



2025-2026 COLLEGE CLASSIC RULES AND REGULATIONS

Thank you for your interest in DTU's College Classic National Championship. This set of rules and regulations will assist you in preparation for your 2025-2026 competition season. The rules and regulations will apply to all College teams and mascots. Please read thoroughly. Rules and Regulations are subject to change. For any questions or concerns, contact The College Classic at info@thecollegeclassic.com. **Substantive changes to the rules and regulations from the 2024-2025 season are printed in red.** We look forward to seeing you at one or more of our competitions this year!

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SECTION I: GENERAL RULES

HOW TO HANDLE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS

1. **RULES & PROCEDURES** – The coach or advisor of a competing team or mascot should contact us regarding any questions or concerns pertaining to the rules and regulations.
2. **PERFORMANCE** – Should there be questions regarding the team's or mascot's performance, the coach or advisor of the team or mascot should contact us to discuss any concerns.

DISQUALIFICATION

Teams that do not abide by the Rules and Regulations are subject to disqualification from the event. A disqualified team or mascot will automatically forfeit its rights to any prizes or awards presented at the event.

We reserve the right to disallow any team, mascot, coach, dancer, cheerleader, spectator or other person from attending any of our or our affiliates' competitions, for any reason, in our sole and final discretion.

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES

1. Teams and mascots should have an emergency plan in the event of an injury.
2. Coaches have the responsibility of recognizing the abilities of their performer(s), and should make sure the presented routine does not exceed that person's/team's capabilities or include elements that create a safety risk for their team or mascot regardless of whether the element is not specifically listed as a safety risk in the routine guidelines below.
3. Technical skills should not be executed without an advisor/coach present. Performers should always practice in an area suitable for their safety. Performers should not perform technical skills on:
 1. Concrete, asphalt, or any other hard or uncovered surface
 2. Wet surfaces
 3. Uneven surfaces
 4. Surfaces with obstructions
4. Appropriate warm-up and stretching should be implemented by the performer(s) both before and after a performance.
5. All College Classic events will be run in accordance with applicable laws and regulations regarding health and safety, and coaches, teams and spectators will be expected to fully comply with such laws and regulations, as well as any more restrictive health and safety rules put in place for such events from time to time.
6. Additional safety guidelines applicable to dance and cheer teams can be found in SECTIONS III and IV.

SECTION II: JUDGING

JUDGING PROTOCOL

Dance Team Union appoints judges based upon a host of factors, including their relevant experience and feedback received throughout the year judging at our regional competitions. The appointed judges will be evaluating each performance based upon a scoring system as specified in the applicable score sheet. The total score from each judge will be combined with scores from the other judges and averaged, generating the team's or mascot's overall score.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Each judge will evaluate performances using an individual score sheet designated to the performing team or mascot. The judge will be responsible for providing a thorough evaluation and sufficient feedback for each competing team or mascot. Score sheets will be released to each individual team or mascot after each competition or competition round, and detailed score rankings will be available for teams and mascots to review after the competition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF JUDGING AND EVALUATION POLICIES

Each judge will be evaluated after the College Classic based upon, among other things, input from competing teams and mascots. Each judge's responsibility is to make fair decisions based solely upon the score sheet, using his/her knowledge of dance/cheer/mascot (as applicable) and training as a professional judge. Each participating team and mascot acknowledges that the decisions of the judges are final. However, because the integrity, transparency and professionalism of our judging process is key to our competition philosophy, we encourage each team to bring any judging issues to our attention either through our formal post-competition evaluation process or by other means. Just as our judges' frank evaluation of your routines will help your team or mascot to improve, your frank evaluation of our judges and judging process will help us and our judges to improve as well.

