

AN OK FIRESTORM CHEER PARENT'S GUIDE TO COMPETITIONS!

INTRO:

Hi everyone! It is that time of year where the kids and coaches are getting excited for competitions to begin and parents are starting to feel more overwhelmed than normal as they don't always know what to expect. Trust me, even once you have been in cheer for a few years, some of the terminology, goings on of a competition etc. will still seem foreign to you! Take a breath! Just like your athlete you will get through the day and you will do great! To help you, here are some tips, tricks and frequently asked questions which will help you understand what is happening around you!

SCHEDULES AND TIMELINES:

Coaches will give you a schedule that includes a time to be at the venue, an approximate competition time and an awards time. At the competition you may notice a whole bunch of other times listed in your program. These are the very strictly enforced warm up times that each team gets. Coaches will ask for your athlete to arrive well ahead of the warm up time to ensure they are ready, have had a chance to watch a few teams and get used to the venue (to help settle nerves), stretched, marked their routine etc. before entering into warm up.

I'M AT THE EVENT, HOW DO I READ MY PROGRAM?

Reading a program can sometimes be a little complicated to understand all the lingo that you will see there. This list will hopefully help break it down and make it understandable! In addition to being divided by levels (answered in the next two questions), teams are divided by age, size of their team, and type of performance.

<p>AGES: Tiny: Ages 3-6 Mini: Ages 5-8 Youth: Ages 5-11 Junior: Ages 5-14 Senior: Ages 11-18 Open: Ages 17+ International Open = Ages 14+</p>	<p>SMALL, MEDIUM OR LARGE: While there are recommended number break downs, it is up to the discretion of the competition how they divide the divisions (or if they divide the divisions at their event. Athletes Coed* = 1 or more males •Coed only applies to level 3 or higher. Lower levels can have multiple male athletes and not be coed.</p>	<p>ABBREVIATIONS: (refer to age list) IOAG6 – International Open all Girl Level 6 IOCOED6- International Open Coed Level 6 IOCOED5 – International Open Coed Level 5 IOAG5 – International Open All Girl level 5</p>
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<p>INDY: 1 minute routine performed by one athlete to show their elite tumbling, jump and dance skills.</p> <p>DUO/PAIR: 1 minute routine performed by two athletes to show their elite tumbling, jump and dance skills.</p> <p>STUNT GROUP: 1 minute routine of 4-5 athletes performing elite stunting skills only.</p> <p>SPECIAL NEEDS: A team comprised of athletes with a variety of special needs performing a simplified routine or skill demo.</p> <p>PREP: A competitive routine of 2 minutes in length, performed by a team that practices 2 hours a week or less or that is part of a half year program in their gym. Usually will perform Level 1 skills with a lower expectation on tumbling numbers.</p>
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LEVEL 1? LEVEL 3? WHAT AM I WATCHING?

On the program after the age and size of the routine, there will be a number listed. This is the level of the division that team is competing in. Each level specifies the specific skills that the teams are allowed to perform (regardless of age) and what the judges will be marking them on. This way a team performing Back tucks is not judged against a team whose highest skill is a back walkover. In the chart below, please find a very simplified list of the skills you will see in each level:

Level	STUNTS	PYRAMID	TUMBLING
Novice	No stunts allowed. Teams will work body positions and pyramids on the ground, no bases.		Cartwheels and forward rolls only.
1	Single leg stunts at waist level or below, straight cradle dismount, inversions (upside down) must have flyer hand staying on the floor start to finish, Shoulder height on 2 feet or on one leg (if on one leg they must be holding hands with someone on the ground. ¼ turns. No baskets. Pyramids: Shoulder level flyer can be on one leg with hand to hand contact with another flyer. Groups can extend (arms straight) if attached to another stunt. Cannot release (throw and catch the flyer) except in a cradle. hand to hand must be with someone at shoulder height or below		Cartwheels, Roundoffs, forward and back wards rolls, bridges, handstands, back and front walkovers only.
2	Single leg stunts at shoulder height, Extensions (bases arms are completely straight up), ½ turns into stunts, ¼ turn cradles, barrel rolls (360* in a cradle to cradle), straight basket tosses, no releases (one base must be in contact with the flyer at all times except cradles and tosses), inversions (upside down into stunts) Pyramid: Extended one leg stunts if the flyer is holding the hand of another flyer, no releases (one person must stay in contact with the flyer and the		Standing back handspring or step out back handspring, multiple handsprings in a running pass, all level 1 skills

