



MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL STATE CHEERLEADING COMMITTEE

2025-2026 RULES (SAFETY)

REVISED BY GREG COLLINS FOR MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATE CHEERLEADING COMMITTEE





POINTS OF INTEREST:

- MPSSCC follows the current year's NFHS rulebook (this year is 2024-2025). Rulebooks should be handed out by each county, or you may purchase an on-line version from NFHS for 6.99.
- Spirit Rule books encompass both Cheer and Dance. MPSSCC **ONLY** follows Cheer rules **NOT** Dance/drill/pom rules. You will never need to refer to the dance rules when choreographing a routine.
- Old Rule 1- Definitions has been removed and now are incorporated into their respective rules for cheer (rule 2)
- All judges' decisions are FINAL. **There is no review process.** Letters from coaches, AD's, Parents, etc., will be referred back to your county rep and athletic supervisor. Rankings and Standing WILL NOT CHANGE!





2025-2026 RULE CHANGES

The Rule has been redesigned this year to accommodate the unique nature of Dance and to make it more user friendly .

RULE 1 General Risk Management

Rule 2 Cheer

Rule 3 Dance (we do not refer to this rule for cheer)

- Rule 1 Definitions: Old Rule 1- Definitions has been removed and now are incorporated into their respective rules for cheer (rule 2)
- 2.2.7- STUNTING PERSONNEL

New language added to allow an extended single-based stunt supported at the waist was an exception for requiring a spotter.





RULE CHANGES

- 2-3-5d- Inversions New language added to clarify a bracer may release the top person or move to load position during a flip inversion when the top is descending and goes to a cradle or the **performance surface**
- 2.3.7 clarifies exceptions for when a participant can hold props in hands
- 2.3.9- New language added to prohibit a participant from landing or being caught in An inverted position in a stunt or pyramid from an unassisted airborne position
- 2.5.3e Release Stunts/Tosses New language added to clarify restrictions on use of props during tosses to a cradle
- 2.5.3f New language added to clarify a top person must not be inverted during tosses or cradles





RULE CHANGES

- 2.5.6d,e- New language added to clarify release form extended vertical position and to permit a release from a vertical position at prep level to land in vertical or horizontal position. (this allows for the ball release to horizontal/vertical position. Keep in mind the height of the release so that it does not end up being considered a toss).





RULE 1- GENERAL RISK MANAGEMENT

SECTION 1 GENERAL

- Art 1 Coach must not permit a team member to participate if in the judgement of the coach, the participant does not conform to NFHS Rules.
- Art 2 Only bona fide students may be on the school team.
- Art 3 Appropriate warm-up before activity
- Art 4 Fingernails must be kept short
- Art 5 Hair is securely fastened and appropriate for the activity
 - See situational rule 1.1.5 D for updated hair explanation.
 - If secured, hair is considered to be legal until it interferes with the performance.
- Art 6 Suitable practice areas, free from obstructions



RULE 1 SECTION 1 GENERAL RISK MANAGEMENT

- Art 7 Appropriate performing surface
 - a. reasonably free from objects
 - b. Stunts/tumbling modified to be appropriate for the surface
- Art 8 no mini-tramps, springboards (height increasing)
- Art 9 No gum/candy in mouths during activity
- Art 10 No stunt/tumbling during Basketball or volleyball when the ball is in play



RULE 1 SECTION 1 GENERAL RISK MANAGEMENT

- Art 11 Soft, non-abrasive/non-hardening supports/braces that are UNALTERED from manufacturer do not require additional padding. Hard and unyielding items (guards, casts, braces) on the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow or upper arm must be padded if involved in stunts, pyramids or tosses. Athletes in lower body plaster cast or walking boot must not be involved in stunts, pyramids, tosses, jumps or tumbling.
- Art 12 logo size (this is not a concern for MPSSCC)
- Art 13 no warm-up on sidelines during player warm-ups
- Art 14 athletes must remain outside playing area for 30 second or less timeouts





