



2025 – 2026

Mill Creek Winter Guard Handbook

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Mill Creek High School Winter Guard

General Information

What is Winter Guard?

Winter Guard is the sport of indoor color guard. Modern color guard is a combination of the use of flags, sabers, mock rifles, and other equipment, as well as dance and other interpretive movements. Color guards can be found in high schools, middle schools, some universities, and also some independent organizations. Winter Guard is called the Sport of the Arts because it brings music to life through performance in a competitive format. Even with over 40 years of history, the sport continues to evolve and grow. There were more than 33,000 participants at the regional level, and more than 16,000 participants at the WGI World Championships in a recent season.

Is There a Prerequisite or Audition for Winter Guard?

Previous experience in Fall Color Guard or dance is helpful, but not required. Students will participate in a three-day audition clinic to determine which Winter Guard they will be placed in. All students must be enrolled in an MCHS Cluster school and be members in good financial standing to be a part of the Winter Guard Program.

Members in good financial standing are those who are:

- Paid up-to-date on all dues from past and current activities with the band program OR
 - Actively making payments according to a personalized payment plan to pay off dues owed.
-

How Many Winter Guard Groups Are There?

There are two primary membership levels in the Mill Creek Winter Guard program:

Cadet Guard

- Beginner–Intermediate developmental level of performer
- Open to rising 5th–8th-grade students in the Mill Creek Cluster who will attend MCHS
- Competes in our local circuit, SAPA

Varsity Guard

- Open to Mill Creek High School students (grades 9–12)
 - Emphasis on character development and performance ability
 - Performs in both our local circuit (SAPA) and nationally through WGI
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Required Paperwork

All necessary forms are included in this handbook. Required documents, expectations, and financial details will be reviewed at the Parent Meeting and signed during registration.

Because Winter Guard is an athletic activity, each student must have a current physical and insurance card uploaded to Rank One (instructions are provided later in this handbook).

Registration:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftQzn_94wKOTjhSxoJdgR0oMi4MOVVzaYZC1hjMT1-ELhxUg/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=108210607236234744507

Season Calendar & Attendance Reminder

The full season calendar will be shared online and included in this handbook. While we make every effort to follow the proposed schedule, adjustments or additional rehearsals may be necessary as the season progresses. All updates will be communicated and posted on our band website under the main calendar: www.prideofmillcreek.org.

Please note that homework, work schedules, babysitting, and family visits are not excused absences. Attendance at all rehearsals, events, and competitions is essential to each student's success and to the overall performance of the group.

Communication — What is CutTime?

CutTime is the management software used by our band program for financial tracking and communication. After auditions, an email will be sent with login instructions and an overview of how to use the system.

Access will be granted once your registration forms are complete and the database is updated. Please keep your contact information current and do not block emails or texts from CutTime, as this is a primary way we share updates and weekly communications.

Parent and student email and text groups will also be established, with group-specific instructions provided at that time.

Transportation

Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing transportation for their student to and from all practices and competition sites, unless otherwise communicated by the program. If a family needs to arrange a carpool, it is their responsibility to make those arrangements in advance and ensure their student arrives and departs on time.

When Traveling in a Chaperoned Vehicle

Students who ride with an approved chaperone or parent driver are expected to follow all vehicle and safety guidelines:

- The driver's rules are always to be followed—do not argue or question directions.
- Remain quiet when someone is addressing the vehicle.
- Music should be kept personal—no external speakers.
- Keep the vehicle clean, both in language and behavior.
- Remain seated and refrain from distracting the driver while the vehicle is in motion.

Returning Home After Competitions

If a carpool is arranged for transportation to or from a competition and a parent or guardian later decides to take their student home instead, a written note or form must be provided to the chaperone of the student's assigned vehicle before departure. This ensures that all students are properly accounted for and that program staff are aware of any changes in transportation plans.

Students must return their uniform to the Director of Guard Affairs at the designated time following the event.

The Mill Creek High School Band Booster, Inc. (MCBB)

Parents of Mill Creek Band and Guard members are encouraged to become active members of the MCBB. A list of officers, along with their contact information, can be found on the band's website at www.prideofmillcreek.org. Meetings of the MCBB are held throughout the school year; dates can be found on the band's general calendar. Volunteers are always needed and welcomed.

