

2024-25 JR SPIRIT SONG/POM SAFETY RULES

NOTE: Routines in these divisions must also follow the rules listed in "2024-25 High School Spirit (or Junior Spirit) General Information" and the "2024-25 High School Song/Pom and Pep/Short Flag Division Limitations".

Please refer to the Glossary of Terms for rules and skills terminology.

General Guidelines

1. All participants agree to conduct themselves in a manner displaying good sportsmanship throughout the event. The coach of each team is responsible for seeing that team members, coaches, parents, and any other person affiliated with the team conduct themselves accordingly.
2. All programs should have, and review, an emergency action plan in the event of an injury.
3. Coaches must recognize the entire team's particular ability level and limit the team's activities accordingly.
4. No technical skills should be performed when a coach is not present or providing direct supervision.
5. All practice sessions should be held in a location suitable for the activities of dance, and away from noise and distractions.
6. Warm-up and stretching should precede and conclude all practice sessions, pep rallies, games, competitions, performances, and other physical activities.
7. The performance surface should be taken into consideration before engaging in any technical aspect of dance. The performance area should be reasonably free of obstructions. Dancers should not perform technical skills on:
 - a. Concrete, asphalt, or any other hard or uncovered surface
 - b. Wet surfaces
 - c. Uneven surfaces
 - d. Surfaces with obstructions
8. The dance team coach or other knowledgeable designated representative should be in attendance at all practices, functions, and games.

Competition Routine Guidelines

1. For Song/Pom and Pep Flag divisions, a school uniform that is worn for game/sideline cheering or performing must be worn (i.e. skirt and top). Costuming is not allowed. If an accessory or article of clothing adds to the overall effect and/or theme of the routine, it will be considered "costuming". (Exception: Costuming is allowed in the Jazz Category – Please refer to the USA Spirit Competitions General Information).
2. When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff (front of the body). If a violation occurs, a 3 point deduction will be incurred (Please refer to USA Spirit General Information).
3. All participants must wear soft-soled, non-marking shoes on both feet while competing. Shoes must have a solid sole and cover the toe and heel. (Exception: Half sole shoes/dance paws/turners are acceptable in the Song/Pom and Song/Jazz categories. Performers who wear half sole shoes/dance paws/turners while performing do so at their own risk. Shoes that cover the toe and heel are required at all other times when not directly performing).
4. Penalty of marking the floor is disqualification. The performing school will be responsible for any charges that may occur as a result of damage to any floor. (Please refer to "Penalties" in the USA Spirit General Information).

5. Wearing "hard" jewelry is illegal, except when such items are securely affixed to a uniform or the hair and will not interfere with the safe execution of a dance/pom/twirling move
6. Exceptions:
 - a. Jewelry that is a part of a costume will be allowed in the Jazz Category.
 - b. Earrings that are a part of the uniform will be allowed in the Song/Pom Category.
7. Support braces, etc., which are hard and unyielding or have rough edges or surfaces must be appropriately covered.
8. Props are not allowed. A prop is any physical object used to enhance the overall effect and or theme of the routine. (Exception: pom or pep/short flag)
9. Hands Free Poms: The use of hands-free poms will be allowed. Hands-free Poms are specifically made so that performers do not have to hold the poms but rather the poms are affixed to the performers hand. "Proper use" means bars cannot be in palm of the hand and only an elastic band can be between the supporting hand and performance surface making it possible to safely execute skills. A hair tie, rubber band, or tying pom strings/pieces together will not be counted as a hands free pom.

Executed By Individuals - Inverted Skills & Tumbling

Please note that any or all inverted skills and tumbling are not required in any category. If choreographed into routine, please be sure to follow the guidelines below.

1. Inverted Skills: Non airborne skills are allowed (Example: Headstand).
2. Skills with hip over head rotation:
 - a) With hand support are not allowed while holding poms or props in supporting hand(s). (Exception: Forward rolls, backward rolls and the proper use of hands-free poms) See "Hands Free Poms" competition routine guidelines #7.
 - b) Non airborne skills are allowed and are limited to 3 connected skills. Example: 3 consecutive cartwheels are allowed; 4 consecutive cartwheels are not allowed.
 - c) Airborne skills with hand support may not be airborne in approach but may be airborne in descent if the approach is non-airborne (Clarification: A round off is allowed – hands touch the ground before the foot leaves the ground).
 - d) Airborne skills without hand support are not allowed. (Exception: Aerial cartwheels/Side somis not connected to any other skill with hip over head rotation). Clarifications:
 - i) NEW LANGUAGE* If a team chooses to use non-hands free poms for aerial cartwheels they **must be moved to one hand**. If a dancer fails to move both poms to one hand or touches down with the hand that holds both poms during the skill, a penalty will be assessed.
3. Simultaneous tumbling over or under another dancer that includes hip over head rotation by both dancers is not allowed.
4. Dropping (from being completely airborne) to the knee, thigh, back, shoulder, seat, front or head onto the performing surface are not allowed unless the dancer first bears weight on the hand(s) or foot/feet.
5. Landing in a push up position onto the performance surface from a jump in which the legs are in front of the body and swing behind are not allowed.
6. Airborne skills without hip over head rotation may not jump from a standing or squatting position with backward momentum landing onto the neck, shoulders and hands.

- a) Any kip up motion must initiate from the back/shoulder area touching the ground. (Note: This rule refers specifically and only to the “kip up”/”rubber band” skill.)
- b) Kip ups are not allowed while holding poms or props. The proper use of hands-free poms for kip ups is allowed.

Executed By Groups or Pairs - Lifts and Partnering

Please note that any or all lifts and partnering are not required in any category. If choreographed into routine, please be sure to follow the guidelines below.

1. Lifting with poms or pep/short flags is allowed.
2. The Executing Dancer must maintain contact with a Supporting Dancer who is in direct contact with the performance surface at all times. (Exception: Kick Line Leaps).
3. When a skill is above hip level, at least one Supporting Dancer must maintain contact with the Executing Dancer until the Executing dancer returns to the performance surface.
4. Hip over-head rotation of the Executing Dancer(s) is allowed provided:
 - a) Contact between the Executing Dancer and at least one Supporting Dancer(s) must be maintained until the Executing Dancer returns to the performance surface or is returning to the upright position.
5. Elevators, thigh stands, shoulder sits, and chair sits are allowed. Extensions, pyramids, and basket tosses are not allowed.
6. A Vertical Inversion is allowed provided:
 - a) Contact between the Executing Dancer and at least one Supporting Dancer(s) must be maintained until the Executing Dancer returns to the performance surface or is returning to the upright position.
 - b) When the height of the Executing Dancer’s shoulders exceeds shoulder-level there is at least one additional dancer to spot who does not bear the weight of the Executing Dancer. (Clarification: When there are 3 Supporting Dancers an additional spot is not required).

Groups & Pairs - Dismounts to The Performance Surface (Clarification: May Be Assisted but Not Required)

Please note that any or all dismounts to the performance surface are not required in any category. If choreographed into routine, please be sure to follow the guidelines below.

1. Dismounts are allowed provided:
 - a) At the highest point of the dismount, the Executing Dancer’s hips may not elevate above head level and the Executing Dancer must land on their foot/feet.
 - b) The Executing Dancer’s hips may not cross the vertical axis while airborne and inverted. (Clarification: while free of contact from both the performance surface and other performers.)
 - c) The Executing Dancer is not supine or inverted when released.
2. Toe pitches are not allowed.

Song/Pom questions please email USADanceRules@varsity.com.