RULE 1 SECTION 1 – GENERAL RISK MANAGEMENT

- Art 15 artificial noisemakers not allowed expect for pregame, postgame or halftime performances (**Contact competition director if this arises**)
 - MPSCC does not allow spectator noisemakers during ANY competition.
- Art 16 Athletes shall stand outside the free throw lane lines
- Art 17 athlete cannot participant if bleeding, open wound or ANY blood on uniform.
- Art 18 Athlete will be removed from activity if any signs of concussion are present. Cannot return until cleared
- Art 19 Each state may modify NFHS rules as long as they it doesn't fundamentally alter the sport.



RULE 2 SECTION 1 GENERAL RISK MANAGEMENT

- Art 20 Patches (American flag, commemorative/memorial) not to exceed 4 sq. inches, that are approved, may be worn on uniform (not a concern for MPSSCC)
- Art 21 Head coverings worn for religious reasons are allowed but must be secured appropriately for activity- (we modified to allow for medical reasons as well)





RULE 1 SECTION 2 SPORTSMANSHIP

- Art 1 A participant, coach, substitute, trainer, or another team attendant must not commit an unsporting act. This includes, but is not limited to acts or conduct such as:
 - a. Disrespectfully addressing or CONTACTING an official or gesturing in such a manner as to indicate resentment.
 - b. Using profane or inappropriate language, music or gestures.
 - c. Baiting or taunting and opponent for ANY reason.
- Art 2 A participant, coach, substitute, trainer, or another team attendant must not use tobacco (including smokeless), alcohol or other controlled substances when representing the school/team.





RULE 2 CHEER

- Definitions are now located at the beginning of this section
- NEW DEFINITIONS/CLARIFICATIONS:
 - Assisted Walkover
 - Kip Up
 - Nugget
 - Tumbling





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 1 APPAREL/ACCESSORIES

- Art 1 NO JEWELRY (religious medals must be taped and worn under the uniform) Medical-Alert must be taped and is allowed to be visible
- Art 2 Appropriate apparel must be worn and be appropriate for all activities including athletic shoes (for walking boot see Rule 1.1.11)
- Art 3 Mascot in full head/costume must not stunt or tumble forward roll/cartwheel is allowed
- Art 4 when standing at attention, apparel must cover midriff
- Art 5 GLITTER that does not readily adhere on the hair, face, body or uniform is not permitted. Glitter on props must be laminated or sealed.





RULE 2 SECTION 2 STUNTING PERSONNEL

- Art 1 base must not:
 - a. Assume a back-bend, headstand or handstand
 - b. Hold objects in hands that are supporting a top person
EXCEPTION: a base and top person may share a pom during a mount or dismount from a thigh stand, shoulder sit/straddle, shoulder stand or prep
 - c. Hold objects when supporting an extended stunt
- Art 2 Bases of extended stunts must have both feet in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface
- Art 3 a bracer must not provide primary support for a top person
- Art 4 a spotter may help with support but are not allowed to provide primary support for top person





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 2 STUNTING PERSONNEL

- Art 5 In stunts that require a spotter, a spotter must:
 - a. Be in proper location with appropriate body position to help minimize risk
 - b. Remain visually focused on the head, neck and shoulders of the top person.
Briefly checking on other stunts/personnel is allowed.
NOTE: in general, a spotter should be in a position to have the quickest or cleanest path to protect the (**top person**) from falling off the back of a skill
- Art 6 In stunts that require a spotter, a spotter must not
 - a. Grasp the sole of the top person's foot
 - b. Grasp the base's hand(s) under the top person's foot
 - c. Place torso underneath the stunt
 - d. Hold objects in hand(s)
 - e. Stand with hands behind back



