

Administrators' Guide

for



STUNT

A women's sport developed and supported by



stuntthesport.org

STUNT Overview

STUNT is a new competitive team sport, derived from traditional cheerleading. STUNT was established by USA Cheer, the national governing body for all disciplines of cheer. USA Cheer is a nonprofit that through its delegate membership provides a formalized structure to serve all the stakeholders in the cheer community with National Championships, formalized safety standards and rules that are designed specifically for each discipline and over 1,000 competitions across the country. In addition, each year USA Cheer puts together two national cheerleading teams to represent the United States in international competition.

Unlike traditional cheerleading, STUNT removes all of the crowd-leading and performances, and instead focuses exclusively on the technical and athletic components of cheer. This includes partner stunts, pyramids, basket tosses, jumps and tumbling skills. Each game will consist of four quarters of play with a halftime between the second and third quarters. The quarters of play are described as follows: 1st) Partner Stunts; 2nd) Pyramids & Tosses; 3rd) Group Jumps & Tumbling; 4th) Team Performance.

In STUNT, the rules and scoring system are focused solely on routine execution and there are only two teams competing at a time. There is one set of rules and one scoring system that is followed at every game. The competition is objective and the head-to-head format is easy to follow for the crowd. Scoring Officials are in place to evaluate and score the execution of predetermined skills and technique used by the team when performing the different elements.

Predetermined routines associated with each quarter's technical areas are distributed to STUNT team coaches prior the start of the season. This new format incorporates all the excitement of a typical cheerleading competition, coupled with the coaching strategy of a regular sporting event. The fourth quarter is the "Team Performance," which combines routines from the previous quarters into longer, more challenging performances.

Anyone who follows sports will be able to follow STUNT. The head-to-head format simplifies the scoring process, while also allowing fans to track the results of the competition as each quarter is completed. Games last approximately forty-five minutes to an hour and teams compete simultaneously similar to most other sports. In this new format, teams will have season records and national rankings that determine their post-season play, much like other sports. Post season play can also be tracked by the fans, much like "March Madness" through STUNT's interactive website.

For more details on STUNT, go to usacheer.org or stuntthesport.org

Questions and Answers: STUNT as a School Sponsored Sport

I. Sport Overview

1. What is STUNT?

STUNT is a new competitive team sport, derived from traditional cheerleading. STUNT removes all of the crowd-leading and performances, and instead focuses exclusively on the technical and athletic components of cheer. This includes partner stunts, pyramids, basket tosses, jumps and tumbling skills. Each game will consist of four quarters of play with a halftime between the second and third quarters. The quarters of play are described as follows: 1st) Partner Stunts; 2nd) Pyramids & Tosses; 3rd) Group Jumps & Tumbling; 4th) Team Performance.

2. How is STUNT different from traditional cheer?

In traditional cheerleading, teams are primarily focused on crowd leadership at other sports' athletic contests. When traditional cheerleading teams engage in competition, it is by combining the unique skills of crowd-leading. These routines include actual game cheers and chants as well as the use of signs and include "crowd leadership" and other entertainment categories in their scoring. The rules governing these skills take into account that they will be performing during games as well as in competition settings. For example, there are rules for traditional cheerleading that restrict what skills can be performed at basketball games. Being that there are a wide range of traditional cheerleading styles and ability levels, the rules may change from one competition to another.

In STUNT, the rules and scoring system are focused solely on routine execution and there are only two teams competing at a time. There is one set of rules and one scoring system that is followed at every game. The competition is objective and the head-to-head format is easy to follow for the crowd. Scoring Officials are in place to evaluate and score the execution of predetermined skills and technique used by the team when performing the different elements.

II. Participation

1. Why should schools offer a varsity STUNT team for its students?

STUNT provides an effective way for schools to expand participation opportunities for women. There is substantial interest in the youth pipeline to make girls STUNT a highly popular sport at the collegiate level. Not only can STUNT draw from the significant number of girls who participate in cheerleading, but from other high school female athletes who do not have opportunities to compete in college, as most STUNT athletes participated in other sports at the high school level.

