



CHSAA Cheer Technical Judging 2026-2027 Training Course

Hosted By: Liz Carey & Brian Franca

Tech Judge Mission:

- Keep athletes safe / Minimize risk
- Know the rules, apply rules fairly, be consistent, professional

Being a 'Tech' Judge:

- Are you the right person for the job?
 - We are not out to "get teams"
 - Committed to honesty & integrity
 - Set all biases aside
 - Stay current on rule knowledge - rules change every year (know them as best you can)
- You are a representative of CHSAA at all times - be professional in every situation
- Coaches trust us to be fair, consistent, and know the rules

Understanding your Role:

- You **ARE** responsible for assessing the "technical/legality" parts of the routine - looking to ensure all skills meet safety requirements
- You are **NOT** responsible for assessing "technique" of skills - no deductions should be given based on "technique/execution" of skills - leave these comments to the judging panel
- Deductions are **ONLY** given if they violate specific rules noted on the **CHSAA** Technical Deduction Sheet and the deduction can be supported by the appropriate page number(s)/section(s) associated with the infraction

Knowing the Rules / Resources:

- There are two rule books we use for Colorado - CHSAA Spirit Bulletin & NFHS Spirit Rules Book
- Resource for videos/training - [USACHEER.org](https://usaheer.org)
- **MANDATORY!!!** Rules training course - USACHEER.org (go under Programs, High School Cheer, Important Links - \$20, \$15 for members p/exam) - **you will need to complete ONE of the rules courses (Comprehensive Rules Course or Rules Changes Course) - You will only be eligible for the Rules Interpreter Course once you complete one of the other exams first**
- Send **ONE** certificate of completion to **Audra** at CHSAA - apetersoncathy@chsaa.org

Judging an Event:

- **Notify event organizers if you have any affiliation with the teams**
 - Knowing competitors is ok, however, you must not have any contact with them during the event.
- Arrive on time with your NFHS Book / access to Spirit Bulletin via website
- Ideally, it's best to have two judges, but some locations cannot afford to pay for multiple judges
 - Pending size of the event, you may wear multiple hats (deduction and legalities)
- Judge what you see during that performance, not what you have seen previously, or in a video review

- Not all stunt groups perform skills the same way - try to look at each group for correct grips/technique. Even if one group does a skill incorrectly, it must be called a deduction - we do not give "athlete error" warnings.
- Don't make it obvious if you see an error/infraction - Don't point if something falls
- Find a note system that works for you, but try not to take your eyes off through routine to make your notes always look up (be able to reference back to your notes if possible) / make slash marks, etc
- **Anticipate skills the best you can....**
 - Entrance: Count athletes, look for casts/braces, jewelry, hair, nails, etc.
 - Cheer: Looks for spotters, Signs/Props uses and how they are discarded
 - Stunts/Pyramids: # of bases, bracers, connections
 - Tumbling: Ensure skills are performed safely (no touchdowns/crashes/out of bounds)
 - Dance: Drops to the floor, jumping/tumbling over/onto someone

Making the Call:

- Be fair and consistent for the event
- MUST stand behind it 100% and do not make assumptions
- Know how to read the NFHS book and the Spirit Bulletin
 - Determine skill is being performed / Does it meet the definition (Many of us have different terminology for skills, so ensure you are accessing the correct skill or the rules) / Does it meet the criteria & guidelines noted in the book?
- **Give specific location in NFHS book / Spirit Bulletin for reference**
 - **Deductions can ONLY be given if they are supported by a rule in the NFHS book or Spirit Bulletin**
- If unsure, always err in favor of the athletes - give a warning and tell coaches to email us a video of the skill. Call or email Liz/Brian after the event so we can help identify the rule for future events.
- Be available at the end or at the time of distribution of deduction/legality sheets to answer questions - stand behind your deductions/warnings.
- Remember to remain professional and ask that coaches have a constructive conversation - **only talk to the head coach** - not choreographers, parents, etc.