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 2 STUNTING PERSONNEL

- Art 7 A spotter is required for extended stunts or transitions that stop in an extended position except for the following:
 - a. Chair
 - b. Russian Lift
 - c. Double-base split catch
 - d. Double-base vertical T-lift
 - e. Triple-base stunts in which the top person is horizontal
 - f. Triple-base suspended splits
 - g. Triple-base straddle sit
 - h. Single-base stunt in which the top person is vertical and supported at the waist
- Art 8 spotter is required for single-base prep-level stunts in which the foot/feet of the top person is in the hands of the base and for tosses to single-base shoulder stands





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 2 STUNTING PERSONNEL

- Art 9 All partner stunts and pyramids are limited to two levels high, meaning that the top person(s) receive (s) primary support by one or more bases who is/are in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface.
- Art 10 A participant must not move over or be under a partner stunt or pyramid except when helping build, stabilize or dismount that partner stunt or pyramid.
 - EXCEPTION: a top person in a vertical T-lift may be moved over an athlete in a nugget position on the performing surface





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 1 unless permitted in this section, a top person must not be in an inverted position.
- Art 2 An inverted top person may pass through an extended position but must not begin, end, pause or stop in the extended inverted position.



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 3 Braced inversions in a pyramid that do not flip, or roll are permitted provided the following conditions are met:
 - a. Inverted top person shall have at least two bases or a base and a spotter
 - b. If the top person is released the following conditions must be met:
 1. The skills/stunts before and after the release are permitted
 2. Each bracer is at prep level or below. If in a prep or shoulder stand the bracer(s) shall have 2 bases or a base and a spotter
 3. The bracers do not provide primary support for the top person
 4. The top person and bases(s) make no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ turn around the bracer in a continuous movement
 5. When the catchers are not the original bases, the new catchers are in place when the transition is initiated and remain close to the original bases and are not part of any other skill
 6. The top person does not land in an inverted position





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 4 Braced rolls in a pyramid are permitted provided the following conditions are met:
 - a. The inverted top person has at least 2 bases or a base and a spotter
 - b. The bracer(s) have 2 bases or a base and a spotter
- Art 5 Braced flips in a pyramid are permitted provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. The top person and at least one bracer(s) must have a hand to hand/arm connection. This connection can be with one or both hands/arms.
 - b. There must be three people involved in the toss and catch of the top person either as a base or spotter



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- ART 5 (cont.)
 - c. Bracers with hand to hand/arm contact must be in a multi-based prep with a spotter and remain stationary until the top person is descending.
 - d. If the flip ends in a cradle, or on the performing surface the bracers may release the top person or move to a loading position once the top person begins to descend and is no longer inverted
 - e. Non-arm bracer(s) must be at prep level or below. If in a prep or shoulder stand, the bracer(s) shall have two bases or a base and spotter.
 - f. The top person must be to the side or in front of the bracer (s).



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- ART 5 (cont.)
 - g. The top person ends in a non-inverted position
 - h. The top person does not perform more than one and one quarter ($1 \frac{1}{4}$) flipping rotations and no more than 1 complete twist
 - i. The released top person and the base(s) make no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ turn around bracer
 - j. When the catchers are not the original bases the new catchers are in place when the flip is initiated, remain close to the original bases and are not part of any other skill.





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 6 In all other inversions:
 - a. Inversions may release to a non-inverted dismount, loading position, or stunt at any level provided the following conditions are met:
 1. Top person completes no more than one twist
 2. The release goes to the original bases(s)
 3. There is a spotter
 - b. In inversions where the base of support begins and remains below prep level, contact be maintained between at least one base or spotter and the top person until the top person is no longer inverted, or hands are on the performing surface.