SECTION IV: CHEER TEAMS

Part 1: Entry Guidelines and Awards

ENTRY GUIDELINES

College/university teams may compete in Co-Ed or All-Girl categories, as well as the Partner/Group Stunt category. Any mascot that is part of a college/university's official spirit program may compete in the Mascot category. A college or university may enter one routine in each team routine style (maximum of 2 routines total), and an unlimited number of Partner/Group Stunt or Mascot routines. If a college/university wishes to enter multiple team routines in a single team category, they must designate different teams (e.g. Lincoln University Gold Team and Lincoln University Silver Team) and only the top scoring team will be eligible to receive a final awards placement. The following team size guidelines will apply:

- a. Team size will be determined as of the registration date.
- b. At least 5 performers must be registered to perform in each team routine. A team will still be allowed to compete if they drop to fewer than five performers at performance time but at least five performers must be registered and paid for in order for the routine to compete.
- c. Teams may use a different number of performers in each routine subject to the minimums above required to be registered.
- d. Two (2) performers must compete in each Partner Stunt routine. Partners may be of the same gender or different genders. Three (3) or four (4) performers must compete in each Group Stunt routine.
- e. Any Co-Ed cheer team with 1-4 male cheerleaders will compete in the Small Co-Ed division; all other Co-Ed teams will compete in the Large Co-Ed division.
- f. Only one (1) mascot may perform in any routine in the Mascot division; however, there is no limit on the number of individual mascots who can enter the Mascot division from the same college/university. Every performer must be an official mascot that is considered as such within the college/university's official spirit program.

ELIGIBLE TEAMS

College/university cheer teams and mascots may not compete at Dance Team Union regional competitions, but are encouraged to compete at The College Classic and the College Virtual Championship. Each team must be an official cheer team at the team's college/university either under athletics or as a club sport or fine arts program, and DTU reserves the right to require verification from the college/university indicating the team is an official team as part of the registration process. Regardless of the character of the team's designation at the university (athletics, club sport, fine arts), the team will be grouped for competition with other teams in accordance with the Competition Divisions section below. Teams from outside the United States

may compete in The College Classic in the division at or above the division they would compete if their team was from the United States.

ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS

Any performer who is eligible to be a member of their team or perform as a mascot based on their college's or university's eligibility rules may perform at The College Classic. We reserve the right to require documentation at any time in order to confirm, in our sole discretion, whether an individual is eligible to compete.

COMPETITION DIVISIONS

1. Teams may be grouped within each style into divisions based upon their NCAA, NAIA or similar sporting affiliation or division (provided, however, that all teams from NCAA Division I FBS schools participating in the Big Ten, Big 12, ACC, SEC and Pac 12 for the 2024-25 football season will be considered Division 1A and all other Division I schools will be considered Division I).
2. A team will not be considered to be within a division until its athletics programs are eligible to win national championships in that division (i.e., if a school moves from NCAA Division II to Division I, it will remain in Division II for our purposes during any waiting period for championship eligibility).
3. Any split between divisions will be determined by DTU based upon the number of entries received for each competition. In addition, DTU may choose to combine styles or add additional categories in order to increase competitiveness in DTU's sole discretion.
4. Any team may elect to "compete up" – that is, compete in a division for teams of larger school sizes in accordance with the above guidelines. Teams may not elect to "compete down" with teams of smaller school sizes.

COMBINING DIVISIONS

At The College Classic National Championship, **DTU may combine any cheer division that contains three or fewer entries with an adjacent classification in DTU's sole discretion.** This may result in divisions that include multiple school sizes (e.g. Division 1/1A All-Girl Cheer). No single team divisions will be permitted at The College Classic National Championship unless DTU determines in its sole discretion that there is a division that cannot reasonably be combined with any other division.

COLLEGE CLASSIC AWARDS

At least 50% of teams that compete in the preliminary round will ultimately advance to finals. No semifinal or Second Chance Round will be held. Finalists in categories with **six** or more finalists will compete figure skating-style (in sub-groupings with lowest scores competing first, based upon their scores from the previous round, but within each sub-grouping, teams will draw for random order). Finalists in categories with **five** or fewer finalists will compete in reverse order of their preliminary scores. All finalists will receive trophies. In addition, all The College

Classic champions will receive banners, jackets or fleeces, and rings. In recognition of the tremendous success of each champion, no Grand Champion award(s) will be given at The College Classic.

