

MADERA SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL CHEERLEADING HANDBOOK

I. Philosophy: Character Leadership Academics Sportsmanship Service

Being a cheerleader is a privilege and an honor. Cheerleaders should be the school's most effective student learners. Cheerleaders have the responsibility to serve as a support group for the various interscholastic activity programs within the school. The squad should strive to boost school spirit, promote good sportsmanship, develop positive crowd involvement and help their school achieve the most worthwhile educational objectives in its interscholastic program. The cheerleading squad is not intended to solely develop their physical skills and talents for the purpose of entertainment or competition. The areas of entertainment and competition should be placed in perspective within the educational program. These activities should serve to develop leadership, confidence, and skill. They should not interfere with the primary responsibility of cheerleaders and their commitment to support the school activity program.

Cheerleaders are in a position of great influence, and high standards on conduct are essential. Personal behavior communicates. Appropriate behavior will help earn the respect of the student body, and this is the core of developing effective school spirit and student involvement.

II. Purpose

The primary purpose of cheerleading is to promote school spirit at athletic events, community events, and to positively represent Madera South High School. In fulfilling this purpose, cheerleaders will:

- Raise the level of fan support for MSHS athletics, lead in positive support for all teams, and project and solicit support from fans.
- Embrace the athleticism of cheerleading by incorporating gymnastics, jumps, tight arm motions, pyramids, and dance in an effort to keep the crowd's attention and direction focused on the field/floor where the athletic contest is taking place.
- Serve as public relations ambassadors of athletics at MSHS and uphold and project the goals and ideals of the institution (C.L.A.S.S.)
- Create an atmosphere of spirit and support throughout MSHS and the community by combining the aesthetic, social, and communicative elements of cheerleading.

III. Expected Behaviors and Standards

1. All cheerleaders are expected to present themselves as respectable citizens of Madera South High School at all times, this includes respect towards the coach, cheer coordinator, and fellow squad members, MSHS students, staff, and Administrators.
2. Cheerleaders will not partake in drinking, smoking, or drug usage on or off school grounds. If any member chooses to disregard these rules set by the Madera Unified School District (student/parent handbook) or Federal & State law, he or she will compromise his or her position as a member of the team.
3. Uniforms must be kept neat and clean. Any damage must be reported and repaired. All polyester uniforms are machine washable. Do not dry clean uniforms. Cheerleaders must return uniforms and equipment clean and in good condition either at the end of their eligibility, after basketball season is over and before tryout clinics begin, or immediately after expulsion from the squad. Failure to do so will result in placement on Loss of Privilege list.
4. Damaged or lost items/uniforms must be paid for and/or replaced.
5. Cheerleaders must remain in good academic standing by maintaining a 2.0 cumulative GPA for two consecutive quarters. If a member's GPA drops below a 2.0 they may be placed on academic probation, not be eligible to tryout or continue on the squad. (See MSHS Activities handbook)
6. Cheerleaders are expected to remain in good physical condition **per State of California physical fitness standards.**
7. All cheerleaders must wear the designated uniform on the designated day, both to school and to the game.
8. **All cheerleaders must abide by ALL expectations listed in the MSHS Cheerleader handbook at all times or they may compromise their position as a member of the team.**
9. **Cheerleaders should anticipate having 10-20 hours of cheer related activities per week. This time commitment is NOT compatible with work, musical theater, drama, choir, band, or other team sports. However, if a student is involved in more than one activity they must manage their time effectively or they may not be able to participate in a number of cheer related events if**

they are not prepared. Also, they may not qualify to receive their Athletic Letter at the end of the year. This decision will be left to the coaches, advisors, in consultation with the Athletic Director.

10. Cheerleaders must finish the Fall, Winter, and Spring season in order to receive an Athletic Letter. In order to be eligible to receive this award/recognition s/he must maintain a 2.0 grade point average, attend practices, attend all required sporting events and perform at required activities throughout this time period.

11. Cheerleaders must be enrolled in Fall and Spring Cheer PE in order to receive their Athletic letter at the end of the year. Enrollment changes will not be permitted unless there is an Advisor, Parent, and Counselor meeting.

