routine not to exceed two minutes and thirty seconds (2:30); up to seventy-five (75) seconds may be performed to music.

2. Time for all spirit squads will begin with the first movement, sound of music or word by the squad after its name has been called to perform. If a squad exceeds either time limit, a point deduction will be assessed. We recommend that you time your performance several times prior to attending the competition and give yourself AT LEAST FIVE SECONDS of "cushion" to allow for variations in sound equipment. Formal entrances are not recommended, starting a routine with a mount is permitted, however the build starts the clock and is scored.

B. INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCES

1. If, in the opinion of the championship officials, a squad's routine is interrupted because of failure of the official or host equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the championship event rather than the squad, the squad affected will be allowed to present its routine at the end of the division.
2. In the event a squad's routine is interrupted because of failure of the squad's own equipment, the squad must either continue the routine or withdraw from the competition.
3. In the event that an injury causes the squad's routine to be interrupted, the squad may either continue the routine or perform at the end of the division at the discretion of the Cheer Commissioner. The championship officials reserve the right to stop the routine due to injury, if it is deemed necessary.

C. ENTRANCES AND EXITS

1. All introductions (i.e. tumbling, formal entrances, chants, spell-outs, silent building, etc.) are considered part of the routine and timed as part of the performance. Formal entrances are not recommended, starting a routine with a mount is permitted, however the build starts the clock and is scored.
2. There should not be an organized entrance prior to the official start of the routine that involve organized cheers or run-ons with jumps, tumbling, or stunts. Your routine entrance to the competition floor should be brief with the sole purpose of walking, running, etc., to your starting line-up position (i.e., "Spirit On", etc.). Squads should enter the performance area in a timely fashion.
3. Exits are not included as part of the routine; therefore, there should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official ending of the routine.

D. COACHING

1. Coaching during the performance of competing squads is prohibited (e.g., yelling instructions or motioning directions to squad members). Spirited crowd response, however, is welcomed from any and all fans, including members of the coaching staffs.

E. MASCOTS

1. The use of mascots is prohibited in Championships. Mascots are not eligible to compete in League, Region or National Cheer Competitions with their squad that is being scored. They can participate in an exhibition performance at the League and Region Championships within their age appropriate category (i.e., exhibition with a squad of mascots, exhibition with a Mitey-Mite Squad).

F. CHEER ROUTINES

1. Music selection should appeal to the audience to get them involved in the performance. Routines must be appropriate for family viewing and listening. Any vulgar or suggestive movements (hip thrusting, inappropriate touching/slapping/positioning to one another), words or music will result in a 5 point deduction. Please note that removing improper language and replacing it with sound effects still constitutes inappropriate.
2. Transitions should flow smoothly with the music being the integral part.
3. Coaches must recognize the entire squad's particular ability level and limit the squad's activities accordingly.
4. Squad names will be called three times: once as the team on deck, once as the next team to take the floor and once to begin the routine.

G. PARTICIPANT APPAREL

1. Please reference Participant Apparel in Rule 11 for a complete list of guidelines.
2. Appropriate use of make-up and uniform selection or routine movements for a youth squad (i.e., improper/revealing uniform fit/coverage, bikini briefs, lack

of tinder-garments, extreme length of skirt, etc.) is the responsibility of the Head Coach. Please use discretion in judgment in selection of uniforms. Uniforms should be properly fitted to each participant. Appropriate undergarments should be worn at all times

3. If a shoe falls off during a performance, then the participants must immediately remove the shoe or kick it away from the performance area. Reinforce that sneakers must be checked prior to each performance.

H. PERFORMANCE AND WARM-UP AREA

1. The matted competition area will be approximately 54'x 42' deep.
2. Any form of cheering, dancing, stunting, jumping and/or tumbling on/off of the matted competition area during your routine is a safety issue: therefore, it is a violation. It is important to choreograph your routine for the safety of the participants due to over-rotation of tumbling and uneven surfaces.
3. It is highly recommended that an auxiliary gym should be in place to serve as the warm-up area just prior to performance. This area is secured from non-participants and spectators, and includes a matted surface for tumbling and/or stunt warm-up.
4. Stunting or tumbling on concrete surfaces or in other unsafe environments (poor lighting, obstructions, etc.) is strictly prohibited.