THE CHEER BATTLE ROUND AT THE COLLEGE CLASSIC

The College Classic will hold a Cheer Battle Round at the National Championship. The primary purpose of the Battle Round is to promote a fun, supportive environment to showcase selected athletes' skills and routines for each other and the viewing audience. The College Classic will conduct the Battle Round in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Within the Cheer Battle Round, there will be two Individual Cheer Battles:
 - a. Pyramid Battle, for cheer teams selected by The College Classic for the Battle, and
 - b. Tumble Rumble, where any team may select one (1) cheerleader to participate. The College Classic may allow more than 1 cheerleader to represent a team at its sole discretion.

More details will be provided by The College Classic leading up to the event.

2. No scoring or critiques will be done by judges in the Battle Round. Judges will view all performances in each Battle, collaborate and announce a Battle champion shortly after the conclusion of the applicable Battle. Each judge will be asked to vote for a winner based on overall technical quality, crowd appeal, difficulty and creativity. Battle champions will receive a Battle Cup (and bragging rights until next year's National Championship!).
3. The College Classic may invite teams to participate in the Pyramid Battle beginning after the conclusion of all preliminary routines for teams eligible for that Battle Round, and invitations may continue to be issued throughout finals for that group of teams. For example, if preliminaries for all divisions eligible for the Cheer Battle conclude Saturday at 5:00 pm, and the Cheer Battle is scheduled to begin Sunday at 7:00 pm, then The College Classic may issue Cheer Battle invitations at any time between those times, based on either preliminary or finals performance, in The College Classic's sole discretion.
4. Preliminary round scores and finals performance quality will be a factor in determining Battle Round invitees; however, these will not be the only determining factors. The College Classic may also consider factors such as entertainment value, showmanship, creativity, appropriateness for a "battle" atmosphere, and/or judge recommendations in issuing invitations. No team is guaranteed to participate in the Battle Round by virtue of having the highest score in preliminaries, and a team with a lower score may be invited to the Battle Round if it meets one or more criteria set forth above.
5. A schedule for each Battle within the applicable Battle Round will be published in advance of the National Championship with start times for each Battle category; however, a specific performance time for each participating team will not be published in advance.
6. **Battle Round invitations and results are completely independent of the official results of The College Classic National Championship. Battle Round results are based solely on performance**

in the Battle Round, in accordance with the Battle judging criteria set forth above. National Champion results are based solely on performance in Finals for that style and division, in accordance with the score sheet for such division.

Part 2: Cheer Routine Rules and Guidelines

GENERAL SAFETY

The coach of a team is responsible for monitoring the safety of each element of a cheer or mascot routine and determining that it is safe to perform. The character of the skills being performed, as well as the skill level of the athletes performing those skills, should be considered by the coach in making this determination. All of the skills listed below as well as any other movement should be evaluated for safety by the advisor/coach prior to competition.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

All teams and partners competing in any cheer division(s) at The College Classic should adhere to Open Championship Series safety rules and regulations in effect as of the competition date. Visit www.openchampionshipseries.com for more information.

COMPETITION ROUTINE GUIDELINES

1. Teams may make substitutions in the event of injury. Substitute participants must be listed on the team's participant roster in the team's registration form.
2. Any equipment or items that may damage the performance floor are prohibited.
3. There is no minimum time limit for any routine. The maximum time limit is 2:30. Routines will be evaluated upon the first sound in the music or the first physical movement. The final note or physical movement will be considered the end of the performance. Routines will be given a maximum grace period of five seconds above the 2:30 time limit to account for minor differences in music equipment timing or performance errors.
4. A responsible adult must be present to assist in the start and finish of the routine music. **IT IS RECOMMENDED TO UPLOAD YOUR MUSIC TO THE REGISTRATION SOFTWARE BY ONE WEEK PRIOR TO COMPETITION.**

JEWELRY

Jewelry will not be allowed for cheer team members. We reserve the right to require a team member to remove any jewelry we deem hazardous at any point during the competition.