	ground), hand to hand must be with someone at shoulder height or below.	attached to back handsprings.
3	Single leg extended stunts, 360* turn up or down from shoulder height, inversions in stunts as long as hand to hand contact with someone on the ground, or out of stunts, releases to forehead height, single skill in basket toss Pyramid: can front or backflip as long as stay in contact with one person on the ground, 360*extension with hand to hand contact, single leg extended with hand to hand or hand to foot contact, releases allowed with 2 hand contact. Two foot extensions can be attached together.	Everything above plus jump or standing to multiple back handspring, running into front or back tucks or aerials
4	360* to extended 2 foot or extended lib (no body position), double twist to cradle from 2 feet at shoulder, inversions from shoulder level, Double skills in basket tosses, releases from extension to shoulder height, releases up to extension. Pyramid: Front and back flipping with 2 points of contact with other flyers (hand and hand or hand and foot), transition group to group in the air if connected. Full to one leg with one hand to hand contact. Extension can brace one leg extended	Everything above plus standing back tucks, running layouts, Pike outs, X out and front aerials.
4.2	All level 4 stunt skills listed.	All level 2 Tumbling skills listed.
5	1 ½ or double twisting to and from extended stunts, releases at extension, inversions from extension, multiple skills in baskets, inversions to extension, twisting releases from extension Pyramids: one arm or foot braced transitions that can twist, flip or change groups, double twists into and out of skills, extended one legs all attached together. Pyramids can pass through 2 ½ people high but can't stop	Everything above plus standing fulls and running fulls and doubles.
6	All of the above for Level 5 plus free flipping releases out of stunts (no hand to hand contact), and free flipping/twisting releases into stunts. Pyramids at 2 ½ people high can stop and transition (Flyers held by flyers), Multiple skills including inversions in basket tosses.	Everything from Level 5.

MY ATHLETE COMPETES AS A SENIOR 2, BUT THERE WERE SENIOR 2'S ALREADY THIS MORNING BEFORE HER SESSION. WHO WERE THEY?

What you are seeing from the morning session of the program are the school teams. While they

have levels and age breakdowns the same as all-star, the school teams have a different score sheet which includes a mandatory cheer portion of the routine and less tumbling. The cheer is usually one minute in length and involves crowd leading, the use of poms, sign boards and other traditional props. If you are there early enough to watch, feel free to yell along with them!

The school divisions include Junior 1 and 2, Senior 2, 3, 4.2 and AG or Coed 4.

WHAT ARE THE ALL STAR TEAMS BEING SCORED ON?

Look down at the front of the floor or back of the audience and you will see a long panel of judges on a riser. That panel is divided into two groups of judges. Each group can be anywhere from 4-6+ judges. There is a building judge, tumbling judge, performance judge, deductions judge and a safety judge. If you look at your program you will notice that the teams alternate divisions as they perform (For example, Small Mini 1, followed by a Small Youth 1, followed by another Small Mini 1). The same group of judges will judge all the routines within the same age group and division, so by alternating the teams it gives the judges the chance to finish scoring the last team and giving the feedback while the next team is being judged by the other group of judges. Otherwise we would have to wait 5 minutes of dead time between every routine for the judges to catch up. On each section of the score sheet the athletes are judged in the high, medium, or low range based on the variety of skills they show, the difficulty level of those skills, the overall technique shown by the team etc. The areas on the score sheets are as follows:

STUNTS: 3 separate scores for Difficulty, Technique, and Creativity

PYRAMIDS: 3 Separate scores for Difficulty, Technique and Creativity

STUNT QUANTITY: A set number of flyers in the air performing the same elite skill at the same time calculated according to the size of your team.

STANDING TUMBLING: Must show the minimum number of level appropriate standing tumbling skills at least one time in the routine, as set by the number of people on the routine (example a team of 15 must have 1 level appropriate pass with a minimum of 9 athletes to get on the score sheet)

RUNNING TUMBLING: Same ratios as standing but must have a power hurdle or take several steps into the level appropriate running tumbling skill. Does not need to be synchronized with everyone (higher points if you do though. Judged on Difficulty (number of passes, type of skills shown) and Technique.

JUMPS: Must show 2 attached jumps with one single jump or 3 attached (called whip jumps) to score top score. Minis and Tiny must show 3 jumps but don't need to be connected. Judged on Difficulty (number of jumpers, variety of jumps) and technique (toes pointed, legs straight, height)

TOSSES: For Level 2 and higher. Judged on Difficulty and technique.

