



## HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL CHEERLEADING HANDBOOK

### I. Purpose

The purpose of the Highland High School Cheerleading program can be summarized in the following.

#### Enthusiasm

Cheerleaders will promote school spirit that will generate pride and enthusiasm from the student body, staff, parents and fans and direct it toward encouraging all athletes.

#### Excellence

Cheerleaders will develop an attitude of excellence by offering their very best effort toward the perfection of every cheer and routine.

#### Example

Cheerleaders will be an example of character in what they say, how they act, and in their attitude with others.

### **The Vision for the Highland High School Cheerleading Team is:**

- Consist of members who conduct themselves with character, integrity, and class.
- Strive to be the best they can be in every area of their lives.
- Be unified.
- Be team-oriented.
- Respect others and themselves.
- Be a respected team by the students, faculty, and administration.
- Promote school spirit inside and outside the school.
- Encourage their teammates and others.
- Work to be the best cheerleaders they can be.
- Practice every time like they are performing for a crowd.
- Be recognized by other schools as one of the best cheer programs in the State.
- Be in top-notch condition.
- Be on the cheer team because they love the sport of cheerleading.

## II. Membership

### A. Eligibility

1. Cheerleaders are subject to the minimum academic eligibility requirements of 2.0 GPA at every grading period. If a cheerleader drops below 2.0 and/ or is failing (receiving an "F") in two or more classes she must complete academic probation (if eligible). Please see the "Consequences" section of this Handbook. Someone wishing to tryout for cheerleading may be asked not to tryout if the athlete has been ineligible several times throughout the current school year.
2. All applicants must submit to the athletic/ activities secretary, a physical examination form signed by a licensed physician (MD), physician's assistant (PA), or nurse practitioner (NP). You MUST have a physical prior to tryouts – no exceptions.
3. All applicants must be willing to learn tumbling, stunts and routines.
4. Acceptance of an applicant shall be on the basis of ability, the coach's agreement, acceptance of the team handbook, and without prejudice of race, creed, or color.
5. An applicant must be an incoming freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior.

### B. Tryouts

1. All paperwork must be turned in the day of tryouts.
2. Must attend all the scheduled tryout sessions.
3. Wear a t-shirt and shorts to tryouts. You may wear tank tops, but you must not show cleavage.
4. Wear athletic shoes and socks, preferably cheer shoes.
5. Hair must be either in a high ponytail or half up, half down with a cheer bow or ribbon.
6. Remove ALL jewelry. Even if you have a new piercing, you will be asked to remove it in order to participate.
7. Remove acrylic nails or file down long natural nails.
8. Bring a water bottle filled with water.
9. A tryout will consist of performing designated skills in front of judges, advisor/ coach, and/ or an administrator, and will be held in a fair manner to allow each applicant to show his/ her abilities.
10. Tryouts will generally be held each year in the Spring, but may additionally be conducted at other times at the discretion of the coach.

### C. Teams

1. Freshmen are only eligible for Junior Varsity.
2. There will be no switching from the team you make (if applicable) (i.e. if you make Junior Varsity, you will stay on Junior Varsity for that season).
3. The first practice of the season, each cheerleader will receive a list of their strengths and areas for improvement. For students who do not make the team, they may request a written assessment of areas of strengths and improvement. Scores will not be distributed.
4. There will be a special team tryout for those wanting to compete on the competition team. Anyone on either team is welcome to tryout.