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 6 (cont.)
 - c. Inversions where the base of support begins at or passes through prep level:
 1. require at least two people on the performing surface to be in position to protect the head/neck of the top person
 2. Contact must be maintained between at least one base or spotter and the top person until the top person is no longer inverted or the top person's hands are on the performing surface. The contact must be sufficient to stabilize/control the top person's position. **Exception:** a foldover must be initiated from prep level or below and the top person must be caught on the back by multiple catchers. When the catchers are not the original bases the new catchers shall be in place when the inversion is initiated, remain close to the original bases and are not part of any other skill



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 6 (cont.)
 3. The top person must not go from an upright vertical position to an inverted position on the performing surface from prep level or higher.
 4. If caught in a cradle, load or stunt by catchers who are not the original bases, the new catchers shall be in place when the inversion is initiated, remain close to the original bases and are not part of any other skill
- Art 7 An inverted top person must not hold props in the hands, except for during a(n):
 - a. transition from inverted position on the performing surface to a non-inverted stunt
 - b. from a prone position below prep level to a forward roll dismount.
 - c. A partner cartwheel
 - d. an assisted walkover





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 3 INVERSIONS

- Art 8 A swing roll down stunt is not permitted
- Art 9 The top person in a partner stunt, pyramid or transition may not leave the floor unassisted with the intent to land or be caught in an inverted body position. (see 2.3.9 situation)



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 4 NON-RELEASE STUNTS

- Art 1 in pyramids where one extended stunt braces another extended stunt the connection **MUST NOT** be hand/arm to foot/leg
- Art 2 A top person may be moved from a vertical position to a horizontal or cradle position provided all the following conditions are met.
 - a. The top person maintains contact with at least one original base, post or spotter
 - b. At least two catchers and or bases catch the upper body of the top person
 - c. When the catchers are not the original bases, they remain close to the original bases and are in place prior to the movement to the horizontal position.
 - d. When the catchers are not the original bases and the top person begins or passes through an extended position, three catchers are in place.



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 4 NON-RELEASE STUNTS

- Art 3 A hanging stunt is permitted provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. Bases remain stationary and maintain constant contact with all suspended top person
 - b. Spotters are present for each shoulder stand
 - c. Suspended person does not rotate on the dismount



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 4 NON-RELEASE STUNTS

- Art 4 Single-base stunts in which the top person is supported under the legs in a split or straddle position prep level or above are not permitted
- Art 5 A spotter is required during a roll down from a side T-lift
- Art 6 a single base must not be the only primary support for two extended top person with the exception of a double cupie/awesome. If dismounted to cradles there must be three catchers for each top person
- Art 7 Single-base partner stunts in which the base uses only one arm to support the top person are only permitted on grass (real/artificial), a mat, or a rubberized track
- Art 8 A participant must not jump unassisted onto the back of a base who is in a horizontal position





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 5 RELEASE STUNTS/TOSSES

- Art 1 unless permitted in this section, a top person must not be released to a stunt or toss.
- Art 2 In all release stunts and tosses:
 - a. The top person must be directed vertically and be caught by the original bases
 - b. The top person must not land in an inverted position
 - c. Participants must not pass over, under other participants or through a prop
 - d. Tossers/catchers and spotter must remain in their original locations unless making necessary safety adjustments, except that bases of release transitions may move as outlined in 2-5-5
 - e. The top person must not make more than 1 ¼ twists during the release.
 - f. The top person must not be inContact with another top person



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 5 RELEASE STUNTS/TOSSES

- Art 3 Tosses to a cradle are permitted provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. Only allowed on grass, mat or rubberized track
 - b. Involves no more than 4 tossers, including the person assisting with load
 - c. One of the tossers is behind the top person throughout the toss
 - d. Top person is cradled by at least two of the original tossers and a separate spotter who was one of the original tossers.
 - e. Top person does not hold objects in the hands (poms, signs, etc.)
 - f. The top person does not execute hip-over-head rotation while released from all tossers/catchers and spotters



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 5 RELEASE STUNTS/TOSSES

- Art 4 A toss caught in a non-inverted stunt by the original bases is permitted providing the following are met:
 - a. The toss must not go significantly higher than the point of contact with the bases on the catch
 - b. The ball-up position is the only allowed body position during the release other than the landing position



