



**WESTERVILLE WINTER GUARD
HANDBOOK
2025-2026**

Program Overview

Winter Guard is an indoor color guard sport originally derived from Military ceremonies or veterans' organizations ceremonies. Unlike traditional color guard, Winter Guard is performed indoors, usually in a gymnasium or an indoor arena. Performances make use of recorded music rather than a live band or orchestra. Winter Guard was invented in the United States, where it is still by far the most predominant scene for the sport.

Winter Guard ensembles commonly perform at judged competitions officiated by local and regional associations using criteria developed by Winter Guard International (WGI).

Why Westerville Winter Guard?

The Westerville Winter Guard is a performing arts organization that incorporates the use of flags, rifles, sabers, and dance. The program combines students from multiple schools throughout the district for their competitive seasons. The Westerville Winter Guard ensembles have medaled at State Championships since the program's inception and has been a WGI World finalist. The group strives to set high expectations for its students while maintaining a positive performance environment, as well as providing an outlet where students can express themselves creatively.

The Westerville Winterguard is a program that directly gives back to the Westerville Marching Bands by continuing to provide training and instruction to Westerville students during the marching band off season. Contrary to the marching band season, the show takes place indoors and is typically performed to recorded music that is not live.

Competitions

Each ensemble in the Westerville Winter Guard program will attend five to seven competitions. These will each be a day long commitment (typically on a Saturday or Sunday), as we will rehearse before we perform. Our main form of communication is through an app called BAND. It allows us to send out communication regularly as well as upload videos for training, practices and competitions.

Ensemble Breakdown

The Westerville Winter Guard organization is composed of two performing ensembles:

Varsity: This is the highest performing ensemble in the Westerville Winter Guard Program. The High School Guard competes in the Scholastic AA class in the OIPA Circuit. This group will practice two to four times a week based on the needs of the program and features students 7th-12th grade.

Juniors: is a Winter Guard ensemble that performs at the state level. Juniors is an exciting and fun introduction into the color guard world for young students to be exposed to. This group rehearses twice a week and features students in Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Rehearsal Schedule

The Varsity group will typically rehearse Wednesdays and Sundays with an occasional Saturday camp. Once competition season starts (end of January), instead of Sunday, we may change this day to Thursdays.

The Juniors group will rehearse every Monday and Wednesday and sometimes Fridays or Saturdays before shows. Check the calendars for specific days and times, and emails will be sent out weekly stating the location of rehearsal.

VARSITY- PLEASE NOTE: Varsity rehearsal schedule has to remain fluid. Meaning we may have to change days based on availability of gym space. We may get “bumped” from the use of a gym based on the priority of a sanctioned school sport/activity requiring the space. When this happens we will notify you as soon as possible.

If you know of an affordable space that can fit a 60’x70’ tarp with high enough ceilings to toss equipment, please let us know!!

Rehearsal Expectations

Be prompt. Be prepared. Be proactive. Be polite.

Be Prompt

- Arrive on time. Rehearsal begins on time, so it is important to arrive at least 15 minutes before rehearsal begins to physically and mentally be ready to prepare yourself to be your best. If we happen to travel off site to rehearse, students may have to arrive at our home site 30 minutes prior to the rehearsal start time to load our equipment and travel to the rehearsal facility.
- Do not leave until dismissed. Rehearsal itself ends at the time given by the instructors, however students are also expected to work together to fold the tarp, load the trailer, clean up the rehearsal space, put away equipment, etc. It is likely the students will not be ready to leave until approximately 15 minutes after rehearsal ends. How quickly members get home relies mainly on how efficiently members decide to move after rehearsal is completed.

Be Prepared

- Know your work. It is your job as a cast member to practice your individual routines at home so we can work to improve ensemble concepts and forms during full group rehearsals.
- Wear appropriate clothing to rehearsal. You will be moving, dancing, and spinning for most of rehearsal, so plan accordingly. Jeans, jean shorts, sandals and cargo pants are examples of things that should not be worn at rehearsal. Rings, dangly earrings and necklaces are not permitted to be worn, as they are a safety hazard. Nails should be trimmed for safety purposes as well.
- Bring your equipment and keep it maintained to performance quality.
- Bring water to every rehearsal.
- Keep your cell phone on silent. They are to be stowed away during active practice. The director may hold phones for the duration of normal weekly rehearsals. If there is an emergency where a parent/guardian needs to reach a member, they should contact the director.
- Spit out gum BEFORE you step into our rehearsal space. It is an extreme safety hazard.

