



2017-2018 All-Star Team Handbook

“We Love What We Do”

Returning parents - Several policies have been modified, so please read completely.

New parents - This information will seem like “information overload,” but *please* do not let it overwhelm you. Everyone was new once. We will be happy to answer questions after the parent meeting and throughout the year. Veteran parents are very friendly and helpful. Call or e-mail anytime with any questions.

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Why Athletes Plus?

Athletes Plus offers traditional values, positive role models, a family atmosphere, AND a healthy athletic environment. We provide a family atmosphere in which we teach our athletes "life lessons" that will benefit them throughout their lives. Being a parent, I know how important it is to have family time! Cheerleading is a big commitment, with big rewards and we believe that our philosophies, attendance policies and competition calendar balance the needs of the family with development of successful teams. For example, our teams do not practice on the weekends during the summer in order to allow our athletes to spend more time with their families. We are more lenient with absences over the summer, as long as we have prior notice. We also avoid overnight travel competitions in December so that our athletes can have more time to enjoy the holidays with their families. The family is the cornerstone of every child's character, and strong families make our athletes and our program better! We are the only cheerleading training center in the area that focuses exclusively on cheerleading. Our gym is a member of the USASF and our coaches are USASF credentialed. Our focus is cheer, cheer and more cheer! During the cheer season your child will develop, step by step, all aspects of the sport including dance, tumbling, strength, coordination, jumps, sharpness, timing, motions, stunting and HAVING FUN!

Attendance

All Star Cheerleading requires commitment from both athlete and family, and the commitment to attend all practices maximizes the team's ability to reach its full potential. Cheerleading is, at its core, a team sport. There are no back-ups, second stringers or bench-warmers **ever**. When an athlete misses, it affects not only the other athletes in the stunt group, but the entire team. An absent athlete disables the pyramid, formations and tumbling sequences. **It is very important that parents and athletes understand the importance of attending practices.** Athletes must be fully committed to their team. Recurring absences will be discussed with the athlete and parents and may result in removal from the team. If your child is absent or unable to attend practice for any reason, it may result in a change in their position in the routine. **Please communicate with us ASAP if there is severe illness or unavoidable circumstance.** We are dedicated to your child's success and strongly encourage good communication.

Absentee forms - For planned absences, please fill out an absentee form and give as much notice as possible. Have your child give the form to their coach or place it in the payment drop box. Absentee forms must be filled out for summer vacations and absences. Absences are allowed from May 1st-August 12th.

Athletes must commit to your mandatory practices per week and at least one team tumbling per week. Extra practices may be scheduled close to competitions and we will do our best to announce them well in advance, however an emergency practice may be scheduled in case of sudden illness, injury, etc. After August 12th **ALL** practices are mandatory and there's no such thing as an excused absence—an absence is an absence. If your child can't practice due to

an injury or illness, which is not contagious, they should still attend practice to watch. Please do not use withholding of cheer practice as a punishment. If you feel that your child cannot balance homework, other activities and cheer, then tumbling or cheer classes may work out better for you.

All competitions are mandatory. Every athlete must attend every scheduled competition with his or her team. It takes an entire team to perform our routines that incorporate every athlete's unique talents. It is a major disruption, both physically and mentally, for a squad to change routines to accommodate missing athletes.

Choreography

We plan for missed practices during the summer with vacations and other family activities. However, **choreography camp is mandatory. During choreography weeks athletes learn the routine and stunt/pyramid they will be used for the entire year.** If you already have a vacation planned for their choreography—let me know today!!! We will need to find someone to take your child's place, learn their part and then teach it to them.

Practice and Team Tumbling

Valuables should be left at home or with parents. A few hundred people come through our gym every week. They may be on a team, attending tumbling classes, or may be siblings, friends or parents of athletes. **We are not responsible for lost or stolen items.** Athletes' cell phones must be turned OFF during practice. Athletes are not allowed to check phones during drink breaks. **Gum is not allowed in the gym.** Food and beverages are not allowed outside the parent rooms. ALL athletes must keep their property in a bag and hung on the hooks. Shoes, clothes or other items are not allowed on the gray floor in order that parents and tumblers have space to walk.

Friends and Family

Please be extremely careful in the parking lot!

Parents and siblings must be in parent rooms during practice and team tumbling. Please do not allow children to run up and down the stairs or freely roam the gym.

The curtains in the upstairs parent room will be closed. We have realized that it is a big distraction when the girls can look up and see their parents. We spend lots of time, especially with the younger girls, telling them to stop looking at their parents and pay attention to us. We have also found that when parents don't fully understand what we are doing they tend to second guess our coaching ability and this causes many problems. We want you to be involved and you will have many opportunities to do so, just not during practices. Periodically, we may invite you to come down at the end of a practice to watch.