With its foundations in cheerleading, STUNT can draw from athletes that participate in school-based and All Star cheerleading programs. The 2017 Sport & Fitness Industry Association survey showed a total of 4,029,000 cheerleaders in the United States. Participation by those in the high school age range (cheering for their school or for an All Star program) was estimated at 596,000 – 99.3% of which are females.

2. Why does STUNT require such a high number to field a team?

Because of the physical exertion and nature of STUNT, the new sport requires a higher number of athletes to participate. Each of the first three quarters will utilize 4-16 athletes, and the 4th quarter could potentially utilize 20+ athletes. This provides the potential of 8-10 athletes for development and potential substitution much like any other sport.

III. Legal Obligations

1. Do schools have a legal obligation to provide equal participation opportunities for men and women?

Title IX requires that schools provide equitable athletic participation opportunities for its female and male students. In order to comply with these requirements institutions must pass one of these three tests:

- a) Proportionality—males and females participate in athletics in numbers substantially proportional to their respective enrollments in school, or
- b) History and Continued Practice of Program Expansion—the institution shows a history and continuing practice of program expansion which is demonstrably responsive to the developing interests and abilities of members of the underrepresented sex, or
- c) Full Accommodation of Interests and Abilities—the institution demonstrates that the interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex (females) are fully and effectively accommodated by the existing programs.

An institution fulfills the compliance requirement for participant opportunities if it adheres to any (or just one) of the three tests listed above. By adding a STUNT team for women, institutions can improve their ability to comply with these three tests.

2. How will STUNT meet the Office for Civil Rights standards of a sport to qualify for Title IX purposes?

To determine whether a team is engaging in a varsity sport, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has developed a detailed set of guidelines to determine on a case-by-case basis if the activity in question meets the criteria for sport. Specifically, it considers several factors related to an activity's structure, administration, team preparation, and competition.

Because there is a presumption by OCR that traditional cheerleading is not considered a sport for Title IX purposes, USA Cheer has developed STUNT as a separate discipline from cheer that is designed specifically in accordance with the OCR's guidelines for sport. For example, the exclusive purpose of the STUNT team is competition, it has a fully developed regular season and post season competition schedule, and it is governed and regulated by an established national governing body—USA Cheer. (See below for further details).

3. What regulations/obligations will arise out of STUNT being designed as an NCAA Sport?

As an NCAA Sport, STUNT teams will be subject to NCAA rules and regulations similar to other intercollegiate varsity sports. The status and benefits of an NCAA varsity program are accompanied by an array of responsibilities that must be met by the institution, the team, the coaches and the student-athletes. For instance, depending upon off-season or playing season, the NCAA delegates a specific limit on hours of practice and strength and conditioning time.

The elements of academic study hall, strength and conditioning, daily practices, structured NCAA competition and academic eligibility standards are among just a few of the elements involved in the transition of the team structure. These changes, while demanding, will have positive effects on the program including increased visibility, professional coaching and administration, and inclusion in athletic departmental policy and planning.

IV. Devising Programs

1. How will schools be able to identify enough participants to field a viable team without taking away from its traditional cheerleading squad?

Athletics is not a zero-sum environment in which the participation of students in STUNT comes at the expense of the loss of participation of students in traditional cheerleading. There are more than enough women and girls interested in cheerleading and STUNT to field squads for both. The vast majority of high school cheerleading programs are all female while nearly all Division I colleges and around half of all college cheer programs are coed teams. Unlike coed cheer teams, all female STUNT teams have multiple roles for female athletes (primary base, secondary base, back spot, top). This creates opportunities for various body types and heights that match the role requirements. This disparity between the percentage of all female teams in high school and the percentage of coed teams in college creates a great opportunity for high school females entering college to participate on a STUNT team roster.

