



HIGH SCHOOL
CHEERLEADING INFORMATION
HANDBOOK

FIREBIRDS

ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

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Welcome to the 2025-2026 High School Cheer Season!

Our goal is to create a program with a solid foundation of athletes, coaches, and parents that focuses on positivity, great character, school cheer, and exemplary sportsmanship. We will strive to represent Windsor Charter Academy's Eight Keys of Excellence in school, on the mat, and in the community. To reach our goals, each team member must meet high standards in academics and athletics.

Our main goals this year are to:

1. Strive to improve as athletes at every practice, game, and competition.
2. Challenge ourselves to be better role models and better athletes.
3. Continue to promote school cheer and support other athletic teams at Windsor Charter Academy.

Coaching Staff

Domanic Castillo, Varsity Head Coach

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As a coaching staff, we will strive to provide a positive and inclusive environment where each athlete has an opportunity to thrive. Our coaching philosophy is built on the foundation of respect, teamwork, and personal growth. We aim to instill a sense of discipline and commitment in our athletes in all things they do, both on and off the mat. We'll encourage our athletes to push their limits while maintaining a safe environment and supporting one another.

Team Expectations

Cheer is a year-round sport. Here are the commitments you can expect for each season. Dates are subject to change. We do our best to give them to you, but there are many variables in our competitions - times might change as we get closer.

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Academics/Eligibility

Cheerleaders are students first. Grades are pulled every Tuesday afternoon. Students with more than **2 F's, 3 D's, or 1 F and 1 D**, and/or an unexcused absence from class will be benched for a week. Ineligibility will remove an athlete from the competition mat for up to three weeks. Athletes benched for grades/attendance must come to all team events in warm-ups and may not participate in the event, unless the parents and coach discuss and decide differently.

Communication

Communication is the driving force behind a successfully managed team. The coaching staff has an open-door policy. However, when upset, it is recommended that athletes and their families wait 24 to 48 hours before contacting the coach via email. When a problem must be solved, the athlete, coach, and parent must be present. We like to use a two-deep leadership style: coaches coach together, and athletes are asked to talk to a set of coaches with their concerns.

- Parents and/or athletes must notify the coach immediately if an **injury** or emergency occurs.
- Utilize ParentSquare/StudentSquare and school email for other communication.
- At **NO** point is a parent allowed to approach a coach to address a conflict without first scheduling a meeting. Doing so may cause removal of an athlete from the team indefinitely. No exceptions will be made!

Sideline Cheer

Sideline cheering is our primary focus as a cheer team. Our main purpose is to cheer on the other athletic teams, work with Student Council, and Student-Athlete Leadership Team (SALT) during games and events. We are here to support the athletics program in any way we can.

- Attendance at all scheduled games is mandatory.
- Every athlete is responsible for knowing the practice and game schedule and should be on time to each event.
- No visiting with spectators (including family, friends, or significant others) during the event or game. (halftime, and in between sets is acceptable)
- Missing practices before the game may result in benching.
- Not thoroughly learning the cheers or respecting the captains' calls will result in benching.

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- Being **ALL IN** is a requirement of being on the cheer team, even if you don't agree with the coaches' or captains' decisions.
- Stunts must hit 3 times in succession at practice and then warm-up in order to be performed on the playing surface.
- Focus attention on the game at all times; athletes must be aware of what is happening at all times. If not performing a chant, cheer, or stunt, then attention must be on the game.
- No jewelry is to be worn while in uniform at all. **Medical bracelets are the exception. Per CHSAA**

Routines and Cheer Lines

- Placement for stunt groups, performances, and cheer lines is the decision of the coaches. At any time leading up to a performance, if a team member does not have the routine clean enough for performance or does not have the tumbling or jumping skills required, they may be moved or asked to sit out of the performance. All team members are expected to progress in their abilities.
- Constructive criticism and suggestions delivered in a polite manner are welcome. Complaining or being rude to the coaches or team members is a disruption that will carry demerits or removal from the team at coaches discretion.
- Members are expected to be attentive and cooperative when learning cheers and routines. Repeated disruptions, especially during the same practice, will result in warnings, demerits, and possible removal from the next game or performance. Continued problems will result in calls to parents, additional game suspensions, and possible removal from the team.