PROPS AND BACKDROPS

1. Props are permitted in any cheer category as long as they are wearable, handheld, or freestanding and can be taken off or released safely (as determined by DTU).

2. No dry ice, confetti, glass, canned smoke, water or other liquid, flammable material or other similar loose material that may obstruct the judges' view or affect the condition of the performance floor may be used.
3. No prop may be tossed off the performance floor or used in any way that risks damage to or obstruction of any persons or property in the vicinity of the performance floor (including, without limitation, the ceiling, a performance backdrop or any lighting on the front of the floor).
4. For any questions or concerns regarding prop choice, please send a photo of the prop to DTU prior to the competition.
5. Backdrops **may** be permitted, but only with prior written approval of DTU. DTU reserves the right to disapprove a backdrop for any reason in its sole discretion, including (without limitation) if DTU believes the backdrop may damage the floor, damage or obstruct any part of the practice or performance area, or disrupt the flow of the event (including any excessive time moving the backdrop on and off the practice or performance floor).
6. Poms are not considered "props" for the purpose of this section, and may be used only in the Pom and Spirit Showdown categories.

AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT

Crowd appeal is an important element of any cheer or mascot performance; however, teams will be judged based only on performance elements taking place on the competition floor. Involvement of non-regular members of a team ("Other Participants") in the performance of the routine is allowed in the Spirit Showdown divisions only, subject to the following restrictions:

1. Only registered and paid individuals may be on the official performance floor
2. Any Other Participants must be located in the Fan Zone and stay in the Fan Zone for the entire performance
3. The involvement of Other Participants is subject to all of the rules and regulations set forth herein for competing performers, including the safety guidelines.

STATE REQUIREMENTS

DTU will require teams to follow NFHS safety guidelines (instead of the safety guidelines set forth above) when holding any state or regional dance competition in a state that requires NFHS rules to be followed.

SECTION V: PROTOCOL IN UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

1. In the event of an unforeseen interruption of performance (i.e. production equipment malfunction that directly affects the team's or mascot's performance, music malfunction, or other potential factors), the team or mascot will be presented the option to perform again.
2. Should the affected team or mascot choose to perform again, the initial performance scores will be replaced with an entirely new score from the judges based only upon the second performance.
3. Should a team's or mascot's routine be interrupted due to an unforeseen malfunction of the team's or mascot's performance equipment, the team or mascot will not be presented the option to perform again within the performance round.
4. In the event of injury, a team's or mascot's performance may be stopped by the officials, the coach or advisor of the performer(s), or the injured individual.
5. At our discretion, the competing team or mascot may be presented the option to perform the routine again at a later time. The time of performance will be determined by us.
6. Should the injured performer express an interest in performing again, the following protocols will be followed:
 - a. Approval must be granted by the medical professionals on site, as well as the parents of the performer and the coach or advisor of the team or mascot.
 - b. If the injured participant does not receive approval from the medical professionals on site, the signature of a parent or legal guardian on a separate medical waiver will be required in order for the participant to return to the competition. If the medical professionals suspect a concussion/head injury, the participant would then require clearance from a licensed medical professional with training in head-related injuries.

SECTION VI: MUSIC

OUR POLICY

Our camps and competitions comply with all applicable laws. We will obtain the music license(s) we need as hosts in order to present our camps and competitions.

Our music policy for teams and performers attending our camps and competitions is straightforward: you may perform to **any** music that complies with the law. The law permits you to use original songs, “cover” songs or so-called “exclusive” songs (generally new songs by “unknown” music artists) under various circumstances depending upon your team’s specific use. You should always legally purchase your music, and then you should obtain any necessary permission(s) for your music based on your own consideration of applicable law.