I. SPOTTING

1. The active spotter is an integral part of the safety program. Spotting requires a constant visual with the top person/flyer/ partner/partner (from shoulder height and above), and should not be looking at the crowd or making motions during the performance of the stunt. The primary responsibility of a spotter is to watch for safety hazards and be in a position to prevent injuries with special emphasis on the head, neck and shoulder areas. This person shall not provide primary support of (weight bearing contact with) another person.

J. JUDGING CRITERIA & PROCEDURES

1. Judging Procedures:
 - a. The League events must utilize qualified (panel) judges, using the NYFCL Official Score Sheets.
 - b. These events will be judged by five (5) qualified (panel) judges, using the NYFCL Official Score Sheets.
2. Following the guidelines set by the National Spirit Group (NCA, NDA, Cheerleader & Danz), the scoring process for the Nittany Youth Championships will also be similar to that of gymnastics, diving and figure skating. Scores for each of the five judges will range from 0-100, including tenths of points (i.e., 5.5, 9.2, etc.). These scores will be totaled and then averaged. All point deductions and/or penalties will be deducted from the averaged score to get a Final Score.
3. In addition, the necessary deductions for any safety violations will be taken by the legalities judges. Every effort will be made to find qualified judges from various geographic regions. Talking between judges will be limited to points of necessary clarification only. Individuals serving as safety judges must report to the NYFCL Cheer Commissioner for a review of decision(s) prior to the verification of results.
4. After penalty points are assessed, the squads' overall grand total will be used to determine rankings and winners.
5. Judging Panels
 - a) Head Judge - The Head Judge is responsible for overseeing the entire Judging Panel that consists of: Panel Judges, Legality Judge and a Point Deduction Judge. The Head Judge will also fill out his/her own score sheet for each performance. Head Judge's scores will carry the same weight as a Panel Judge.
 - b) Panel Judges are responsible for scoring each squad's performance based on the NYFCL score sheet. Each panel judge fills out his/her own score sheet for each performance in their division. The same panel of five will judge all squads within any particular division. Panel judges judge technical ability and overall routine, but they do not determine or judge deductions or safety violations. Decisions made by Panel Judges are final.

- c) The Legality Judges are responsible for administering all safety violations, time violations and boundary violations. Decisions made by the Legality Judges are final. There is one Legality Judge per scoring panel.
 - d) Point Deduction Judge - The Point Deduction Judge is responsible for assessing deductions in each routine for obvious bobbles or falls from technical skills. Decisions made by the Point Deduction Judge are final. There is one Point Deduction Judge per scoring panel.
6. The judges will score the cheer squads according to the following criteria:
- Projection/Expression/Showmanship 10 points
 - Fundamentals 40 points
 - Motion Technique (10 points)
 - Jumps (10 points)
 - Tumbling (10 points)
 - Partner Stunts/Pyramids/Tosses (10 points)
 - Dance/Choreography 10 points
 - Team Precision 20 points
 - Precision of Motions, Timing/Formulations, Spacing, Transitions (10 points)
 - Success of Attempted Difficulty (10 points)
 - Overall Appeal 20 points

K. POINT DEDUCTIONS

1. Nittany Youth has adopted a new deduction system with the assistance of the National Spirit Group (NCA/NDA/ Cheerleader & Danz). We plan to keep the current NYFCL Cheer & Dance Scoresheets in place for competition (100 point system). However, we will eliminate the automatic 50-point violation/deduction system along with the NYFCL Safety Observation Sheet. Our plan is to administer a fair scoring system that applies technical deductions appropriate to the violation (i.e., stunt missing a backspot vs. hair bow falling out).
2. The following scoring process was taken directly from National Spirit Group's Scoring System:
 - a) **Minor Bobbles/Mistakes**
 Minor errors during technical skills (i.e., hand(s) down on tumbling (minimal weight bearing); obvious missed skills; shaky stunts/pyramids, incomplete twisting cradles; obvious errors during dance maneuvers; etc.) will result in a .5 deduction for each mistake.