IV. Game Day

1. Cheerleaders must **arrive 30 minutes-1 hour** prior to game time, **game ready**. This means in appropriate uniform, hair up, make-up done, **jewelry off (ear studs ok)**, and **food digested**. **If food is consumed it will be done in the stands away from the sideline area out of view of spectators. (See Merit/Demerit list)**
2. All squads must stretch and warm up stunts and cheers prior to cheering. (See Merit/Demerit list)
3. Food and drinks (except water) will be strictly prohibited from the sideline area. If a cheerleader brings these items or leaves trash on the sideline area they will receive demerits.
4. You may only bring ONE cheer bag and any posters to the sidelines. All bags must be lined up (single file), neatly, in the designated area. Any cheerleader that does not put their personal items in the designated area will receive demerits. (2 demerits)
 - a. Reasoning: The sideline area is highly visible from all areas in the stadium and it is important to maintain organization and the integrity of the sideline (stains from food and colored drinks) at all times.
5. 20 min prior to the game, the cheerleaders will be on the sideline ready to move to their appropriate place on the field/court and in formation for the singing of the National Anthem and/or set up for the tunnel. (2 demerits)
6. See section on **Absences, Late Arrivals, and Early Departures**
7. Abusive language and/or criticism of officials, coaches, fans, other cheerleaders, etc. is prohibited and will result in demerits and/or benching. (5 demerits)
8. Cell phones are strictly prohibited during the games, breaks, and ½ time. (2 Demerits)
 - a. Cheerleaders may use cell phones prior to the 20 minutes they are required to be on the field.
 - i. They must use them away from the sidelines and out of site of the crowd.
 - b. The Cheerleaders may use their phones after the game is over.
 - c. If a parent must speak with their student they should call the Advisor and/or coaches. The Advisor and/or coaches will allow the student to call their parents in case of an emergency.
9. Cheerleaders must stay off the playing field/court when the ball is in play.
10. During basketball games, the lane area must always remain clear during free throws, unless otherwise instructed.
11. The cheerleader must ride the bus to and from away games. If a cheerleader misses the bus, he or she will receive demerits and/or will not cheer for a designated period of time (1st two quarters of game). A cheerleader may leave an away game only if checked out by a parent or guardian as recognized in their transportation contract.
12. **Other duties: All Varsity members will help decorate the stadium or gym and JV members will clean up after games. Each member will sign up in the beginning of the Season for the game/games that they will be responsible for.**

V. Performances

1. All music and dances must be authorized/approved by the Advisor 5 days prior to the performance.
 - a. If the Captain, from each squad, does not submit the music according to this schedule the squad will not perform.
 - b. If the music has been chosen but not edited the captains must give the title of the songs to the Advisor to approve 5 days prior to the performance.
 - c. Each squad must show the Advisor the progress that they make with performances during 6th period in order to be eligible to perform.
2. The length of the performance must be communicated to the Advisor 5 days prior to the performance so that the information can be given to the Athletic Director. This step is critical. If we do not notify the Athletic Director within an appropriate time period the squads may not have enough time to perform for the crowd at ½ time due to other events (Homecoming, Senior Night, Band Night, etc.)

VI. Practices

1. The cheer coaches and/or advisor will determine mandatory summer practices and camp dates and communicate that information to cheerleaders and cheer parents.
2. Practice will be held during the 6th period and/or after school and on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays if necessary).
3. Last minute changes to practices will not be permitted. The practice will be canceled unless 48 hour notification is given to cheerleaders and parents.
 - a. Coaches may assign additional afternoon practices. However, all parents and students must have 48 hour notice. If an additional practice is required prior to a performance and adequate notification has not been given the practice may only take place with the consent of the cheerleader's parent. If the parent does not want their child to participate the cheerleader will not be issued demerits.
4. All practices are closed to the public. Parents may come to the last 15 minutes of practice in order to provide transportation for their cheerleader.
5. No cell phones are to be used during practice (See Demerits)
6. Participants must attend all practices in order to perform at an event (game, pep rally, competition, etc.) Members will be held accountable for an absence, and may be removed from any performance by the coach and/or Advisor. (2 unexcused absences will lead to performance suspension)
7. Cheerleaders are expected to arrive on time to practice. (See Demerits)
8. **See Merit/Demerit** list for appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior at practices and other events.
9. **Summer Practices: Coaches will set practice days and times during the summer. Each member must attend 80% of practices during the summer. Practices will be held 2- 3 times a week depending on coaches' schedule. If a student fails to attend the practices they will be suspended from the first performance event and/or home game.**

