Mission Statement: At Owen County High School Cheerleading, we live by the principle: *Student First, Person Second, Player Third (Coach Steve Ridder)*. We are committed to fostering a positive and supportive environment where academics come first, personal growth and respect are paramount, and athletic achievement is built upon a foundation of hard work and teamwork. As a member of our cheerleading team, you are expected to prioritize your education and personal development, while striving for excellence in both character and athletic performance. Through this approach, we aim to develop well-rounded individuals who succeed in all aspects of life.

2026-2027 OCHS CHEERLEADING POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

GRADE REQUIREMENTS

Student-athletes are expected to prioritize academics. Commitment to the team requires a strong dedication to education.

- Athletes are responsible for seeking academic support (from teachers, peer tutoring, etc.) outside of practice times.
- Athletes must notify coaches in advance if missing practice for academic reasons.
- Coaches may require mandatory academic support for athletes at risk of academic ineligibility during the season.

Success in the classroom is just as important as success on the mat. Prioritizing academics ensures that athletes remain eligible and prepared for their future.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance at all practices, games, competitions, and other required team events is mandatory. Personal commitments such as work, club activities, doctor's appointments, and other appointments should not interfere with cheerleading. If you are unable to make this commitment, do not try out.

Excused Absences

- Pre-planned family vacations (with at least one month's notice)
- Family emergencies
- Illness (must notify the coach in advance, not last-minute)

Unexcused Absences

- Work, club activities, or personal appointments
- Missing practice without prior notice or a valid reason
- Conflicts with another OCHS activity must be communicated with both coaches in advance. You are responsible for catching up on any missed material.

Tardiness & Consequences

- Three tardies equal one unexcused absence
- Arriving late without prior notice will result in sitting out one half of the next game or a 15-minute consequence after practice.

Competition & Choreography Camp Attendance

- Missing more than three competition practices makes you ineligible to compete.
- **Choreography Camp is scheduled for June 10 and June 17th 4:30pm - 7:30pm.**

Unexcused Absences & Consequences

- Two unexcused absences result in a written warning
- Each additional unexcused absence will result in sitting out one game (assist with the team as needed)
- More than three unexcused absences may result in dismissal from the team.

Commitment & Accountability
Cheerleading is a team sport—there are no substitutes. Your teammates rely on your full commitment. Should you choose to quit mid-season, you will be ineligible to try out for the following season, though exceptions may be made at the coach's discretion.

UNIFORMS

Uniforms are issued by the school and remain the property of the **OCHS Athletic Department.**

- **Returning Uniforms:** If a cheerleader quits or is dismissed, all uniforms and equipment must be returned within three days. Failure to do so will result in a fine for replacement costs.
- **Uniform Care:**
  - Wash after every outdoor event.
  - Treat stains on white sections immediately.
  - Wash in cold water separately and hang to dry—do not use hot water or a dryer.
  - Store on a hanger to prevent wrinkles.
- **Damage or Loss:** Cheerleaders are financially responsible for replacing lost or damaged uniforms.
- **Proper Use:** Uniforms should only be worn for cheerleading events and by the assigned cheerleader.
- **Shoes:** Keep cheer shoes clean and white. Clean immediately with a damp cloth if they become dirty (older shoes during football season are an exception).
- **Alterations:** Any necessary uniform alterations must be approved by the coach and handled by a designated seamstress—no outside alterations without prior approval.

ZERO TOLERANCE & CONDUCT POLICIES

Zero Tolerance:

- Bullying or slander of teammates/coaches.
- Negative behavior or drama on social media (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter).
- Spreading drama or creating conflict within the team.
- Violations will result in immediate disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the team.

General Conduct:

- Violations are subject to discipline, determined by the coach and, if necessary, the AD/Administration.
- Insubordination, disrespect, lack of effort, unsportsmanlike conduct, or negative behavior.
- Refusing to follow coach instructions regarding practices, events, games, or attire.
- Failing classes
- Inappropriate social media activity (e.g., offensive language or disrespectful posts).

