

GEORGETOWN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Department of Fine Arts

**GEORGETOWN ISD
CHEERLEADER, MANAGER, and
MASCOT HANDBOOK**

**Georgetown Independent School District
507 E. University Avenue
Georgetown, Texas 78626**

A District of Innovation

Article I Mission Statement

Cheerleaders in Georgetown ISD will make a positive difference in the lives of it's members and the entire student body of all GISD schools by developing unity, competitiveness, creativity, leadership, personal growth, and success through its membership. Cheerleaders will dedicate the time and energy needed to make the school outstanding in all areas of competitiveness.

Article II Tryout Eligibility

Section 1 Each student must be enrolled at a GISD high school or middle school during the participation year.

High School

- Varsity – a candidate must be a junior or senior during the participation year. After looking at the natural break of junior and senior scores, sophomores above the break may be allowed on varsity based on spots available and coaches' discretion.
- Junior Varsity – candidate must be scheduled to be a freshman, sophomore, or junior during the participation year. If a freshman team is formed, Junior Varsity will consist of sophomores and Juniors.
- Freshman - candidate must be scheduled to be a freshman during the participation year. A freshman team may or may not be formed based on candidate numbers and team configurations.

Middle School

- Candidate must be scheduled to be a 7th or 8th grader during the participation year.

Section 2 Campus administration will review discipline and attendance for each candidate. This review includes but is not limited to: GAP placements, I.S.S., O.S.S., previous dismissal from a GISD cheer team, truancy, or persistent misbehavior in the present school year. Candidates with these infractions will require special approval by campus administrators to try out. If they are chosen to be a member of a team, they will be placed on a probationary contract.

Section 3 Cheerleaders are not allowed to participate in any school team sport other than cheerleading. These students are allowed to participate in the individual sports of track, cross country, and powerlifting. Any sport or fine art not listed must be approved by the sponsor following a meeting with parents, administrators, and all coaches involved.

Article III Selection Process

Section 1 Candidates will receive a copy of the guidelines prior to try out. Candidates and their parent/guardian will read, sign, and return all permission forms and applications to the appropriate campus cheer sponsor by a designated date.

Section 2 There will be a student/parent meeting held in advance of the tryout. All tryout candidates and parents are required to attend. Relating to attendance at this meeting - extenuating circumstances of which the cheer sponsor has been notified will be handled on a case by case basis by campus administration.

Section 3 Prior to tryouts, each tryout candidate will be notified about his/her eligibility status. Candidates will be informed concerning an inability to participate based upon eligibility.

Section 4 The Director of Fine Arts will schedule the tryouts and secure judges. The clinics and tryouts are closed to the public.

Section 5 Clinic/practice dates and times to be held in advance of the actual tryout and will be set by the campus cheer sponsor(s) and announced well in advance. Because try out material is taught at all practices, attendance at each practice is highly recommended. Students attending all practices are more likely to have successful tryouts.

Section 6 Attire for tryouts - Every candidate should wear athletic clothing with cheer shoes (closed toed running shoes may serve as an alternative if the candidate does not have cheer shoes) during the 4 days of clinic. For the day of tryouts, the candidate will wear school colored cheer shorts and a plain white t-shirt with white socks. Cheer shoes are encouraged. Hair should be pulled out of the student's face and white ribbon used if appropriate. No jewelry will be allowed, and nails cannot exceed one quarter of an inch over the fingers.

Section 7 If a cheerleading candidate is severely injured, under quarantine, or facing special circumstances near the time of the tryout, video recording of the candidate performing jumps, tumbling (on a gym floor without the assistance of spring boards or mats), and stunting (must be in a group of 4, 1 flyer, 2 bases, 1 backspot, no partner stunts) may be substituted for the live performance portion of these skills at the tryout. A parent note must be provided specifically requesting this exception. The parent note should explain the special circumstances that have created the need for this type of tryout. A doctor's note must be provided to the cheer sponsor before any tryout clinics are held. The cheer sponsor and campus administrator must give final approval for a video recording to be used as a portion of the tryout.