Be Proactive

- Lead by example. Every student is expected to be a leader in their own rite. Treat others the way you want to be treated, and lend a helping hand whenever you can. Leave the teaching to the instructors.
- Embrace responsibility. You may be given an individual duty, such as loading equipment, working the sound system, maintaining uniforms, attending to the guard box, cleaning up, etc. This means you have been entrusted with a crucial task that impacts the entire group. Take pride in the confidence we have in you to keep your group fully functional.

Be Polite

- Be respectful of your peers. Positivity is the key to a unified team. No hazing or bullying will be tolerated.
- Be respectful of your instructors. If a staff member is speaking, it is important for every member of the ensemble to listen. Students are expected to not talk or spin when a staff member is giving instructions.

Special Rehearsal Circumstances

Staging Camp

The HS Group may have a few “staging” camps that can go as late as 10pm. Staging is when our drill designer comes to rehearsal and gives performers direct, real time instructions. **Members are to dress in all black, form fitting attire for these rehearsals.** Staging camp attendance is required for the full rehearsal. If for some reason a student is unable to attend for all or part of these practices, he/she will be required to get someone to stand in for them, or it may result in the member being removed from the program.

Open Gym

Winterguard is a highly competitive activity and practice outside of rehearsal is necessary to perfect technique and show routines. The instructors will occasionally host "open gym" on nights when full group rehearsal is not scheduled. Open gym is when the students can come in and get instruction and practice on their own to improve their individual technique. **Attendance at these informal practices is never required but is strongly encouraged for every student to perform his/her best.** The staff takes notice of who participates in open gym and does take this into consideration when determining each cast member's role in their show. Students may attend another guard's rehearsal/open gym if they refrain from being disruptive to the rehearsal flow. A staff member will always try to keep track of students at open gym, but the staff's main priority is the rehearsal taking place.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled rehearsals and shows and is crucial to the success of our performing ensembles. In a Winter Guard show, every single student is important to the group's success; if one piece of the puzzle is missing, the big picture will never look complete. If you are sick and cannot attend rehearsal, you **must** bring a doctor's note, and should let the director know at least 3 hours before rehearsal. Scheduled practices should not be missed due to dentist, orthodontist, physical therapy, or other routine doctor's appointments. **Excused absences are at the discretion of the instructors,** so communication is key. *Birthday parties, family dinners, driving classes, college visits, vacations, work, church activities and/or homework are examples of unacceptable reasons to miss rehearsal.* Not attending practice, or repetitive tardiness, for any reason may result in a member having an altered role in the show, and more than one unexcused absence may result in removal from the program.

Disciplinary Policy

If behavioral problems occur with member(s):

- Step 1 - Member(s) will meet with coaches in hopes of resolving the issue. Parents/Guardians may be contacted based on level of concern.
- Step 2 – Parents/Guardians are contacted, all coaches are consulted, and board is notified. Discussion will be had, with all parties, to determine resolution.
- Step 3 – Member(s) removed from program

There is a ZERO-Tolerance policy for alcohol/drug use and/or physical violence.

Phone Policy

If the use of personal phones begins to affect rehearsal etiquette, staff may require phones to be put in our phone storage bin- allowing the members to only use their phones at certain times.

Parental/Volunteer Expectations and Guidelines

- The parental structure for the Westerville Winterguard is a support system only. Keep the teaching to the instructional staff.
- Parents are not to pick up their children until the members have been dismissed, all the proper equipment has been loaded, and the practice site has been cleaned up. Again, this is typically about 15 minutes after rehearsal but relies tremendously on how efficiently members choose to move after rehearsal.
- Parents must refrain from interrupting or interfering with guard rehearsals. The staff will dictate the content and flow of rehearsals. Please ask the director ahead of time if it is ok to come to a rehearsal.
- Parents are expected to be respectful to all staff members and other members of the program. Yelling and other hostile behavior will not be tolerated.
- On show days, parents should refrain from visiting members during stretches and warm-up. The members are there to perform and compete. They need to focus on performing and doing the best job that they can do without distraction.
- Lead parent roles may be given to certain parents at the director's discretion.
- When housing offsite at a hotel, the parents are not to interfere with the rooming assignments. The members will room together, not with parents.
- Most importantly, the Westerville Winterguard Staff is here to provide an enriching learning experience for your child. We are all working for the same goal, so support and positivity for the program as a whole - every member and staff - will help make everything run smoothly. If an issue does arrive, feel free to contact the head director of the program.