- Gossip, negativity, or bad attitude.
- Uniform violations or arriving unprepared for practice (incorrect attire, jewelry, nails, etc.).
- Engaging in physical violence or verbal altercations.
- Use of foul, profane, or abusive language.
- Public displays of affection (PDA) in uniform or school functions.

Appearance & Attire:

- No new piercings during the season.
- Jewelry is prohibited during practice or events.
- No fingernail polish, acrylic, press-on, or extended nails; natural nails must be clipped short.

Substance Use & Illegal Activity:

- **Tobacco, vaping, alcohol**:
  - **First offense**: Educational lesson on substance use risks.
  - **Second offense**: Dismissal from the team.
- **Drugs or drug use**: Immediate dismissal from the team.

Cheerleading is a privilege. Members must uphold high standards of behavior both in and out of uniform. Failure to do so will result in consequences determined by coaching staff and administration.

Coaches reserve the right to make changes/additions to the rules as needed.

In addition, if you have any questions or concerns, please respect the following chain of command: Cheerleading Coaches > Athletic Director (TJ Wesselman/Megan Hearn) > School Principal (Betsy Webster)

COMMUNICATION

Timely Communication:

- Athletes must directly inform the coach of any absences, injuries, or illnesses, with parent/guardian confirmation.
- Per Senate Bill 181, all official team communications will be through the SportsYou app. If unavailable, notify the coach for an alternative communication method (e.g., email).
- Athletes are responsible for relaying cheer-related information to their parent/guardian.

Chain of Command for Concerns:

1. Athlete contacts the coach to request a meeting.
2. If unresolved, parent contacts the coach for a joint meeting with the athlete.
3. If unresolved, coach contacts the Athletic Director (AD) to schedule a meeting with the coach, parent, and AD.
4. If unresolved, AD contacts the High School Principal to schedule a final meeting with all parties.

Respectful Communication:

- Coaches are not available 24/7. Please respect their time outside of scheduled activities.
- Wait 24 hours after events before reaching out to a coach unless it's an emergency.

- Unscheduled discussions before, during, or immediately after events will not be accommodated. Follow the chain of command to schedule a meeting if needed.

PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS

Preparedness:

- Arrive on time, in proper practice attire (t-shirt/tank, shorts, cheer shoes), with hair pulled back, jewelry off, nails short, and water bottle filled. Be ready to stretch by the scheduled start time.
- **We will only wear maroon, white, grey, or black to practice unless we have scheduled a theme practice**.

Effort:

- Always give your best effort. Practice is for learning new material, refining skills, and mastering routines. Subpar effort impacts the team and coaching process.

Cell Phones:

- Phones must remain silent and in your bag. If caught using it, it will be taken and returned to your parent. Parents should contact the coach in case of emergency.

Material Mastery:

- Know all required material by the first game. If you miss practice, catch up on your own time. Failure to do so may result in sitting out of games.

Missed Practices:

- If you miss practice, it is your responsibility to catch up on the material before the next session to stay on track.

Focus:

- Practices are for skill-building, requiring focus. Practices are **CLOSED** to family and friends.

Clean-Up:

- Leave the practice space cleaner than you found it. Everyone is responsible for putting away mats, equipment, and personal items.

GAME DAY/EVENT

Academic Eligibility: Cheerleaders must meet OCHS academic eligibility requirements.

Pre-Game Preparation: Eat dinner or snacks before arriving to ensure energy for performance. Arrive on time, dressed, and ready for warm-ups. In cooler weather or basketball season, cheerleaders may wear black, maroon, gray, or white sweatpants, leggings, or athletic pants.

Breaks: Return from breaks two minutes before the game clock runs out to ensure readiness for participation.

Post-Game: After the game, cheerleaders must clean up and report to the coach. Do not leave until released by the coach.

Uniform & Appearance: The coach will specify the uniform, bow, and hairstyle for each event. Failure to follow instructions will result in consequences.

Behavior: Cheerleaders must maintain professionalism at all times. No fidgeting, horseplay, or wandering from the designated position. Represent OCHS with dignity and focus.

