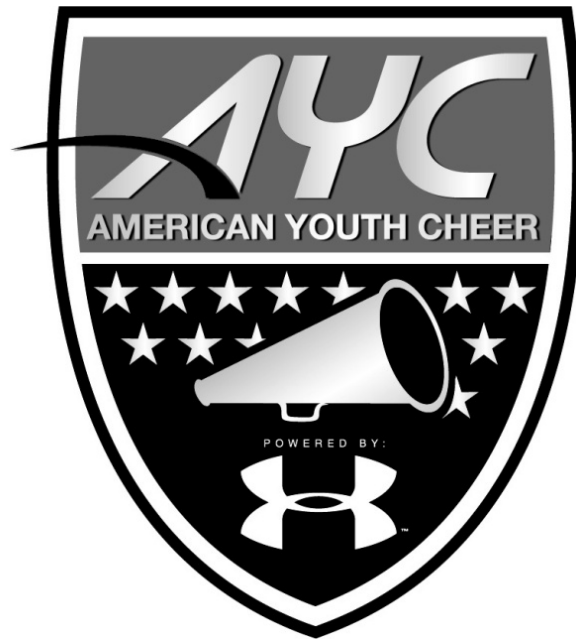


# AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL, INC.



## AMERICAN YOUTH CHEER OFFICIAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

REVISED 2011

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
DEFINITION OF AN AMERICAN YOUTH CHEERLEADING TEAM.....	4
AMERICAN YOUTH CHEER – LEAGUE DESCRIPTION .....	4
SECTION 1 – AYC RULES .....	6
RULE 1 – AGE OF COACHES.....	6
RULE 2 – SQUADS WITHOUT FOOTBALL.....	7
RULE 3 – FORMATION OF TEAMS .....	7
RULE 4 – OUTSIDE COMPETITION.....	7
RULE 5 – AGES OF CHEERLEADERS.....	8
RULE 6 - ROSTERS.....	8
RULE 7 – DROPPING A CHEERLEADER.....	9
RULE 8 – PRACTICE LIMITATIONS .....	9
RULE 9 – WARM UP AND COOL DOWN PERIODS .....	10
RULE 10 – START DATES.....	10
RULE 11 – CAMPS & CLINICS.....	10
RULE 12 - MASCOTS .....	10
RULE 13 – INSURANCE .....	11
SECTION 2: AYC COMPETITIONS REGIONAL/NATIONAL.....	11
AYC COMPETITIONS - CHEER .....	11
AYC CHEER DIVISIONS FOR COMPETITIONS .....	12
LEVEL DIVISION GUIDELINES.....	13
SPLITTING DIVISIONS INTO SMALL AND LARGE.....	13
RED AND BLUE .....	13
AYC INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT .....	16
AYC NATIONAL QUALIFICATION.....	16
SECTION 3: CHEER RULES – AYC REGIONALS & NATIONALS.....	17
AYC GENERAL CHEER GLOSSARY.....	17
AYC GENERAL CHEER SAFETY RULES & ROUTINE GUIDELINES.....	20
AYC SPECIFIC SAFETY RULES & ROUTINE GUIDELINES.....	20
AYC PENALTY INFORMATION.....	22

INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY .....	23
IN CASE OF A TIE .....	23
REASONS FOR DISQUALIFICATION.....	23
SECTION 4: DANCE – REGIONAL/NATIONAL.....	24
TRADITIONAL DANCE DIVISIONS.....	24
TRADITIONAL DANCE RULES .....	24
AYC DANCE ROUTINE GUIDELINES.....	25
PENALTIES – TRADITIONAL DANCE .....	25
INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY .....	26
IN CASE OF A TIE .....	26
SECTION 5: STEP – REGIONAL/NATIONAL.....	26
STEP DIVISIONS .....	26
STEP RULES.....	27
AYC STEP ROUTINE GUIDELINES .....	27
PENALTIES – STEP.....	28
INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY .....	28
IN CASE OF A TIE .....	28
LEGALITY QUESTIONS for CHEER, DANCE and STEP .....	28
SECTION 6 - AYC GAME TIME GUIDELINES .....	29
AYC SCORE SHEETS.....	31
AYC ALL STAR GAME .....	31
AYC SERVICES OFFERED .....	32
CONTACTING AYC .....	33

## **DEFINITION OF AN AMERICAN YOUTH CHEERLEADING TEAM**

The American Youth Football (AYF) League has created a sister league uniquely for its cheerleaders. The name of this league is American Youth Cheer (AYC). Any cheerleading, dance or step team who cheers for, or is affiliated with, an American Youth Football Team is automatically welcomed into this organization. Cheerleading squads are required to be members of AYF/AYC. Sign up is at MyAyf.com.

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL strongly encourages cheerleading for all teams. It also encourages competition between squads for league (local), regional and national championships. AYF/AYC requires that each squad have a responsible adult in charge as outlined in Section 1: AYC Rules. In addition, the general football rules as stated in the Official Rules and Regulations which apply to players will also apply to the cheerleaders, with the exception of weight or weigh-ins and, of course, the rules of contact, except superseded by the Official Cheer Rules and Regulations. Governing of AYF/AYC Leagues occurs as stated in Section 3 & 4 of the Football Section.

## **AMERICAN YOUTH CHEER - LEAGUE DESCRIPTION**

American Youth Cheer, hereafter known as AYC, is an all-inclusive youth cheerleading, dance and step league. As local leagues enter a national program, AYC allows local autonomy except to the extent that basic safety rules must be followed. It is required that AYC leagues follow, at minimum, the safety rules of National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) including prohibitions against the use of trampolines, springboards, and over two-high pyramiding. Local leagues may incorporate additional restrictions or guidelines for use during season play and their local competitions. Teams electing to compete in AYC-sanctioned regional and national competitions are required to follow AYC cheer, dance, or step rules and complete the necessary paperwork listed in the AYF documents. AYC recommends that leagues follow the AYC listed rules at local competitions for the sake of safety and consistency.

AYC is built on the premise that the same families who gather to watch the AYF/AYC football players compete on a weekly basis, will also gather to watch the AYC cheerleaders compete on a local, regional and national level.

To youth cheerleaders, competition is their time to shine. While they greatly enjoy their primary role at each local football game, they equally enjoy the opportunity to perform on the competition floor. If the option of competition is missing from the cheerleading experience, the full benefit of the experience is lacking. AYC is committed to creating a positive competitive environment, where youth cheerleaders can highlight and showcase their skills, while learning how to win with grace and lose with honor.

Associations that commit to their Conferences to participate in the Regional and National Tournament and then do not fulfill their obligation, may be subject to suspension from the following years competition including but not limited to, Regional and National tournaments. Any team participating in the Regional Tournament, winning the right to advance and committing to advance, and then does not travel, may be subject to suspension from the following year's Cheerleading Championships. Any team who does not follow through with their commitment will cause their Association to be subject to suspension from the following year's postseason events. Teams finishing first, second or third at their Regional Tournament or Conference Qualifier are expected to attend the National Cheerleading Championship.

All teams traveling to the Under Armour AYF/AYC National Championships must book their stay through the AYF authorized booking agent and stay in AYF-approved accommodations. This insures that all of our members will receive the discounted accommodations we have secured and allow us to host the tournament in the chosen location,

AYC offers a “Contender Division.” The Contender Division exists to include any child with a disability. Participation in a sport will not only improve their motor skills but also inspire them socially and emotionally. Please see AYC Contender Division Team requirements. For more information, please refer to the Contender Division Official Rulebook.

AYC has also established an Invitational Tournament for our Tiny Mite/Mitey-Mite members. If you have a 5, 6, 7 and/or 8 year old team who wishes to experience the excitement of competition, please see the AYC “Invitational Tournament” requirements.

Each Region/League and/or Association may appoint a Cheerleading Coordinator or Vice-President of Cheerleading or applicable title to their administrative staff. Coordinators will help manage and/or assist the local/regional/national organization with paperwork, staffing, formation of teams etc. for the Cheerleading programs.

Definitions of “Organization” are found in the Official Rules and Regulations - Football “Organization” Section 1 through 3.

#### **Responsibilities:**

**Regional Coordinator** - Serves as a liaison to National AYC for the geographical territory. She/he should be the contact person for disseminating information to the League/Conference level from National AYC, as well as assuring all paperwork for advancing teams are properly completed with all deadlines met; should oversee the Regional Championships (if applicable); and serve as a delegate to any National Office meetings. Region duties are as detailed by the Region operating policies (see Section 3 Structure Rule Enforcement/Authority Football rules)

**Regional Chairperson** - Serves as a delegate of the regional committees. Coordinates and corresponds to regional committees and acts as a liaison to local league conference/coordinators, if the two are separate.