Financial Information (MCBB)

Program Funding Sources

Funds to support the Mill Creek Winter Guard budget come from two major sources: payments from Winter Guard members and fundraisers. Funds from sponsorships are welcome. Many large and small companies will give matching donations to 501(c)(3) groups like ours. Reach out to an MCBB board member for details about sponsorships.

Financial Hardship & Payment Plans

We understand that families may occasionally experience financial hardship and have difficulty meeting the payment schedule. In these cases, families should contact the MCBB Treasurer (mcbbtreasurer@gmail.com) to discuss the situation in confidence.

The Treasurer will work with the family to establish a restructured payment plan or identify additional fundraising opportunities to help meet obligations. These arrangements must be made before the first payment is due or as soon as the hardship arises. Please note that while payment plans and fundraising options are available, dues are still required in full and are not eligible for waiver.

Financial Standing Requirement

To be considered an active member, the first payment (due December 1st), registration, and all required paperwork must be completed and signed.

If a payment plan is needed, it must be established immediately with the MCBB Treasurer at the time of registration. All payments—including the first payment due December 1st—must be made on schedule or according to the approved plan.

Students with outstanding balances from any previous season (Marching Band, Fall Guard, or Winter Guard) are not eligible to participate until their dues are paid in full or a current payment plan is in place. Students who fall behind on payments may be withheld from practice until payments resume or the plan is updated. Reminder emails will be sent to parents at each payment due date.

Dues & What They Cover

Winter Guard is classified as an extracurricular activity and, as such, is not directly funded through Gwinnett County Public Schools. Therefore, fundraising and fees become the financial engine of the Winter Guard. Winter Guard fees cover the cost of arrangement and writing of the music, original drill writing, choreography, individual and group instruction, circuit and competition fees, cost of prop construction and movement to locations, purchase of uniforms, and much more.

Dues Amounts (Placement After Auditions)

- Winter Guard (HS): \$1000
- Cadet Guard: \$600

Additional Costs

- If specialized shoes are needed, students will be responsible for this expense.
- Students are also responsible for various sundry uniform items, including but not limited to: make-up, tights, gloves, hair needs, etc.

Varsity/Winter Guard students will also be responsible for trip fees to cover travel expenses to attend WGI Regionals and Championship.

How to Make a Payment

Payments are expected on or before the established dates. Reminders may be sent home via email or through the student. Payments for any Winter Guard activity can be made by:

- Cash or check (made out to MCBB) delivered to the black mailbox located in the band room. Payments should be labeled with the student's name in an envelope.
 - Credit card on the band website prideofmillcreek.org (select More → Make a Payment; label "WG – [Student Name]").
 - While we understand that family situations may vary, MCBB is unable to manage or mediate financial arrangements between divorced or separated parents. Families should work out payment responsibilities privately, ensuring that the student's account remains current according to the published payment schedule.
-

Fundraisers & Credit Policy

Fundraising credits are a portion of the funds raised for the MCBB Program, Marching Band/Fall Color Guard, and/or Winter Guard and/or Concert Band Program(s), through volunteer efforts by your student and/or family and friends (e.g., Coolray, RaiseRight Cards, Popcorn, etc.). These credits can be used toward dues, uniform needs, trip fees, and pre-paid meals.

Key guidelines:

- Credits are for use while your student is in the MCBB Program.
 - Credits cannot be transferred to another student or released as a refund.
 - Once a student leaves and/or graduates from the program, credits are returned to the Operating Account (unless you have a rising sibling joining the program).
 - To utilize or check your credit balance, email Brandy Suber, Treasurer. To apply credits toward dues, shoes, trips, etc., please email Brandy with your request. mcbbtreasurer@gmail.com
 - At the end of the season, if there are any outstanding fees, your credits will be applied toward those fees unless prior arrangements have been made with the Treasurer.
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Volunteer Obligations

All families that are members of the Winter Guard are expected to support, through their work, the activities of the program. All Winter Guard families are expected to volunteer at any Mill Creek Creek-sponsored (hosted) Winter Guard Shows. Profits made from this event support the budgets for the Winter Guards at Mill Creek.