Section 8 Approximately 75% of the total tryout score will be based upon the scoring of five judges adjudicating the audition. The lowest judges score will be dropped and the remaining three judges scores will be used to determine the results. Judges will evaluate the following skills in the tryout:

- Tumbling (one to two mats will be available for tumbling)
- A cheer (to be taught at the clinics)
- Three jumps (one of which must be toe touch)
- A group dance (to be taught at the clinics)

The remaining points will come from stunting at the clinic (high school only), the student's grade point average and recommendations from classroom teachers on the respective campus making up approximately 25% of the tryout score.

Results will be posted the evening of tryouts. If requested, parental viewing of their own child's scores will be allowed after the results are posted. Score viewing dates and times are made by appointment through the Director of Fine Arts.

Section 9 Judges will evaluate each candidate based on cheer motion and technique, jumping ability, tumbling, voice projection, poise, spirit, and overall appearance.

Section 10 Mascot candidates must attend clinics and rehearsals as assigned by the cheer sponsor. Mascot candidates will be evaluated and scored by the same judging panel and utilizing the same scoring system as cheerleading candidates but will be based on the following criteria –

- A skit of less than 90 seconds
- Use no offensive music or gestures
- No physical contact with judges or students

Unless otherwise specified, all references to “cheerleaders” in this document refer equally to mascot(s).

Section 11 The varsity cheer team will consist of no fewer than 8 or more than 30 students. The junior varsity cheer team will consist of no fewer than 8 or more than 20 students. If a freshman cheer team is formed, it will consist of no fewer than 8 or more than 16 students. Middle school 7th and 8th grade teams will each have a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 20 each. The specific number of students that will be selected to each of the cheer teams will be determined by a natural point break, team size and configuration, or coaches discretion the evening of tryouts.

Section 12 7th and 8th graders will be separated into 7th and 8th grade teams. The teams may be combined into one if the minimum for each is not reached, or at coaches discretion.

Section 13 The UIL competition may be formed at the time of tryouts at the sponsors discretion. The team will be composed of no more than outlined by UIL Spirit per school size distinction (4A, 5A, D1, D2, etc.). Additional alternate spots may be awarded (at the sponsors discretion).

Section 14 Should a vacancy arise in any cheerleading position, the cheer sponsor - with the approval of campus administration and the Director of Fine Arts - may fill the vacancy by inviting the next highest scoring candidate to become a cheerleader.

Section 15 Candidates who are not placed on a team may be offered a manager position after tryouts at the sponsors discretion. Managers are permitted to be in the class period, workout with the team, travel to games, and help with equipment on the sidelines. They may also be considered for an alternate role for UIL. Managers will not purchase a uniform, or cheer at football, basketball, or volleyball games. The duties of a manager will be determined by coaches.

Section 16 Late tryouts may be awarded to students on a case by case basis due to moving into the district after the tryout process has concluded with the approval of the Fine Arts Director.

Article IV Obligations

Section 1 A cheerleader will serve from the day of selection. Senior cheerleaders may request to be removed from the UIL class period following the completion of competition season. Senior cheerleaders are required to attend the regular class period until the completion of the next school year's tryouts. After tryouts, seniors are expected to continue attending the regular class period unless otherwise approved following a meeting with parents, coaches, and administrators.

Section 2 Cheerleaders must remain in compliance with the Cheerleader Handbook, cheer syllabus, the respective school campus handbook, and the GISD Code of Conduct at all times.

Section 3 Cheerleaders will cheer for any and all school activities as determined by the sponsor.

Section 4 In accordance with GISD policy, all cheerleaders are subject to random drug testing as described in the Student Code of Conduct.

Section 5 Cheerleaders will be required to attend all practices and performances as well as any sponsor designated camps. Summer practices will consist of mandatory sessions prior to camp and other designated practices before the start of school. All dates and times are to be announced well in advance. The sponsor retains the right to change practice dates and times as best fits the needs of the team in order to limit conflicts. Students unable to perform due to injury or grade probation are expected to continue to dress and work out with the squad during practices as designated by the cheer sponsor.