Obvious Bobbles/Mistakes, 0.5
 Hands down on tumbling, shaky stunts, pyramids, incomplete twisting dismounts, etc. Reserved for OBVIOUS mistakes that would result in a fall if they would not take evasive action. Balance checks are not reason for deduction. In cradles, a full twisting dismount must OBVIOUSLY land ON THEIR STOMACH in order to receive a deduction.
 - b) **Major Mistakes**
 Major errors during technical skills (i.e., falls from individual stunts; falls during tumbling skills; falls to floor during dance maneuvers) will result in a 1 point deduction for each mistake.

Major Mistakes, 1.0
 Any body part other than hands and feet hitting ground when transitioning warrants a 'major mistake'. Example of an exception: A front spot hitting their knee when helping support a fall will not result in a technical deduction, although it could affect their overall technique score.
 - c) **Major Falls**

Major falls during technical skills or other obvious severe mistakes (i.e., multiple falls in a single sequence/ series by a single couple/stunt group; pyramids that fall or that are severely missed) during the performance will result in a 2-point deduction.

Major Falls, 2.0

Multiple falls in a sequence, tumblers hitting and falling hitting the ground, Pyramids come down. Before a deduction is given, confer with the Head Judge.

- d) **Boundary Violations**
Each boundary violation will result in a .5 deduction per occurrence. Deductions for boundary violations are given for stepping off (the entire foot) or touching (the entire hand or other body part) outside the performance area or an object outside the performance area. Stepping on or touching the edge of the mat does not constitute a violation. Props may be partly touching out of bounds without penalty. A squad member may pick up or set down a prop that is partially out of bounds. However, a squad member may not pick up or set down a prop that is completely outside the performance area. Tossing props off the performance floor is acceptable.

- e) **Time Limit Violations**
Competition timing is done by the Legality Judge for each panel. Time limit violations (for both the music portion and/or the total routine time) are as follows:

1 - 5 seconds overtime - 1 point deduction
6 - 10 seconds overtime - 3 point deduction
11 or more seconds overtime - 5 point deduction

- f) **Safety Violations/General Competition Guidelines**
A 5-point deduction will be given for each safety/general competition guideline violation (i.e., 5 point penalty will be assessed for jewelry). Safety violations are in effect until the squad leaves the performance floor. For a safety deduction to be assessed, a majority of 1/2 + 1 of the legalities judges must agree that the violation did occur.

Also, music selection should appeal to the audience to get them involved in the performance. Routines must be appropriate for family viewing and listening. Any vulgar or suggestive movements (hip thrusting, inappropriate touching/slapping/ positioning to one another), words or music will result in a 5-point deduction. Please note that removing improper language and replacing it with sound effects still constitutes inappropriate.

- g) **Legality Deduction Sheet Clarification:**
The warning box: Does this mean that the judge has the option to give a warning instead of the violation? What would be an example of a warning?

A Warning (instead of a deduction) should be given when:

1. You are UNSURE as to whether or not what you saw was an infraction. If there is the slightest doubt in what they saw, the Legality judge should only give a warning. Always err in favor of the NY squad when unsure.
2. The skill was ALMOST illegal, and for some loop-hole reason avoided being truly illegal.

Point Deduction Sheet Clarification:

An example of a point deduction for Motion Technique would be a participant forgetting motions, arms crashing into someone else, tripping in a transition.

L. DISQUALIFICATION

Any squad that does not adhere to the terms and procedures of the competition's "Articles of Understanding" may be disqualified from the championship and automatically forfeit any right to any prizes or awards, and may also forfeit the opportunity to participate in regional and/or national competitions.

M. HOW TO HANDLE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS

Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the championship will be handled exclusively by the head coach of the squad and will be directed to the competition coordinator (i.e., League/ Regional/National Cheer Commissioner).

N. INTERPRETATIONS AND/OR RULINGS

1. Any interpretation or any decision involving any other aspect of the championship will be rendered by the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee will render a judgment in an effort to insure that the championships proceed in a manner consistent with the general spirit and goals of the Nittany Youth program and its championships.
2. The Rules Committee will consist of the NYFCL Cheer Commissioner, the Head Judge, and the safety official(s) to speak on specific matter(s).