Communication

A schedule will be set that displays when each respective ensemble rehearses and show schedule. These rehearsal times are not concrete and subject to change. An email will go out every Monday with information regarding when and where practices will be. A show schedule will be attached to the email if there is a show that coming weekend. Emails will also provide information regarding fundraising and other information. There will also be an app called "BAND" that is used for regular announcements and videos. It is recommended for all members and parents to be a part of the app.

Student Academic Commitment

The winterguard staff and board realizes that being part of this program is a big time commitment, and that juggling the balance of schoolwork and rehearsals may be difficult at times. To keep students accountable, we may require members to have grading reports filled out by their teachers one to two weeks prior to every interim report and report card. We are passionate about our athletes of the arts to be diligent students, so please let the director know if they can help *outside* of rehearsal.

Social Media Policy

- Members and parents may only share information about our show (in any form) after our premier performance in January. Members must refrain from posting pictures or sharing information of the show concept or design in any form to anyone outside of contracted members and staff. This includes phone calls, pictures, text messages, emails, or social media sites including, but not limited to, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter.
- Bullying other members, passive aggressive comments or inappropriate language will not be permitted on social media. "Sub-tweeting" or talking behind someone's back, will not be tolerated. A staff member has the right to ask a member or parent to take down a social media post.
- All social media posts pertaining to the Westerville Winterguard must present the program in a positive light.
- No illegal actions are to be posted on social media. This will result in removal from the guard.

Dues

All student performers have fees associated with their respective ensemble, which will cover their fair-share fund (contributes to show equipment, uniforms, other incidentals related to show), use of uniforms and equipment during the season. Families are expected to follow a payment plan and communicate any issues with the instructors. We are willing to make some accommodations on an individual basis. If unable to make the fee obligations by the dates below, please contact the director or westervilleguard@outlook.com.

Payments may be made by Cash, Check, Zeffy or Venmo.

- *All checks payable to Westerville Winter Guard Performance Ensemble*
- *Venmo: @Westerville-Winterguard*
- *Zeffy Link sent to you for Credit or Debit Cards*

Juniors:

DEC 1st: \$150
JAN 5th: \$125
FEB 9th: \$125

Total: \$400

Varsity:

DEC 1st: \$250
JAN 5th: \$250
FEB 9th: \$200
MAR 9th: \$200

Total: \$900**

***Fees will be lowered to \$800 if paid in full by December 1st.*

Once Registration is complete there will be a follow up email confirming the student's level of enrollment, payment options including a link to pay by credit/debit card.

Fundraising

Fees only cover a fraction of costs associated with Winter Guard. All performing members are expected to participate in **EVERY** fundraiser regardless of financial need. This helps keep dues down for everyone! There will be a different fundraiser every month. Students are expected to participate to help keep costs down for everyone.

Individual Fundraiser:

Fundraiser established for the student-with all profits going towards their fees.

- Outcomes are added to the back end of the students fees reducing final payment(s).

Group Fundraiser:

Fundraiser established for the program- with all profits going towards the remaining expense budget. Students are required to participate in all group fundraisers and may be held to an additional amount added to their fees due to lack of participation.

Had a successful past fundraiser or have an idea for a good one? Let us know!!

Sponsor

Every member (Junior & Varsity) is expected to bring in a sponsor.

Sponsor Donation= \$150 or more

The Business/ Person will receive:

- Company Logo or Name printed on the back of the member/staff show shirts.
- Company Logo or Name on our website
- Company Logo or Name advertised at all home events throughout the season

Westerville Winterguard is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization= their donation/sponsorship may be tax deductible.

Registration is OPEN!

Visit www.westervillewinterguard.com

Complete:

- Student & Guardian Information
 - Medical Information
 - Emergency Contact Information
- Transportation Permission Form
- Covid 19 Waiver
- Season Fees Form
- Fundraising Form
- Intent Form

Once Completed you will receive an email from westervilleguard@outlook.com (within 48 hours) confirming your registration and payment selection. A link will be provided in this email to set up payment information for fees (if needed).

Individual Fundraiser will be established for the student once registration is complete.