### III. Commitment, Responsibilities, and Expectations

#### A. General Commitment

1. Being part of the Highland Cheerleading Team *is a year-round commitment*. Please do not take this decision lightly.

#### B. Summer Commitment

1. A detailed calendar of events, practices, and camps will be provided at the parent meeting or the week of tryouts for April – August activities.
2. Attendance at all summer camps and clinics are **mandatory** for all squad members.
3. Please notify the coach in writing, preferably by email as soon as you know of all summer vacations and days the cheerleader will not be at practices.
4. Summer practices will take place throughout the summer three to five times a week.
5. Parents are responsible for transportation for their cheerleader.
6. Tumbling classes may take place throughout the summer.
7. Cheerleaders will need to complete a summer workout schedule.
8. Please try to schedule vacations before end of June.
9. The following is a sample list of what the team must know before school starts:
  - All sideline chants and cheers
  - Sideline dances
  - Up to 4 Half-time routines

#### C. Practice Expectations

##### 1. Practice Times and Schedules

- a. Cheerleaders will practice two to four times a week (depending on which teams they are on). All cheerleaders are required to attend all practices pertaining to their team.
- b. In general regular school year practices will take place after school until 6:00 pm.
- c. Schedules will also be placed on the team communication app.
- d. Spring and Summer: A detailed calendar of practice and other events will be distributed at tryouts.
- e. Fall: A detailed calendar with practices and other events will be distributed in early August.
- f. Winter: A detailed calendar with practices and other events will be distributed in November.
- g. Schedules will be based on the best information available at the time the schedule is distributed. Cheerleaders and parents are asked to remain flexible and cooperative when last minute changes to the schedule arise. As soon as the coach find out information, you will be made aware.
- h. Cancellations due to inclement weather will be announced as early in the day as possible so that rides home are not compromised. Practices will always be cancelled in conjunction with school district cancellations (i.e. snow day, flooding).
- i. Coaches may occasionally call additional practices or meetings for special events.
- j. Missing a practice before a game or event will result in being taken out of the routine.
- k. Only practices called by the coach are valid. There will be no practices held at parks, anyone's home, etc. Taking part in an invalid practice will result in disciplinary action.

#### D. Practice Guidelines

1. Cheerleaders must arrive to practice on time and ready.
2. All team members must help roll out mats at the start of practice.
3. Cheerleaders must be dressed in designated practice clothes. Briefs should be worn under shorts.
4. Bring a FULL water bottle to every practice.
5. Hair must be pulled back from face. No hair should be in the eyes.
6. No jewelry. It must be removed before practices or games. DO NOT get any new piercings once you become a cheerleader. You WILL be asked to remove all piercings for practice.
7. No gum chewing.
8. Natural nails must be short.
9. No acrylic nails during the season (exception during Christmas break). You will be benched until they are removed.
10. Cell phones must be on silent and cheerleaders may not text or use the phone during practice, unless approved by the coach.
11. Please bring a positive attitude to practice.
12. Leave any problems at the door. If something needs to be dealt with in order to have a productive practice, please notify the coach in private, PRIOR to practice starting.
13. Each cheerleader needs to eat healthy throughout the day and drink plenty of water.  
*Please do not arrive to practice with an empty stomach.*
14. Violation of any of these guidelines will result in extra conditioning for the ENTIRE team. Repeated violations may result in benching or dismissal from the team.

#### E. Game Expectations

1. General Guidelines
  - a. Cheerleaders MUST know all chants, sideline dances, and half-time routines BEFORE school starts. A specific date will be set. If a cheerleader does not know all routines, she will be benched from games until she knows all the material. This could jeopardize the cheerleader's ability to letter and compete.
  - b. Must attend all games assigned.
  - c. Must display high energy and interaction with the crowd. Cheer constantly.
  - d. Appearance
    - Must be dressed in the proper uniform (shell, liner, skirt, briefs, socks, shoes, etc.) and ready (hair done, jewelry off, hair bow etc.) for the games an hour and a half prior to the game start (or at the scheduled call time).
    - Uniform must be clean and not wrinkled.
    - Hair should be pulled off face and out of the eyes.
    - Nails should not be too long.
2. Eat before arriving to the game or before the scheduled time of arrival.
3. Do not leave the game until the end of the game, unless permission is granted.
4. Pay attention during the game.
5. Do not talk on the sidelines.
6. Display good sportsmanship to the opposing team.
7. No gum chewing.