O. FINALITY OF DECISIONS

1. By participating in a competition, each squad agrees that decisions by the judges and officials will be final and will not be subject for review. Each squad acknowledges the necessity for the judges and officials to make prompt and fair decisions in this competition and each squad therefore expressly waives any legal, equitable, administrative or procedural review of such decisions.
2. All decisions of judges, including mandatory safety judges are final.

P. COACHES' TECHNICAL/STUNTING QUESTIONS

As a coach, it is important to be current on the NYFCL Safety Guidelines. If you have questions concerning any safety guidelines or questions regarding specific stunts, and/or pyramids, please follow these steps. This will insure that you receive a timely and accurate response to your questions.

1. All questions must be in written form due to the differences in interpretation and terminology. No phone calls will be accepted.
2. For Partner Stunt and/or pyramid approval, you must send a VHS videotape which includes the mounting and dismounting of the stunt and/or pyramid in question. Your videotape will be kept on file with the League Cheer Commissioner.
3. The above requests must be sent directly to the League Cheer Commissioner and all Association Cheer Coordinators. All requests must be received at least two weeks prior to your event in order to be reviewed.
4. Please include your name, address and daytime contact number on all requests.

SPIRIT TERMS/FORMS

1. TERMS

Aerial- A stunt performed free of contact with a person or surface.

Arabesque- A stunt in which the working leg is extended behind (close to 90 degrees) while the supporting leg is in the hands of the bases. Partner and bases using body position, as in the liberty, turn to the side. Partner's chest is up with legs directly behind her. Hips should be in line with the floor.

Arch- An arch is a position in which the back is curved.

Awesome- An extended stunt in which the flyer/partner has both feet tightly together in the bases' hand(s). Proper spotting techniques are required.

Back-Bend- Back Bend is a face-up body position where the hands and feet are in contact with the cheering surface and the hips are pushed upward into an arched position.

Ball-Ups- A stunt where the flyer/partner/partner starts on the opposite leg and then switches on the way up to the main leg. Also, in co-ed stunting, the flyer/partner/partner tucks the legs on the way up to the stunt.

Basket Toss- A toss with multiple tossers, two of which have their hands interlocked. Basket tosses or any type of multi-based tosses are limited to a total of four bases tossing the stunt. One base must be behind the flyer/partner during the toss and may assist the flyer/partner into the stunt. This base counts as one of the tossing bases.

Bear Hug Dismount- The spotter stands to the side and slightly in front of the person dismounting with their arms up in the air. As the person dismounts the spotter makes contact above his/her head and places the outside arm and shoulder in front of the person dismounting and the head, other arm and shoulder behind the person dismounting. The spotter's arms wrap around the person like a bear hug so as to cushion the impact of the person dismounting. The flyer/partner/partner/ person dismounting must keep her arms up at all times.

Brace- A brace provides stability to a partner without having weight-bearing contact. A stunt could remain stable without the brace.

Bow and Arrow- A heel stretch which is executed while the flyer/ partner holds the extended foot with the opposite hand. The extended knee/leg usually touches the ear. Proper spotting techniques are required.

Chair- A single based stunt in which the base places the right hand in the center of the partner's seat with arm locked. The base's left hand holds the flyer/partner/partner's left ankle and pushes upward for support. The flyer/partner/partner is in a sitting position on the hand of the base.

Chant- A short repetitive yell performed continually throughout a football game. A chant is a short routine to encourage crowd participation.

Cheer- A longer, spirited yell incorporating motions and stunting skills. A cheer is performed during official breaks in the game. A cheer should also encourage crowd participation.

Chorus Line Flip- A stunt where a cheerleader back-flips between two other cheerleaders with locked arms and waist. A Chorus Line Flip is prohibited.

Cradling Dismount Position- The bases reach up and look up with straight arms. The bases wrap their arms around the flyer/ partner/partner's upper back and legs. The flyer/partner/partner wraps her arms around the bases' shoulders.