**League/Conference Coordinator** - Is a liaison to the Region Cheerleading Coordinator. While serving as a delegate to the regional meetings. Performs League/Conference duties as detailed by the League/Conference by-laws or constitution. (See Section 3 Structure Rule Enforcement/Authority Football rules)

**Association Coordinator** - Is a liaison to the League/Conference Coordinator. While serving as a delegate at the League/Conference meetings. Performs local duties as detailed by their local league by-laws. (See Section 3 Structure Rule Enforcement/Authority - Football rules)

## SECTION 1 - AYC RULES

### RULE 1 - AGE OF COACHES

All coaches through their appointment to coach are bound by the “Coaches Pledge,” “Coaches Code,” and “Standard of Conduct.” All coaches must be approved by and serve at the pleasure of the Local Association. Coaching assignments are for one season only and are automatically terminated at the close of each season. Coaches must re-apply for coaching positions annually. The local association determines the close of the season, which must not extend past the “End of the Year Banquet”.

Cheerleading coaches are answerable to and under the supervision of administration of the local league or Association.

Head coaches must be at least 21 years of age. The coaching staff will be under his/her direction and supervision. (See Rule 3 Formation of Teams)

Assistant coaches must be at least 18 years of age and must have graduated from high school or hold a GED certificate. They must have a general knowledge of cheerleading and cheerleading safety rules.

Coach Trainees or junior coaches must be a minimum of 16 years old and may only carry out the instructions of the Head or Assistant coaches. Coach Trainees shall not conduct a practice.

Student Demonstrators should be 14 years of age or older; however, if a student demonstrator is attending high school, they may be 13 years old. Student Demonstrators may only carry out the instructions of the Head or Assistant coaches. AYC recommends that all Student Demonstrators work with teams a minimum of 2 years younger than his/her current age. Student Demonstrators shall not conduct a practice.

All coach volunteers under the age of 18 must certify in the same manner as all other minor participants (i.e. parental permission, proof of age, photo ID, physical and proof of scholastic eligibility)

Each team must have a Coach or Volunteer who is the holder of a current Red Cross Certificate in Community CPR and First Aid or its equivalent. A copy of the certification card must be in the team book.

Head coaches are in complete charge during practices, games, and championships. They are responsible for their own actions or inactions, their assistants’ actions or inactions and the actions of their players.

Head coaches may be required to be skilled through any available training program available to their Association/Conference. The Association/Conference may also make this a requirement of assistant coaches. It is highly recommended that all coaches attend at minimum a cheerleading safety program, such as AACCA (American Association of Cheerleading Coaches & Administrators).

Electing to participate in National Championships does obligate participants to follow a list of specific guidelines for their protection as well as AYF/AYC:

**The National Championship participating HEAD COACHES OF FOOTBALL AND CHEER are required to complete the AYF/AYC Online Coaches Course (includes the \$2 million coverage) found at [www.ayfcoaching.com](http://www.ayfcoaching.com).**

**\*\*This will be confirmed by an affidavit due at the Regional/National Championships.**

## **RULE 2 - SQUADS WITHOUT FOOTBALL**

AYC recognizes cheer, dance or step squads without football.

In an effort to support Youth Cheerleading and help our organization grow, AYC is proud to continue to encourage Youth Cheerleading squads that are **not affiliated with AYF football teams** or recreation football programs to join AYC independently. In these cases, we ask that the cheerleading, dance and/or step squads register as members of AYF/AYC as a **non-affiliated cheer squad**. To register squads and become a member visit [MyAyf.com](http://MyAyf.com) or if you have any related questions please email the National Cheer Director at [cheer@americanyouthfootball.com](mailto:cheer@americanyouthfootball.com).

(See football formation of teams Section D for Participant Recruitment)

## **RULE 3 - FORMATION OF TEAMS**

The formation of teams is based on a first come, first serve participation policy. AYC does allow registration/sign-up for “veteran (returning) players” prior to “open” registration/sign-up. Each child must be afforded the opportunity to cheer regardless of their ability. Tryouts are not permitted. Once a participant is registered, the local association may assess the appropriate team levels in which to place the participant with regard to the age requirements. Assessments cannot result in dismissal of any cheerleader for ability or any other reason other than Rule 7 Dropping a cheerleader.

AYC requires that for the first 12 participants there must be one (1) head coach (adult volunteer who is at least 21 years of age) assigned to the team. A squad with more than 12 participants (including mascots), there must be one (1) assistant coach (adult volunteer who is at least 18 years or older). For any team with over 24 cheerleaders, there must be one (1) additional assistant coach (adult volunteer at least 18 year old). (I.e. maximum 12 participants, one (1) head coach; 13 to 24 one (1) head coach and one (1) assistant coach; 36 participants one (1) head coach and two (2) assistant coaches.)

Teams electing to compete in AYC Regional and National competitions are required to restrict teams to thirty-six (36) members. Mascots are not included in the total count of thirty-six (36).

## **RULE 4 - OUTSIDE COMPETITION**

The cheerleading coordinator, with the approval of the local league, shall be in charge of all outside competition. All cheerleading teams report to the cheerleading coordinator for approval of any outside activities. In accordance with the football season as stated in the AYF Playing Season/Practice, the cheer season for AYC shall be in accordance with the football season, traditionally spanning from the last Monday in July through December 31.

## **RULE 5 - AGES OF CHEERLEADERS**

For determining the participants' age (Protected Age), the term "On or Before" and the term "As Of" is intended to have the same definition (Age Cut Off Date):

An age cutoff date of (on or before as of 7/31) July 31 of the current season is as follows: 14 years old on July 31, turns 15 years old on August 1, the participant cheers as a 14 years old. (See the ages in AYC cheer divisions).

## **RULE 6 - ROSTERS**

Associations must collect, complete, and inspect all AYF Required Participant paperwork for compliance by **August 31**. Conferences must certify that their Associations have met this requirement and have a system in place for paperwork and roster certification. A Certified Roster means that all of the participants listed on the roster have submitted the AYF Required Paperwork and that all paperwork is authentic and compliant with AYF/AYC Rules and Regulations and the participant fits the criteria established for the specific team level and age division to which the Participant is certified. Cheerleaders added to rosters after **August 31** must be certified prior to participating in any game or competition. Any participant moved to another division must be age eligible according to the AYC age divisions. There must also be room on the roster, as no participant shall be cut or dropped just to make room. On **September 15**, the Cheer roster will be final for the remainder of the season. If a cheer squad should drop participants after **September 15**, the squad size will be determined by the roster as of **September 15**. All final rosters are required to be submitted to AYF on **October 1**.

Conferences must receive all of their Associations rosters and certify all of their player documentation by **September 15**, (or a date designated by the conference/league/association before **October 1**).

Player documentation for the official team book must include:

1. A certified copy of the participant's birth certificate
2. A signed waiver/release form signed by parent/guardian
3. A health form, medical waiver or doctor's note allowing athletic participation, signed by a physician dated in the current
4. A copy of the final report card from the preceding school year
5. A player information page containing a current photograph of the player

Conferences must maintain a copy of the final certified copy of all rosters in their possession. Conferences must then submit all rosters to AYF National via MyAyf.com and a copy to the designated Regional Committee member by **October 1**. All Conferences must submit rosters to the AYF National Office by entering them electronically to the MyAyf.com system by the deadline of **October 1**, of the current playing season. Failure to submit rosters may mean the loss of certain services provided by AYF, including postseason and championship eligibility.

(See Football Section 12 - Participant Registration/Eligibility)



## **RULE 7 - DROPPING A CHEERLEADER**

### **A) Dropping A Cheerleader Will Be Acceptable:**

1. When a participant is found to have signed up as a result of parent or guardian pressure, or, he/she tells team management he/she does not really want to play football/cheer.
2. When a participant cannot furnish the required documents to be certified to a team roster, (e.g., Medical, Proof of Birth Date, etc.).
3. When a Participant shows no interest in football/cheer, is disruptive to other participants and the instructions of the coaching staff, and becomes a discipline problem.
4. When a Participant does not show up for practices. Participants must have a valid excuse from the parent(s), guardian(s) or a physician.
5. When a Participant attempts to intimidate fellow participants by word and/or physical act.
6. When a Participant is actively a member of another football team or cheerleader squad while actively participating with an AYF team. Participants shall not practice or compete with another football team or cheerleading squad during the AYC season. A participant is allowed to try out and practice for a school team as long as it does not interfere with the AYC team.