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 5 RELEASE STUNTS/TOSSES

- Art 5 Braced release transitions are permitted provided all the following conditions are met throughout the transition:
 - a. The skills/stunts before and after the release are permitted
 - b. Each bracer is at prep level or below. If in a prep or should stand, the bracer(s) shall have 2 bases or a base and a spotter
 - c. The bracers do not provide primary support and remain stationary
 - d. The released top person and bases make no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ turn around the bracer
 - e. When the catchers are not the original bases, the new catchers are in place when the transition is initiated, remain close to the original bases and are not part of any other skill. The top person must not be in contact with another released person





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 5 RELEASE STUNTS/TOSSES

- Art 6 Non-Braced released transitions are permitted provided all of the following conditions are met throughout the transition:
 - a. the skills/stunts before and after the release are permitted.
 - b. The release goes to the original bases.
 - c. Vertical releases from an extended position to an extended position may not perform more than a $\frac{1}{4}$ turn.
 - d. When starting from an extended vertical position, the top person remains in a position where the body is vertical.
 - e. When starting from vertical position at prep level the top person may land in a position where the upper body is vertical or horizontal. The release must not go significantly higher than the point of contact with the bases on the catch
 - f. When starting from a cradle or horizontal position at prep level or above, the top may be released to a loading position or stunt at any level.



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 5 RELEASE STUNTS/TOSSES

- Art 7 A helicopter is permitted provided all the conditions are met:
 - a. Rotation in horizontal plane is no more than 180 degrees
 - b. Top person does not twist
 - c. Top person is face-up
 - d. At least 3 bases who serve as tossers and catchers
 - e. Tosser/catcher must be in position to protect head/neck
- Art 8 toe/leg pitches to jump or tumble skill are not permitted
- Art 9 Quick tosses are permitted



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 6 SUSPENDED STUNTS

- Art 1 non-braced suspended splits that originate below prep level are permitted provided there are at least two bases, and the top person has both hands in contact with at least one base or post
- Art 2 non-braced suspended splits that originate from or pass through prep level are permitted provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. At least three bases slow the momentum of the top person
 - b. Top person has both hands in contact with a base(s) once the full split has been reached **EXCEPTION:** Top person may release one hand to grasp the hand of another base, post or bracer to adjust position
 - c. At least two of the bases support under the top person's legs and the third may support under the legs or be in contact with the top person's hands.



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 6 SUSPENDED STUNTS

- Art 3 Braced suspended splits are permitted provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. Top person has at least 2 bases
 - b. Top person and at least one bracer maintain continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact
- Art 4 If the top person in braced suspended splits is released by the bases, all conditions of the release transition rule 2-5-5 must be met.
- Art 5 A swinging stunt is permitted provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. Any downward movement begins from below prep level
 - b. Top person is face up
 - c. Top person begins on the performing surface or in a stunt below prep level
- Art 6 top person must not be in face-down position between the bases in which the top person's torso is suspended below the arms and legs



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 7 DISMOUNTS

- Art 1 Bases/catchers must not move during dismounts except as necessary for safety adjustments. **EXCEPTION:** bases may make a $\frac{1}{4}$ turn to catch a cradle.
- Art 2 Dismounts to the performing surface from prep or above are permitted provided there is assistance from a base or spotter sufficient enough to slow the momentum of the top person.
- Art 3 In all cradle dismounts:
 - a. Base/catchers must have continuous visual contact with top person
 - b. Top person must not hold props made of hard material or have sharp edges/corners





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 7 DISMOUNTS

- Art 4 cradle dismounts from multi-base stunts must have at least two bases/catchers and an additional head/neck catcher/spotter
- Art 5 Cradle dismounts from single-base stunts to single-base cradle must have an additional catcher/spotter responsible for head/neck of top person
 - **EXCEPTION:** additional catcher/spotter not required when cradling a chair
- Art 6 A skill (toe touch, twist, etc) may be performed to a cradle except when dismounting to separate catchers
- Art 7 twist to cradle must not involve no more than 1 ¼ rotations