VII. Absences, Late Arrivals, and Early Departures

1. Absences from a practice, game, performance, or fundraiser are not permitted and are excused only in the event of death of an immediate family member, illness, or a required school function. The cheerleader must submit a doctor's excuse to his or her coach in cases of illness and a written note from a parent and/or teacher is mandatory in the other two cases listed above. Any other absences, such as vacations, must be cleared with the coach at least two weeks prior to the event in order for an excused absence to be considered. The coach will then determine if the absence(s) will be excused or not. A written note from a parent **does not** always constitute an excused absence.
2. Any time a member is absent or leaves school early, he or she must report to his or her coach prior to the game and/or practice. Cheerleaders not at school for the first 4 periods are not eligible to cheer and/or practice that day. **ABSENCES AND EARLY DEPARTURES FROM SCHOOL DO NOT EQUAL EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM CHEERLEADING FUNCTIONS.** Unless your absence from a cheer function falls within one of the categories listed above, it will not be excused and demerits will result.
3. **Missed AWAY games will result in a HOME game suspension.**
4. **If a student is suspended from a game or performance event they MUST attend the scheduled game, in uniform, and support their team and school from the bench.**

VIII. Merit/Demerit System

As a representative of MSHS, cheerleaders are expected to uphold all handbook policies and state laws while in uniform or out of uniform. Any violation of these rules or conduct deemed improper and unsuitable for a cheerleader – **no matter where the incident takes place** - will result in consequences administered at the discretion of the cheerleading coach(es), Advisor, and/or the athletic director

The following system will be put in place to add structure to the MSHS cheerleading program as a whole. The following Merit and Demerit list will be used to identify appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior, to issue consequences, document & monitor behavior, and keep the lines of communication open between parents, coaches, advisors, and the Athletic Director. Note: The following list can be altered at any time. Any additions or deleted items will be communicated immediately.

MSHS Cheerleading Merit/Demerit System

MERITS

Merits are given for conduct above and beyond the expectations of a cheerleader. Demerits earned under the Attendance and Tardies, and Performance Behavior can be canceled out by acquiring **5 merits for every 1 demerit**. **Merits CAN'T cancel demerits earned for Misconduct.**

- 5 4.0 GPA or higher at the end of each quarter
- 4 3.5 GPA or higher at the end of each quarter
- 3 3.0 GPA or higher at the end of each quarter
- 5 No Discipline referrals from other teachers or emails to Advisor of poor behavior in other classes (applied every quarter grading period)
- 5 Perfect attendance at school (all day, each class) at each six week period
- 5 Perfect attendance at all practices and performances each six weeks
- 1-5 The Advisor may assign merits for special assignments including but not limited to:
 - a. Volunteer hours in community and/or at school events
 - a. 2 merits for each hour
 - b. Create extra signs for games/players or school events
 - a. 1 merit per sign
 - c. Selling extra snack bags
 - a. 2 merits
 - d. Attending non-mandatory school functions in order to promote school-wide participation.
 - a. Ex. Dances (excluding winter formal & Prom) (2 merits)

DEMERITS

When a demerit is received the cheerleader must initial their individual Merit/Demerit document immediately. The initial indicates that the cheerleader is aware of their behavior and must adhere to the following steps.