DANCE: Judged on Difficulty (Timing, footwork, visuals, formation changes) and Technique (sharp motions, pointed toes etc.)

CHOREOGRAPHY: Judged on creativity of the choreography, appropriateness to the team, timing with the music.

OVERALL: Judged on athlete showmanship, energy levels of the routine, facial expression, overall impact of the routine.

WHAT DO THE DEDUCTIONS AND SAFETY JUDGE DO?

It can be hard to notice some of the little things going on while a routine is running, but these two

judges are trained to notice everything.

DEDUCTIONS JUDGE: This judge is only looking for the things that go drastically wrong in a routine. This can include hands touching down on tumbling, bums touching down on jumps, or stunt bobbles or falls. Each of these things has a different deduction it will get. For example if 3 athletes at different times do backwalkovers and each of them touch their knee to the mat before standing up, that will count as 3 tumbling falls. If you hear your athletes excited or setting goals for a "Hit Zero" routine, what they are aiming for is a 0 score from the deductions judge.

SAFETY JUDGE: The safety judge does essentially the same thing as the deduction judge, but they are looking for rule infractions instead of day of performance mistakes. This could be a team performing an illegal skill for their level, an athlete wearing jewelry, a pyramid skill that is unattached that must be attached to be legal, sportsmanship infractions etc. This judge will deduct 2 full points from the score sheet for every rule broken.

HOW DO THE JUDGES KEEP UP WITH THE ROUTINES AND SEE ALL THESE LITTLE THINGS?

Not only do all the judges have to go through extensive training and refresher courses every

year before they are allowed to judge, at 90% of competitions now they also have instant video

playback on the judges table so can go back and watch any part of the routine to ensure they

have clearly seen what they are about to score.

WHY ARE PEOPLE RUSHING UP TO THE AREA RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE MAT?

This is the fan area. During your teams performance, or the performance from a team from your gym, athletes and spectators fill the front of the mat area to cheer their team on.

Parents are welcome to come down and sit up front during their child's team. Please be aware though, if you are videoing, sometimes the video is clearer from up in the stands.

When your team is done, please exit the front right away so the next teams' fans can fill the space. Do not stand around talking; save conversations until you are back in the stands.

HOW DOES THE AWARD CEREMONY WORK?

During the awards ceremony, all the teams and coaches from a section of the competition will all come down and sit on the mat. Awards can be handed out one of two ways. If the competition is offering a placing for every team, if there were 6 in the division they will start at 6th place and work their way up to 1st. If the competition is only awarding the top 50% of teams, they may only announce 3rd-1st. The coaches will have a breakdown of the entire division that they will be able to discuss later with the team exactly where they placed.

Placings are awarded to each group of teams. For Example, Small Senior Level 2 and Large Senior Level 2 will be placed separately. At the end of an awards section they will

call the division champion. This award goes to the team that in their level (Not just their age group) had the highest score. This means that a Youth 1 team, if they won 1st place for their age division, AND had the highest score of all the 1st place level 1 teams in the different ages, will be awarded Division Champion.

WHY DO SOME ATHLETES HAVE THEIR BELLIES SHOWING? I THOUGHT THAT WASN'T ALLOWED?

The USASF rule states that an athlete on a SENIOR or OPEN team may have a uniform that is

a crop top. All other age groups must have a uniform that covers their midsection. If you see a very young athlete in a uniform that is a crop top, chances are they are crossing over onto a senior team and that uniform is the Senior teams uniform.

WHY AREN'T PARENTS ALLOWED IN THE BACK ROOM?

This is a safety precaution. First the athletes focus should be 100% on their coaches and the job at hand and a parent can be a distraction. This is the same way parents are usually not allowed in a hockey change room. Secondly, the security at events is kept tight for the athletes safety. The security guards at the door do not know if you are legitimately the parent of a child or whether you are just saying that to gain access to a room full of little girls and boys. Thus, only coaches, athletes or those with an access band (only gym owners have the capabilities of purchasing and giving these out) are allowed in the back area. Purchasing additional bands for the back room can cost anywhere from \$30-\$95 depending on the competition.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE:

A few do's and don'ts to keep in mind:

- Stay seated while a team is on the mat. Do not be standing or walking up and down isles except between performances.
- Watch what you say about other teams, you never know who is sitting close to you. Sportsmanship, Sportsmanship, Sportsmanship.
- Cheer equally for all teams during awards (do not scream and shout when a team places below your team)
- Cheer loud and proud all the time. Unlike dance competitions you will notice silence is not common at a cheer competition.
- DO NOT CALL YOUR CHILD'S NAME WHILE THEY ARE PERFORMING AND DO NOT WAVE AT THEM. These are serious safety concerns that can cause your child to become distracted and an accident can happen.
- If a teams' music dies out part way through their routine, listen to the athletes and parents up in their cheering section and keep count with them! We would want the audience to do the same if it was one of our teams!

