

2026-2027

Game Day Competition Manual



Dates:

July 27: First Practice Date

August 6: Registration Opens

Sept 15: Registration Closes

Sept 19: First contest/ Season begins

Sept. 15: Deadline to register for Game Day competition

Dec. 5: Last Day of competitions

Dec 10-11: State Championship @Macon Coliseum

Sanctioning a Game Day competition:

1. Log in to the MIS site (app.ghsa.net).
 - a. If you don't have a username and password, contact your AD.
2. Go to Sanctioned Event Applications.
3. Complete and submit the application.
4. Ask your Principal to electronically sign the application.
5. Wait for GHSA approval
6. Now, add a contract.
7. Log back in to MIS site.
8. Find the tab for scheduling at the top of the page.
9. Click on Contest Contracts for Game Day.
Complete and submit & wait for GHSA approval.

Signing up for a Competition:

1. Click on this link to find a list of sanctioned events for Game Day.
https://www.ghsa.net/sanction-view?find_season=2026-2027&find_sport=GDC
2. Complete and print the contract.
3. Mail the contract with the check to the host of the competition.
4. Email the host to let him/her know you have mailed it. Please do not mail the contract with no check.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Educate yourself and your team on the GAME DAY format and get excited about the GHSA GAME DAY STATE CHAMPIONSHIP opportunity!

Get GAME DAY ready by supporting your school teams!

Scan the QR Code to join the BAND GROUP now! All event related information will be communicated through this group on-site during the event.



THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2026

Game Day State Championship REGISTRATION OPENS.

Go to www.ghsa.net to access the link to register your team!

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

EVENT REGISTRATION CLOSES.

There is a \$25 "Late Registration fee" for any team that registers past this date.

No teams can register past Friday, September 18th.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026

PAYMENT is due for all teams registered for the event.

Remit payment to **Varsity Spirit** (Address also located on your team invoice).

PO BOX 70157

Memphis, TN 38107

Team fee will be retained for cancellations after this date.

Unpaid teams will not be included in the Order of Performance.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026

Order of Performance will be posted on the GHSA website.

No teams will be added once the Performance Order is posted.

2026 GHSA GAME DAY STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

DATE: THURSDAY-FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10th-11th, 2026

LOCATION: **MACON COLISEUM**

200 Coliseum Dr, Macon, GA 31217

Additional Information

PARTICIPATING TEAM FEES:

- A \$180 Team Fee (1A-6A & Private) covers all participants up to the max number of participants (24) and up to 2 alternates and up to 3 coaches or other school representatives.
- Additional participants, alternates, or coaches over the max number allowed by classification must pay the admission fee by purchasing a ticket for admittance.

ADMISSION:

- Tickets will be available for purchase through GoFan. See GHSA website for details.
- Admission: \$20.00 per person—good for ALL DAY EVENT.
- There will be a designated GHSA pass entrance for Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors, and Bus Drivers.
- Media credentials will be available from GHSA upon request.
- A separate TEAM ENTRANCE will be utilized for athletes and coaches included in team registration.

MERCHANDISE:

- Merchandise will be available for purchase on-site the day of the event.
- Only credit cards will be accepted. No Cash.

USA CHEER MEMBERSHIP:

- This requirement does NOT apply to GHSA (State Association) events at which Varsity Spirit assists in facilitation.

Rules and Regulations

SECTION I: SCHOOL REPRESENTATION

A. GAME DAY FORMAT

The total number of participants for a school team is determined by counting all spirit-leading participants including cheerleaders, mascots, and flag runners. The use of a live band and/or drum line to supplement the Game Day environment is not permitted. **Mascots** may participate but cannot be involved in the execution of stunts. Mascots executing any jumps or tumbling must do so in accordance with the National Federation of State High School (NFHS) Spirit rules. **Flag Runners** may not perform cheerleading “technical” skills including stunts, jumps and tumbling.

Each school team will be allowed to enter one (1) school team division. Schools are responsible for registering their squad in the appropriate division based on conference classification.

The following conference divisions have been identified in which schools must participate in their appropriate division.