Uniform Requirements

While in a Windsor Charter Academy cheer uniform, the following must adhere to: (including any spirit wear, t-shirts, sweaters, or warm-ups)

- Team members **will not** loan out any piece of uniform. This includes, but is not limited to, camp wear, T-shirts, sweaters, or warm-ups.
- Uniforms must be clean and free of stains.
- Hair must be neatly pulled back in a high or low ponytail with no hair in the face or flyaways unless otherwise stated by the coaching staff or captains.
- White socks must always be worn in a Firebird uniform.
- Makeup shall be neutral colors (no bright eyeshadow or lipstick). Coaches

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may allow glitter or lipstick on certain occasions.

- Nails shall be a short, athletic length. Neutral or school color (gray, white, navy blue) nail polish may be worn. No bright nail polishes. Per CHSAA
- Please note that no nail polish, or acrylic/fake nails, may not be worn at a competition. Per CHSAA
- No jewelry can be worn in uniform. Medical bracelets are the only exception. Per CHAA
- No bra straps should be showing in uniform.
- Tattoos must be covered by a uniform or will need to be taped up.

Attendance

Attendance at all assigned games and scheduled events is **mandatory**, unless prior arrangements have been made with a coach. Each athlete is expected to know the practice schedule and be on time. Parents must contact the coach in advance if their athlete will not be at practice or a game. Email is the best and fastest way to contact coaches. **Parents are the only ones who can excuse absences.**

Injured and benched team members are expected to come to practice and watch, unless other arrangements have been made with a coach.

Excused Absences

An excuse for absence for games and events can be given if a parent contacts the coach **(an athlete cannot get an absence excused)**. Excused absences come from the parents. An email is best; however, a phone call can work, but it must be received two days prior to a practice, game, or two weeks prior to a competition. We understand emergencies and illness may prevent this, but we ask that each parent respect the practice time put into these events and notify the coach in a timely manner. In the case of an absence due to sickness, parents should notify coaches as soon as they can. This can jeopardize the next game or competition, and if a student misses, they may lose their spot. The head coach will make the final decision in accordance with what is best for the team.

Unexcused absences are any absences not excused by a coach two days prior to practices or a Windsor Charter Academy event, excluding medical or family emergencies.

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Extra Practices

Extra practices may be called during the competition season, October through January. Team members who miss practice or arrive late may jeopardize their next game, spot, and placement on the competition team or spot in the stunt group.

If a athlete misses practice, they may lose their spot.

Multi-Sport Athletes

Multi-sport athletes must communicate openly with coaches about their schedules and commitments. It is crucial to have a clear plan in place for when an athlete will participate in cheer and another sport, especially during competition season. Competition season is a vital time for team cohesion and preparation, and we need everyone to be fully committed. Keep in mind that participation in both sports may affect your spot on the team. Athletes should communicate and prioritize their commitments. Their dedication is essential, and we want to ensure everyone is committed to a successful season.

Practice Policy:

- All practices are closed practices. Unless stated otherwise by the coach.
- Athletes will arrive ready to work and improve daily.
- Athletes will wear the designated practice uniform, decided on by the coach.
- Team members are responsible for knowing the practice schedule, attending, and being on TIME (at least 10 minutes before practice begins).
- Parents must email the coach if an athlete will not be at practice.
- Selected additional practices may be called during the competition season.
- Injured team members are expected to come to practice and watch.
- Athletes Should Bring: Water bottles, appropriate clothes, shoes, light snacks, and a great attitude.
- Athletes Should Not Bring: Food, gum, jewelry, cell phones, significant others, friends, iPods, or a bad attitude.

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Time Commitment

Being part of the cheer team requires a significant time commitment from athletes and families. This commitment is essential for fostering teamwork, skill development, and overall success.