- Student members of the Winter Guard program cannot fulfill this requirement at the Mill Creek-hosted SAPA show because they will be performing (during the years Mill Creek hosts the SAPA show).
- Families wishing to opt out may choose to "buy out" their shifts. Families that opt out will be assessed an additional \$75 per required event as part of their dues.
- Missing a shift or not scheduling yourself for a shift will also result in a \$75 fee being assessed.

Refunds and Withdrawals

Once the season has started, all payments—including dues, uniforms, choreography, competition, and instructional fees—are **non-refundable**, regardless of injury, illness, withdrawal, or inability to participate. Program expenses are committed early in the season on behalf of each member.

Students who voluntarily withdraw from the program remain responsible for all payments. Additionally, students will be charged for any uniform or costume expenses incurred on their behalf before their withdrawal. The majority of Winter Guard expenses are committed early in the season for show design, instruction, and materials. Even if a student leaves the program, these funds have already been spent on their participation, and the family will remain financially responsible.

Securing Your Position

A student will officially be considered a member of the Mill Creek Winter Guard only after they have made the initial payment on December 1st and/or after their family has had a financial aid meeting with the MCBT Treasurer and the President in person. Parents/Guardians who do not schedule this meeting and/or make the deposit will not have a drill spot written for their student.

2025-2026 Expected Winter Guard Season Expenses

May not include all costs

<u>Required Fees</u>		<u>Notes</u>
Varsity Guard Dues	\$1000.00	
Cadet Guard Dues	\$600.00	
WGI World Championships Trip Costs (room and minimum of two meals for students included in Varsity Dues)	-	Varsity Guard only, meals and misc. costs
Show Shirt & Shoes	\$36.00	All Guard members will get a t-shirt and shoes
SAPA Championships	VARIES	Cadet & Varsity Guard , meals, lodging, and misc. Families are responsible for arrangements.
<u>Additional Possible Costs</u>		
Warm-up Jackets	\$60.00	See Order Form
Warm-up Pants	\$30.00	See Order Form
Flag Bag	\$ 60.00	HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Price varies based on shipping costs
Personal Items- gloves, weapons, body tights, etc.	Varies	See Order Form
Money for food at competitions and during travel	Varies	
Souvenir Money	Varies	

Payment Plan

	<u>Varsity Guard</u>	<u>Cadet Guard</u>
December 1st (first rehearsal) *This payment must be on time as it secures the student's position*	\$250	\$150.00
January 5th	\$250	\$150.00
February 9th	\$250	\$150.00
March 9th *All outstanding fees due*	\$250	\$150.00

Alternate Payment Plans are available to all families, if needed. Please contact Brandy Suber to schedule an appointment.
mcbbtreasurer@gmail.com

Attendance Policy

Winter Guard is a performance-based activity that depends on full participation from every member. Each student's presence directly affects the success of the group. Attendance reflects both self-discipline and commitment—skills essential to the learning process.

A calendar of rehearsals and events is published well in advance (included later in this handbook and on the band website). Families are expected to plan appointments, trips, and other activities around these dates to avoid conflicts.

Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory.

Excused Absences

Excused absences include illness (with a doctor's note), a death in the family, an important religious observance, or other serious circumstances approved in advance by the directors. Personal conflicts such as work, homework, babysitting, birthdays, or non-academic school activities are not excused.

To be excused, students must notify the Winter Guard Committee Chair, Rebekah Chrisman, through the Absence Google form before the absence. Excessive tardies or absences may result in a review to determine if an alternate should fill the student's role.

Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence is any absence not meeting the above criteria. Examples include work, homework, family visits, or social events. The Directors reserve the right to remove a student from the program for unexcused absences.

Promptness

Students must arrive at least 20 minutes before rehearsal to prepare and participate in group stretching. The first few minutes of rehearsal are critical for physical and mental readiness.

Tardies follow the same excused/unexcused guidelines as absences. Chronic tardiness will result in a meeting with the Band Directors regarding continued participation.