8. Bring water bottles. You may only drink water or a sports drink right before the game and during the game. No energy drinks or sugary drinks or junk food.
9. Cheerleaders must know all the chants and sidelines dances before they can perform at games.
10. Cell phones must be on silent and you may not text or use the phone during games (except during halftime).

## F. Competition Season

1. Competition team is a big commitment. Plan on practicing during the last week of Christmas break (week of January 6).
2. All competition practices and competitions are mandatory. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from practice and competitions.
3. Attitude, cooperation, and commitment are the most important elements of being part of the competition team.

## G. Safety

1. Every precaution will be taken to ensure safety among the cheerleading team.
2. All skills will be taught in a proper progression based on the ability of the team and the coach's judgment of their ability level.
3. Cheerleaders must not perform stunts or tumbling when a coach is not present.
4. In the event of an emergency, a coach will remain with the injured athlete until paramedics arrive.
5. One member of the team (captain or co-captain) will be assigned to call 911, and another will be assigned to go to the front doors to guide paramedics to the location of the injured athlete and coach.
6. Once 911 has been called, the parent will be notified.
7. Treatment will be determined based on the best interest of the athlete and the recommendations of emergency professionals.
8. Coach will follow up with athlete and/or parent within 24 hours of injury.
9. When an injury is serious enough to warrant a visit to the trainer, doctor, or hospital, the athlete must provide either a note from her doctor or verbal communication between the coach and the trainer before she will be allowed to actively participate in practices again. Until that time and depending on the injury, member must still attend all practices, games and events in uniform, but remain on the bench or sidelines.
10. If the injury does not warrant a 911 call, the coach will notify the parents during or after practice, depending on the situation.
11. No coach may dispense medication of any kind to a student.
12. If a student has a life threatening medical condition and requires prescription medication, an inhaler for asthma, or an epinephrine pen for allergies, the parent must notify coach of the health plan in writing.
13. Student will be responsible for being aware of any allergen or activity which may trigger a life threatening reaction and for keeping inhaler, epinephrine pen, medication, etc., readily available for an emergency. Parents are responsible for providing any Health Plans to the coaching staff before the season starts.

14. If injured, treat injuries promptly and fully.
15. Although injuries are unfortunate accidents, an injury may result in being removed from certain routines. Just because a cheerleader is cleared to participate the day of an event or competition, does not mean she will automatically be put back into the routine. It is important to have proper practice prior to a performance. This decision will be made by a coach on a case-by-case basis.

#### H. Health and Nutrition

1. Maintain a healthy diet.
2. Keep in good physical condition.
3. Get proper rest.
4. Water and sports drinks are the only beverages allowed during practice, camp, games, and competitions.
5. Members are encouraged to eat lunch at school and bring a snack to eat before or during practice during a break.
6. Members are also encouraged to increase calcium intake during cheer season as female athletes between the ages of 15-19 are twice as likely as male athletes to suffer stress fractures.
7. Athletes will be given weekly home workouts to help them with endurance and strength at home.

#### I. Injuries

1. If a cheerleader is injured for any reason and needs to sit out of practice or performance, he/she must have a doctor's note. The note must specifically say what the cheerleader is cleared or not cleared to do in the following four categories: cheers/dances, jumps, stunts, tumbling. Be SPECIFIC with the doctor about what your role is on the team. Describe what you do. Doctors in general are not educated on cheerleading.
2. You MUST be cleared for two of the four activities to cheer on the sidelines. You MUST be clear of ALL activities to compete.
3. When a cheerleader is cleared to participate again, the coach will work to put the cheerleader back into the routine based on the following: length of time sitting out for an injury, safety of the team, adequate practice time prior to next performance, and a number of other factors.
4. The coaches will not tolerate one cheerleader's situation being compared to another's. Please respect the decision of the coaches as the safety of the cheerleader and the entire team needs to be considered.
5. The coaches cannot guarantee the cheerleader will have the same spot in the routines when returning from injury.
6. Adequate practice time must take place prior to cheering at a game or performing at a game or competition. This will be left up to the coach by assessing the circumstance.
7. Should injury or sitting out happen frequently, the coach may need to re-evaluated the cheerleader's position on the team.