### **B) Dropping A Cheerleader Will **NOT** Be Acceptable:**

Excessive team or individual conditioning drills, disciplinary actions or assigning individual players' laps or intentionally placing player in intimidating situations for the purpose of encouraging weaker players to quit is not acceptable. Coaches determined to use this or any other tactic to drop weaker players will be immediately dismissed for the remainder of the season and may be permanently suspended.

## **RULE 8 - PRACTICE LIMITATIONS**

### **Practice Length:**

Pre-season practice can be on a daily basis until Labor Day, but must not exceed 10 hours per week, and two and a half (2.5) hours in duration per day. A mandatory 10-minute break ("Mandatory Break") after each hour of practice is required. Mandatory Breaks do not count against the hours per week or the maximum hours per day.

After Labor Day, all practices may not exceed a maximum of eight (8) hours per week, with a maximum of two and a half (2.5) hours per day. Mandatory Breaks are still required. All players, regardless of when they join the team, must have at least one week of conditioning (at least 10 hours) before they are allowed to engage in regular practice sessions. This requirement must be met even if a cheerleader joins the team after the start of the regular season schedule. Conditioning is defined as basic warm-up exercises; conditioning for jumps & tumbling (not tumbling), arm motion drills; and basic stunting at prep level; learning of cheers or chants.

### **Practice Staff Requirements:**

At least one coach (18 or older) must be present during every practice. There shall be at least one person holding a Red Cross Card, or of similar equivalency, present at all practices. The team's emergency plan should be available at all times. This can be a coach or any volunteer approved by the Association. Conferences are required to enforce this rule with its member Associations.

## **RULE 9 - WARM UP AND COOL DOWN PERIODS**

Practice shall include a 15-minute warm up and a 15-minute cool down to minimize risk to your team.

**Example of a warm up & cool down:**

Jogging or walking is a good way to warm up. By requiring the team to warm up, you improve your blood flow and increase the temperature of your muscles. A proper warm up, will decrease your chances of injury.

Stretching should also be included. Perform "active" stretches such as squats, lunges, side lunges, crunches, and hip rotations. Do some limbering up. Raise your knees to your chest. Roll your shoulders and neck. Bend over and touch your toes. Relax while you are stretching. Exhale as you go into a stretch, and don't hold your breath. Stretching prevents injury, increases your range of motion, and can reduce muscle soreness. Do not use quick or jerky motions while stretching. Use a partner to stretch. Use slow "static" stretches after you work out to warm down. Your muscles will be warm and need to cool down gradually. This will also return your muscles to normal relaxed length.

## **RULE 10 - START DATES**

The AYC cheering season may start as defined in the football rules Playing Season A. Start Dates. Cheerleaders shall not participate in any "Summer League" cheerleading activities. Alternatively, they are encouraged to attend camps/clinics in the off-season as described in Rule 11 - Camps & Clinics.

## **RULE 11 - CAMPS & CLINICS**

Cheer teams are strongly encouraged in part or full squad to attend either a camp or clinic [defined as a training session] during the off-season. These camps or clinics should be designed as instructional for youth/recreation leagues and should not be made mandatory by any coach, league, or personnel associated within an AYC program. The focus of such camps should be on safety and proper execution of cheerleading skills to the team's age level. It is important to secure the proper insurance for any camps or clinics.

AYC and UCA can help assist your league in hosting a camp/clinic. For more information please contact the National Cheer Director at [cheer@americanyouthfootball.com](mailto:cheer@americanyouthfootball.com).

## **RULE 12 - MASCOTS**

Mascots are at the discretion of any individual League. The following are guidelines for leagues that offer Mascots:

- A. A Mascot must be at least 5 years old
- B. A participant can be a Mascot if they are not old enough to be included in any other offered age division.
- C. A Mascot shall register as any other applicant and is required to fill out registration paperwork.
- D. Mascots are our youngest cheerleaders and should not perform any stunts or any other activity with the exception of crowd participation sideline cheers/chants. Mascots should not be in the area of stunt groups performing in a halftime routine due to safety concerns caused by the difference in age, maturity and skill level between the mascot and roster of participants.

## RULE 13 - INSURANCE

All teams/squads must furnish proof of General Liability and Accident Insurance. The required coverage can be seen at MyAyf.com. Additionally, American Youth Football must be named as an additional insured. All members, not covered under the AYF/AYC endorsed insurance policy are required to deliver to AYF/AYC a certificate of insurance prior to conducting any games or practices. For more information on the AYF/AYC endorsed insurance plan, visit MyAyf.com. A Cheer Team without football must have additional insurance.

## SECTION 2: AYC COMPETITIONS REGIONAL/NATIONAL

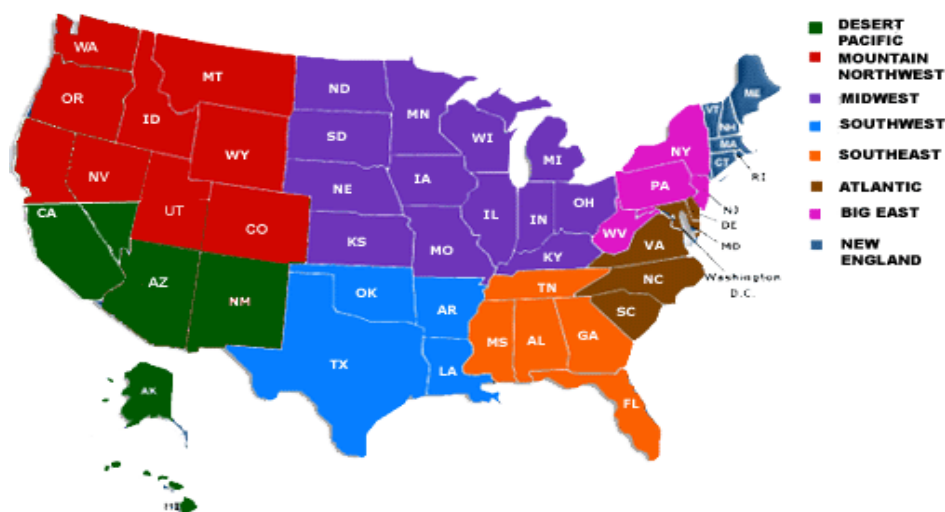
### AYC COMPETITIONS - CHEER

AYC understands when cheer, dance, and step teams from various regions across the nation come to compete; there must be a standardized set of rules under which all must comply. The following pages will list the age divisions, level divisions, and safety guidelines that will be used in AYC Regional and National Cheerleading Competitions. Local competitions should follow these rules for the sake of consistency.

AYC teams from various regions use a variety of terms to identify the same age division. As an example of this: Junior Midget, Junior Varsity, and Junior Prep can all be used to identify the same age group depending on what part of the nation is represented. For this reason, AYC is unable to define performance divisions using these terms. Each area must register their teams using the National identifiers found in this rulebook if they intend to advance to National Championships. They also must follow all age requirements as determined In Age Divisions.

The age of a team member on **July 31** of the current calendar year becomes the age used through AYC Cheer, Dance and Step Nationals in December (see Rule 5 - Ages of Cheerleaders).

AYC Regions for Regional Competition are defined here. As regional location and registration information becomes available (October) it will be sent out via the AYC newsletter and be posted at MyAyf.com.



AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL, INC. has established two (2) separate skill levels for all AYC cheerleading teams. The AYC cheer skill levels have been created to provide safety and convenience for leagues whose cheer teams may perform at a different skill level than others. All AYC cheer teams shall make a determination of which one (1) of the two (2) listed skill level grids outlined in this section they will follow. Coaches must consider tumbling and stunting abilities when choosing the level in which their team will compete. Coaches must also refer to the AYC General Cheer Safety Rules, which apply to all levels, for further rule specifications and routine guidelines. The AYC cheer rules established in this section shall supersede any of the current safety rules of NFHS High School Safety Guidelines.

## AYC CHEER DIVISIONS FOR COMPETITIONS

Division	Ages	Level
Division 8 (Tiny Mite/Mitey Mite)	5,6,7,8	Red Level Only
Division 10	8, 9, 10	Red Level Only
Division 12	10, 11, 12	Red or Blue Levels
Division 13	11, 12, 13	Red or Blue Levels
Division 15	13, 14, 15	Red or Blue Levels
Division 18	*15, 16, 17, 18	Blue Level Only
Contender Division	**5 - 17 (skill based)	Red Level Only

\* 15 year old participants may only compete with Division 18 if their Association does not have a Division 15 team

### **\*\*Contender Division**

The AYC Contender Division enables youth with either cognitive or physical disabilities to participate in football and cheer. The Contender Division is further explained in the Official AYF/AYC Contender Rule Book at MyAyf.com.