PARENT STANDARDS & EXPECTATIONS

Support and Encouragement: Parents are asked to support the program's standards to maintain a positive environment for all involved.

Closed Practices: Practices are closed unless otherwise notified.

Respect for Decisions: Please respect coaching decisions. Refrain from negative talk, gossip, or contacting coaches/administration unless necessary.

Respectful Behavior: Be kind and respectful to the coaching staff. Recognize their dedication and commitment.

Model Positive Behavior: Set an example of positive conduct for athletes. Avoid rude language, gossip, or negative comments, especially in front of athletes and on social media.

Support Coaches' Decisions: Trust that coaches are trained to make decisions for the team's benefit, and avoid placing undue emphasis on specific positions or activities.

Emotional Support: Help your child process frustration or discouragement in a healthy way after practice.

Assist with Organization: Support your child in managing their busy schedule to help them succeed in school, cheer, and other activities.

Attendance: Cheerleaders should not miss practice or games unless necessary. Schedule personal appointments on off days.

Timeliness: Arrive on time for drop-offs and pick-ups for practices and events. Coaches will strive to release athletes on time.

SAFETY

Physical Requirement: All participants must have a current KHSAA physical on file before participating in any cheerleading activities.

Stunting: Participants must be trained and qualified in proper landing and spotting techniques before stunting. All stunts must follow proper progressions, starting with simpler skills and building to more complex ones.

Coach Supervision: Tumbling or stunting is only permitted under the supervision of a coach, camp personnel, choreographers, or qualified gymnastics instructors.

Focus and Safety: No horseplay, laughing, or socializing during stunting and tumbling. Maintaining focus is crucial to prevent accidents.

Jewelry: No jewelry, including body piercings or spacers, may be worn during practices, games, or events due to safety concerns as outlined in the NFHS Spirit Rule Book.

FINAL FORMS

Owen County Athletics uses Final Forms to maintain records of all student athletes. Final Forms must be completed and student must have an up-to-date physical on file with Athletic Trainer Casey Riley prior to attending any open gym or tryout.

How Do I Sign Up?

1. Go to: https://owencounty-ky.finalforms.com/
2. Locate the parent icon and click NEW ACCOUNT below
3. Type your YOUR NAME, DATE OF BIRTH, and EMAIL. Next, click REGISTER.

Note: You will receive an email within 2 minutes prompting you to confirm and complete your registration. If you do not receive an email, then check your spam folder. If you still can not locate the FinalForms email, then email support@finalforms.com informing their team of the issue.

4. Check your email for an ACCOUNT CONFIRMATION EMAIL from the FinalForms Mailman. Once received an opened, click CONFIRM YOUR ACCOUNT in the email text.
5. Create your new FinalForms password. Next, click CONFIRM ACCOUNT.
6. Click REGISTER STUDENT for your first child.

Note: FinalForms resets for the new school year on July 1. Even though you will have already completed the forms for the 2025-2026 season, you will have to complete them again for the 2026-2027 season.

ESTIMATED COSTS

We understand that cheerleading can be an expensive activity; however, we make every effort to minimize costs through fundraising and proper care of our equipment. While we will hold fundraisers to help cover expenses, certain items cannot be passed down and will need to be purchased individually. Some costs will need to be covered out of pocket.

Gymnastics: Approximately $100/month

Cheer Clothing: Approximately $350

Includes: Shoes, 2 pair of shorts, 2 t-shirts, 1 tank top, 1 skort, 1 baseball jersey, warm up pants, warm up jacket, crew neck sweatshirt, uniform top, uniform bottom

***Other items as determined necessary**

Payments for apparel will be made directly to the vendor website and will be due no later than May 15th. The store will open directly after tryouts are completed. (Please reach out to Sarah or Lyndsey if there are issues purchasing attire by deadline)

FUNDRAISERS

*This is not an all inclusive list, nor is it a guarantee that all fundraisers listed will be completed.

- Five Fs Fundraising
- Doublegood Popcorn
- Calendar Fundraiser
- Kona Ice
- Business Donations
- Concessions
- Rodeo

*Fundraising will assist in covering the cost of senior nights, cheer banquet, choreography fees, music fees, competition fees, equipment such as signs, flags, and poms, and any other fees associated with competing.