Crunch- A crunch is a stunt position where both of a partner's feet or legs are in the hands of a single base whose hand(s) are in front of his/her body near the waist level.

Dead Man Lift- An extended stunt above the head. A stunt where the flyer/partner/partner is in a layout position, supported by the bases away from the cheering surface. Double Based Dead Man Lift requires a spotter. A Triple Based Dead Man Lift does not require a spotter.

Double Cartwheel- A stunt where two partners perform cartwheel(s) while holding each other's thighs, waist etc. This stunt is not permitted in Nittany Youth.

Extended/Extension- A stunt in which the flyer/partner/partner is standing with both feet in the hands of the bases. Each foot of the flyer/partner/partner must be supported by at least one hand that is not supporting the other foot. The bases each grab the heel and the toe of the flyer/partner/partner's feet. Partner with weight in arms pushing off the bases shoulders, bases looking at the partner the entire time. Partner has locked legs out and looking forward. The spotter grabs the wrist of the bases or the ankles of the flyer/partner/partner and pulls in. Dismounts from multi-base stunts to a cradle shall have at least two catchers and a separate head-and-shoulders Spotter.

Flat Body Position- The flyer/partner/partner is in a horizontal position (face up or face down).

Flip- A flip is an aerial stunt involving hip overhead rotation.

Fly Over Back Flip- A basket toss or multi-based toss with a backwards flip that is cradled to a new set of bases. This toss/flip is prohibited per NYFCL guidelines.

Fly-Over Toss- A basket toss or multi-based toss that travels and is cradled by a new set of bases. This toss is prohibited per NYFCL guidelines.

Gauntlet- A set of at least two basket tosses or multi-based tosses that toss in unison and cradle to each other's bases. (The partners switch bases during the toss.)

Hand Shake Grip- The partner and the base interlock hands as if they were shaking hands.

Hands/Half Extension- A non-extended stunt position where the flyer/partner is standing in the hands of the bases at shoulder level. The bases each grab the heel and the toe of the flyer/partner's feet and hold at chest level. The spotter grabs the wrist of the bases or the ankles of the flyer/partner and pulls in.

Handspring- A handspring is a spring from a standing position to the hands, and back to a standing position.

Heel Stretch- Similar to the liberty, a stunt where the flyer/ partner/partner holds the leg in an extended position while the other leg remains in the hands of the base(s). Partner pulls body to a "High W position. Proper spotting is required.

Inverted Position- A position in which the person's head is below his/her waist. An inverted stunt is prohibited. (Examples: Chorus Line Flip, Assisted Back Handspring, Assisted Back Tuck.)

Layout- A layout is a position where the partner is in a face-up flat body position.

Liberty- The main base should have a firm grip on the toe covering as much of the foot as possible while controlling the front to back motion of the partner's foot. The side base should grab underneath the foot with the right hand, on top of the foot with the other hand and control the side-to-side motion of the partner's foot. The back spot needs to hold the partner's ankle and seat of the partner with the other hand while pushing up with the bases. The flyer/partner/partner should push off the bases' shoulders and step up into a liberty position while locking her leg and lifting to a high V.

Log Roll- A top person cradled in a horizontal position is tossed, rotates parallel (twists) to the performing surface before being caught by the original bases.

Prone Position- A position where the partner is supported by bases and is in a face down, flat body position.

Pyramid- A pyramid is multiple connected stunts.

Reload- A reload is a stunt that reloads from a cradle position to another stunt while maintaining constant contact with the bases.

Regrab- A regrab is landing from a multi-based toss in a new toss, stunt or any other position other than a dismount.

Retake- A retake is moving down from one stunt to the floor and back up to another stunt.

Rocket/Kick Out- A double-based stunt where the flyer/partner/partner lifts one leg straight up in a kick position while the other foot remains in constant contact with the bases. The proper spotting techniques for shoulder height and above must be followed. A spotter is required on stunts in which the supporting arms of the bases are fully extended.

Sailor- A sailor roll is permitted and requires a head spotter.

Sassy- From a liberty position, the flyer/partner/partner crosses the opposite leg over the leg in the bases' hands. Flyer/partner/partner places hands on hips. Proper spotting is required.