### **COMPETING UP**

In order to allow all interested athletes to participate, athletes may compete in an older age division with the following restrictions:

Athletes may compete in an older age division ("compete up") ONLY if it is **NOT** possible to create a team in the division that corresponds to their age level.

Athletes may **NOT** compete in a younger age division without approval from AYC.

## LEVEL DIVISION GUIDELINES

### SPLITTING DIVISIONS INTO SMALL AND LARGE

At the National Championship, divisions will be further divided into small and large, when there are at least two teams that will ultimately compete in each division.

- **Cheer Small Team:** 5-16 members, male and/or female
- **Cheer Large Team:** 17-36 members, male and/or female

### RED AND BLUE

Each of the age divisions above are divided into two skill levels - Red and Blue.

The following stipulations will be in place regarding red and blue level divisions:

**Division 8** May compete in **Red** Only

**Division 10** May compete in **Red** Only

**Division 18** **MUST** compete in **Blue**

These levels have been created in the interest of providing safety and convenience for teams who may perform at different skill levels. Coaches must consider tumbling and stunting abilities when choosing the level in which their team will compete. Teams should choose to compete in the level that adequately matches the overall ability level of their team.

Teams will be required to comply with all **NFHS Spirit Rules**, as well as the skill restrictions that correspond to the Level Division that they choose. Any team that violates a safety guideline or performs a skill not permitted in their level division will be subject to a penalty.

	Red
Standing Tumbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All skills with hand support performed from a standing position are allowed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>For example: front rolls, back rolls, front walkovers, back walkovers, cartwheels, handstands, round offs and handsprings are allowed.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>Connection of more than one of the above skills is allowed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Ex: cartwheel/back walkover or standing back handspring series.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>At least one hand must remain in contact with the floor during skill execution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Exception:</b> both hands must remain in contact with the floor when performing front or back handsprings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Flips and aerials are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Running Tumbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All skills with hand support are allowed. (All flips are <b>prohibited</b>)</li> <li>At least one hand must remain in contact with the floor during skill execution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Exception:</b> Both hands must remain in contact with the floor when performing front or back handsprings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Series tumbling is allowed.</li> </ul>
Stunts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two leg extended stunts are allowed.</li> <li>One leg prep level stunts are allowed. (<i>Single leg extended stunts are <b>prohibited</b></i>)</li> <li><b>*Twisting during the load-in is limited to one half (1/2) twist by the flyer only (base cannot turn during the load-in).</b></li> <li>Split stunts and swing-up stunts are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Tosses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tosses are prohibited.</li> </ul>
Pyramids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pyramids must follow stunt and dismount rules. (<i>Single leg extended stunts are <b>prohibited</b></i>)</li> <li>In pyramid transitions, the flyer (top) must maintain contact with at least one base at all times.</li> <li>Hanging and collapsible pyramids are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Dismounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cradles from prep level one leg stunts and two leg extended stunts, may not exceed more than one and one quarter twisting rotation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Other positions during cradles are allowed (i.e. arch, toe touch, pike, tuck, etc.)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>Any inverted dismount, including double based suspended forward rolls, are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> <li>Cradles may not land in prone position (on stomach).</li> <li>Cradle dismounts to different bases that do not progress back to an upright/vertical position are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Release Moves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No release moves are allowed other than those mentioned in the Dismounts and Tosses sections. (<i>No up and down release transitions that are braced by prep level or below stunts are allowed</i>)</li> <li>Exception: A single full twisting barrel (log) roll is allowed if it starts and ends in a cradle position.</li> </ul>

	BLUE
Standing Tumbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All skills with hand support performed from a standing position are allowed.</li> <li>Connection of more than one of the above skills is allowed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: cartwheel/back walkover, or standing back handspring series.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Flips are allowed but may not exceed 1 flipping rotation and 0 twisting rotations.</li> <li>Forward 3/4 flips to the seat and toe-pitch flips are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Running Tumbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All skills with hand support are allowed.</li> <li>Flips are allowed but may not exceed one flipping and one twisting rotation.</li> <li>Flips may <b>ONLY</b> be performed from a round off or round off back handspring entry.</li> <li>Flips may be performed in alternate positions (layout, x-out, pike, etc.).</li> <li>Aerial cartwheels and running front tucks are allowed.</li> <li>Tumbling after a flip is <b>prohibited</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Exception: a forward or backward roll out of a flip for safety is permitted.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Stunts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single leg extended stunts are allowed.</li> <li>Twisting during the load-in is limited to one full twist by the base(s) and/or flyer.</li> <li>Split stunts, and swing-up stunts are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Tosses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basket and sponge tosses are allowed.</li> <li>Tosses may not exceed one and one half twisting rotations.</li> <li>Half (1/2) helicopter tosses are allowed.</li> <li>Flipping (front or back) and traveling tosses are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Pyramids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pyramids must follow stunt and dismount rules.</li> <li>Moving/walking pyramids are allowed.</li> <li>Hanging pyramids are allowed but must remain stationary.</li> <li>Collapsible pyramids are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Dismounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cradles may not land in the prone position.</li> <li>Cradles from all stunts are limited to two and one quarter (2 1/4) twists.</li> <li>Flips are <b>prohibited</b> (Exception: Double based suspended forward roll dismounts)</li> <li>Cradle dismounts to different bases that do not progress back to an upright/vertical position are <b>prohibited</b>.</li> </ul>
Release Moves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Release moves are allowed but must not exceed more than eighteen inches above extended arm level (i.e. tick tocks would be allowed).</li> </ul>

## AYC INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT

American Youth Cheer recognizes the importance of involving our youngest members in the excitement of a National Venue. Experience gained at this level instills a confidence in children that will follow them throughout their competitive years.

The following guidelines will be in place for the AYC season for any league wishing to participate in a National Invitational Tournament.

Division	Size	As of July 31, youngest participant must be	As of July 31, oldest participant can be
8 years old and under small	5-16 cheerleaders	5	8
8 years old and under large	17-36 cheerleaders	5	8

**Format** - This tournament is held in an invitational format. All teams will be scored using a modified score sheet. No level of difficulty will be considered. The teams will be critiqued and trophies will be awarded for placement in first, second, and third.

**Rules** - All NFHS and AYC Rule Book guidelines apply.

**Skill Levels** - All **RED** level skills apply. No **BLUE** skills allowed.

**Qualification** - Any league registered and in good standing with American Youth Cheer may participate. There is no local or regional qualification to advance.

**Rosters** - Rosters as of **September 15** will determine team size.

**Participation** - Leagues must submit an “intent to participate” to their conference no later than **November 1**.

**Paperwork** - All National paperwork requirements remain in effect.

## AYC NATIONAL QUALIFICATION

In order to qualify for the AYC National Championships, competition teams must be affiliated with AYF/AYC and have entered final rosters by **October 1**. Teams must have ranked first, second and third place in a Regional AYF/AYC Competition. If an AYF/AYC Competition is not offered at the Regional level, a ranking of first, second and third place finish must be accomplished at your local AYF/AYC Conference Competition.

AYC reserves the right to grant a team qualification to the National Championship should an extraordinary circumstance arise which prevents the team from attending a qualifying event.



## SECTION 3: CHEER RULES - AYC REGIONALS & NATIONALS

Please refer to the National Federation of State High School Associations 2011-2012 Spirit Rule Book for complete set of rules and explanation of all glossary terms. Please see the NFHS website for details [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

### AYC GENERAL CHEER GLOSSARY

#### STUNTS

**Forward Roll** - A roll beginning from a position with hands on the performing surface.

**Partner stunt** - Any skill in which one or more persons support one or more persons.

**Prep** - A skill in which the base(s) hold(s) a standing flyer at approximately chest height.

**Pyramid** - Multiple partner stunts.

**Sponge** - A skill in which the base(s) absorb the flyer's downward momentum to push/lift the flyer into position for the next stunt/skill.

**Stunt** - Any tumbling skill, toss, partner stunt or pyramid.

**Tumbling** - Rolls (forward, backward), inverted extended skills (cartwheel, handstand, walkover, front/back handsprings, etc.) and flips.

#### STUNTING PERSONNEL

**Base** - A person in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface who provides primary support for another person.

**Bracer** - A second-level person who is in physical contact with another flyer but does not provide primary support. The stunt should remain stable without the bracer.

**Flyer** - A person who receives primary support from another person or prop at any time during a stunt. Also referred to as "top person."