#### **IV. Conduct and Discipline**

Please also refer to Demerit System on the last page.

##### **A. Conduct**

1. By accepting the privilege and honor of being a cheerleader, the athlete accepts the fact that his/ her actions are more prominent than those not associated with such an activity.
2. Because of this prominence and because members represent the school, exemplary behavior is mandatory at all times, anywhere in the community of the school and at all functions where members are recognized as representatives of the school.
3. Any member of the cheer team who participates in any kind of activity whether in school or outside school that damages the reputation of cheer team in any way may result in consequences and possible removal from the team.
4. Any member who violates the student and/or athlete code of conduct will also warrant involvement of parents, administration, and possibly police.
5. Proper appearance is required at all times, with appropriate clothing for the occasion.
6. All members must show the utmost respect for the coaches, school staff, and most of all each other. Disrespectful attitudes will be addressed on an individual basis. If problems continue or worsen it may result in a benching or removal from the squad.
7. Be the best you can be in practice, at games, and competitions.
8. Show good sportsmanship.
9. No foul language should be used in practice, at camp, games, competitions, other school events, or when in any uniform or clothing representing the school and/or the cheer team.
10. Members must display proper behavior even in cyberspace. Any photos and/ or behavior of cheerleader deemed inappropriate will result in an established consequence and must be removed immediately (i.e. vulgar dancing, lewd behavior, violence, cursing, etc.).
11. Any public displays of affection are never considered appropriate especially in uniform, at games, or in school. Excessive physical contact is unacceptable and warrants a consequence established by the team and coach at the beginning of the season.
12. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are not allowed at any time. If engaging in these activities it may result in removal of the team.

##### **B. Absences and Tardies**

1. Cheerleaders will condition for being tardy.
2. Cheerleaders absent from a practice for any reason will be required to do additional conditioning within a week of the missed practice.
3. Cheerleaders must provide a note or email from a parent (or teacher) in advance if he/ she needs to miss practice, leave practice early, or will be tardy (when a parent/teacher can excuse a tardy). If it is within an hour before practice/ game/ event, please text the coach.
4. If a cheerleader is absent from school, the parent must call or email the coach in the morning to excuse her from practice.
5. When a member is absent, it is her responsibility to call the captain(s) to find out what was missed. This includes material that was taught on the day the member was absent.
6. The cheerleader must make every effort to learn the material before the next scheduled practice.
7. Excessive tardies and/or absences may result in being benched, placed as an alternate, or may be removed from the team.

### C. Excused Absences

1. Personal illness or accident  
If a cheerleader is injured and misses any practice or performance because of the injury, she must provide a doctor's release before she may resume cheerleading activities. Injured cheerleaders must attend practices and performances in uniform and support their squad unless they are physically unable to attend.
2. Funeral or death in the family
3. Weddings in the immediate family (parents, grandparent, siblings)
4. A school activity approved in advance by the coach
5. If a cheerleader has had 4 or more excused absences, the coach will discuss this with the parent and cheerleader.

### D. Unexcused Absences

1. Out of town trips and vacations during the school year
2. Work
3. Social gatherings
4. Other sport
5. Failure to inform coach in advance (exceptions are made if the situation does not allow for this).

### E. Consequences

1. A cheerleader may be benched upon not being in compliance with any part of this handbook.
2. Conditioning will be applied for not arriving ready for practice, including, but not limited to wearing jewelry, not having practice clothes or shoes, not having a water bottle, etc.
3. Consequences will be applied for not respecting the rules, talking excessively during practice, or a disrespectful attitude.
4. An unexcused absence equals one bench from the next game. After three unexcused absences, the coach will discuss this with the parent and cheerleader. It may result in being benched, placed as an alternate, or removed from the team. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
5. Three unexcused tardies equals one bench from the next game. Excessive tardies will be discussed with the parent and cheerleader and further consequences may be enforced.
6. Disrespect or insubordination towards the captain(s), coach, and/ or school personnel will result in additional conditioning, one bench from the next games and/or another consequence based on the situation.
7. If a cheerleader is on academic probation, she will not be allowed to wear her uniform to school or to games, but will be required to attend all games and competitions (if on competition team) wearing her warm ups and sit with the coach. They can attend practice and participate, but will work with the coach and parent to see if time spent doing homework and studying would be more worthwhile.
8. If a cheerleader is ineligible for grades more than two times, he/ she will be removed from the team.



