

Gus Almquist Cheerleading Handbook

2025-2026

Purpose:

- Cheerleading is a vibrant part of the HISD community. For campuses and the community, cheerleading exists in order to promote:
 - Tradition
 - Spirit
 - Ambassadorship
- For participants, cheerleading exists to provide students:
 - Multiple leadership opportunities
 - A sense of team
 - Participation in an athletic activity for students with skill in that area
 - Opportunities to learn and exhibit sportsmanship and citizenship
 - Opportunities to be a role model
 - Campus and community ambassadorship

Program Membership:

- The cheer membership consists of the following people:
 - 1 Team composed of 6th, 7th and 8th grade
 - The coaches will determine the final number of team members.
 - Cheerleader openings that occur after the official tryouts may be filled by the coaches.
 - Cheerleaders who move to HISD after the tryout process has been finalized must tryout via the same rubric used as the HISD students. Based on skill evaluation, the campus coaches will determine placement on the team. The Tryout is to the discretion of the coaches based on need, previous cheer experience and/or a variety of other factors. Coaches have the right to close the tryout process at any time.
 - Cheerleaders who are transfer students may be required to pay in full for items ordered before the annual transfer agreement is approved.
 - Coaches reserve the right to move cheerleaders from team to team as deemed necessary.
 - Candidates who are injured and unable to demonstrate skills due to injury or illness, or who may be unable to attend tryouts with approval may provide video footage for evaluation of skills during the tryout process. Video may be from practices, games, or competitions. Video footage should include tryout skills that are evaluated. If the candidate was previously on the GAMS team, coaches can evaluate the candidate on skill level prior to tryouts. Video submission expectations:
 - Skills must be performed without a spot.

- Skills are preferably performed on a non-spring floor.

Commitment

- Members of the cheerleading program will follow the guidelines in the handbook.
- Cheer members will serve from the day of selection through the last day of school the following academic year.
- Cheerleaders represent HISD at all times.
- Cheerleading is a year-round commitment that requires devotion of time and effort (i.e. attendance guidelines). It is an honor that requires commitment, hard work and dedication.
- **HISD cheer commitments should come before other obligations such as jobs, driver education, all-star cheer teams, etc.** Should there be a conflict with another activity, conflicts will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Consequences will be enforced as necessary.
- Each member is required to be in the cheer class. Classes will consist of conditioning, preparation for events, tumbling, jumps, stunting, etc.
- Coaches may require supplies for cheer class. With the success of our sports teams or fundraising events, additional supplies may be required.

Tryout Information

- General Information:
 - Cheer tryouts will be held in the second semester of the school year.
 - No videotaping of any portion of the clinics or evaluation is permitted by candidates or parents.
 - Must be enrolled at a HISD campus, provide transfer information, or declare the intention to transfer.
 - Candidates who have outstanding fees owed to Hutto ISD are ineligible to try out.
 - **Candidates who were placed in DAEP or Out-of-School Suspension are ineligible to try out.**
- Before Tryouts:
 - All candidates and a parent/legal guardian must attend the mandatory parent/candidate meeting. Conflicts will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Candidates and parents are responsible for all information at the mandatory meeting.
 - Should a virtual meeting be scheduled, it will be recorded and placed on the website for review from parents who had a conflict.
Parents/candidates are responsible for the content of the meeting.
 - **All candidates are expected to attend with a parent/legal guardian. Lack of attendance may result in the inability to make a team.**
 - Candidates and parents are responsible for completing, signing, and returning all forms required.
 - All candidates must have all Hutto ISD debts paid prior to being eligible to try out.