1. 2 demerits have been received, verbal notification to student
2. 5 demerits received written (mail or email) or Verbal notification to parents
3. **8 demerits** received verbal notification to parents including a parent/student/coach meeting. Possible suspension from upcoming game/performance. Determined by Advisor and/or Activities Director
4. 15 demerits received notification to parents of student suspension. Duration of suspension determined by Advisor and/or Activities Director. Student is still required to attend practice
5. 20 demerits received meeting with parents, coach, and athletic director. Duration of suspension will be determined by the Advisor and/or Athletic Director.
6. **25 demerits** received, meeting with parents and athletic director that will discuss possible removal from cheer squad. This will depend on the type of demerits received over the year. Example. If most demerits are acquired due to misconduct this may lead to removal from the cheer squad.

A. Attendance and Tardies

NOTE: 5 merits can cancel every 1 demerit

- 4 Unexcused absence from a performance or activity.
- 4 Unexcused absence from any practice.**
- 2 Unexcused tardy to any practice, performance, activity, or game (more than five minutes)
- 1 Unexcused tardy to any practice, performance, activity, or game (less than five minutes)
- 4 Unexcused absences/Truants in other classes
- 5 If student does not adhere to school tardy policy and is given a referral**

B. Performance Behavior

NOTE: 5 merits can cancel every 1 demerit

- 2 Failure to wear the correct uniform or attire to a practice. (Shoes, shorts/sweats, shirt)
- 3 Failure to wear the correct uniform or attire to a game, performance, activity, and school.
- 2 Lack of attention/participation during practice, performance, or activity (talking, laughing, and not standing at attention, etc.)

- 2 Use of food or drink near the sidelines/court before or during a game. Student must eat out of sight of spectators. Water is ALWAYS permitted.
- 3 Not learning and/or knowing cheers, chants, or dances
- 2 Does not warm up properly before game, activity, or practice
- 3 Failure to return to the field/court on time after halftime or break at ALL sporting events
- 2 Not following directions
- 2 Using cell phone during practice, performance, game or activity unless otherwise directed by Coach or Advisor
- 1 Missing any part of the uniform (including shoes, poms) or wearing prohibited items (hair not up, no bow/wrong bow, wearing jewelry, colored nail polish, wrong bra or pantyhose etc.)

C. Misconduct

NOTE: Merits CAN'T cancel demerits earned for Misconduct.

- 15 Any conduct resulting in an arrest by law officials. (See Student/Parent Handbook or California State Law requirements)
- 10 Any disciplinary action resulting in suspension from school. (See Student/Parent Handbook)
- 10 Any disciplinary action resulting in behavior contract (ex. Harassment, gang, bullying, etc. via Campus Security and/or Administration)
- 10 Inappropriate media (phone pictures/videos, Myspace, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) related to school, coaches, teammates, etc. The final decision for this action will be determined by the Athletic Director.
- 10 Defiance toward Coaches, Advisor, and any other adult in a supervisory role.
- 5 Any disciplinary action that results in assignment to SRC or On campus suspension
- 5 **Unlady like conduct at any time (disrespect toward the Advisor, other cheerleader, or any other adult in a supervisory role including teachers, administrators, etc.). (In uniform or not) This could include back talk, rude interruptions during meeting, etc.**
- 5 Any inappropriate Public Displays of Affection on campus, in or out of uniform.
- 2 Inappropriate, foul, language used at practice or events (in or out of uniform)

IX. Safety

1. Because of the increased athleticism of today's cheerleaders and the complexity of some stunts performed, there is a risk, as in any athletic endeavor, of serious injury.
2. All participants must have a current physical form on file prior to participation. If a student fails to turn in the physical they will be asked to attend practice but MAY NOT participate.
3. All participants must be trained and qualified for proper landing and spotting techniques before they are allowed to stunt.
4. All participants must go through proper stunt progressions.
5. No tumbling or building of stunts is permitted unless a cheer coach is present.
6. No horseplay, laughing or general socializing will be permitted during any stunt/practice session.
7. Absolutely no jewelry will be worn during practices, games or events, including body piercings.