9. Excessive absences, even if they are excused, are detrimental to the team. It may result in being removed from competition team (if applicable), being benched, placed as an alternate, or removed from the team. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
10. If caught using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, the cheerleader will be benched from the next 3 games for first offense and may result in dismissal from the team, based on the situation.
11. Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs usage first offense will likely result in dismissal from competing in competitions.
12. Repeated insubordination or an uncooperative attitude may result in dismissal from the team.
13. All unexcused absences may be under review on a case-by-case basis.
14. If a cheerleader continually breaks the rules set forth in this handbook it may result in dismissal from the team.
15. Every attempt will be made to make consequences fair and equal and to make consequences of actions known ahead of time. Parents will be informed of problem situations.
16. Because all situations may not be foreseen and thus outlined here, each will be dealt with in a manner decided upon by the coach with assistance from the administration if deemed necessary.

#### F. Challenge Resolution

1. Any and all problems that the athlete may have with the squad, captain(s), or the coach need to be addressed by the student first.
2. Always allow at least 48 hours for the coach to make a decision and readdress the problem. If talking to the coach does not change the problem a parent may then become involved in the situation. (Again, allow at least 48 hours for the coach to think about the problem and make a decision or answer a question.)
3. Proper chain-of-command is as follows:
  - Student/coach
  - Student and parent/coach
  - Student and parent/ school administrator
4. Problems between cheerleaders are encouraged to be resolved by each other or with the assistance of captain(s). If the situation does not change, then the coach needs to be notified and will deal with personal relationships between team members according to the situation.
5. If any cheerleader feels her personal safety is threatened, she needs to notify the coach, school counselor, the school police officer, and/ or an administrator immediately.

#### V. Varsity Lettering

##### A. Lettering

1. Cheerleaders must have a combined GPA of at least 3.0 both semesters.
2. Cheerleaders must cheer at 85% of all games AND attend 85% of practices during the school year.

## **VI. Uniforms**

1. Uniforms and camp wear will be purchased by each cheerleader. It is expected that uniforms remain in good condition and that they fit. If any part of the uniform is not in good condition or does not fit properly, it is the responsibility of the cheerleader to re-purchase these items.
2. It is important shoes are taken care of. They must be in good condition for competitions. A cheerleader may be asked to buy another pair of shoes if they are not in good condition.
3. Only official squad jackets or warm ups may be worn over uniform.
4. Uniform will only be worn for events as designated by the coach.

## **VII. Financial Information**

### **A. Financial Commitment**

1. Cheerleading is a financial commitment. All cheerleaders are expected to make payments on their set due date.
2. Ordering in bulk often gives the program discounts with uniform items, shipping fees, competition registrations, etc. When an individual does not make payment by deadline, they are risking their athlete not getting items on time, as well as opting to pay a higher fee. If payments are not received in time, a \$5 late fee will incur for the first week, \$10 fee for the second week, \$20 the third week. After the third week, the athlete may be benched from a game(s) or removed from the team. This is to include Booster Club fee.
3. Late fees will be put in the Booster account to pay for team needs.

### **B. Fundraisers**

1. Fundraisers will take place throughout the year.
2. Individual fundraisers are not mandatory and will benefit that individual to help offset some costs associated with cheerleading. Anything leftover will be used to help cover general team expenses.
3. TEAM fundraisers are mandatory (i.e. car washes). All members are required to participate. Each cheerleader must have one parent, or adult family member, volunteer time and help the Booster Club with at least one fundraising event.