- All candidates must be in good discipline standing at their respective school. This is determined by the student's specific campus administration. No action is needed to be taken by the candidate; coaches will inform campus principals of the candidate list. Students with discipline referrals or other concerns (attendance, grades, etc.) may not be placed on a team.
- During Tryouts:
 - All candidates should report to the designated tryout site on time each day of the tryout process.
 - **No cell phones** will be permitted in any of the tryout areas.
 - **Clothing for clinic sessions:** shorts, sports bras (girls), spandex under shorts for girls, t-shirt/tank top, cheer/running shoes, hair pulled back securely, **no jewelry**.
 - All candidates **must attend all tryout clinics** to be eligible to attend the formal tryout. Any conflicts must be approved by the coaches.
 - During the tryout process, the following will be evaluated: cheer, dance (girls), jumps, stunting, and tumbling. Tumbling skills must be independently performed unless specified by point value.
 - Stunting will be in a stunt around format to evaluate positions and team needs.
 - During the evaluation portion of the tryout, only the tryout uniform may be worn. If the appropriate tryout uniform IS NOT worn, the candidate may not be permitted to try out.
 - **Plain black** fitted shirt/tank top for girls (no camisoles or spaghetti straps). Shirts may not be turned inside out.
 - Girls must wear a sports bra.
 - **Plain black** shorts (or spandex-girls only)
 - Spandex under shorts for girls if shorts without a liner are worn.
 - Hair pulled securely in a ponytail. For hair that is too short to wear in a ponytail, 1/2 up with a bow is permitted. Bangs should be secured out of the face. A white bow is optional.
 - Cheerleading shoes or athletic shoes
 - Gameday makeup is appropriate (mascara, blush, red lipstick)
 - No jewelry
 - GAMS tryouts and clinics are closed to the public. Parents are asked to drop off their candidate and leave the tryout/clinic facilities.
 - If candidates have a conflict, emergency or an illness that prevents them from attending a clinic or evaluations, cheer coaches will make arrangements to try out after being contacted by the candidate/parent/guardian.
 - **Scoring:** Cheer candidates will be evaluated on a point system. Each component is assigned a point value. The maximum point value assigned is considered excellent and the minimum point value assigned is considered below expectations.
 - The more difficult the skill, the higher the point value earned. In skills that progressively become more difficult, participants will be asked to perform the most difficult skill they are capable of doing and will be scored accordingly.
 - Candidates may be asked to perform a skill more than one time for consistency purposes.
 - If performing advanced skills, candidates may be asked to perform skills

as a prerequisite.

- Should a candidate fail to perform a skill at a satisfactory level (judges' decision), then the next lowest skill should be performed.
- **Point Values:** Points will be used to compare and rank candidates against one another to gain an overall impression. Decisions are NOT based purely on points, as coaches will make the final determination on who makes each team.

Skill Evaluation Criterion

- **Standing Tumbling** **15 points**
 - Cartwheel/Back Walkover/Front Walkover 1-3 points
 - Back Handspring (spotted) 4-6 points
 - Back Handspring (dead floor) 7-9 points
 - *Back handspring series 10-12 points
 - *Standing back tuck 13-15 points
 - *Must perform prerequisite skills (standing back handspring, bhs series, etc)
- **Running Tumbling** **15 points**
 - Roundoff 1-3 points
 - Roundoff back handspring/series 4-6 points
 - Roundoff (back handspring) tuck 7-9 points
 - *Roundoff (back handspring) layout 10-12 points
 - *Roundoff (back handspring) full 13-15 points
 - *Must perform prerequisite skills
- **Jumps** **20 points**
 - Toe Touch 10 points
 - Jump Series (2 or 3) 10 points
- **Dance (Girls)** **15 Points**
 - Sharpness 5 points
 - Energy/Facials 5 points
 - Coordination/Rhythm 5 points
- **Cheer** **15 points**
 - Sharpness 5 points
 - Technique of Motions 5 points
 - Energy/Facials 5 points
- Cheerleaders will also be evaluated by using their semester core class grade average and discipline records. These scores will be in addition to the total skill score.
Pre-AP/Honors courses will earn 10 points in addition to their original score, as is done in GPA calculation (i.e. 85 in PAP English will earn a 95 for calculation purposes). Scores will be rounded to a whole number. Cheer candidates are responsible for obtaining their

report card with semester grades. The report card must be provided to the coaches with a registration form packet.