A recent survey by the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators estimates college cheerleading participation at approximately 39,000 female and 13,000 male participants. Of the 148 colleges responding, the trend was for a college to have one cheerleading team made up of a mixture of males and females. In these cases where only one coed team exists, there is a limited opportunity for female athletes as the skill requirements are for “top” partners.

In addition, most traditional college cheerleading squads turn away three to five times the number of females they select. Combined with the number of All Star athletes that are not interested in traditional cheerleading, this demonstrates there are a large number of interested athletes without an outlet at the collegiate level who can participate in STUNT.

2. What risk of injury is there for STUNT athletes?

STUNT has shown itself to have significantly less risk than other women’s sports at the college level. STUNT injury data has been tracked through athletic trainers and coach reporting mechanisms.

The lower injury risk is attributed to the design of the game, where routines are determined by the competition committee, and all teams prepare according to these routines. Game play allows teams with lower ability level to have the opportunity to control the overall ability level of the game for both teams. In addition, specific skills can be modified to a lower ability level with a comparable deduction being assessed. It is to the advantage of the coach to modify a skill for a lower deduction than to risk a fall and be assessed a higher deduction. These factors, plus the non-reactionary nature of the game combine to limit risk considerably.

Injuries per 1,000 Athletic Exposures

| Sport | Practice | Game | Source |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|---|
| STUNT ¹ | 0.89 | 0.46 | See below |
| Soccer | 16.40 | 5.20 | https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941298/ |
| Basketball | 7.68 | 3.99 | https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941290/ |
| Gymnastics | 15.19 | 6.07 | https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941288/ |

¹ Data from 2010-2015 Athletic Trainer reports from STUNT games and 2016-17 Injury Survey to coaches including practices and games. Game data collected from athletic trainers in 2010-15 supports data collected from coaches in 2016-17 (0.46 AE vs 0.42 AE).

3. What type of training is required for coaches and officials to provide STUNT teams? What resources are available to assist with this process?

Training for coaches and officials is paramount in minimizing risk in athletics. STUNT provides online training webinars for all coaches and officials.

Coaches: USA Cheer requires all coaches to have completed and remain up to date with the Risk Management Course from The American Association of Cheerleading Coaches (AACCA). The NCAA, NAIA, NFHS, and USA Cheer all recognize the benefits of the AACCA Safety Course, a risk management program that teaches risk minimization for cheerleading skills. As the skills in STUNT derive from cheerleading skills, the AACCA risk management course is an important resource for STUNT coaches. The course addresses the medical and legal responsibilities of a program as well as proper skill progression and performer readiness.

Additionally, all USA Cheer coaches, including STUNT coaches, must complete a nationally recognized concussion course through the CDC or NFHS, the USA Cheer Maltreatment Course, and a national background check.

Finally, USA Cheer has developed an online interactive training program for the game of STUNT itself. This course provides training on the rules of the game as well as commonly employed strategies for practice and game settings. Beyond these training programs, most STUNT coaches are also experienced cheerleading coaches. They travel with their teams to on-site training programs with their peers and stay up to date on skill and safety techniques.

Officials: STUNT Officials and Referees complete an online interactive training program and testing to ensure that routines are properly scored based on the degree of execution error. Referees undergo additional game management training that includes procedures for dealing with potential injuries.

V. Rules Governing Competition

1. How will games and tournaments be structured to ensure that new STUNT teams have enough regular season and post season competition?

STUNT is a Spring sport. The competition format features teams competing in both head-to-head and tournament style games. During each season, USA Cheer works closely with schools to help identify teams to compete with and host tournaments for STUNT teams across different regions. Once designated as an NCAA Sport, STUNT teams will be required to compete in a minimum of 12 competitions, with a maximum of 16. At the high school level, as a varsity sport STUNT teams should participate in 8-10 games during the regular season.

2. How will STUNT games and tournaments be scored and evaluated?

STUNT games and tournaments will be staffed with trained officials that will evaluate execution and synchronization between team members and team groups. Each STUNT game will consist of four quarters which will each produce a score that will be added to the score total for that team. Teams will be ranked according to their overall record and total points from their games.