Practices

Regular practices during the school year are typically in the high school gym for about 2 hours, generally on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday (during competition season) between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. **(Location may change based on availability)**

Additional Events

There may be additional events such as fundraisers, community service events, and team bonding activities. Participation in these events is highly encouraged to strengthen team spirit and camaraderie.

Cheer Season Tentative Schedule

Summer (May, June, August)	Fall & Winter (September-February)	Spring (March - May)
2 - 3 practices per week	3 - 4 practices per week	1 - 2 practices per week
Participate in UCA Camp June 15th - 18th @ CSU	Attend 2 - 3 games a week	2 - 3 games per week
Fundraising	Competitions	Tryouts
Team-building activities	Fundraising	Banquet

The table above is subject to change due to gym availability. The coaching staff will work hard to ensure that athletes and parents are notified of any changes to events, times, and locations within a 24-hour window. Changes will be communicated through **ParentSquare**.

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Competitions

We will be participating in a total of 5 to 8 competitions this season. The competition team and positions on the floor will be determined during competition choreography in **September**. The varsity competition team will need to show team readiness to attend these competitions. As Windsor Charter Academy cheerleaders, we will win or lose as a team. This is a team sport, and we will conduct ourselves with good sportsmanship and integrity. Our motto for competition is: Clean, Competitive, and to be Champions!

Tentative Competition Schedule:

<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>
Boo Bash	NoCo Classic	UCA Regionals	New Years Blast	Sweetheart Blast
	Patriot League	State Competition		*Nationals
	Winter Blast			

Competition Attendance Policy

Absence from practice within four weeks of a scheduled competition may result in position loss or rearrangement. Absence from practice two weeks before a competition will result in removal from the routine **No Exceptions**. Also, if an athlete becomes ineligible during the competition season, they will automatically be removed from the competition routine at coaches discretion.

Nationals

Our team going to nationals is dependent on our team winning a bid at our UCA regional competition. Going to nationals takes buy-in from everyone involved in our program. There are many factors to think about, including: money, food, travel, transportation, and fun!

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Demerits & Discipline

A demerit system, along with benching and suspension, will be used as punishment for rule infractions. During benching and game suspensions, a team member is still required to attend all practices. The team member will sit in team warmups with the coach for games and may be required to condition at the next practice. Athletes must complete their missing/late schoolwork to compete in all events.

1. Tardy = **1 demerit** (demerits may increase for repeated offenses).
2. Unexcused absence= **3 demerits** (demerits may increase for repeated offenses). The first demerit can be worked off by coordinating with the head coach. Any additional unexcused absence/ineligible demerits are not removable.
3. Uniform/dress code violations = **1 to 3 demerits** at head coach's discretion (see "Uniform Requirements" above). The first demerit can be worked off if coordinated with the head coach. Any additional uniform demerits are not removable.
4. Disrespect in any form; **Including Drama** = **1 to 5 demerits** at the head coach's discretion, and can result in immediate dismissal from the team.
5. Gum chewing at practice or during games = **1 demerit** (demerits may increase for repeated offenses).
6. **Bullying in any form** = **0 TOLERANCE!** = **7 demerits**, and may result in immediate dismissal from the team at the head coach's discretion. Demerits for bullying are NOT removable.
7. Social conduct detrimental to the program's integrity or inappropriate postings to public social media sites. (If you don't want your parents, coach, or administrators to see it, it shouldn't be posted.) = **4 to 6 demerits** at the head coach's discretion. These demerits are NOT removable and may result in immediate dismissal from the team at the head coach's discretion.
8. Discipline for alcohol consumption, drug use, or use of tobacco products will follow school policies. **Seven demerits** will be issued; these demerits are NOT removable and may result in immediate dismissal from the team.
9. Fighting will follow school policies. **Seven demerits** will be issued; these are NOT removable and may result in immediate dismissal from the team.

This list is not all inclusive. The head coach reserves the right to add or subtract items as necessary.