Private	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180
1A	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180
2A	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180
3A	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180
4A	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180
5A	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180
6A	Maximum of 24 participants, 2 alternates, and up to 3 coaches	\$180

**GHSAA reserves the right to alter or adjust divisions based on the total number of registered teams per division.*

***Additional participants, alternates, or coaches over the max number allowed by the division must be registered with the team and pay the admission fee (automatically included on invoice)*

B. SCHOOL REPRESENTATION AND TEAM PARTICIPATION

The school team will consist of students that meet the requirements according to the GHSAA Rules and Guidelines.

1. One team per school will be allowed to enter the GHSAA Game Day State Championship.
2. All participants must be academically eligible students at the school in which they represent and must be designated by school officials as spirit representatives for participation purposes.
3. To maximize opportunities for participation, substitution of athletes is permitted in the Qualifying Round provided each performance does not exceed the maximum number of participants. (Different spirit leaders may be used in each of the individual performances: Band Chant, Crowd Leading and Fight Song.)
4. However, teams advancing to the State Championship Round, participants that enter the floor must remain the entire length of the State Championship performance. Substituting individuals on and off the floor for the different sections of the State Championship Round is not permitted.
5. **It is the school coach's responsibility that each team member, coaches, parents, and other people affiliated with the school conduct themselves appropriately.**
6. School teams must refrain from taunting, bragging, or suggestive expressions or gestures as well as discrimination of any nature.

C. UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

1. Traditional game day uniform is required.
2. All National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) uniform rules apply.
3. The covered midriff requirement does include flesh or nude colored body suits and liners; however, fringe would not count as a cover.
4. School teams must display an overall appearance conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school regarding grooming, traditional and appropriate attire, conservative make-up, and uniformity.
5. The use of signs, poms, flags, rally towels, and megaphones is allowed and encouraged for performances. The use of additional props is not permitted. **The use of flags on poles is not permitted by top persons while in stunts.**
6. **ALTERNATES** - *Alternates must be dressed in a matching school cheer uniform or team warm-up. Alternates dressed in clothes other than cheer uniform/team warmup will need to purchase a spectator ticket and enter as a spectator.*

D. COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Approximate floor size will be 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 strips).
2. The GHSA Game Day State Championship will comply with the NFHS competition surface rule.
3. Signs or props may be placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area. See **Section IV, E** for deductions associated with out of bounds.

E. MUSIC

1. Schools **must use recorded marching band music for the Fight Song and Band Chant categories.**
2. All use of music must be compliant with U.S. Copyright Laws.
3. *Neither the GHSA nor Varsity Spirit is responsible for obtaining any necessary permission or licensing of the recorded music used by a school team during the GHSA Game Day State Championship.*
4. Fight Song /Band Music
 - a. If a high school marching band records their school's **original** fight song, they will need to get the school's permission to use the song and recording.
 - b. If a team legally acquires a recording of a band playing a popular recording from an authorized provider (iTunes, Amazon, etc.), the song can be used if **no edits** are made to the music (other than for timing purposes).
 - c. **Music from streaming sites (YouTube, Apple Music Subscription) does NOT meet licensing requirements and cannot be used for this competition.**
 - d. A team cannot use a recording of their band playing a popular song (a cover) or other music without the proper permission (such as a compulsory license)
5. Coaches will be required to provide proof of licensing, in the form of a printed copy, during team registration check-in at the event. Examples include:
 - a. **Clementune** – provide team's invoice from camp.
 - b. **Authorized Provider (iTunes, Amazon, etc.)** – provide a screenshot of the song you are using from your purchased playlist.
 - c. **Music Provider** – provide a printed copy of proof of licensing.
 - d. **Recording your school's original fight song** - A letter granting permission for the cheer or dance team to use the fight song on school letterhead is enough. It should be signed by your program's administrative supervisor.

e. **Recorded Band Music playing a SINGLE Musical Composition –**

- If your school band has recorded a song for your cheer or dance team to utilize during competition or performance, you will need to show a Compulsory License or Mechanical License that allows you to use the recording of the song.
- If your Band Director cannot provide this for you, please follow the instructions on the Quick and Easy Licensing document.

f. **If a team does not have the required paperwork, they will be given the option to count the routine verbally.**

6. ***A coach or team representative MUST remain at the music table to push play and manage the music. This representative is responsible for pressing “play”.*** Should an adult choose not to stay at the music table for the duration of the routine, and a malfunction occurs, teams may or may not be permitted to perform the routine again.
7. All coaches must bring their own **DONGLE** adaptor to connect it to the aux cord attached to the sound systems provided on the main competition floor.

F. HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

1. GHSA rules require cheer and spirit performances to be in accordance with safety standards prescribed by the [NFHS Spirit Rules](#).
2. GHSA requires annual education, and training that applies to any person designated by the school as a cheerleading coach, supervisor, or sponsor.
3. School participants must comply with the GHSA Constitution and Contest Rules section 1205(a)(6) and file it with the school district personnel for the current school year.
4. Any student participating in a GHSA member school cheerleading program, suspected of having a concussion, must be evaluated by his or her treating physician. The participant’s treating physician must provide a written statement that in his or her professional judgment it is safe for the student to return-to-play before the participant may begin the school districts’ COT return-to-play designated protocol.

SECTION II: PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Teams will be evaluated on the practicality of Game Day material, the ability to effectively lead and engage the crowd, proper skill incorporations, performance, motions, dance, and overall routine. Game Day practicality is heavily emphasized. Performances should be prepared as they would for sideline leading at a school sporting event.

A. GAME DAY FORMAT

The competition will consist of three Game Day elements. There should be no “organized” entrances when taking the floor for any of the performances. **Teams cannot build stunts or execute skills off the performance floor prior to the beginning of the routine—all skills must be executed DURING the routine and on the mat.** Mascots and flag runners must enter the floor with the team and should be used to raise crowd energy and participation.

1 - Band Chant:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Should have emphasis on crowd appeal and practicality.
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** Teams will be announced, take the floor, and timing will begin with the first beat

of music or organized movement. To clearly mark the end of the Band Chant, music should end, then teams should show spirit. Teams are discouraged from adding any words or organized movement following the end of the Band Chant music.

- Marching band music that encourages crowd interaction.
- No stunts or tumbling are permitted in this section. Jumps and kicks are allowed.

2 - Crowd Leading:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Sideline leadership that engages crowd response
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** Timing begins with the sound of a BUZZER, which will occur ***within 10 seconds*** following the completion of the team's BAND CHANT routine and while the team is spiriting on the floor. Timing begins immediately when the buzzer sounds, and the team should then execute its Crowd Leading performance.
- There will **not** be a buzzer to signify the **END** of this section.
- Skill restrictions:
 - No basket, sponge or elevator tosses allowed (cradles are considered dismounts, not tosses). Coed and "quick" tosses are permitted.
 - No inversions
 - No twisting dismounts from stunts
 - Single leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
 - No running tumbling.
 - Standing tumbling is limited to one tumbling skill at a time. A back tuck is the most elite standing tumbling skill allowed.

3 - Fight Song:

- One-minute time LIMIT
- Traditional school fight songs performed to recorded marching band music.
- **QUALIFYING ROUND:** **Within 10 seconds of the completion of the Crowd Leading Section** and while the team is spiriting on the floor, the coach or team representative will be responsible for starting Fight Song music. Timing for Fight Song will begin with the first beat of music or organized movement, whichever comes first.
- Added or "Incorporated" skills (stunts, jumps and/or tumbling) are a component of the Fight Song score sheet. Up to three **CONSECUTIVE** eight-counts may be incorporated with stunts, tumbling and/or jumps. The three 8 counts of added skills (incorporation) can take place at any point in the routine and can (but does not have to be) repeated once if desired. **IF** repeated, the incorporated skills must repeat **exactly as initially performed**. Exception: Repeated skills that must dismount to the floor during the routine to meet the 8-count restriction rule, may end "up" at the end of a routine. To properly count any incorporation, start counting the 8-counts with the "dips" of the added skill(s)—the dip to jump, dip to tumble, dip of top person to load stunt, etc.). **REGARDLESS OF WHEN THE MUSIC ENDS**, the counting of incorporated 8 counts will continue until the **routine** is complete, or the skills are completed and back on the ground.
- Skill restrictions:
 - No basket, sponge or elevator tosses allowed (cradles are considered dismounts, not tosses)
 - No inversions
 - No twisting dismounts from stunts

- Single-leg extended stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches
- No running tumbling
- Standing tumbling is limited to one skill at a time. A back tuck is the most elite tumbling skill allowed.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND - Teams with the highest cumulative scores from the Qualifying Round will advance to the Finals. The number of teams advancing to the State Championships will be determined based on the number of teams participating in the Qualifying Round in each conference, with a maximum of 20 teams per conference. The State Championship Round will be preceded by a designated warm-up session.