Practices

Practice uniform, cheer shoes and the practice bow must be worn to all mandatory team practices. If your child shows up to practice without the correct attire, they will be given one warning. It is so much easier for the coaches to evaluate choreography and formations when everyone looks the same. Hair must be pulled back and out of their face (high ponytail preferred, if possible) for practice and team tumbling. Please bring a water bottle from home or purchase a water or Gatorade prior to practice start time (\$1). **Athletes may only have sports drinks or water during practice and team tumbling—No energy drinks or soda.** No jewelry, including earrings, necklaces, belly rings, nose studs, etc can be worn to practice. **Do NOT get any piercings during competition season or before camp.** There can be no excessively long fingernails.

Practice uniforms are not required for team tumbling, but appropriate and comfortable attire, including cheer shoes, should be worn. No crop tops, half-shirts, loose t-shirts or sports bras are to be worn at Athletes Plus. Your stomach should be covered at all times.

Competition uniforms, shoes, make-up and competition bow must be worn at all competitions. Prior to competition season, you will be given complete competition guidelines that will explain how competitions work, expected arrival time, hair and make-up instructions and competition policies. **Athletes must be in full uniform for their awards ceremonies and while at the competition arena.** T-shirts, warm-ups, flip-flops, pants or boots cannot be worn during awards. No pajama pants or sloppy clothes are allowed when you arrive to the competition in the morning. Please look presentable when you arrive. Remember, you are representing our team wherever you are.

RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY

If you are not on the red floor ready to practice at the practice time, then you are late. For every minute you are late, you will stay after and do line drills/jumps/whatever the coach wants you to do.

Communication

E-mail is our primary form of communication. We also have a facebook page and will post updates, reminders and closings due to weather. It is your responsibility to check your e-mail often or find an e-mail friend that will call you if you do not have an e-mail account. We will also keep an updated schedule on our website at www.athletespluscheer.com.

Facebook and Internet

Facebook and internet gossip sites can be a fun way to communicate with others and post pictures. We use it all the time. However, all choreography, stunts and the routine should be highly protected and not shared with others. Please do not post videos to any site such as Youtube or Facebook until approved by the gym (usually late in the season.) All comments need to be positive. Do not put anything on the internet that will reflect negatively on Athletes Plus or any athletes plus team member, or will start drama. **There is no place for drama at Athletes Plus.**

Perfection before Progression

Our coaches are USASF credentialed, have attended numerous coaching conferences around the US and many training sessions. We adhere to the "perfection before progression" philosophy. We will not allow a child to move on to more advanced skills until they "own" or perfect their current skill. Our motto is "Do the Drills, Get the Skills." You will notice at team tumbling that at any given time 90% of the girls are doing drills. They will only be allowed to execute a skill when their drills are perfected and they are ready to do the skill on their own. This method helps teach proper technique and helps prevent injury and mental blocks.

Squad Placement

Team placement is always subject to change based on attendance, attitude, consistency of skills, and the overall skill level of each team. **We will set teams by June 4th. An email will be sent with the team lists.** There are a myriad of factors that must be considered when placing athletes on our squads. Team placement is fully up to the coaches. Many factors, some mentioned below, are considered to create championship teams. Please keep in mind that your child may base, fly, front spot, back spot, be in front, middle, back, or a little of each, and may be level 1, 2, 3 or 4. It is rarely a good idea to move your child out of their age group. The goal is to have an appropriate level team for your child's age and skill.

The USASF regulates what skills are allowed at each level. Below is a **portion** of the skills allowed:

- Level 1—No experience necessary. Athletes are allowed to compete rolls, cartwheels, round offs, front and back walkovers. Athletes are allowed to do two leg stunts at shoulder level and one-leg variations below shoulder level.
- Level 2—Standing back handsprings and round off back handsprings are allowed. In addition to combination skills with level 1 skills attached to handsprings. Allowed stunts include extended two leg stunts and one leg stunts at shoulder level.
- Level 3—Standing series back handsprings and round off tucks, round off back handspring tucks and punch fronts. Extended one leg stunts are allowed as well as twisting dismounts.
- Level 4—Standing back tucks, jump back handspring tucks and round off back handspring layouts. Stunts include release moves, double twisting dismounts and twisting mounts to one leg.
- Restricted level 5—Round off back handspring full twists, standing back handspring full twist and jump to a back tuck. Stunting skills include release moves, double twisting dismounts, advanced baskets and pyramids.
- Level 5—Skills ending in double full twists, standing full twists and jump to a back tuck/standing full. Stunting skills include release moves, double twisting dismounts and advanced baskets and pyramids.