Section 6 Absences - Cheerleaders are required to attend all practices and performances. All absences are considered to be unexcused except for the following:

- Attendance at other school sponsored activities as discussed in advance with cheer sponsor
- Illness with a note from a medical doctor
- Special circumstances pre-approved by the cheerleader coach such as family funerals, family weddings, etc.
- Other activities as agreed to in advance by the cheer sponsor and the cheerleader

Parental discipline, part-time employment, excessive homework and/or principal/teacher detention hall are not considered excused absences.

Two unexcused absences from a cheer related activity may result in suspension from up to two cheering events as defined in Article VIII, Section 2. A third unexcused absence may result in permanent removal from the cheerleading team.

Section 7 All cheerleaders/mascots must arrive on time to games and practices wearing the required uniform. Each cheerleader must remain at the required activity for the entire duration and assist with post-activity clean up. Cheerleaders leaving an event prior to dismissal by the cheer sponsor may be assigned an unexcused absence. The expectation for each practice and game is set by the cheer sponsor and may be expanded from this description as appropriate.

Section 8 Students will enroll in cheerleading class as assigned by the campus cheer sponsor. Grades will be assigned in accordance with established GISD grading procedures.

Section 9 Varsity cheerleaders are to travel to and from out-of-town events together. If a cheerleader must leave an event with his/her own parent, a handwritten note from the parent must be presented to the sponsor and the parent must make personal contact at the game to confirm the note.

Section 10 Cheerleaders are expected to participate in all fundraising activities as specified by the sponsor

Section 11 Cheerleaders are required to complete an athletic physical before the first day of tryout clinic and another dated after May 1st for the following school year.

Article V Conduct

Section 1 Cheerleaders are school representatives and should act accordingly. This includes meeting all requirements of the GISD Dress Code and GISD Student Code of Conduct.

Section 2 Cheerleaders are responsible for crowd response and conduct. Cheerleaders should lead appropriate cheers and chants in an effort to avoid inappropriate crowd response.

Section 3 Cheerleaders should respect the authority of the cheer sponsor at all times. This includes following all directions given by the sponsor. Concerns should be voiced to the sponsor in an appropriate manner during school hours.

Section 4 Cheerleaders are never to use profanity, smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, or use illegal drugs either in uniform or out of uniform as described in the GISD Student Code of Conduct relating to extracurricular activities. The GISD Student Random Drug Testing Program/Policy - including penalties - will supersede this document in the event that a student tests positive for illegal drug usage.

Section 5 Cheerleaders should never allow team conflicts to be evident while performing.

Section 6 Cheerleaders are representatives of the school, and as such, will refrain from derogatory or impolite remarks about the school, team members, game officials, the opposing team, the sponsor, or any school representative.

Section 7 Cheerleaders should conduct themselves as positive leaders in the classroom.

Section 8 Members are expected to conduct themselves with pride and discipline at all times. Practices should be focused and well disciplined. The use of profanity is inappropriate.

Section 9 Game Etiquette - Cheerleaders are not to converse with each other or with people in the stands during a game/performance. Cheerleaders should be attentive to the game and lead cheers/chants when appropriate. When not cheering, cheerleaders should stand in formation with hands behind the back.

Section 10 Any violation of the guidelines stated anywhere in this Handbook may result in temporary suspension from the squad for a length of time to be determined by the cheer sponsor and campus administration. Serious and/or repeated violations may result in permanent dismissal from the cheer squad. Discipline is outlined in the strike system.

Article VI Expenses

Section 1 A Cheerleading team, with sponsor guidance and approval, may choose to purchase an additional uniform, but will be issued school-owned uniform(s). Each cheerleader may be required to pay a rental fee for the school-owned uniform(s) and must be prepared to pay for other personal items such as, backpack, practice wear, spirit shirts, warm-ups, spandex, socks, shoes, pom poms, uniform alterations, class attire and ribbons/bows. Cheerleaders must return all school owned uniform pieces by the date designated by the sponsor, or will be required to pay for those pieces.

Section 2 Additional fees for camp tuition, travel, meals, equipment and other essentials as determined by the cheer sponsor will be assessed for all cheerleaders. New uniforms will not be ordered for a student who is not up-to-date with fee payments.

Section 3 All cheerleaders and mascots may be asked to occasionally provide supplies such as markers, posters, tape, candy, balloons, streamers, etc.

