



Parent Handbook

2026

Mission

Our mission is to prepare Nipomo's youth athletes for high school cheerleading by teaching fundamentals, including sideline cheer, stunting, dance, tumbling, and cheer kicks, while fostering physical conditioning and building core strength. We are dedicated to creating a supportive and safe environment where teamwork, respect, and positivity are encouraged. Through our program, participants will not only advance their cheerleading skills but also learn to handle differences with grace and cooperation, growing both as athletes and individuals.

Participation Expectations

All cheerleaders are expected to attend and be punctual for all practices and games, demonstrating their commitment to the team. In addition to scheduled sessions, participants should practice cheer skills, flexibility, and jumps independently to enhance their performance. During practices and games, cheerleaders must remain focused, actively engage, and listen attentively to coaches, ensuring a productive and positive environment for everyone.

Cheerleader Responsibilities

- **Foster Respect:** Treat teammates, coaches, and staff with kindness, and work to resolve conflicts positively, embracing differences.
- **Promote Positivity:** Represent the team with a positive attitude and display good sportsmanship at all times.
- **Stay Accountable:** Listen to coaches, respect their instructions, and adhere to program rules to avoid disciplinary actions.
- **Show Commitment:** Prioritize attendance, as excessive absences may affect your role in routines and performances.
- **Be a Team Player:** Work together with teammates to create a united and supportive atmosphere, both on and off the field.

Parent Responsibilities

- **Be Supportive:** Encourage your child and all participants, and embrace a team mentality by actively participating when needed.
- **Model Respect:** Demonstrate good sportsmanship and show respect to cheerleaders, coaches, and fellow parents at all events.
- **Communicate Effectively:** Maintain open communication with coaches, respect their decisions, and address concerns promptly and respectfully.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up with program updates and announcements, especially on the Band App.
- **Uphold Program Standards:** Review handbook rules with your child and ensure they are followed, understanding violations may lead to consequences.

Squad Placement

Cheerleaders will be placed in squads based on their grade. Placing cheerleaders with their peers fosters a supportive environment that promotes personal growth, teamwork, and skill development. Being among peers allows for more effective learning and encourages positive social connections within the team.

- **Bantams:** Grades 1-2
- **Juniors:** Grades 3-4
- **Intermediates:** Grades 5-6
- **Seniors:** Grades 7-8

Grade is determined based on the school year beginning in the fall not at registration. No exceptions.

Practice Requirements

- Attendance is **mandatory**. Practices are essential for learning cheers, chants, and routines used during games and exhibition.
- Cheerleaders must participate fully in all aspects of practice, including conditioning, stunting, tumbling, and jumps.
- **Dress Code:**
 - **Practice wear should be appropriate for working out.** We would prefer to keep the spirit by wearing Cowboys colors when possible (or pink in Oct). Bottoms should be form fitting such as black leggings or spandex shorts on bottom. **No hooded sweatshirts, jackets with zippers, jeans or pj pants.**
 - Wear cheer shoes or athletic shoes (other footwear will result in sitting out).
 - No jewelry (rings, bracelets, earrings), this includes permanent jewelry
 - Hair must be neatly tied back with a bow (please save the game day bows for game day)
- **Rules During Practice:**
 - No gum chewing.
 - Bring water to every practice; hydration is crucial.
 - All cheerleaders must warm up before participating.
- **Arrival:** Cheerleaders should arrive 10 minutes early, ready to begin practice on time.
- **Pickup:** Parents must arrive 10 minutes before practice ends. Notify coaches immediately in case of delays.
- **Late Pickup Procedure:**
 1. Contact parents/guardians.
 2. If unresponsive, contact emergency contacts.
 3. If unresolved, San Luis Obispo County Police will be notified.

Attendance Policy:

- Missing the warm up/practice on game day will result in sitting out of the halftime routine.
- **1 unexcused** absence in a week results in sitting out for halftime. **(This includes failing to notify the coach)**
- **2 unexcused** absences in a week results in sitting out the entire game.
- Cheerleaders sitting out of a game must still attend in full uniform and support their squad on the sidelines. Missing or attending out of uniform will result in sitting out of the following week's game.
- It is at the coach's discretion to have a cheerleader sit out of the halftime performance if they have missed important practices that impact the group's overall performance or the safety of a stunt. This includes excusable absences.