Deduction Sheet Review:

Skill Specifics (Per CHSAA Guidelines NOT UCA - noted in Spirit Bulletin):

UPDATES TO DEDUCTION SHEET:

- Out of Bounds - 0.5 points
- Loading Stunts - 1 point
- Game Day Format Violation (*stunting before the sideline has been started*) - 1 point

TUMBLING ERRORS:

- Hands/knees down on tumbling
- Landing on head, shoulders, back or other compromising positions
- Dropping from an airborne tumbling skill to knees (not landing on feet)

BUILDING DEDUCTIONS "aka: Dropped Stunt":

- Top person becomes weight bearing on the spot of a stunt
- Top person incorrectly places weight on middle layer of a pyramid (if the bracer was not there the stunt would fall)
- Dropping to a load in, cradle, prone or flat back
- Base(s) or spot(s) landing on the ground
- Controlled or uncontrolled lowering of a falling top person
- Dropping to a compromising position

- Tosses that land in a cradled position (upright or vertical position)

OUT OF BOUNDS:

- Moving or stepping out of the competition floor/mat boundaries will constitute a penalty.
- *Breaking the plane outside the boundaries will **not** draw a penalty/deduction.*

RULE CHANGES/GREY AREAS:

- **Definitions in Rules 2 and 3:**
Revised definition of loading position/load. (*Top is supported under their foot/feet below 'bases' shoulder level.*)
Revised definition of tumbling. (*Any hip-over-head skill that is not supported by a base that begins and ends on the performance surface.*)
- **2-3-5a and (new) k:** New language added to allow a flip inversion when the top person and bracer have a hand-to-foot connection. Additionally, when a hand-to-foot connection is the only connection, new restrictions have been added.
- **2-3-5d:** New language added to allow a bracer to release the top person or move to a load position during a flip inversion when the top person is descending and goes to a cradle, a horizontal position or the performance surface.
- **2-4-2c and 3-4-3c:** New language added to clarify criteria for new catchers during releases from a vertical to horizontal position.
- **2-5-5g (new):** New language added to clarify that a top person is prohibited from passing over another top person or bracer during stunts.
- **2-5-6c:** New language added to allow a single twist during a vertical release from an extended position to an extended position.
- **2-5-6e:** New language added to clarify that two catchers are required for releases from a vertical to a horizontal position.
- **2-7-8d and 3-7-8d:** New language added to allow a ¼ twist during a cradle dismount to new catchers.

COMMON ERRORS:

- Stepping on props while stunting, tumbling, jumping - 2 points
- Stunting and tumbling with props - signs, poms, megaphones, flags (*which ones are legal to stunt, cradle, and tumble with?*)
- Releasing hard props to the ground - 1 point (***do not deduct if it is dropped accidentally while building, only if it is intentionally thrown or dropped***)
- Props - You **CAN** build & dismount with poms
 - Props (signs/poms/megs/etc) - that get stepped on WHILE stunting or tumbling **DO** incur a penalty (not just stepped on or kicked out of the way while moving)
 - Signs - Tops CANNOT release to the ground from ANY stunt, but if they do - 1 point penalty
 - Single base (when feet are in hands of the base) - MUST have a spotter that is close, not holding prop, or involved in choreography
- Excessively tossed signs - 1 point - *more commonly warned vs given an actual deduction unless it hits fans/judges*
- Position of Spotters - ***Spotter should be in position to have quickest path/cleanest path to protect top person from falling toward their back***
- Inversions with correct # of spotters
- Fingernails - kept short/near end of the fingers
- Hair - worn in a manner appropriate for the activity (just cannot restrict vision)
- Jewelry - all prohibited except religious (without chain)/medical ID bracelet / hair ties on wrist/plugs/spacers/studs/etc
 - *****DO NOT CHECK FOR NAVEL PIERCINGS****

- Braces/Soft Casts/Hard Casts & walking boots - what can they be involved in? See page 8 / article 11
- Buffer Time - The “buffer” time allowance for state is 2.5-3 seconds ONLY to account for variance in equipment and/or human error, timers, etc. Coaches should be using this as part of the routine. If there is a time violation, be consistent and still warn a team if it’s overtime by the “buffer”
 - Routine Time Limits:
 - All Girl/Coed Routines - 2:30 time limit / music cannot exceed 1:45
 - Gameday - 3:00 time limit

GAME DAY RESTRICTIONS:

- Only Kicks and Jumps in the band chant section are allowed.
- No Tumbling is allowed.
- No Tosses are allowed (ex: basket, sponge or elevator). Coed tosses/tosses from ground are ok.
- No Inversions are allowed.
- No Twisting Released Dismounts are allowed.
- Single leg stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
- New - A cue will no longer be given for sideline, so no deduction is needed for incorrect response
- Game Day Format Violation (*stunting before the sideline has been started*) - 1 point

Overall Reminders:

- Encourage coaches to send in a video to CHSAA!!! The more creative, the more time it may take to ensure it’s legality - help out your tech judges
- Do not answer rules questions over the phone or via text - must send to CHSAA chsaacheer@chsaa.org
- HIGHLY ENCOURAGE everyone to go to USACHEER.org and complete the Interpreters Course in addition to your mandatory training course