TRYOUTS

Selection of cheerleaders will be based on the following:

- Sideline Cheer
- Toe Touch/Double Toe Touch
- Band Dance
- Tumbling Skills
- Fight Song
- Stunting
- Attitude, initiative, teamwork, leadership, work ethic, enthusiasm, and coachability during open gym

What do you wear to tryouts?

During open gym, please wear comfortable, length appropriate shorts and a white t-shirt/tank top.

- No basketball shorts, pajamas, denim shorts, or baggy/loose pants.
- Absolutely NO jewelry and fingernails must be cut short.
- Your hair is to be pulled into a high, clean ponytail with a bow.
- Tennis shoes must be worn. Non-athletic shoes are not acceptable.

On tryout day:

- Black Skort, tucked in fitted tank top (color of choice), bow, hair in ponytail, white socks, white shoes

PLEASE DO NOT wear any previous cheerleading or dance attire during tryouts.

Owen County Cheerleading

Student First, Person Second, Player Third

Statement of Permission and Agreement

By making the decision to try out for the OCHS Cheerleading squad, you are committing to Owen County High School, your coaches, your teammates, and most importantly, yourself for the duration of the entire season. This decision should not be taken lightly, as it requires dedication and responsibility. As a member of this team, you will be expected to prioritize cheerleading alongside your other commitments.

As a representative of Owen County High School, it is essential that you maintain proper behavior and conduct both on and off the field, following the guidelines outlined for the cheerleading program. Failure to meet these expectations may result in removal from the team.

By joining the OCHS Cheerleading program, you are choosing to embrace a variety of valuable experiences that will stay with you long after high school. These activities will not only allow you to channel your enthusiasm and spirit in a positive and productive manner, but will also foster a sense of pride and accomplishment as part of a successful and dedicated cheerleading program.

Student Agreement

I, _____, have read and understand the 2026-2027 Cheerleading Guidelines. I agree to abide by the policies described if I am chosen as a member of the team. I am agreeing to the information in the packet and understand that failure to adhere to these policies could result in dismissal from the team.

_____
Student Signature

_____
Date

Parent/Guardian Agreement

I, _____, the parent or legal guardian of _____, have read and understand the 2026-2027 Cheerleading Guidelines. I agree to abide by the policies described if my child is chosen as a member of the team. I also agree to the financial obligations as they are described in the information provided. I understand that failure by me or my child to adhere to these policies could result in dismissal from the team.

_____
Parent/Guardian Signature

_____
Date

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND BULLYING CONTRACT

Social Media Misuse
Misuse of social media (including but not limited to X, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok) will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

Cheerleaders are expected to represent Owen County High School and the cheer program in a positive manner at all times. Any social media activity that is inappropriate, harmful, or that substantially disrupts the team or school environment may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the squad.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Negative or disrespectful comments about teammates, students, staff, or others
- Inappropriate photographs (in or out of uniform)
- Posting or participating in inappropriate dances, trends, or content on social media (including content that is suggestive, explicit, or not representative of the cheer program)
- Use of profanity or offensive language
- Bullying, harassment, or any behavior that violates the Student Code of Conduct

Bullying
Bullying in any form–physical, verbal, or online–will not be tolerated. This includes cyberbullying, hazing, harassment, or intimidation, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct

Illegal Activity
Any illegal activity related to social media or bullying will be reported to appropriate authorities and school administration.

Reporting Process

Incidents may be reported to the coach, athletic director, school administration, guidance counselor, and/or parents/guardians.

Cheerleaders are expected to report concerns to the coach or a trusted staff member.

Commitment to the Team
As a member of the cheerleading program, I understand that I represent my team, Owen County High School, and the community. My behavior must reflect the expectations and standards of the program.

Consequences
Violations of this agreement may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or removal from the cheerleading squad, at the discretion of coaching staff and administration.

_____ _____ _____

Cheerleader Signature Parent/guardian signature Date

_____

Cheerleader Name

(Please print)

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