**Post** - A person in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface, generally standing in front of a base(s), who supports a flyer's weight during the execution of a stunt.

**Spotter** - A person in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface whose primary function is to minimize risk to a flyer. A spotter shall be in a position and location to prevent injuries, with special emphasis on protecting the flyer's head, neck and back.

#### BODY POSITIONS

**Handstand** - An inverted, straight-body position in which the arms are extended and beside the head, and the hips are directly over the head and shoulders.

**Inverted** - One in which a participant's shoulders are below her/his waist. (Examples: Chorus-line flip, back handspring, needle scales.)

**Layout** - Straight-body position

**Pike** - Bent at the hips with legs straight and together.

**Straddle** - Bent at the hips with legs straight and apart.

**Splits** - Legs extended in opposite directions at right angles to the trunk.

**Tuck** - Bent at the hips and knees with knees drawn toward the torso.

## DISMOUNTS

**Cradle** - Occurs when catcher(s), with palms up, catches the flyer in a face-up, pike position, by placing one arm under the back and the other under the thighs of the flyer.

**Dismount** - Ending a stunt by releasing the flyer to: **a.** the performing surface; **b.** be cradled by the original bases; **c.** be cradled by catchers who are not the original bases

## DROPS

**Front Drop** - Dropping to a horizontal, face-down position on the performing surface.

**Knee/Seat/Thigh\_Drop** - Dropping to the knee(s), seat or thighs onto the performing surface.

**Split Drop** - Dropping to the performing surface, landing in a split position.

**Tension Drop** - A partner stunt, e.g., shoulder stand, in which the base initiates a forward lean until the flyer leaves the base without assistance.

## AERIAL STUNTS

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

**Dive roll** - A stretched, forward roll with flight.

**Flip** - An aerial stunt involving head-over-heels rotation in a tuck, pike or layout position.

**Swan Dive** - An aerial stunt in which a flyer is caught in a prone (face down) position.

**Twist** - An aerial stunt involving rotation perpendicular or parallel to the performing surface in a straight body position.

## EXTENDED STUNTS

**Extended stunt** - One in which the supporting arm(s) of the base(s) is/are fully extended above the head, e.g., Russian Lift, Liberty, Cupie. Most extended stunts require a spotter.

**Extension** - A specifically defined extended stunt in which the supporting arms of the base(s) are fully extended above the head, and the flyer has both feet in the hands of the base(s). All extensions require a spotter.

## SUSPENDED STUNTS

**Suspended Roll** - A flyer dismounts in a continuous heels-over-head rotation while having both hands in constant, hand-to-hand/arm contact with bases or posts who control the flyer's descent to the performing surface or cradle.

**Suspended Splits** - A flyer supported in a split position between two bases.

**Swinging Stunt** - A flyer is suspended and swung between multiple bases.

## NONRELEASE, SPECIALIZED STUNTS\*

**Assisted Inverted Floor Stunt** - A stunt in which an inverted participant on the performing surface is partially supported by non-inverted participant(s) who is/are also on the performing surface.

**Chorus-Line Flip** - A stunt in which a participant performs a backward flip while being supported by the arms of other participants.

**Cupie** - A stunt in which both feet of a flyer are in one hand of a base.

**Deadman Lift** - A stunt in which base(s) fully extend a flyer overhead, face up or face down, in a horizontal straight-body position.

**Flatback** - A stunt in which a flyer is transitioned from a vertical position to a horizontal position between two original bases.

**Handing Pyramid** - A stunt in which a flyer(s) is suspended from a shoulder stand stunt(s).

**Liberty** - A one-leg stunt, (usually extended) that may include variations such as a hitch (front or side), a torch, a heel stretch, an arabesque, a scorpion, etc.

**Pendulum** - A stunt in which the flyer in a straight-body position falls forward and/or backward away from the base(s) to a horizontal position to catchers while maintaining constant hands-to-feet/legs contact with the base(s).

**Side T-lift** - A stunt in which the base(s) fully extend a flyer overhead in a forward-facing, horizontal straight body position.

**Swedish Fall** - A stunt in which the flyer is in an extended prone (face-down) position, generally supporting her own upper body on a base, while being supported on her lower body by a base(s) with extended arms. One of the flyer's legs may be lifted above her body.

**Totem Pole** - A multi-base stunt that creates a tiered appearance by connecting stunts of increasing height, one behind the other.

**Vault** - A stunt in which the hands of the flyer are used to assist in clearing a base(s) or prop(s).

*\*NOTE: Stunts in this section may also be known by other names. This section does not attempt to list every stunt mentioned in the NFHS rules book.*

## RELEASE SKILLS/STUNTS

**Basket Toss** - Toss involving three or four tossers, two of whom have their hands interlocked.

**Helicopter** - A release stunt in which the flyer in a horizontal position is released upward, then rotates like helicopter blades in a horizontal plane before being caught by the original bases.

**Load In Toss** - A pop/toss that begins with the flyer in weight-bearing contact with the performing surface and ends in a partner stunt or pyramid.

**Log Roll** - A release stunt in which a flyer in a horizontal position is released upward, then twists parallel to the performing surface before being caught by the original base(s).

**Pop** - A controlled upward pushing motion by a base(s) to increase the height of a flyer to initiate a dismount or a transitional stunt.

**Release Stunt** - A specifically designated stunt that is initiated by a moderate upward throwing motion by the bases to increase the height of the flyer.

**Sweep** - A controlled forward pushing motion by a base(s) to release a flyer to a cradle.

**Toss/Pitch** - A forceful upward throwing motion by base(s) to significantly increase the height of a flyer, who is then caught by the original bases.

## TRANSITIONAL STUNTS

**Release transition** - A transitional stunt in which there is a loss of physical contact between a flyer and her/his bases.

**Tick-tock** - A one-legged transition in which a flyer switches from one support leg to the other.

**Transitional Stunt** - Involves a flyer moving from one stunt to another. The transition may involve changing bases.

## PROPS

**Props** - Items which may be manipulated (e.g., poms, signs, flags, etc.)

## **AYC GENERAL CHEER SAFETY RULES & ROUTINE GUIDELINES**

### **AYC Cheer General Safety Rules:**

In addition to 2011-2012 National Federation of State High School Associations Spirit Rules, AYC cheer teams must follow the following additional general safety guidelines. These additional guidelines supersede any conflicting rules.

- Banners, flags, megaphones, poms, and signs are the only props allowed. The use of poms and/or props is prohibited during tumbling, stunt/pyramid load-ins, stunt/pyramid dismounts, and during stunt transitions.
  - \*Clarification: a flyer may safely obtain a prop while in a prep and may hold onto that prop while pressed into an extended stunt. The flyer may not use props when a stunt transition requires the use of the flyer's arms, example a squish or reload. The top person/flyer may obtain and use poms or props when secure in a stunt or pyramid.
  - Exception: a forward/backward roll may be performed with a prop or poms in hands.
- When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material or have sharp edges/corners, team members must gently toss or place the props so that they are under control. The placement of props or poms should be a safe distance away from skills being performed to eliminate any safety hazards.
- Hiding or hidden type props are prohibited. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.

## **AYC SPECIFIC SAFETY RULES & ROUTINE GUIDELINES**

All cheer teams must follow the 2011-2012 NFHS Safety Rules. Please refer to the NFHS 2011-2012 Spirit Rule Book for complete set of rules at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

AYC Clarification for the most common safety violations:

### **Jewelry**

- No jewelry may be worn except religious or medical medals that may be taped to the participant's body without a chain.
- Earrings must be removed - coverage with band-aids does not meet requirements for safe participation.
- Jewelry includes plastic and rope bracelets/anklets.

### **Hair/Ribbons/Pins/Hair Pieces/Nails**

- Hair must not interfere with participant's ability to stunt safely. Hair must be secured away from the face as not to obstruct vision.
- Ribbons must be securely fastened as not to fall out onto the playing surface. Length of ribbons must not impair vision.
- Bobby pins and hair pins are discouraged, if they fall during performance a safety deduction may apply for each infraction, gymnastic type clips are recommended to secure hair.
- All hair pieces must be securely fastened, if they fall onto the performing surface a safety deduction will apply.
- Fingernails, including artificial nails, must be kept at an appropriate length (short, near the end of the fingers) to minimize risk for the participants.

### **Glitter**

- All loose glitter in hair, on hair accessories, on signs or on the body is prohibited. Exceptions, laminated signs where glitter is sealed inside, hair pieces with glitter strands from manufacturer, glitter/shimmer eye shadow.

