



SAFETY

A CHEERLEADER'S GUIDE TO CHEERLEADING

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1. Recognize that cheerleading involves risk. Cheerleading stunts and gymnastics involve height, inversion and rotation of the body, and working in unison with other individuals. By its very nature, it is a physical activity which involves risk, even when performed properly. Do not take this risk lightly, and be constantly vigilant when practicing and performing cheerleading skills.

2. Practice Safety. As the person actually performing the skills, you have an important role in safety. Always check to make sure the environment is smooth, level, dry and clear from objects that may interfere with safe performance.

3. Make sure to use skill progressions. Skill progressions in cheerleading are like learning to ride a bike. First you ride a tricycle, then a bicycle with training wheels, and then finally a freestanding bicycle on your own. You should take time to perfect lower level skills and less complicated skills before attempting to move to higher and more advanced skills. Never attempt a skill outside of your ability level.

4. Be a diligent spotter. Spotters are responsible for assisting or catching the top person in a stunt with a priority to protect the head, neck, and shoulders of the top person coming off of a stunt. If you are assigned to a spotting position, do not take your focus off of the person you are assigned to spot.

5. Find balance in cheerleading and other activities. Cheerleading is an activity that builds self confidence, leadership and communication skills and involves more than stunts and tumbling. However, too much emphasis and focus on cheerleading can cause fatigue and overuse injuries.

6. Do not be afraid to voice safety concerns. If you have a safety concern about a skill you are performing, an individual performing with you, or any other concern, be sure to voice that concern to your coach. If they are unreceptive, discuss the situation with a parent or administrator. Performing a skill without proper readiness increases the risk of injury to yourself and the other members of your team.

Cheerleading involves risk just like other athletic activities. However just like other athletic activities, following prescribed standards of care can minimize this risk. Cheerleaders play a vital role in their own risk management by following the rules, listening to their coaches and staying within their ability level.