We note that a recent case, *Tresona Multimedia v. Burbank High School Vocal Music Association* (decided March 24, 2020), ruled that the use of a song as part of a show choir’s music mix for educational purposes (not for commercial profit) was fair use and did not require any permission by, or license fee to, the song’s license holder. The court also required the licensor to pay all of the show choir’s legal fees incurred in defending the suit. Although every team and music mix is different, teams should read about this case as part of educating itself about music use law, given that many teams use music similarly to the show choir and may decide they have a strong fair use argument. A link to the case is here:

<https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2020/03/24/17-56006.pdf>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do you have a list of “preferred” music vendors whose songs are definitely acceptable at your competitions?

No. We do not promote a “preferred” list of music vendors because we believe teams should have maximum creative freedom. Although we respect the rights of vendors that sell and/or mix covers of popular songs (and you are welcome to use those songs at our competitions, subject to our music policy), we believe encouraging or “preferring” that teams use covers instead of original songs takes profits away from record labels and original music artists. Generally, a competition company that “prefers” cover music vendors simply “prefers” them because the “preferred” cover music vendors have agreed to insure the competition company (not your team) against legal liability.

Creative freedom is a foundation of the spirit industry and The College Classic. We believe that a rule that encourages teams to use the music they want, while still honoring the legal rights of copyright holders, is most appropriate for our industry and our company. Thus, we repeat our general rule: you may perform to **any** music that complies with the law.

Why not just give us a list of music, vendors and edits that are definitely okay or not okay?

Our simple rule that you may perform to **any** music that complies with the law, without detailing specific songs, vendors or edits that are definitely okay, is best for your team because:

1. *Our approach permits maximum creativity.* Creating a “short list” of permissible songs, vendors or edits necessarily excludes other songs, vendors or edits that may be perfectly legal based on your individual circumstances.
2. *Our approach allows you to control your team’s destiny.* You can and should educate yourself about copyright law and make your own determination. No one knows your team, your situation or your music needs better than you.
3. *Our approach does not give you a false sense of security.* No competition company (including us) can provide you with legal advice or guarantee that your specific music mix is legally acceptable, given how many millions of possible variations of songs and types of edits you might use. A competition company might adopt a policy that certain specific music and/or a certain type of edit is permitted (or not) at its competitions, but that does not mean that (a) teams following that policy are complying with the law, or (b) teams NOT following that policy (or companies that choose to adopt a different policy) are “illegal.” **Competition rules are just competition rules - they are not the same as the law. Educate yourself about the rights of copyright holders and make informed music choices for your team.**

What will you require for compliance?

We will simply require you to confirm within the online registration process for our camps and competitions that you have read and understand all of our rules and regulations (including our music policy) and agree to comply with them.. You should also have information about your music available in case a copyright holder has any questions about it.

RESOURCES FOR YOUR TEAM

For a richer understanding of the music permissions universe and how to protect your team’s copyrightable work (including your choreography and the right to broadcast your team’s performances), take a look at the FAQ published by the National Dance Coaches Association (NDCA), found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/national-dance-coachesassociation/ndca-faq-copyright-and-dance-teams/274095962980858>.

This FAQ may also help you evaluate whether you may or may not need specific music permissions.

SECTION VII: SCORESHEETS

DANCE CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

The College Classic encourages creativity in all categories. There is no particular style or “formula” required in any category. Dance team is about more than just imitation of previous award-winning routines - we want to inspire your dancers to showcase their own unique style. Our judges will strive to provide you with the most valuable feedback you will receive all season.

Full category descriptions may be found [linked on the Rules and Scoresheets page of our website](#).

CHEER AND MASCOT CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

The College Classic encourages creativity in all categories. There is no particular style or “formula” required in any category. Cheerleading is about more than just imitation of previous award-winning routines - we want to inspire your performers to showcase their own unique style. Our judges will strive to provide you with the most valuable feedback you will receive all season.

Full category descriptions may be found [linked on the Rules and Scoresheets page of our website](#).