### **Uniforms**

- Uniforms must fit properly, covering the midriff when standing at attention. Skirts may not be rolled. Safety pins may not be used on uniforms as they present a safety hazard.
- Athletic shoes (sneakers) must be worn and must be tied.

### **Casts/Braces/Glasses/Medical Equipment**

- Casts: Participants may participate in limited capacity while wearing casts as long as casts are covered. Participants wearing casts may not stunt, jump or tumble during the performance.
- Braces: Hard braces with metal hinges are prohibited. Braces may be made of fabric with covered hinges. Any covering may not restrict movement of hinges.
- Velcro: All Velcro closures must be completely covered with either medical/athletic tape or a neoprene or similar sleeve.
- Glasses: Glasses may be worn, but must be secure. If they fall off, they must be quickly retrieved, a sport strap for all participants wearing eyeglasses is highly recommended.
- Medical Equipment: Any participant requiring a medical device shall be allowed to participate as long as a medical documentation is available. The extent of the participation (ex stunting etc. should consider the safety of all participants involved)

### **Spotting**

- All participants assigned as spotters in a stunt group must remain in the ready position during the entire stunt. Ready position includes arms up and eyes focused on the flyer/top at all times.
- All participants assigned as bases are required to keep eyes on their flyer, a glance when transitioning and pyramid building is allowed but the remainder of the time, bases need to be focused on their stunt group and not looking around.

### **AYC Cheer Routine Guidelines:**

- Each team will perform a choreographed performance not to exceed 2-1/2 minutes. Each team's performance must consist of a cheer component AND a music component. The total music component must not exceed one (1) minute and thirty seconds, or there will be a deduction for overtime.
- Formal entrances (i.e. crowd response chants, choreographed marching, cheers, tumbling or stunts) to the competition floor are prohibited. Entrances to the competition floor should be brief with the sole purpose of walking, running, etc to position. A quick team huddle prior to performance is allowed. Spirited entrances are allowed; teams should take no longer than 10 seconds to set for their routine.
- Timing begins with the first organized word, movement, or note of music following the team's announcement to take the floor. Timing will end with the last organized word, note of music, or movement by the team. Please note, stunt groups may get into position, but flyers must keep one foot on the floor at all times. Once both feet are loaded into a stunt, timing will begin.
- Poms, megaphones, signs, and banners are encouraged. No tear away uniforms or removal of clothing is allowed. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.
- The team's name will be called at least twice (once as the team is on deck, and again once the team is next to perform). Teams missing their performance time will perform at the end of the division only if time permits.
- Gymnastic skills are required, please see appropriate skill category. Stunts, Lifts, and Pyramids are required, please see appropriate skill category.
- All choreography, material, music, and uniforms should be age-appropriate and suitable for family viewing. Teams using excessively vulgar or suggestive movements, words, or music are subject to disqualification. Extreme cases that require disqualification will be under the discretion of the head rules judge.
- When there is a music malfunction during a performance that **is not** the result of the coach or "team music person's" error, the team will be offered the option to perform again.

In order to be eligible, each team must have more than one copy of their music and the CD's must be free of scratches.

### **AYC PENALTY INFORMATION**

#### **PENALTIES: SAFETY GUIDELINES:**

5 points will be deducted from your total score for each infraction of the AYC Cheer Safety Rules, NFHS Rules and/or the AYC Cheer Routine Guidelines.

10 points will be deducted from your total score for each violation of the level division requirements (red or blue).

Please refer to the Level Divisions, AYC Cheer Safety Rules, and AYC Cheer Routine Guidelines regarding specific skill allowances and restrictions.

Teams are responsible for following all NFHS rules as well as the Level Division skill restrictions that further restrict permitted skills within NFHS rules.

## **BOUNDARY PENALTY:**

0.5 point per occurrence will be deducted from your total score if any team member steps or touches out of bounds with any part of the body. Stepping off (the entire foot) or touching (the entire hand or body part) outside the performance area is considered a boundary violation. Performers may not use the non-performing surface for transitions; the entire routine including transitions must remain on the performing surface. Stepping on or touching the edge of the mat does not constitute a violation.

Objects outside the performance area:

- Props may rest partially out of bounds without a penalty.
- A squad member may pick up a prop that is partially out of bounds; however a squad member may not pick up any props that are completely outside of the performance area. When props are set up, they must touch the edge of the performing surface.
- Carefully discarding props completely off the performing surface is acceptable; however, they may not be touched again until the conclusion of the performance or a boundary violation will be assessed.

## **TIME LIMIT PENALTIES:**

- 1 point will be deducted from your total score if your routine and/or music goes from 6 - 10 seconds over time requirements.
- 3 points will be deducted from your total score if your routine and/or music goes from 11 or more seconds over time requirements.

## **INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY**

Age appropriate choreography and music must be used.

\*5 points per occurrence will be deducted from the total score if inappropriate choreography or music is used. This deduction will be assessed as a violation of the AYC Cheer Routine Guidelines as many times as the infraction occurs in each routine. Please note, dubbing over inappropriate lyrics or cutting off a song just before profanity will still violate this rule.

## **IN CASE OF A TIE**

All ties will be broken at Regional/National competitions. Ties will be broken by using the Basic Fundamental scores on the score sheet. Those categories include: Stunts, Pyramids, Tumbling, Jumps, and Dance/Motions. If it is necessary to break a second tie, the scores under Overall Elements will be calculated along with the Fundamental score categories.

## **REASONS FOR DISQUALIFICATION**

Teams with illegal competitor(s) will be disqualified. Reasons for disqualification include but are not limited to overage competitor(s), competitor(s) not listed on official AYF/AYC league roster, and/or illegal competitor(s) listed on AYF/AYC official league roster. If a team is found with unregistered competitors, the team will be disqualified. Teams registering and performing in incorrect divisions and/or categories will be disqualified. See the Youth Cheer Divisions General Routine Guidelines for further details.

## SECTION 4: DANCE - REGIONAL/NATIONAL

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL, INC. has established two divisions of dance-- Traditional Dance, and Step. Each division will have their own set of specific rules. The AYF/AYC traditional and step rules incorporate the current rules of National Federation of State High School Associations and existing AYF/AYC General Safety Rules and General Routine Guidelines.

### TRADITIONAL DANCE DIVISIONS

11 & Under	Minimum 8 years old
15 & Under	Minimum 12 years old

\*\*Dance team 5 - 36 members

### TRADITIONAL DANCE RULES

#### AYC Dance General Safety Rules

In addition to 2011-2012 NFHS Spirit Rules, AYC dance teams must follow the following additional general safety guidelines. These additional guidelines supersede any conflicting NFHS rule.

- All teams should be supervised during all official functions by a qualified Advisor/Coach.
- Dance teams may wear approved jewelry as part of their costume. Approved jewelry includes legal post stud earrings and hair accessories. Jewelry such as hoop earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings, belly, tongue, and nose rings etc are prohibited. Medical alert bracelets or necklaces may be worn, but should be secured to the body with tape.
- Drops (knee, seat, thigh and split drops from a jump, stand or inverted position are illegal unless most of the weight is first borne on the hand(s) or foot/feet or is controlled, to absorb the impact of the drop. Front drops from an airborne position are illegal. Tension drops and handspring/flips to any drop are illegal.
- Soft soled dance shoes (jazz boots, dance sandals, jazz shoes) or bare feet are acceptable when competing. Wearing "socks only" is prohibited.
- All dance lifts, stunts, pyramids, or tosses are prohibited. Partner lifts may be used if the flyers hips are not above the base's shoulders.
- All tumbling skills (with the exception of forward rolls and one shoulder backward rolls) are prohibited. Tumbling is defined as any hip over-head rotation.
- Back bends and handstands are allowed so long as they are choreographed as a progression to another skill. They may not be sustained and/or involve a hip over-head rotation.

#### Specific Safety Rules

All dance teams must follow the 2011-2012 NFHS Rules for Dance Teams.