For more detailed information regarding skills allowed at each level, please visit www.usasf.net

Much like other sports, a variety of skills and abilities are necessary to give teams the best opportunity to place high at competitions. Every athlete is on a team for a reason - please trust the staff. Please understand that your child may not be placed on the "highest level" or "oldest" team. They will be on the **appropriate** team.

A common misconception of parents and athletes relates to tumbling ability. Proper technique is more crucial now than ever to achieve high scores. Simply being able to perform a skill without falling to the ground does not indicate that the athlete "has" that skill. You must perform the skill with perfect form and be able to do it consistently, under pressure, in nearly any scenario. It is easy for athletes and parents to overestimate the ability and form of the athlete.

The second most common confusion comes from overestimating the importance of tumbling compared to other factors. There are many factors that go into determining the best spot for an athlete, not just how well they can tumble. Stunting, pyramids, jumps, sharpness, and maturity all factor equally in determining team placement. Tumbling level will not solely determine placement on a certain level team.

Please also note that no athlete has a right to any particular role or location in a routine. Coaches change formations and stunt groups for a variety of reasons throughout the year. Many times the flow of choreography or formations dictate changes be made in which athletes are doing certain skills. While you are always free to ask the coaches (at appropriate times) about their decisions, negative or emotional confrontations send the wrong message to the athlete and are unacceptable. Questioning too much may affect the coachability of your child, and their attitude toward the coaches. You should not discuss athletes (yours or others) positions or abilities negatively in front of other parents or your child. We have a very successful program and our coaches have decades of experience. Please let them do what they do best! Coaches reserve the right to move cheerleaders to different teams at any time.

Travel

We will be doing some out of town cheer competitions that will incur travel expenses and it is your responsibility to make your own travel arrangements. We obtain and block rooms at a discount for each competition. You will be given a date to call and reserve your room.

Athletes Plus Rocket Gear

We have an online pro shop that sells the shoes as well as other items that you can go to at any time to make purchases. We will also offer other items from at various times, usually in time to place items for Christmas gifts. (<https://proshop.varsityallstar.com/athletesplus/home>). When you order from the pro shop, the items will be mailed directly to you.

We respectfully request that you restrict the replication of our logo and company name. We make this request with the goal of protecting the quality of the products that bear our name and to protect our ownership of our logo and name. Thank you in advance for honoring our request.

Coaches - Private Lessons and Availability

Some of our coaches offer private tumbling lessons in their limited free time. All lessons must be scheduled directly through the coach, as all workers at the gym are not aware of each coach's availability. Private lessons must be paid at the time of the lesson or can be automatically deducted from your account.

If you have any questions or concerns, we will be happy to discuss them. Please call the gym during the day, email us, or come to the office to speak with Melanie. Our coaches are typically very busy with the cheer squads and tumbling classes between 4:30-8:30pm during the week.

Please do not interrupt practice at any time to discuss concerns with the coaches. Parents are not allowed on the floor at any time unless invited by the coach. Please don't assume they can chat with you after practice, as they may have another practice or class. They will return your message as soon as they can. When they do have spare time after practice, they will come to the gray mat to chat with parents.

Calendar

We will keep an updated summer and fall calendar on our website. Note that practice and team tumbling times and days may change from summer to fall.

Fundraising

Fundraising for the athletes are the responsibility of the booster club. All proceeds go to you and your child and not to our gym. Please send inquiries to the appropriate booster club member and not to the gym.

Charity Project

We are a proud supporter of St. Judes Children Hospital. We have a flip-a-thon at West Park Mall every year. We will also always have a donation jar on the desk downstairs for donations.

Sportsmanship

In the event another team in their division outscores our team, athletes should make a point to graciously congratulate the other team. In the event our team wins, athletes should not cheer until their name is called. The second place team deserves their moment in the spotlight. No matter what place we get, we should be excited. Attitude is **VERY** important! A positive attitude can do more for a team than the best equipment, uniforms, skills and practice. By the same token, poor parent or athlete attitudes can destroy the best team. All-Star cheerleading is a demanding sport and we expect every team member to give maximum effort. We also expect everyone to treat coaches, other team members, other teams and parents with respect at all times.

It is important to remember that it takes the support of all our parents and athletes to make this gym successful. Thank you for your commitment to your athlete, your team and the program as a whole.

Welcome to the Athletes Plus Family!