Section 4 Yard signs - Cheerleaders and mascots will be allowed to display yard signs at home under provisions approved by the cheer sponsor.

Article VII Rules Concerning Uniforms

Section 1 Cheerleaders are not allowed to let any other person wear the uniform at any time. Cheerleaders are not to wear their own uniform at any time other than those designated by the cheer sponsor (i.e. games and appearances). Appropriate conduct should be displayed while in uniform or official cheer practice wear.

Section 2 If any part of the uniform is damaged or lost, it must be replaced at student expense, at the then-current catalog cost.

Section 3 Team uniformity is a must. When in uniform, cheerleaders must wear identical shoes, shoelaces, socks, bows, hair style, etc. Jewelry is never part of the cheerleader's uniform and should not be worn at school or during games/events; this includes all body piercings. Failure to do so may result in temporary or permanent loss of performance status and/or removal from the squad. Nails may be no longer than one quarter of an inch past the tip of the finger. Approved nail colors are white, light pink, french tip, or school colors, unless otherwise approved by the sponsor. Hair must be a natural color during the school year.

Section 4 Renting a school-owned uniform is a privilege and is also cost efficient; however, uniforms do not always fit every cheerleader perfectly. A cheerleader refusing to wear a school-owned uniform for any reason may be suspended from the activity. It is the responsibility of the student to make alterations to uniforms. However, all alterations must be approved by the cheer sponsor.

Section 5 A cheerleader dismissed from the cheerleading program at any time must return all school-owned uniforms and equipment within one week of dismissal. Cheer sponsor and campus administration will take appropriate disciplinary action for failure to comply with this directive. All outstanding payments must be paid within one week of dismissal notice.

Section 6 Cheerleaders and mascots will be required to return in good condition all school-owned uniforms and equipment by a deadline set by the cheer sponsor. Any damaged school- owned property must be paid for at replacement. Cheer sponsor and campus administration will take appropriate disciplinary action for failure to comply with this directive, potentially including disqualification from future cheer tryouts.

Section 7 A complete uniform check will be held prior to any activity or performance. This includes:

- a. Correct uniform
- b. Correct school cheer shoes
- c. No jewelry, approved nail length/color
- d. Hair must be styled as designated by sponsor and/or captain
- e. Other requirements as designated by cheer sponsor

Failure to meet these expectations may result in temporary or permanent loss of performance status and/or removal from the squad.

Article VIII Suspension and Ineligibility

Section 1 Once a student has been selected as a member of a GISD cheerleading team, that student will be allowed to be a member of only that school's team. Students will not be allowed to cheer as a member of a different campus' cheer team or continue cheerleading at the original campus after enrollment status changes.

Section 2 Suspension of a cheerleader is defined as a period when the student is not allowed to cheer at games and activities. However, for the duration of the suspension, at the discretion of the sponsor, a cheerleader may be expected to attend cheer related activities including games, practices, fundraisers, and sponsor designated events.

Section 3 Cheer sponsors may suspend a cheerleader for violation of this Handbook, violation of the GISD Student Code of Conduct, or for any conduct deemed to be inappropriate of a Georgetown ISD cheerleader per the cheer syllabus which contains a strike system.

Section 4 All students must maintain extra-curricular eligibility as defined by the Texas Education Agency and the University Interscholastic League in order to perform at extracurricular events. UIL grade checks are at the end of the first 6 weeks of school and at the end of each 9-week grading period – please see the GISD website for the current school year calendar with UIL grade check dates. Cheerleaders may be required to attend tutorials or develop a plan of action with their teacher if their grade falls below 80%. If a cheerleader is suspended due to ineligibility, the student must attend all cheer events and sit with the sponsor as defined in Article VIII, Section 2. Cheerleaders who are UIL ineligible due to 2 consecutive official grade check failures in a school year will be placed on a probationary contract. For cheerleaders on a probationary contract, failure to regain eligibility may lead to the inability to try out.