## AYC DANCE ROUTINE GUIDELINES

- Each team will perform a choreographed performance not to exceed 2 minutes. Each team's performance must consist of cheer skills AND funk (hip hop) skills. Routines may display a theme but must incorporate skills from both cheer and funk.
- Each team will be judged on the following:
  - **Cheer skills:** Basic cheerleading motions emphasizing uniformity, synchronization and strong/ sharp motions/arm placement as well as ground work, level changes and roll-offs and visual effect.
  - **Funk skills:** Movements comprised of funk, hip-hop, and street styles with tempo variation. Dance style with an emphasis on uniformity, rhythm, body isolation, creativity, and execution.
  - **Technical skills** (i.e. pirouettes/leaps) are not required, but if included will be credited towards the technical/difficulty score.
- Formal entrances onto the competition floor are prohibited. Entrances to the competition floor should be brief with the sole purpose of walking, running, etc to position. A quick team huddle prior to performance is allowed. Spirited entrances are allowed; teams should take no longer than 10 seconds to set up for their routine.
- Timing will begin with the first organized word, movement, or note of music following the teams' announcement to take the floor. Timing will end with the last organized word, note of music, or movement by the team.
- Props, Poms, and/or costuming may be used but is not mandatory. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.
- Hiding props is prohibited. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.
- The team's name will be called at least twice (once as the team is on deck, and again once the team is next to perform). Teams missing their performance time will perform at the end of the division **only** if time permits.
- Music is required throughout this performance. If music is interrupted due to technical failure, performers will continue to be judged on dance skills outlined in the routine specifics.
- Routines must be appropriate for family viewing. Appropriate choreography and music **MUST** be used. The use of inappropriate choreography, music, or uniform/costume will be subject to a penalty. Teams using excessively vulgar or suggestive movements, words or music are subject to disqualification. Extreme cases that require disqualification will be under the discretion of the head rules judge.

## PENALTIES - TRADITIONAL DANCE

### SAFETY GUIDELINES PENALTIES:

\*10 points will be deducted from your total score for each infraction of the NFHS Safety Rules for Dance Teams, AYC General Safety Rules, and the Dance Routine Guidelines.

Teams are responsible for following all NFHS Safety Rules for dance teams, as well as the AYC General Safety Rules, and Dance Routine Guidelines.

### BOUNDARY PENALTY:

\*5 points per occurrence will be deducted from your total score if any team member steps or touches out of bounds with any part of the body.

**TIME LIMIT PENALTY:**

\*5 points will be deducted from your total score if your routine goes from 5 - 10 seconds over time requirements.

\*10 points will be deducted from your total score if your routine goes from 11 or more seconds over time requirements.

**INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY**

Age appropriate choreography and music must be used.

5 points per occurrence will be deducted from the total score if inappropriate choreography or music is used. This deduction will be taken as a violation of the AYC Dance Routine Guidelines.

**IN CASE OF A TIE**

All ties will be broken at Region/National competitions. Ties in dance will be broken by using Dance Fundamentals scores. If necessary, a second tie breaker will consist of Dance Fundamentals scores plus Showmanship scores.

**SECTION 5: STEP - REGIONAL/NATIONAL**

Step is a form of dance that has been in existence for decades. This type of dance is sophisticated, synchronized chanting and rhythmic beats from participant hands, feet and mouth. Today, youth across America have embraced this art form, which provides groups with a sense of unity, teamwork, discipline, self-esteem and responsibility. AYC supports this philosophy and excited to offer this dance category.

**STEP DIVISIONS**

<b>8 &amp; Under</b>	<b>Minimum of 5 years old</b>
<b>10 &amp; Under</b>	<b>Minimum of 5 years old</b>
<b>12 &amp; Under</b>	<b>Minimum of 5 years old</b>
<b>15 &amp; Under</b>	<b>Minimum of 5 years old</b>

\*\*Step team 5 - 36 members

## STEP RULES

### AYC Step General Safety Rules

In addition to 2011-2012 NFHS Spirit Rules, AYC step teams must follow the following additional general safety guidelines. These additional guidelines supersede any conflicting NFHS rule.

- All teams should be supervised during all official functions by a qualified Advisor/Coach.
- Dance teams may wear approved jewelry as part of their costume. Approved jewelry includes legal post stud earrings and hair accessories. Jewelry such as hoop earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings, belly, tongue, and nose rings etc are prohibited. Medical alert bracelets or necklaces may be worn, but should be secured to the body with tape.
- Drops (knee, seat, thigh and split drops from a jump, stand or inverted position are illegal unless most of the weight is first borne on the hand(s) or foot/feet or is controlled, to absorb the impact of the drop. Front drops from an airborne position are illegal. Tension drops and handspring/flips to any drop are illegal.
- Soft soled dance shoes (jazz boots, dance sandals, jazz shoes) or bare feet are acceptable when competing. Wearing “socks only” is prohibited.
- All dance lifts, stunts, pyramids, or tosses are prohibited. Partner lifts may be used if the flyers hips are not above the base’s shoulders.
- All tumbling skills (with the exception of forward rolls and one shoulder backward rolls) are prohibited. Tumbling is defined as any hip over-head rotation.

Back bends and handstands are allowed so long as they are choreographed as a progression to another skill. They may not be sustained and/or involve a hip over-head rotation

### AYC STEP ROUTINE GUIDELINES

- Each team will perform a choreographed performance not to exceed 3 minutes.
- Timing will begin with the first organized word, movement, or note of music following the teams’ announcement to take the floor. Timing will end with the last organized word, note of music, or movement by the team.
- Props may be used but is not mandatory. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.
- Costuming is required because you will be judged on appearance, uniformity, originality, synchronization, style, energy and showmanship.
- Routines must be appropriate for family viewing. Appropriate choreography and music **MUST** be used. The use of inappropriate choreography, music, or uniform/costume will be subject to a penalty. Teams using excessively vulgar or suggestive movements, words or music are subject to disqualification. Extreme cases that require disqualification will be under the discretion of the head rules judge.
- Note - the age of the oldest participant will determine the age bracket that the group will be placed in.

## **PENALTIES - STEP**

### **SAFETY GUIDELINES PENALTIES:**

\*10 points will be deducted from your total score for each infraction of the AYC Step Safety Rules & Step Routine Guidelines (when applicable).

Please refer to the AYC Dance General Safety Rules and Youth Dance Routine Guidelines for details.

### **BOUNDARY PENALTY:**

\*5 points per occurrence will be deducted from your total score if any team member steps or touches out of bounds with any part of the body.

### **TIME LIMIT PENALTY:**

\*5 points will be deducted from your total score if your routine goes from 5 - 10 seconds over/under time requirements.

\*10 points will be deducted from your total score if your routine goes from 11 or more seconds over/under time requirements.

## **INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC/CHOREOGRAPHY**

Age appropriate choreography and music must be used.

5 points per occurrence will be deducted from the total score if inappropriate choreography or music is used. This deduction will be taken as a violation of the AYC Dance Routine Guidelines.

## **IN CASE OF A TIE**

All ties will be broken at Regional/National competitions. Ties in Step dance will be broken by using Showmanship & Originality scores. If necessary, a second tie breaker will consist of Showmanship, Originality plus Appearance scores.

## **LEGALITY QUESTIONS for CHEER, DANCE and STEP**

Coaches and Coordinators are responsible to comprehend and comply with all Step Age Division Requirements, AYC General Safety Rules for Step, NFHS Safety Rules for Dance Teams, and/or Step Routine Guidelines pertaining to the competing division. Questions concerning any AYC General Dance Safety Rules should follow the below process:

All legality questions must be addressed in writing. By reason of terminology and misunderstandings, answers will NOT be provided by phone AYC Rule judges will address all questions in writing. All questions should be emailed to: cheer@americanyouthfootball.com. Questions must be submitted 14 days prior to nationals to ensure a reply. Questions submitted 13 days or less prior to nationals are NOT guaranteed an answer prior to the event.

When you e-mail your questions make sure to include:

- 1) Event/Competition Date
- 2) Your name
- 3) Your team name and Region
- 4) Your division
- 5) Your category

(A written answer will be provided)

## SECTION 6 - AYC GAME TIME GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will apply to teams competing in any of the three game time divisions.

### I. GENERAL RULES

#### A. AYC GAME TIME ROUTINE GUIDELINES

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute and 15 seconds.
- Formal entrances (i.e. crowd response chants or cheers, tumbling or stunts) to the competition floor are **prohibited**. Entrances to the competition floor should be brief with the sole purpose of walking, running, etc to position. A quick team huddle prior to performance is allowed. Spirited entrances are allowed; teams should take no longer than 10 seconds to set for their routine.
- Timing will begin with the first organized word, movement, or note of music following the teams' announcement to take the floor. Timing will end with the last organized word, note of music, or movement by the team.
- No tear away uniforms or removal of clothing is allowed. Hiding props is **prohibited**. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.
- The team's name will be called at least twice (once as the team is on deck, and again once the team is next to perform). Teams missing their performance time will perform at the end of the division only if time permits.
- All choreography, material, music, and uniforms should be age-appropriate and suitable for family viewing. Teams using excessively vulgar or suggestive movements, words, or music are subject to disqualification. Extreme cases that require disqualification will be under the discretion of the head rules judge.