WHY ARE NIKKI AND PETE MCing OR ON THE JUDGES TABLE?

Our gym owners have been involved in the BC cheerleading industry for many years and because of this wear many different hats. Nikki is a trained judged specializing in safety, deductions, building and performance and Pete has been MCing many of the major competitions for more than a decade. They also work closely with several competition

companies. You may see this usually at Cheerfest or Mardi Parti, and of course our home competition. If you see them in these roles please do not approach them as approaching Nikki on the judges table can actually result in an infraction for our team (a parent can NEVER approach the judges table). We will be with our teams when it is time for them to go into warmup etc. Otherwise we have an amazing staff who is highly trained and has the back room and your athlete well under control. Nikki is also the BC Cheerleading All-Star rep for the province, so may be performing additional duties at the competition on behalf of the board of directors in addition to her role with our gym.

CAN I SEE THE SCORE SHEET?

All parents are welcome to join us on the mat our first practice back after a competition where we will be going over the score sheets with the athletes in detail. Come, listen and learn!

WORLDS, SUMMIT, THE ONE? WHAT ON EARTH IS MY ATHLETE TALKING ABOUT?

You may notice at some competitions that there are teams indicated as World's teams or that

the competition will be giving away bids to World's, Summit, or The One. Each of these is a prestigious competition that a team must win their way into.

-WORLDS: International USASF World Championships for the top Level 5 and 6 teams held in Disney World at the end of April. Usually over 30 different countries are represented. Teams here represent their country AND their gym. (as opposed to the IASF worlds where it is more like the Olympics and one team made up of the top athletes around their nation competes under their country name directly against other countries. Usually 70+ countries are represented at the IASF worlds. This is held Thursday and Friday before the USASF Worlds)

. CHEERFEST and SEA TO SKY will be handing out Worlds bids.

-THE SUMMIT: All Level International Finals offering levels from 1-5 in USASF and International Divisions. Also in Disney World, the weekend after the USASF worlds. To earn a Summit bid, a team must not only win their division at a Summit qualifying competition (example 1st place Small Junior Level 1), but they also must be the highest score of their level (Top score of ALL level 1 teams Mini-Senior). A bid can be At Large (no money), Partial Paid (entry fee and part of travel is paid for by the competition) or Full Paid (Competition pays entry fee, travel and accommodation). SEA TO SKY is the only competition we attend that hands out Summit bids. Sometimes you will see a team that did not win first be awarded a Summit bid. This is usually because the team that scored above them either already has a bid or they turned the bid down. All bids are announced the Monday night after a competition on Varsity TV Live online.

BC ALL-STAR GYMS:

Absolute Cheer and Tumbling.....North Vancouver.....Gold, Black and White
Academy of Cheer Excellence.....Mission; BC.....White and Lime Green
Adrenaline All-Stars..... Richmond.....Black, Teal and White

Aurora All-StarsFort St.JohnPurple, Turquoise, Pink, Green
 Coquitlam AngelsCoquitlamNavy, Silver, White
 Energetic Edge Cheerleading.....Fort St. John.....Black, Turquoise and Green
 Freeze Athletics.....Kamloops.....White, Navy and Turquoise
 Infinity AthleticsAldergrove.....Blue, Black and White
 Island Elite.....Victoria.....White, Seafoam, and Teal
 Langley Cheer and Athletics.....Cloverdale/Langley..... Red, Black and White
 Midnight Cheer Athletics.....Vancouver.....Navy, Gold and White
 Okanagan Firestorm Cheerleading.....Kelowna..... Purple, White +Turquoise
 Panthers Cheer Athletics.....Richmond..... Black, Hot Pink and White
 Pacific Cheer EmpireVictoriaPurple, Black, White
 Peace Arch Champion Cheerleading.....South Surrey.....Green, Silver and White
 Royal City CheerNew WestminsterBlack, Rainbow
 Valley Stars.....Abbotsford..... Blue, Green and White
 Vancouver All Stars.....Port Coquitlam & Tsawwassen..... Blue, Black and White
 Xtreme Allstar Cheer & Dance.....Langley.....Purple, Silver and White