Academic Evaluation Criterion

- Semester Core Class Grade Average (based on semester 1):
 - 95-100 20 points
 - 90-94 15 points
 - 85-89 10 points
 - 80-84 5 points
 - 75-79 3 points
 - Below 75 0 points

After Tryouts

- After tryouts, coaches will rank candidates based on the points they earned and will use this to guide the decision for placement on each team. **As a reminder, score is not the only determinant of placement. Final decisions are made by the coaching staff.**
- The results of tryouts will be posted at a location determined by the campus coaches and will be communicated to all participants.
- Parents may inquire about their student's tryout results by sending an email to the cheer coaches. Concerns about other students' results, including scores, will not be discussed.
- **All decisions made regarding teams are made by the campus coaches and administration and are final.**
- Athletes who are no longer on the team may be moved to P.E. or another course placement, per the coaches' discretion.

Cheer Camp

- **A \$250 deposit payment will be required upon placement on a team. Specific dates will be shared by the coaches.**
- Final payment of cheer expenses must be paid in full by the designated due date in order to attend camp with the team.
 - Any family who needs special payment arrangements should contact and make arrangements with the campus cheer coaches.
 - Failure to make timely payments will result in suspension, and removal after successive missed payments.
- Cheerleaders who do not attend camp will be removed from the team.
 - Should there be an extenuating circumstance, this will need to be communicated with the coaches, and approved by the administration. Only the most dire of circumstances will be considered.
- All cheerleaders are expected to abide by the GAMS Cheer Rules as well as HISD Code of Conduct, or they will be removed from camp and/or the team.

Safety

- Because of the increased athleticism of today's cheerleaders and the complexity of skills performed, there is a risk, as in an athletic endeavor, of serious injury.
- **All athletes must participate in the HISD physical night due to updated HISD physical expectations.**
 - Failure to have an updated sports physical on file will result in the cheerleader being benched until all paperwork is on file.
 - Prolonged or continued incomplete paperwork may result in dismissal from the team.
- Proper stunt and tumbling progressions will be followed.
- Jewelry may not be worn during practices, games, events, etc.

Duties and Responsibilities

- **Leadership**
 - Cheerleaders represent their school and HISD at all times on and off campus. They must act as role models and leaders at school and in the community.
 - Members will demonstrate good sportsmanship, promote school spirit and display genuine concern for others.
 - Abide by the HISD Code of Conduct on and off campus.
 - Captains will be determined following tryouts. Captain selection may be done by coach selection, a team vote, a combination of both, or may have other requirements.
- **Appearance**
 - Cheerleaders are expected to maintain a well-groomed, natural look.
 - No unnatural hair colors, including highlights (e.g. pink or blue hair color).
 - Nails should be kept short. Natural nails are preferred to dip/acrylic. Gems or other embellishments are not allowed as they pose a safety risk to self and others.
 - Uniforms should always be neat and clean.
 - Girls should wear appropriate make-up
 - No visible tattoos.
- **Academics**
 - Grades will be checked on an as needed basis. Any grade below a 70 may result in required tutorials.
 - Any cheerleaders who receive a grade below a 70 at the end of the grading period or a grade of an incomplete, or fails to meet the standards in his/her IEP may not participate in extracurricular activities for the allotted time set forth by the UIL Athletic Eligibility Schedule.
 - Cheerleaders who are ineligible **will be required** to practice.
 - Any cheerleader who becomes ineligible **will not** be allowed to perform or travel with the team for the term of ineligibility. The coaches will determine if the

cheerleader is required to attend an event without participation. Cheerleaders are not permitted to be in uniform.