Section 5 Cheerleaders are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the team, for any behavior which the sponsor deems inappropriate, including but not limited to violation of this Handbook, violation of the GISD Student Code of Conduct unsportsmanlike conduct at events, insubordination, or lewd, profane or inappropriate behavior(s). **These behaviors extend to any inappropriate comments, pictures or photos made via electronic device and/or the internet including email, texting, and use of social media or any other type of electronic communication.**

Section 6 Cheerleaders are subject to disciplinary action through a strike system. Strikes may be given at coaches discretion for inappropriate, disrespectful, or behavior unbecoming of a GISD cheerleader. School administrators and the Fine Arts Director will have the power to dismiss cheerleaders under severe circumstances. The following is a list of potential causes for a strike. They include, but are not limited to:

- Missing a football game, volleyball game, or basketball game without a coach approved excused absence
- Refusal to participate in the 2 required community service and fundraising events
- Unsportsmanlike conduct. First offense is a warning, second is a strike.
- Inappropriate language or behavior in school, at a school event, outside of school in uniform, or on the internet. First offense is a warning, second offense is a strike
- Disrespecting a coach, teacher, or administrator. Including but not limited to: violating the student code of conduct, athlete code of conduct, school rules, or cheer constitution
- Inappropriate school behavior resulting in ISS/OSS
- Refusal to remove jewelry or maintain appropriate uniform. Refusal to follow school dress code. First offense is a warning, second is a strike.
- Being caught off campus in uniform, or on social media with drugs or alcohol
- Inappropriate displays of PDA while on campus, at a school event, or in uniform
- Missing practice without a coach approved absence the week of a performance or competition

On a cheerleader's third strike, they will be removed from the program. If a dismissed cheerleader plans to try out again in the future, they will need approval from administration per the GISD Cheerleading Handbook. If they are placed on a team, they will be on a probationary contract. Strikes will reset each cheer season. A cheer season is set from the start of tryouts into the completion of the next year's tryout process.

Section 7 A conference will be held with the campus administrator and parent before a student is removed from the team.

Article IX Character Qualifications

Section 1 Cheerleaders must be enthusiastic and positive, maintaining a “group first” attitude.

Section 2 Cheerleaders must be willing to accept constructive criticism in a gracious manner and have perfection as a goal.

Section 3 Cheerleaders must be reliable and dependable - understanding that the schedule and discipline of the squad demands a high-level determination, hard work, strength, dedication, self-discipline and loyalty.

Section 4 Cheerleaders must act with courtesy and be respectful of fellow squad members, faculty members and other adults involved in the organization.

Section 5 Cheerleaders must maintain a reputation above reproach. Cheerleaders must accept responsibility for all actions, at all times, in all places.

Section 6 Cheerleaders must understand that decisions made by the director(s) are in the best interest of the team and individual members.

Article X Special Situations

Section 1 The GISD Director of Fine Arts, after consulting with campus principals, may alter any part of this Handbook at any time if it is determined to be in the best interest of the GISD Cheerleading Program. Sponsors and students will be advised of changes.

Section 2 Any special situations which may arise and are not specifically addressed in this Handbook will be dealt with on an individual basis by the sponsor, campus administration and/or GISD Director of Fine Arts.

Section 3 With the noted exception of team sports, cheerleaders are encouraged to participate in other school activities. Any cheerleader may try out and/or participate in other campus activities. Students and parents are encouraged to determine how well the student can manage multiple activities and commitments. It is the cheerleader's responsibility to communicate with the cheer sponsor and other activity sponsor well before a time conflict arises between the activities. Failure to give advance notice to the sponsors may result in suspension or removal from the cheerleading team.

Acceptance of the Handbook

Parents and Cheerleaders,

After thoroughly reading the GISD Cheerleader Handbook and determining that the student and parent fully understands the responsibilities attached to selection as a cheerleader, please sign the following statement.

Return this signed page to the campus cheer sponsor.

*I have read the Georgetown ISD Cheerleader Handbook and the GISD Student Code of Conduct. I have a complete understanding of the responsibilities of the position. If selected, I pledge to fully abide by the rules and regulations outlined in this Handbook. **I understand that failure to abide by these policies may result in temporary suspension or permanent dismissal from the team.***

Candidate Printed Name

Grade **next year**

Candidate Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date