Scale- A scale is similar to an arabesque but the flyer/partner/partner holds her ankle and pulls it up.

Scorpion- From a liberty position, turned to the side, partner reaches back, grabs toe and pulls it up behind head (hips in line with the floor).

Shoulder Sit- A stunt in which the partner sits on the shoulders of a base. All dismounts from shoulder height or above shall have assisted landings. No skill without constant hand-to-hand contact shall be performed prior to the landing on the performing surface.

Shoulder Stand- A stunt in which the partner stands on the shoulders of a base. The base holds under the flyer/partner/partner's calves just below the knee, pulling down and pulling elbows forward. Dismounts from a single based stunt to a single based cradle shall have a separate head-and-shoulder spotter. All dismounts from shoulder height or above shall have assisted landings. No skill without constant hand-to-hand contact shall be performed prior to the landing on the performing surface.

Smush/Sponge- A stunt from an elevator and/or an extension where the bases bring the flyer/partner/partner back down to hips so that they are in the starting position.

Split Drop- The spirit participant drops forcefully to the surface from a jump or a stand, landing with legs extended at right angles to the trunk in a split position without first bearing most of the weight on the hands to break the impact of the drop. A split drop is prohibited.

Straddle Sit- A straddle sit can be double based or triple based. The hands of the bases are fully extended. The flyer/partner/partner is lifted into a sitting straddle position with legs opened in front (knees facing up). A spotter is required on stunts in which the supporting arms of the bases are fully extended.

Swan Dive- An aerial stunt in which the top person is caught in a prone (face down) position. This is prohibited in NYFCL.

Thigh Stand, Double Based- The bases start in a lunge position with the bent knee directly over the ankle and the back leg is straight. The bases' outside hand should grab the flyer/partner's toe with one hand and the inside arms wraps above the flyer/partner/partner's knee with a fist. The flyer/partner/partner starts with each hand on the bases shoulders and steps up into the pockets of the lunged bases. Dismount: The flyer/partner/partner takes the

outside hands of each base while the bases place their hands underneath the flyer/partner's armpit to control the step down landing. A spotter is always recommended for safety purposes.

Toe Pitch/Leg Pitch- A single or multi-based toss in which the base(s) push upward on a single foot or leg of the partner to increase the partner's height. Toe and thigh pitches to a jump or tumbling skill are prohibited.

Torch- A stunt in which the flyer/partner/partner is standing on one foot with the lower part of her body turned to one side while the upper part of the flyer/partner/partner's body remains turned to the front. A spotter is required.

Tick-Tocks- A move within a stunt in which the partner is in an extended liberty variation and simultaneously switches (or hops) to the opposite supporting leg she is standing. A Tick-Tock is prohibited under Nittany Youth rules.

Traveling Basket Toss- A basket toss in which the flier is thrown from one set of throwers to another set of catchers. This toss is prohibited per NYFCL guidelines.

Twist- A twist is a release involving rotation around the body's vertical axis.

Vault- A vault is a stunt in which the hands of the top person are used to assist in clearing a base(s). Vaults that involve head over heels rotation are prohibited.

Waterfall- A waterfall is similar to the arabesque, except the flyer/partner/partners holds the leg straight out to the front, leaning back just a little.

2. JUMPS

Banana- A jump in which you arch your back and reach upwards.

Double Nine- A jump where the arms and legs are in the same nine position. Bring legs to arms and keep your head up.

Herkie- A jump where one knee is bent facing down and other leg is straight facing forward.

Hurdler- A hurdler is a jump where the bent knee faces the crowd and you sit in a hurdler position. There are three positions, Front, Right Side and Left Side Hurdlers.

Pike- A jump where you bring the legs to the arms in a pike position while keeping the head up.

Spread Eagle- This jump is a straddle in the air but you do not need to rotate your hips. Keep the knees forward and a straight body in the air without piking.

Toe Touch- A jump where you keep the head and chest up, pull legs to arms and reach for the arch of the foot.

Tuck Jump- A jump where your arms hit a high "v" while your legs tuck up to the chest, not behind. Be careful not to drop the chest to the legs.