○ **Attendance and Participation**

- Attendance at all practices, games, competitions and cheer events is mandatory. This includes fundraisers, etc. If a cheerleader is injured, he/she is expected to attend events as determined by the coaching staff.
- Planned absences to a cheer event should be requested in writing (**email, not text message**) at least 48 hours in advance. Campus coaches will determine if absences will be excused. Inappropriate notification will result in disciplinary action.
 - Examples of excused absences:
 - Illness with appropriate documentation (within 48 hours)
 - Funeral/Family Illness with appropriate documentation (within 48 hours)
 - School-related functions (48 hours prior to absence)
 - Example of unexcused absences:
 - Dates
 - Out of town activities that are not disclosed to coaches
 - Concerts
 - Jobs
- Students who are ill should notify the coaches via phone call or email as soon as possible. Students who call must provide written documentation within 48 hours. This includes daily absences from school and cheer class.
- Tardies past 10 minutes will be considered an absence. Extenuating circumstances will be excused on a case-by-case basis.
- Cheerleaders should be picked up from practice in a timely manner. Should parents not pick up their athlete in a timely manner, consequences may be issued.
- All cheer members are required to attend summer camp, summer practices and any other team cheer events throughout the summer. Cheer members not attending these events are subject to dismissal from the team.
- More than 3 days of absences is considered excessive, and appropriate documentation is required.

○ **Financial**

- Cost for the year may vary each year. Fundraising is a potential source of income for cheerleaders to pay for individual fees. Team fundraisers require full participation. Should the cheerleader not participate in fundraising fully, then this will result in a larger amount of fees due.
- New members may purchase gently used items from non-returning members.
- Other costs throughout the year may develop (team gifts, dinners, player gifts, spirit items, special occasion items).
- A payment schedule will be set for all payment dates.
 - If circumstances exist that prevent a cheerleader from paying said fees, payment plans can be made according to the needs of the cheerleader. Please discuss with coaches immediately.
 - If items aren't paid for by the due date set, items are not released to the cheerleader & they will not perform until the balance is paid or payment

- plan is in place.
 - Cheer members must be current with their payment schedule. Not being current will result in suspension from all cheer activities until payment is made.
 - Cheer members who owe a balance on their account will not be eligible to try out for the following year until the amount is paid in full.
 - Cheer members are required to attend and participate in all fundraising activities in order to receive credit and be eligible to cheer. Cheer members may also be required to participate in group fundraising activities in which all money earned will be contributed to the general cheerleading activity fund. Cheerleaders who do not participate or fulfill any quotas set forth by the campus may be considered ineligible to cheer (see Code of Conduct).
 - If a member is declared ineligible, injured, is being disciplined, is dismissed, or resigns from the team; the member is still responsible for all fees. Refunds will not be issued.
 - Failure to pay fees will result in being added to the HISD Obligation List.
- **Transportation**
 - The cheer team will ride together as a group to and from all competitions & activities with coaches. Any extenuating circumstances necessitating other arrangements for transportation must be approved by the coach in advance.
 - Cheerleaders may be charged or be expected to provide their own transportation to events (i.e. football/basketball games)
- **Practices**
 - Practices will be held during the cheer class period and before and/or after school and on weekends.
 - Coaches may assign additional afternoon or morning practices on an as needed basis.
 - All practices are closed to the public. Parents may stay the first 10 minutes and arrive the last 10 minutes before practice ends.
 - All practices are mandatory. Members may be removed from performances by the campus coach as necessary due to absences, attitude, skill, etc.
 - Timely arrival and pick up to practices is expected. This includes being dressed and ready at school by the specified time as set forth by the coaches.

Code of Conduct

- A GAMS Cheerleader takes on the role of a respectful and disciplined athlete who should model appropriate behavior for his/her peers at all times-in school, after school and in the community. This is a very visual position. Along with this position comes a great deal of responsibility; cheerleaders display a good work ethic, and a spirit of cooperation with parents, coaches, and other cheerleaders, and other students. Each squad member will be held to these high standards in and out of school. Cheer coaches will determine discipline should infractions occur. This expectation begins the day the member becomes a part of the GAMS Cheer Program.
- Athletes in the GAMS Cheer Program will follow a "Three Strike" System. Strikes will be given based on a cheer member's behavioral infraction. The coaches will document each behavioral

infraction and communicate strikes with the cheerleader and their parent. Strikes cannot be “worked off.”