Each STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND performance will have an overall maximum performance time limit of three (3) minutes and will be performed in the following order:

1. Band Chant
2. Crowd Leading *Beginning with Situational Response* (see description below)
3. Fight Song

The entire performance will be executed in continuous order, like the Qualifying Round. To continue the feel of a Game Day environment, **spirited crowd-leading interaction between each section is encouraged.**

SITUATIONAL RESPONSE: To imitate the Game Day environment, each team will respond to audio cues by a game announcer, as heard at a football or, by request only, a basketball game. Following the completion of the band chant, the announcer will give squads a game scenario indicating an offense or defense situation. Teams should show their definitive understanding of the situation with an OFFENSE or DEFENSE crowd-leading response. Squads should focus on crowd effectiveness, motion technique, and skills relevant to game day. A general response would not meet the criteria. The Situational Response replaces the buzzer from the Qualifying Round.

INTERFERENCE: Coaches and/or athletes not on the performance floor may NOT assist or direct the squad (either verbally or nonverbally) with the situational response.

B. SCORES AND RANKINGS

1. In the Qualifying Round, each team will be scored by multiple judges in each of the three categories. The cumulative scores from the three elements will determine which teams advance to the State Championship Round. If a tie occurs within the designated numbers of teams advancing to the State Championship Round, both teams will advance. If a tie occurs outside the number of teams advancing to the State Championship Round, the tie will stand.
2. The State Championship results, and team placements will be determined by the cumulative scores from the STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ONLY. Qualifying round scores will NOT carry over to determine final team standings. However, if a tie occurs in the State Championship round, the process will be:
 - Tie Breaker A: The Crowd Leading score from the State Championship round will be utilized to break the tie.
 - Tie Breaker B: In the event of a tie when utilizing the Crowd Leading score from the State Championship round, the Fight Song score from the State Championship round will be utilized to break the tie.

- If a tie remains after completing Tie Breaker A and B, the officials will determine the order of placement for tied teams.
3. Scores and rankings will be available only to coaches as follows:
 - Qualifying Round - Score sheets will be made available to all teams following the Qualifying Round.
 - State Championship Round- Score sheets will be available to all teams after the State Championship Round awards ceremony.
 - Comprehensive scores and rankings will be posted on the GHSA website after the competition.
 4. The judges will score teams using the criteria listed on the GHSA Game Day State Championship score sheets.
 5. **All scores and judges' decisions are considered final. There is no process to protest score.**

TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Timing will begin with the first group movement, voice, or beat of music, whichever comes first.
2. Acknowledging the potential variance in sound system and timing devices, a three (3) second allowance is given for the Qualifying Round. Judges will issue deductions as follows:
 - 3 points for a time of 1:04-1:08
 - 5 points for a time of 1:09-1:13
 - 7 points for a time of 1:14+

A five (5) second allowance is given for the State Championship Round. Judges will issue deductions as follows:

- 3 points for a time of 3:06-3:10
- 5 points for a time of 3:11-3:15
- 7 points for a time of 3:16+

It is recommended that all teams practice and time performances prior to competition to allow for variations in sound equipment.

3. Introductions and exits:
 - a. All team breaks, rituals, and traditions need to take place backstage before a team is in the "on deck" or next to perform position.
 - b. Teams should take the floor immediately **with spirit and enthusiasm**, but without excessive gestures (i.e., teams must refrain from chest bumps, hugs, and handshakes) before and after the performances.
 - c. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team's performance. Any team in violation will receive a ONE-point deduction.
 - d. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official end of the routine.

SECTION III: INTERRUPTION OF PERFORMANCE

A. UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

1. If, in the opinion of the competition officials, a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the competition equipment, facilities, or other factors attributable to the competition rather than the team, the team affected will be directed to **STOP** the routine.
2. If directed to stop a routine in the Qualifying Round, the team will perform the impacted section again as directed and will only be evaluated from the point where the interruption occurred.
3. If directed to stop a routine in the State Championship Round, the team will perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated only from the point where the interruption occurred.