Teams are awarded points by the execution of their routine, and the points are awarded based on their rank. The winning team of each round in quarters 1-3 receives 1 point and the losing team receives 0 points. In the 4th quarter, each team may score from 0-3 points per round of this quarter. Winning the game is determined by who scores the most points.

3. What types of facilities and equipment will a STUNT team require?

The general facility requirements would be a basketball court with room to lay down the standard 54' x 42' floor, and with a minimum ceiling height of 25 feet. Additional equipment includes four extra mat panels for team practice area, scoreboard, audio and public address sound system, team benches consisting of a single row of 15-20 chairs on both sides of the performance mat, necessary tables and chairs for staff, and two water stations.

STUNT Title IX Administrator Check List

Summary

To determine whether a team is engaging in a varsity sport, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has developed a detailed set of guidelines to determine on a case-by-case basis if the activity in question meets the criteria for sport. Specifically, it considers several factors related to an activity's structure, administration, team preparation, and competition.

Because there is a presumption by OCR that traditional cheerleading is not considered a sport for Title IX purposes, USA Cheer has developed STUNT as a separate discipline from cheer that is designed specifically in accordance with the OCR's guidelines for sport.

Growing STUNT properly in a way that will meet Title IX's standards and truly develop and create new participation opportunities is a process that takes time. USA Cheer is committed to a long term vision that defines a structure for STUNT as an interscholastic and NCAA sport that will likely meet Title IX standards and that can build sustainable growth within intercollegiate and interscholastic varsity athletics.

STUNT & Title IX Compliance

In order for STUNT to qualify as a Title IX sport at your institution, the key determination the OCR will evaluate is whether the STUNT team functions and receives comparable treatment as other varsity intercollegiate sports at your institution. That means from how the program is created, managed, and operated within athletics to the type, number and quality of competitions—STUNT must look like and run like other varsity sports.

Here are some key considerations you must take into account before STUNT can become "countable" for Title IX at your institution.

- Program Management
 - STUNT must be operated within the varsity athletic department
 - Budget is created and administered within varsity athletics as other sports are within the institution
 - Coach-separate coaching salary for STUNT coach (with salary comparable to similar varsity sports)
- Team Structure
 - A clear distinction must be made between the cheerleading squad and STUNT team. This must include:
 - Separate tryouts for the athletes that will compete on the STUNT team
 - Cross over participation of cheerleaders on the STUNT team is permissible **only if** other varsity athletes are allowed to participate in dual sports/ activities. (In other words, if your institution allows cheerleaders or members of the band, for that matter, to run track or swim, participation in STUNT would be no different).
 - Athletes subject to same academic and eligibility standards as other athletes

- Financial Management
 - Athletic scholarships must be offered to STUNT athletes if applicable at institution for other varsity athletes
 - USA Cheer recommends a minimum of five scholarships during the initial phase of STUNT as a varsity sport; however, institutions have the discretion (and are encouraged) to expand scholarships allocations
 - Facilities for practice and competition provided by institution
 - Can use basketball court with room to lay down the standard 54' x 42' floor, and with a minimum ceiling height of 25 feet
 - Benefits and Resources. STUNT athletes must be provided with comparable benefits as other intercollegiate athletes at your institution—i.e. equipment and supplies, access to medical training personnel, insurance, etc.

- Competition Requirements

**Note-for the high school level, STUNT should follow the competition requirements of other Spring sports set by that institution

 - First Contest Date. A member institution shall not engage in its first date of competition (game or scrimmage) with outside competition in STUNT prior to January 1 or the institution's first day of classes for the Spring term, whichever is earliest.
 - End of Regular Playing Season. A member institution shall conclude all practices and competition (games and scrimmages) in STUNT by the conclusion of the NCAA STUNT Championship.
 - Number of Contents. A member institution shall limit its total playing schedule with outside competition in STUNT during the institution's STUNT playing season to 16 dates of competition with a minimum of 12 competitions required for participation.
 - Level of Competition. Countable competitions towards the minimum requirement only include games against other varsity intercollegiate programs. As STUNT is growing, there is some flexibility in this requirement; however, generally:
 - Countable games must be varsity schools within the same organization (i.e. an NCAA school playing an NAIA school would not count)
 - NCAA and NAIA schools can scrimmage each other, if the institution rules permit that in other schools
 - Varsity programs can scrimmage non-varsity teams, if the institution rules permit that in other sports