Social Media and Band App Guidelines

All members and families are expected to be respectful and mindful when posting on the organization's social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) and the Band App.

Administrators reserve the right to monitor and remove posts, photos, or comments deemed inappropriate, offensive, or disruptive. Individuals who post rude, offensive, or inflammatory content may be removed from the platform.

Conduct Policy

Winter Guard members represent Mill Creek High School, the Mill Creek Band program, and the greater community. Members are expected to demonstrate respect, professionalism, and cooperation at all times—both in and out of uniform.

Inappropriate behavior or language will not be tolerated. All Gwinnett County Public Schools disciplinary policies apply at every rehearsal, performance, and event.

Behavior Expectations

Winter Guard members are expected to show respect, teamwork, and responsibility at all times. To ensure a safe and positive environment for everyone, please follow these guidelines:

- Stay focused during rehearsals and avoid disruptive talking or socializing.
- Follow directions from directors, staff, and chaperones promptly and respectfully.
- Be courteous—no rude behavior, profanity, bullying, or harassment toward anyone.
- Arrive on time and attend all rehearsals, performances, and events.
- Respect all school property, uniforms, and guard equipment; handle items with care and use only as instructed. Students will be held financially responsible for any damage.
- Never use or possess alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs—these are strictly prohibited under school policy. Violations will result in disciplinary action according to school policy.
- Remain in designated areas unless permitted by a director or chaperone.

By following these expectations, members help create a positive, respectful, and successful Winter Guard experience for everyone. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in administrative referral and disciplinary action, including suspension and/or dismissal from the program.

Winter Guard Cell Phone Policy

To promote focus, safety, and productivity during rehearsals, the following cell phone guidelines apply to all Winter Guard members:

- Cell phones may not be used during practice for any reason unless given direct permission by a staff member.
- Phones must be stored in your bag or designated area—not in pockets, hands, or on your person.

- If a parent needs to reach a student urgently, they may contact the Director of Guard Affairs.
- Students who need to contact a parent during rehearsal must request permission from a chaperone/staff member first.

Thank you for helping us maintain a focused and distraction-free practice environment.

Consequences for Misbehavior

First Offense:

The incident will be documented, and a parent/guardian will be notified. Depending on severity, a meeting may be scheduled.

Second Offense:

Depending on the severity of the offense, the student may be suspended from up to two performances. A parent conference will be required.

Third Offense:

The student will be permanently removed from all Winter Guard activities for the remainder of the season.

Automatic Escalation:

Severe misconduct (e.g., harassment, threats, violence, possession of prohibited items, or endangering others) may result in **immediate escalation** to higher-level consequences, including dismissal from the program for a specified period or indefinitely, as determined by program staff.

Appeals:

Parents may submit a written appeal to the directors within five school days of the disciplinary action. Appeals will be reviewed in consultation with school administration.

Note:

For further clarification, please refer to the *Mill Creek High School Student and Faculty Handbook* and the *Gwinnett County Public Schools Discipline Handbook* for complete disciplinary policies and procedures.

Guard Room/Band Room Expectations

- Students must be prompt and positively prepare for rehearsal (see attendance policy).
- Over 50 students use the guard room—please keep it clean and orderly. Trash cans are provided for your use.
- The guard room is for the storage of guard-related items: guard bags, equipment, and uniforms, personal and school items.
- There is to be absolutely no food, drink, or gum in the guard/band room—EVER!
- Vandalism, use of school equipment, or other students' property without permission is not tolerated.

Personal Property: Students are responsible for their own personal belongings at all rehearsals, performances, and events. The Winter Guard program, Mill Creek Band Booster Club, Mill Creek High School, and Gwinnett County Public Schools are not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged personal property. Members are encouraged to label items and keep valuables secured at all times.

Equipment Policy

Each Winter Guard member will be assigned equipment for use throughout the season. Equipment may include flags, rifles, sabers, or other performance items. It is the responsibility of each student to care for their assigned equipment properly and use it only for practice and performance purposes.