## **VIII. Parents or Guardians Expectations**

1. Parents/guardians are expected to support the coach in following this Handbook understanding it is put in place for the best interest of the team.
2. Parents/guardians are expected to make sure their cheerleader arrives to practices, games, and other activities at the designated time.
3. Parents/guardians agree to notify the coach as far in advanced as possible or as soon as they know about absences or tardies to practice, games, events, etc.
4. Parents/guardians agree to carefully check the calendar and weekly/ monthly email update.
5. Parents/guardians need to help enforce their cheerleader conditioning at home. Conditioning is important to prevent injuries and to make sure the cheerleader is in the proper condition to attempt a progression of skills at practice.
6. If a parent/guardian has a concern, it is important they take the concern directly to the coach and not discuss with other parents or cheerleaders.

7. Parents/guardians understand decisions regarding the team and each individual cheerleader are made in the best interest of the team.
8. Parents/guardians understand if they create conflict among the team, other parents, coach, or administration, and it cannot be worked out with the coach, it will be taken to the administration.
9. Parents/guardians will understand the elected school Cheers Booster Club in conjunction with the coach will have the final say in how funding and fundraisers will be spent and distributed.

## **Captains**

### **A. Captains**

1. Shortly after tryouts, coach will begin the application for captain and co-captains.
2. A good captain leads by example. She respects and encourages her team members. She respects her coach, teachers and others in authority over her. She is reliable and someone the team naturally looks to as a leader.
3. The position will not automatically be given to the members with the most seniority.
4. Team members interested in this position must fill out an application.
5. Team vote will have 50% of the result and coach will have the other 50%.
6. The entire team needs to respect the captain position, whether or not he/ she voted for the captain selected.
7. The captain(s) leads the team on the on the sidelines.
8. The captain(s) will help lead practices including warm ups and conditioning.
9. The captain(s) will be given a list from the coach of specific responsibilities.
10. Captain(s) will maintain a 3.0 GPA throughout the school year.
11. Captain(s) will meet with the coach bi-weekly to discuss team related agendas.
12. In the event the captain or co-captain(s) are not fulfilling their duties, the coach will reassign duties to another team member.

\*\*\*\* The coach reserves the right to make adjustments to this handbook during the season and will notify the team in writing of any changes.

\*\*\*\* Please be sure to sign the agreement in the tryout packet and return day of tryouts.

## HHS Cheer Demerit System

**6 Demerits = Benched until Coach Determination**

**10 Demerits= Dismissal from Team**

(Demerits may be worked off throughout the school year by participating in certain activities and events that will be discussed throughout the season)

### **.5 point violations can be characterized as, but not limited to:**

- Missed practice, game or event with more than 24 hour notice (excused)
- Missing attire or not being in complete uniform on a game day (shoes, warm-ups, poms, bag, bow, practice clothes, hair style)
- Late arrival (more than 5 minutes)
- Late pick up (more than 25 minutes)
- Lack of teamwork/ sportsmanship
- Inattentiveness or excessive talking during practice/ game/ event
- Unauthorized use of electronic device
- Jewelry in during practice/ game/ event
- Nail violations- acrylic and long natural nails (this will result in being benched as well)
- PDA in Uniform
- Missing a deadline
- Talking while stunting
- Allowing non-cheerleaders to wear cheer items
- Any teacher negative comment

### **1 point violations can be characterized as, but not limited to:**

- Poor attitude (after initial warning)
- Untruthfulness/ Untrustworthiness/ Dishonesty
- Inappropriate social media content
- Missed practice, game, or event with less than 24 hour notice (excused)
- Missed practice, game, or event with more than 24 hours notice (unexcused)
- Conflict with a coach, teammate, or school personnel (major conflicts will be immediate termination)

### **2 point violations can be characterized as, but not limited to:**

- Missed practice, game, or event with no notice (plus benched)
- Missed practice, game, or event with less than 24 hour notice (unexcused)
- Inappropriate actions while in uniform