Addendum A: STUNT: A Title IX Analysis of STUNT

LEGAL ANALYSIS:

In order for STUNT to qualify as a varsity sport for Title IX purposes, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) considers, on a case-by-case basis, several factors related to an activity's structure, administration, team preparation, and competition.²

Note:

1. **OCR does not issue a blanket approval that ANY SPORT meets the OCR definitions of sport. That includes even mainstream sports like basketball or soccer. Every sport, including STUNT is evaluated on a case by case basis, at the institutional school level, based on how the school has implemented the sport according to the OCR guidance.**
2. **This is written from a college perspective but the same analysis also applies for high schools.**

That said, USA Cheer has structured STUNT in such a way to adhere to the requirements OCR established for sports so that institutions who follow our guidelines can count STUNT for Title IX. Below is a detailed description of these OCR factors and how STUNT addresses these areas.

- I. **Program Structure and Administration** — Taking into account the unique aspects inherent in the nature and basic operation of specific sports, OCR considers whether the activity is structured and administered in a manner consistent with established intercollegiate or interscholastic varsity sports in the institution's athletics program, including:
 - A. Whether the operating budget, support services (including academic, sports medicine and strength and conditioning support) and coaching staff are administered by the athletics department or another entity, and are provided in a manner consistent with established varsity sports; and

STUNT: *As an NCAA Sport, STUNT teams will be subject to NCAA rules and regulations similar to other intercollegiate varsity sports and entitled to the same benefits and treatment. This would include, for example, having access to comparable resources for recruiting, training, coaching salaries, and facilities and equipment as other varsity sports at the institution. The general facility requirement for STUNT programs would be a basketball court with room to lay down the standard floor, and with a minimum ceiling height of 25 feet. Additionally, as an NCAA Sport, STUNT would be subject to NCAA rules and regulations concerning the elements of academic study hall, strength and conditioning, daily practices, structured NCAA competition and academic eligibility standards.*

² See Office for Civil Rights 2008 Dear Colleague Letter "Athletic Activities Counted for Title IX Compliance" at <https://www2.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-20080917.html>

- B. Whether the participants in the activity are eligible to receive athletic scholarships and athletic awards (e.g., varsity awards) if available to athletes in established varsity sports; to the extent that an institution recruits participants in its athletics program, whether participants in the activity are recruited in a manner consistent with established varsity sports.

STUNT: *STUNT team participants would be eligible for athletic scholarships at institutions. It is important to note that only D-I and D-II schools have the capability of offering scholarships for any NCAA sport. NCAA D-III institutions do not offer athletic scholarships for any sports, but have other significant benefits. The number of scholarships recommended for STUNT and actual allocation will be based solely on an administrative decision and will most likely not reach the maximum allowed in the first year of development. Just as in any other varsity sport—male and female—institutional size and budget situation of each athletic department will determine scholarship availability.*

As an NCAA Sport, STUNT teams will be subject to the same recruiting rules and regulations as other intercollegiate varsity sports. STUNT coaching staff will have a recruiting budget and will be able to tour the high school competitive cheerleading competition circuit in order to identify potential STUNT athletes.