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Up to 6 **minor** demerits points can be worked off with coordination by the Head Coach.

- 1-3 demerits can be worked off with conditioning or volunteer work.
- 3-6 demerits will result in benching at the next practice.
- 6-9 demerits will result in benching at the next game/event.
- 9+ demerits will be consultation for removal from the team.

Suspension from school will result in removal from the team.

Lettering

Lettering as a varsity athlete is a special privilege. Not every athlete who cheers will letter, but every athlete will have an equal opportunity to letter. Coaches have the right to choose who receives a letter based on the requirements. Lettering requirements are to:

- Remain "active" during the entire season.
- Be present at least 85% of all events (including practice, games, competitions, fundraising activities, pep rallies, etc.)
- Obtaining and maintaining good grades during the season.
- Remain positive and respectful to yourself, your peers, your coaches, teachers, and administrators throughout the entire year.
- Being an athlete who goes above and beyond what is asked.
- Athletes must compete in the state competition in December. There are certain circumstances that may allow an athlete to letter if they don't compete, but that will be decided by the coaching staff.
- Not carrying any more than 3 demerits by the end of the season.

An athlete must satisfactorily complete the season to receive awards. This includes participation in post-season activities (playoffs, competitions, etc.) In the case of an injury prohibiting an athlete from completing the season, the coaching staff will determine the athlete's eligibility to receive awards.

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Financial Commitment

Cheer is an investment. Athletes and their families need to understand that participation in the cheer program requires a financial commitment that covers the cost associated with spirit wear, uniforms, travel expenses, and other related activities.

- 1. Financial Responsibility:** We acknowledge that the total cost for the season is estimated at **\$1,086**, which includes spirit wear, uniforms, shoes, Athletic registration fees, and other expenses. We agree to pay this amount in full by **10/1/25**.
New Athlete = \$1,086 Current Athlete Cost = \$806. Non-WCA Athlete = \$1,186
- 2. Refund policy:** We understand that fees are non-refundable after **7/1/25**. Should a participant withdraw from the program after this date, no refunds will be issued.
- 3. Fundraising:** We agree to participate in any fundraising activities organized by the cheer program if you so wish, to help offset the costs of the program. Only Athletes that attend fundraising events will receive funds that are raised.

School-Issued Items

As part of our cheer program, athletes will be provided with a warm-up set at the beginning of the season. The following guidelines must be followed regarding these items:

- 1. School-Issued Items:** Each athlete will receive a set of warm-ups at the beginning of the season. These items are the property of the school and must be returned in good condition at the end of the season.
- 2. Care and Maintenance:** Athletes are responsible for the care and maintenance of the warm-ups. This includes regular washing and proper storage. Athletes should avoid alterations, such as cutting and modifying the items, to maintain their condition.
- 3. Loss or Damage:** In the event that a school-issued item is lost or damaged beyond normal wear and tear, the student will be responsible for the replacement cost. A fee will be assessed to the student's account based on the item's value.
- 4. Return of Items:** All school-owned items must be returned by the designated date at the end of the season. If school-owned items are not returned, students may have a temporary hold on participating in school activities.

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Handbook Agreement Form

By signing below, I, _____, acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the terms and information outlined in the WCA HS Cheer Handbook. I agree to adhere to all the rules, guidelines, and expectations set forth by the handbook, including: team expectations, attendance, time commitment, team conduct, and a commitment to the team. I understand that failure to comply with these terms may result in disciplinary action, including the possible suspension or removal from the cheer team.

Student-Athlete's Signature: _____

Date: _____

By signing below, I, _____, acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the terms and information outlined in the WCA HS Cheer Handbook. I agree to support my athlete in adhering to all rules, guidelines, and expectations set forth in the handbook, including attendance, communication, transportation, and financial obligations. I understand that my involvement and support are crucial to the success of my athlete and the overall success of the cheerleading program.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

This contract is due on the first day of tryouts.

No late forms will be accepted.