B. FAULT OF TEAM

1. In the event a team's routine is interrupted because of failure of the team's own equipment or team operator error, the team must either continue the routine or withdraw from the competition.
2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform later. If decided by officials, the team will perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated only from the point where the interruption occurred.

C. INJURY

1. All participants must follow the GHSA safety regulations identified in this document. The only people that may stop a routine for injury are **a)** competition officials, or **b)** the school coach from the team performing.
2. The competition officials will determine if the team will be allowed to perform later. If the competition officials allow a routine to be performed later, the spot in the schedule where the re-performance is to take place is at the sole discretion of competition officials. The team may perform the routine again in its entirety but will be evaluated only from the point where the interruption occurred.
3. The injured participant that wishes to perform may not return to the competition floor unless the competition officials receive clearance from the on-site medical personnel and the school head coach of the competing team.
4. Any injured participant suspected of concussion must follow the GHSA Concussion Policy regarding its treatment and be removed immediately from the competition.

SECTION IV: INTERPRETATIONS AND RULINGS

A. RULES & PROCEDURES

Any questions about the competition's rules or procedures will be handled exclusively by the school-employed coach of the team and directed to the Competition Director. Such questions should be made **PRIOR** to the team's competition performance.

The GHSA Game Day State Championship Rules Committee will consist of a designated Competition Director, Head Judge, and GHSA staff. The school team and school coach must abide by all decisions made by the judges and Rules Committee. Any interpretation of the GHSA Game Day State Championship rules and regulations or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Rules Committee.

B. AWARDS

Each conference or division will receive the following:

1. The top teams will be awarded and designated with 2nd place with a runner-up trophy and 1st place with a championship trophy.
2. The 1st place team and 2nd place team will receive medals.

C. JUDGING PANELS

Judges will be provided by the GHSA, and they will be responsible for scoring each school's performance according to the GHSA competition score sheets.

1. **Head Judge** - A Head Judge is responsible for overseeing a designated panel of judges. The Head Judge will also fill out his/her own score sheet for each performance.
2. **Panel Judge** - Panel Judges are responsible for scoring each team's performance based on the GHSA score sheets. Each Panel Judge will fill out a score sheet for each performance.
3. **Safety Judge** - The Safety Judge is responsible for administering all safety violations, time violations, and boundary violations.
4. **Quality Judge** - The Quality Judge is responsible for overseeing the entire Judging Panel that consists of Head Panel Judges, Panel Judges, and Safety Judge.
5. **ALL JUDGES' DECISIONS ARE FINAL. THERE IS NO PROCESS FOR PROTEST REGARDING SCORING, DEDUCTIONS, OR JUDGES FEEDBACK.**

D. DISQUALIFICATION

Any team that does not adhere to the terms and procedures of the GHSA Game Day State Championship rules and regulations defined in this document or any other GHSA documents pertaining to Contest Rules will be subject to disqualification from the competition and will automatically forfeit any award.

E. DEDUCTIONS

Deduction points will be subtracted from the final score. The following is a **sample** of potential rule infractions and point deductions. Teams should refer to the Time and Deduction Sheet for each performance on any deductions given. **(See next page)**

Area	Specific	Deduction Points
Participant allowance (Section I, A)	Exceed maximum participants	Disqualification from contest
NFHS Spirit Rules (Section I, F, 1)	Utilization of skill or stunt not permitted by rules	3 points per rule violation
Time limit* *3 second window to allow for variance (Section II, C) *5 second window to allow for variance (Section II, C)	Each violation	Qualifying Round: 3 points for a time of 1:04-1:08 5 points for a time of 1:09-1:13 7 points for a time of 1:14+ *3 second window considered above State Championship Round: 3 points for a time of 3:06-3:10 5 points for a time of 3:11-3:15 7 points for a time of 3:16+ *5 second window considered above
Time limit (Section II, C)	Excessive celebration or organized entrance or exit	1 point
Performance floor (Section I, D, 3)	Any team member stepping with both feet outside the designated performance area	.5 Half of one point
Procedure or General Rule Violation (Not a safety violation)	Team exceeds 8-count allowances in Fight Song Team adds stunts or tumbling in Band Chant Team uses music which does not meet the music requirements outlined in the Game Day Rules and Regulations.	3 points per rule violation