- II. **Team Preparation and Competition** — Taking into account the unique aspects inherent in the nature and basic operation of specific sports, OCR considers whether the team prepares for and engages in competition in a manner consistent with established varsity sports in the institution’s intercollegiate or interscholastic athletics program, including:

- A. Whether the practice opportunities (e.g., number, length and quality) are available in a manner consistent with established varsity sports in the institution’s athletics program; and

STUNT: *As with other varsity sports, the NCAA will designate a specific limit on hours of practice and strength and conditioning time for both the off-season and playing season.*

- B. Whether the regular season competitive opportunities differ quantitatively and/or qualitatively from established varsity sports; whether the team competes against intercollegiate or interscholastic varsity opponents in a manner consistent with established varsity sports;

When analyzing this factor, the following may be taken into consideration:

1. Whether the number of competitions and length of play are predetermined by a governing athletics organization, an athletic conference, or a consortium of institutions;
2. Whether the competitive schedule reflects the abilities of the team; and

3. Whether the activity has a defined season; whether the season is determined by a governing athletics organization, an athletic conference, or a consortium.

STUNT: *STUNT will be designated as a Spring sport. The competition format will feature teams competing in both head-to-head and a tournament style competition. As an NCAA Sport, each team would be required to compete in a minimum of 12 competitions against other NCAA varsity STUNT programs during the regular season, with a maximum being set at 16.*

USA Cheer is building out conference play with two different divisions of teams (based on school size, division level, and team experience) and working with STUNT schools to host multi-team tournaments and competitions.

- C. If pre-season and/or post-season competition exists for the activity, whether the activity provides an opportunity for student athletes to engage in the pre-season and/or post-season competition in a manner consistent with established varsity sports; for example, whether state, national and/or conference championships exist for the activity; and

STUNT: *USA Cheer hosts a post-season national championship at the end of the season which features the top intercollegiate teams playing in a tournament. The number of divisions is determined by the number and athletic divisions of participating teams. Since year one, Division I teams have been separated from all other divisions (Division II) for championship purposes. The teams attending the national championship are determined based on overall record and national ranking.*

As more STUNT teams are added at the collegiate level and conferences reach a minimum of five teams, USA Cheer will work with college conferences to develop conference play, conference standings and a conference championship that will feed into the national championship. In addition, USA Cheer has established the STUNT All American program that is administered through USA Cheer's All American Selection Committee (a committee of STUNT coaches, administrators and former athletes). All Americans are nominated by position, by their coaches and are selected by the selection committee based on three primary areas: Athletic Ability, Academic Performance and Leadership Abilities.

- D. Whether the primary purpose of the activity is to provide athletic competition at the intercollegiate or interscholastic varsity levels rather than to support or promote other athletic activities.

When analyzing this factor, the following may be taken into consideration:

1. Whether the activity is governed by a specific set of rules of play adopted by a state, national, or conference organization and/or consistent with established varsity sports, which include objective, standardized criteria by which competition must be judged;
2. Whether resources for the activity (e.g., practice and competition schedules, coaching staff) are based on the competitive needs of the team;
3. If post-season competition opportunities are available, whether participation in post-season competition is dependent on or related to regular season results in a manner consistent with established varsity sports; and
4. Whether the selection of teams/participants is based on factors related primarily to athletic ability.

STUNT: *The sole purpose of STUNT is to provide intercollegiate athletic competition opportunities. STUNT is governed by a permanent and uniform set of rules and guidelines that all STUNT teams must use in all competitions. STUNT was established by USA Cheer, the national governing body for all disciplines of cheer. USA Cheer is a nonprofit organization that through its delegate membership provides a formalized structure to serve all the stakeholders in the cheer community with National Championships, formalized safety standards and rules that are designed specifically for each discipline and over 1,000 competitions across the country. In addition, each year USA Cheer puts together two national cheerleading teams to represent the United States in international competition.*

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STUNT games and tournaments will be staffed with trained officials that evaluate the execution and synchronization between team members and team groups on an objective scoring system. Each STUNT game/tournament consists of the aforementioned four quarters, each of which will produce team scores that will be added to the score total for each institution.

Thank you for your interest in STUNT, and in providing exciting and meaningful opportunities to female athletes. If you have any questions, please reach out to us at the USA Cheer national office at 844-253-6321 or info@usacheer.org.

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