#### B. AYC GAME TIME SAFETY GUIDELINES

In addition to 2011-2012 NFHS Spirit Rules, AYC cheer teams must follow the following additional general safety guidelines. These additional guidelines supersede any conflicting NFHS rule.

- Banners, flags, megaphones, poms, and signs are the only props allowed. The use of poms and/or props is prohibited during tumbling, stunt/pyramid load ins, stunt/pyramid dismounts, and during stunt transitions. The top person/flyer may obtain and use poms or

props when secure in a stunt or pyramid. **Exception: a forward/backward roll may be performed with a prop or poms in hands**

- When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material or have sharp edges/corners, team members must gently toss or place the props so that they are under control. The placement of props or poms should be a safe distance away from skills being performed to eliminate any safety hazards.
- Hiding props is **prohibited**. Items that may damage the performance surface are prohibited.

#### C. FIGHT SONG CATEGORY

##### A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute and 15 seconds.
- Teams are encouraged to use their traditional team fight song.
- Props (poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners) are permitted in this category.
- Performances can incorporate up to three (3) eight counts of skills (stunts, tumbling and/or jumps). The three (3) eight counts must be consecutive and the same three (3) eight counts can be repeated if the fight song is repeated.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria:
  - Crowd oriented material, fit to music, using effective spacing and formations, and incorporating visual effects.
  - Placement, synchronization and strength of motions
  - Overall impression and crowd appeal.
  - Emphasis will be placed on practicality. All material should be suitable and able to be performed multiple times during a game or pep rally.

##### B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS:

- No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar type tosses permitted.
- No inversions and /or twisting into or out of stunts regardless of contact with bases.
- No single leg extended stunts.
- A jump is considered a skill and can only be performed in the three (3) eight count segment.
- A kick will not be considered as a skill and can be performed at any time during the routine.
- Maximum difficulty in tumbling is standing back handsprings.

#### D. TIME OUT CHEER CATEGORY

##### A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute and 15 seconds.
- No music may be used during the performance. Live drummer and / or drum track is allowed. All specialty skills (i.e.: jumps, stunts, tumbling) must be performed in a safe proximity with all Drummers. Drummers cannot be involved in any type of specialty skill.
- Each team's presentation must include at least two components required from the following: cheers, chants, traditional yells, and/or drum cadences.
- Teams should utilize all areas of their squad's crowd-leading strengths. The use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners is encouraged.

- Judging will be based on the following criteria:
  - Crowd communication, including; crowd effective material, spacing and formations, voice and pace, crowd leading skills and use of poms, signs, flags, megaphones and/or banners.
  - Placement, synchronization and strength of motions
  - Overall impression and crowd appeal.
  - Emphasis on crowd involvement and practicality. All material should be suitable for a game or pep rally.

**B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS:**

- No baskets, sponge, elevator, or similar type tosses permitted.
- No inversions and /or twisting into or out of stunts regardless of contact with bases.
- No single leg extended stunts.
- Maximum difficulty in tumbling is a standing back handspring.

**E. TIME-OUT DANCE CATEGORY**

**A. ROUTINE AND JUDGING REQUIREMENTS:**

- Each team will perform a routine not to exceed 1 minute and 15 seconds.
- Any dance style that is appropriate for a time-out situation within a sideline cheering setting is acceptable (i.e. jazz, pom, hip hop, etc.).
- Traditional sideline uniforms required.
- Poms are the only props permitted.
- Judging will be based on the following criteria:
  - Creativity and musicality, variety and the execution of transitions and formations.
  - Placement, synchronization and strength of motions/movement.
  - Visual effect and spacing.
  - Overall impression and crowd appeal.
  - Emphasis will be on audience appropriateness and appeal. This is a performance-based division. Crowd leading components will not be judged.

**B. SPECIFIC SKILL RESTRICTIONS:**

- Tumbling and/or stunting of any kind is prohibited.
- Dance skills (i.e. turns, leaps, kicks, etc.) are permitted.

## **AYC SCORE SHEETS**

Please find all updated AYC approved score sheets for Skill Execution/Deduction Sheets, Cheer Score Sheets, and Step Score Sheets at [MyAyf.com](http://MyAyf.com).

## **AYC ALL STAR GAME**

The Annual Under Armour AYF All-Star Game was established to allow the older participants, those leaving youth football/cheer, the opportunity to travel and experience participation with kids from other teams they may have competed against over the years of their involvement. It will allow some better understanding and friendships to develop and require coaches from different organizations the opportunity to work together to further the objective of providing and giving back to the youth of their

communities. It should be understood that while the participation is a competition for the football players it is the exposure and experience being offered to the kids that is the most important feature of this effort. Winning is the result of the contest the reward is the wisdom one will gain from this opportunity.

- The Annual Under Armour/AYF All-Star Cheer teams will be made up of the oldest participants 15 and Under.
- Any player/cheerleader may be nominated postseason competition or not. Nominations must be made by November 1st. Nominations must be made directly to the National Commissioner at [Cheer@americanyouthfootball.com](mailto:Cheer@americanyouthfootball.com).
- Cheerleaders that are nominated should be the oldest participants on the squad (15 and under with minimum age of 12)
- A maximum of 6 - 8 cheerleaders can be nominated from each region. Nomination does not guarantee the cheerleader will be selected. Selections will be made by the National office based on the nominations received.
- Nomination must include a scholastic component and academic achievement must be a factor when nominating a cheerleader for the All Star squad.
- Nominations should be reserved for cheerleaders that will no longer be eligible to play with the youth league.
- Only players who were certified and submit final rosters by the Sept 15 deadline as well as actively participated with their team during the entire regular season are eligible for the All Star squad.

## **AYC SERVICES OFFERED**

**AYC/UCA Cheer Camps:** One-day, two-day, & three-day camps will be offered to all AYC leagues/conferences. UCA will run camps for your leagues; local leagues can use camps as a fundraiser and may promote camps locally. All UCA instruction will be in line with AYC and NFHS Rules.

**AYC/UCA Coaches Clinics:** A new Coaches education programs and clinics (with options for certification programs) are currently being offered by UCA. Clinics and education/training programs will be available for any local/tournament AYC program to host. AYC members should contact the National Cheer Director at [cheer@americanyouthfootball.com](mailto:cheer@americanyouthfootball.com) for information.

**UCA for AYC Support Staff:** UCA state, regional and national support staff will be available year round for technical support, event planning support and more. Contact information will be posted at [MyAyf.com](http://MyAyf.com)

**'Planning Guide' for Conference Cheer Competitions:** AYC will provide a 'Planning Guide' to assist local conferences in producing a cheer competition. Some AYF/AYC conferences have a long-standing tradition of conducting competitions for their cheerleaders. For these conferences, this planning guide will simply be a check off list of tasks already performed. However, in many parts of the country, there is no local event for AYF/AYC cheerleaders to showcase their skills. A conference-planning guide will assist conference coordinators in the tasks required to produce an excellent competition. UCA support staff will also be available to offer local competition planning support.

**AYC Regional Competitions:** For information on participating in Regional Competitions, check for information and forms on the [MyAyf.com](http://MyAyf.com) control panel and keep updated via [www.AYFChampionships.com](http://www.AYFChampionships.com).



**AYC Updates:** A complementary monthly electronic newsletter will be sent to each AYC member wishing to receive one. It will contain information on AYC programs and details of upcoming events in *The Huddle*.

**AYC National Competition:** A National AYC Cheerleading competition will be held on an annual basis. Invitations will be given to teams that qualify from their regional competitions. There will be a competitor and spectator cost associated with the competition. The cost will vary each year, based on venue and production expenses. This high-energy competition will offer a fitting end to each season. We highly encourage any team who qualifies, to begin fundraising early to ensure every eligible cheerleader have the opportunity of experiencing this excellent event.

**Cheer Uniforms:** AYC now offers a service to provide members the best prices to outfit cheer teams. Visit [MyAyf.com](http://MyAyf.com) for more information on how to contact a Varsity Brands representative in your area and retain exclusive AYC pricing.

## CONTACTING AYC

*All AYC members have the ability to communicate directly with the AYF National Staff.* The AYF National Staff will not tolerate disciplinary actions being taken against members or parents who choose to contact the National Office directly. Contact information can be found online at [www.AmericanYouthFootball.com](http://www.AmericanYouthFootball.com).

Any questions will gladly be answered by AYC National Headquarters. You may contact AYC via email at: [cheer@americanyouthfootball.com](mailto:cheer@americanyouthfootball.com).

To contact UCA representatives, please contact your State Director. Contact information is posted at [MyAyf.com](http://MyAyf.com).