Students are expected to:

- Treat all equipment with respect and use it responsibly at all times.
- Store equipment safely when not in use.
- Avoid rough handling, throwing, or using equipment for purposes other than instruction.

If equipment is damaged, the staff will evaluate the cause of the damage. If it is determined that damage occurred due to misuse, neglect, the cost of repair or replacement will be the responsibility of the student. The charge will be applied to the student's financial account for payment.

Normal wear and tear from practice and performance will not result in charges, but intentional or careless damage will be handled through this replacement policy.

Required Paperwork (Submission Checklist)

Please ensure you complete the Registration Form and make your **first payment no later than Monday, December 1st**. This will be completed via Google Form with a link shared after auditions.

- Registration Form: [Click here!](#)
- Payment Agreement
- Permission Forms
- Volunteer Obligation Agreement
- Medical Form
- Parent Volunteer Opportunities
- Membership Contract
- Waiver

Tentative Winter Guard Calendar Pages

Please understand some PRACTICE days and COMPETITION dates and times on this Calendar are subject to change due to School availability/calendar or weather. We will do our best to communicate in a timely fashion with advance notice.

November 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 5-8pm (Auditions)	18 5-8pm (Auditions)	19 5-8pm (Auditions)	20	21	22
23	24 No School	25 No School	26 No School	27 No School	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	© Calendar-12.com 6

December 2025 (tentative schedule)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	1 3pm-8pm	2 <u>3pm-8pm</u> (½ Commons)	3	4 <u>3pm-8pm</u> (½ Commons)	5	6
7	8 3pm-8pm	9	10	11 <u>3pm-8pm</u> (½ Commons)	12	13
14	15 3pm-8pm	16 3pm-8pm	17 exams	18 exams	19 exams	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3 © Calendar-12.co ^m

January 2026 (tentative schedule)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	6 <u>3-8pm</u> (½ commons)	7	8 <u>3pm-8pm</u> (Commons Not Available)	9	10
11	12 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	13 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	14	15 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	16	17
18	19 NO School	20 <u>3pm-8pm</u> (½ commons)	21 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	22	23 <u>3pm-8pm</u> (commons NOT available)	24 <u>9am-2pm</u> (commons NOT available)
25	26	27 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	28 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	29 <u>3pm-8pm</u>	30	31 POSSIBLE CADET SAPA SHOW DATE TBA

February 2026 (tentative schedule) ⁴



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 3pm-8pm	3 3pm-8pm	4	5 3pm-8pm (½ Commons)	6 DLD	7 POSSIBLE CADET SAPA SHOW DATE TBA
8	9 3pm-8pm	10 3pm-8pm	11	12 No School	13 No School	14
15	16 No School	17 3pm-8pm	18	19 3pm-8pm	20 3pm-8pm	21 Show (Both) - Denmark
22	23 3pm-8pm	24 3pm-8pm	25 3pm-8pm	26	27	28 © Calendar-12.co ^m

March 2026 (tentative schedule)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 3pm-8pm	3 3pm-8pm	4 3pm-8pm	5	6	7 WGI Knoxville Varsity Only
8 WGI Knoxville Varsity Only	9 3pm-8pm	10	11	12 3pm-8pm	13 DLD <u>3pm-8pm</u>	14 SAPA Show - Varsity only Pope
15	16 3pm-8pm	17 3pm-8pm	18	19 3pm-8pm	20	21 SAPA Show - Kell HS both groups
22	23 3pm-8pm	24 3pm-8pm	25	26	27 SAPA Champs - both groups	28 SAPA Champsboth groups
29 SAPA Champsboth groups	30	31	1	2	3	4 © Calendar-12.co™

April 2026 (tentative schedule)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 5-8pm Fall <u>try</u> Out	21 5-8pm Fall Try Out	22 5-8pm Fall Try Out	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2 © Calendar-12.co ^m

Regular Rehearsal Schedule

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 3-6pm (**Varsity**)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 5-8pm (**Cadets**)

****Students MUST attend each rehearsal.**

*Please note any schedule changes will be communicated via email, Band App.

*Please understand sometimes competitions dates may change that our out of our control or practice may need to be rescheduled due to Winter Weather, etc.