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 7 DISMOUNTS

- Art 8 In all dismounts to catchers who are the original bases, the following conditions must be met:
 - a. Top person must be cradled by two catchers and a spotter
 - b. New catchers must remain close to the original bases
 - c. New catchers must be in place and not involved in any other skill when the release is initiated
 - d. Top must not execute any skill (twist, toe touch, etc.) following the release





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 8 TUMBLING

- Art 1 tumbling or rebounding over/under a stunt, person or prop is not permitted with the exception of non-airborne tumbling over a person or prop on the performing surface.
- Art 2 tumbling while holding props is not permitted except for the following:
 - a. Forward/backward roll.
 - b. Holding pom(s) during air-borne or non-airborne tumbling skills in which the hands are not used for support. The props shall not be made of hard material, have corners or edges.
- Art 3 A dive forward roll is not permitted.
- Art 4 A flip that lands into partner stunt or cradle is not permitted.
- Art 5 A flip in a tumbling pass may not involve more than 1 complete hip-over-head rotation or more than one complete twist.





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 8 TUMBLING

- Art 6 Airborne twisting tumbling skills are only permitted on grass, mat and rubberized track **EXCEPTION:** round offs and cartwheels
- Art 7 Airborne skills without hip-over-head rotation may not involve jumping from a standing/squatting position backwards onto the neck, shoulder or hands (kip-up or rubber band)
- Art 8 Headstands, head spins and headsprings in which the hands are not used for support are prohibited
- Art 9 Airborne skills with hip-over head rotation may not connect to another athlete while executing the skill.





RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 9 DROPS

- Art 1 Drops that go directly to thighs, splits knee or seat on the performing surface are not permitted unless MOST of the weight is first borne on the hands or feet or the descent is controlled
- Art 2 Airborne drops to push-up position are not permitted **EXCEPTION:** springing from a crouch position to a push-up position is permitted
- Art 3 falling from a stand directly to the stomach or back on the performing surface is not permitted without first bearing weight on the hands
- Art 4 Dropping to the performing surface from a flip is not permitted



RULE 2 CHEER SECTION 10 PROPS

- Art 1 When using props made of hard materials or have sharp corners/edges (including megaphones) the following conditions must be met:
 - a. Top person may not release the props to the ground
 - b. Person on the ground must gently toss or place prop on the ground.
 - c. cannot throw a prop from one person to another.
- Art 2 A top person may not hold a flag on a pole.
- Art 3 a participant cannot step on a prop (soft or hard) while being a required spotter or while executing or landing from a stunt, jump, or tumbling skill





RULE 3 CHEER SECTION 10 PROPS

- Art 4 If using a prop as a base, the following conditions must be met:
 - a. The height of the prop may not exceed 3 ft.
 - b. jumps, tumbling, and/or stunts are not allowed on props
 - c. When transitioning from a prop to a stunt/cradle, the new bases must be in contact with the top person before leaving the prop.
- Art 5 Hands- free poms are allowed.
- Art 6 Glitter may be used on signs, props or backdrops only if laminated or sealed.





RULE 3 DANCE

This rule applies ONLY to dance/drill/pom teams. Do not refer to this section for any cheer routine information!





BOOK ISSUES

- I found 2 editorial mistakes.

PLEASE NOTE:

Page 18 Under Art 5, NOTE: uses the term executing dancer, it should say “Top Person”.

Page 27 Under Art 2 d, it references situation 3-3-5 and it should reference 2-5-5





STATE INFORMATION

Rubrics and Scoresheets have been updated. Please ask your county representative for copies. They can also be found on the Maryland State Cheer Website along with other important information about our organization at marylandcheercoaches.org