- An athlete is not entitled to any due process prior to removal from the team. Athletes may be removed at the discretion of the coaches and/or administration for any reason at any time.
- Any cheer member who is removed from the cheer program or voluntarily resigns their position during the school year may be moved from the cheer class to another class for the remainder of the semester. Any student who is removed or resigns must submit a formal request to try out for the cheer program for the following year. Appeals will be granted on a case-by-case basis determined by the campus coaches and administration.
- The following levels outline discipline infractions and possible consequences. All discipline is designed to be corrective in nature. Disciplinary actions listed below will be determined by the coaches and/or administration.

- **Level I (these infractions do not incur strikes):**

- Immediate reminders: The cheer coach will determine the consequence at the time of the infraction. Consequences for Level 1 behaviors may result in reminders, physical conditioning, or suspension for all or part of a game or event. Examples include (but are not limited to):
 - Tardiness to practice or class (less than 10 minutes)
 - Incorrect practice clothes, including shoes
 - Being disruptive, horsing around, or talking excessively
 - Failure to participate in team activities (paint, hang or remove signs, decorate locker rooms, etc.)
 - Failure to turn in paperwork, fundraising money, etc. by designated due date

- **Level II (these infractions incur strikes):**

- The cheer coaches will determine if a strike is warranted by the cheerleader's behavior. Strikes may result in the same consequences as a Level I infraction, along with the strike itself. Parents will be notified of strikes via phone call or email. Examples include:
 - Unexcused absence to practice or event (including summer commitments) OR being more than 10 minutes late.
 - Incorrect game day, pep rally, or performance clothes (including hair bows and shoes, if applicable). This may also result in dismissal or suspension from said event.
 - Leaving practice/game/event without permission.
 - Unsportsmanlike conduct at a game or event.
 - Assignment to After School Detention, ISS OR Saturday School.
 - Disrespect/insubordination towards cheer coaches, teachers, administration or teammates.
 - Receiving a discipline referral, including cell phone violations.
 - Academic Dishonesty.
 - Any action deemed to reflect poorly on the squad as a whole.
 - Having “no contact contracts” on file (must be the instigator in this situation)

- **Level III (Removal from the Team):**

- Receiving 3 strikes
- Absences from mandatory events such as camp or competition

- Losing eligibility for 2 consecutive grading periods
- Losing eligibility for any 3 grading periods (not consecutive)
- Filing of Truancy by HISD
- Suspension from School (OSS)
- Assignment to DAEP
- The following events on or off campus:
 - Issuing of a citation
 - Alcohol Use
 - Drug Use
 - Smoking/Tobacco/Vaping
 - Fighting
 - Stealing
 - Destruction/vandalism of school property

Competition

- Competition is required for all cheerleaders who are selected for a competition team. If there are extenuating circumstances, they will be individually assessed.
- Competition is a privilege, not a right of cheerleaders.
- School teams will be divided and leveled by coaches to create competitive teams. Athletes can be moved to another team for competition if deemed appropriate.
- All costs/fees of competition are in addition to school fees.
- All cheerleaders are required to pay all fees regarding competition, if required.
- If the cheerleader is academically ineligible, he/she will be unable to compete, and is required to pay said fees. Refunds will not be issued.
- If fees are not paid, suspension until fees are paid may occur.
- If fees are not paid, the cheerleader will be placed on the HISD Obligation List.
- The cheer team may participate in fundraising to offset any costs incurred for competition. Lack of participation in fundraising will result in more fees owed.
- **Preferred skills:**
 - Hip Level Jumps (single, double, triple), Strong Motions, Ability to Lead a Crowd, Back walkover/Front walkover, Standing BHS, Round-off BHS Series
 - This is not an exhaustive list. Stunting position and team needs are also taken into consideration.
- **Potential Competition Expenses:**
 - Team Gifts/Spirit Items: \$25-\$35
 - Make-up \$30
 - Team T Shirt \$25
 - State Fees: \$150
 - Nationals Fees: \$500

This document is a living document. Any issues that are not within this handbook are to the discretion of the campus coaches and the campus administration.