X. Fundraising

All cheerleaders will be asked to participate in all fundraising events. These will help defray some out-of-pocket expenses for the teams. All monies collected will be deposited in the MSHS Cheer Booster Account. Each cheerleader does not have an individual account. All money raised will be spent on items that will benefit the cheerleaders. If a cheerleader chooses not to participate in a fundraiser parents and the students must understand that all money raised will STILL benefit them. This does become an issue with equity and overall fairness. As the advisor I encourage ALL members to do their part in order to fundraise for the success of the program.

If members do participate in a fundraiser where they "Check out"/Sign-out items to sell they must understand that the items are property of the MSHS Cheer program. If the student does not turn in the money for the items sold or the unsold items on the designated day a written notification to parents will be sent home. After this final warning, if the student does not return the items they will be placed on the Loss of Privilege list and will be suspended from all school and athletic activities until the items and/or money is returned. (See student/parent handbook)

****Fundraisers throughout the year can include but are not limited to: Grub downs, Car washes, Snack Sales**

XI. Communication

Communication is vital for a successful cheer program.

Coaches will communicate:

1. Requirements for students and the squad
2. Locations, dates, times of practices, games, and events
3. Squad requirements including special equipment, uniform, squad rules/regulations, travel arrangements, and off-season expectations (summer)

Parents should communicate:

1. Concerns regarding a son/daughter directly to the coach at the appropriate time and place
 - a. Issues appropriate for discussion:
 1. Student plan for success
 2. Student behavior
 3. Student safety
2. Issues not appropriate for discussion with a coach:
 - a. Any situation that deals with other students/cheer members
 - b. Parent must speak to Activities Director or administrator if this is the case.

Communication between parent, school and coach:

1. If at any time a cheer member or parent feels he/she needs to discuss a problem or complaint, please follow the appropriate channels:
 - a. Cheer Advisor or cheer coach (**set up appointment or email. Please include the Activities Director, Julie Larrivee, in your email**)
 - i. Do not confront coach before, during, or after any event.
 - ii. Only enter cheer class with permission from the campus principal or his/her designee.

If a meeting does not provide a satisfactory resolution, parents should then contact the following in this order:

1. MSHS Activities Director: Julie Larrivee
2. MSHS Principal: Todd Lile

XII. Captain and Co-Captain:

Captain and co-captain duties (for each team) may include, but are not limited to the following:

Captain responsibilities:

- Taking attendance at cheer functions
- Creating calendars
- Selecting uniforms for events/activities
- Communicating pep rally ideas (Varsity only) and develop agendas for events
- Assigning game responsibilities to team members
- Organizing and distribute all practice schedules and agendas
- Composing cheer, chant and game plans
- Demonstrating a positive and motivating attitude at all times
- Being dependable and cooperative
- Having good organizational skills
- Being on time to all events
- Give performance music to the Advisor 5 day prior to the event
- Report the length of the performance to the Advisor 5 days before the event
- Reporting all problems, conflicts and concerns to coaches
- Keeping communication open and flowing with all team members
- Using authority when necessary, but not abusing it

Co-captain responsibilities: (if applicable)

- Support the captain at all times
- Be on time to all events
- Fill in as captain when or if the captain is absent
- Help captain plan and organize pep rallies
- Demonstrate a positive attitude at all times
- Be dependable and cooperative
- Follow campus captain guidelines

Process of choosing captains/co-captains:

- Coaches and administration will set cheer captain selection dates.
- Candidates must declare the position for which they are applying (Captain/Co-Captain).
- Captain/Co-Captain candidates may be required to give a 3 minute speech to his/her team about leadership qualities, etc. that they have to offer the program. This may be followed by a group question and answer session that will be directed by the coaches.
- Any additional requirements will be made at the campus level.
- Coaches will make final determination of Captains/Co-captains.

XIII. Cheer Binder (if applicable)

Throughout the year cheerleaders are responsible for many things and they receive new information on a daily basis. In order for parents and students to stay organized and informed all cheerleaders will be required to carry a small binder to school, practices, and some events. This will hold, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Cheer Handbook
2. Football and Basketball game calendar
3. Practice Calendar
4. Phone Lists
5. Committee information