Excusable Absences:

- Illness or injury (**with prior notification to the coach**).
- Family emergencies.
- School-related obligations (e.g., testing, academic events) with advanced communication.
- Other exceptional circumstances approved by the coach.

Non-Acceptable Reasons:

- Forgetting or not feeling like attending.
- Conflicts with non-academic social events or outings.
- Unapproved extracurricular activities, including 4-H and other sports
- Failing to notify the coach in advance, except in emergencies.
- Lack of transportation.

Important Note: Most important is that the parent communicates with the coach via the app or by text if a cheerleader will be missing practices or games. Clear communication ensures proper planning and support for both the cheerleader and the team.

Cancellations (Practices and Games)

Cancellations due to rain or other unforeseen circumstances will be communicated as early as possible. Coaches will notify parents via text message, and the app. Please ensure your contact information (phone number and email address) is kept up to date.

Behavior

Cheerleaders represent the team and community, and their behavior both on and off the field reflect on the program. This includes online conduct.

- **Social Media:** Cheerleaders must maintain a positive and respectful presence on social media. Misuse, including posting inappropriate content, references to alcohol or drug use, engaging in cyberbullying, sharing confidential team information, or other negative online behaviors, may result in suspension or removal from the program.
- **School suspensions** extend to the program. Reinstatement requires official confirmation from the school counselor. Each case is subject to review by the board.
- Our program enforces a **zero-tolerance policy for bullying and harassment.**

Demerits

Demerits may be given for the following reasons:

- Poor attendance.
- Consistent inappropriate attire for practices or games.
- Disrespect toward coaches, volunteers, or peers.
- Fighting or physical altercations.
- Suspension from school
- Illegal drug use or suspicion of being under the influence will result in parental notification and potential program termination.

Consequences of Demerits:

- **First Demerit:** A verbal warning will be issued to the cheerleader, and the parent/guardian will be notified.
- **Second Demerit:** The cheerleader will be temporarily benched from one game (including halftime) and must still attend in uniform to support the team from the sidelines.
- **Third Demerit:** The cheerleader may be removed from the program for the remainder of the season, forfeiting eligibility for end-of-season and post-season activities. No refunds will be provided.

Demerits are tracked and reset at the end of each season, but repeated issues may impact eligibility for future participation.

Cheerleader Apparel

- **Jewelry:** Jewelry is not permitted, except for religious or medical medals, which must be taped to the body under the uniform before practices and games. Earrings and facial piercings must be removed before practices, games, and appearances.
- **Fingernails:** Natural or artificial nails must be kept short and safe for participation. Fingernails should not extend past the fingertips when viewed from the palm.
- **Hair:** Hair must be styled away from the face and off the shoulders for safety, especially during stunting activities. Bows should be securely attached.
- **Appearance:** Makeup, nail color, and lip color should promote the "All-American Cheerleader" image and be age-appropriate.

Game Day Uniforms

Cheerleader uniforms must include the following items ("Bow-to-Toe"):

- Game Day Bow
- Shell
- Skirt
- Briefs
- Pom-poms
- Cheer shoes

Uniform Replacement: If any part of a cheerleader's uniform is lost or unusable, it is the parent's responsibility to replace the item before the next game or appearance. Cheerleaders not in full uniform will not be allowed to cheer—no exceptions.

Uniform Care:

- Wash shells and skirts separately to prevent color transfer. **Do not wash shells/skirts with socks or briefs**, as this can lead to discoloration requiring replacement.
- Use mild detergent and wash in cold water. **Do not use color-safe bleach or spray stain removers.** Hang garments to dry.

Refund Policy: Uniform orders are non-refundable once placed. If a cheerleader chooses to withdraw from the program either before or during the season, they may keep their uniform.

Game Day

Game schedules will be made available once finalized by CCYFL and posted on the program's website. Please note that schedules may change during the season. Cheerleaders are expected to attend all games, even if there are schedule changes.

- **Arrival:** Cheerleaders must arrive at the field 60 minutes prior to the game start time in full uniform to warm up and minimize injury risk.
 - Cheerleaders arriving less than 45 minutes before the game start will not perform in the halftime routine.
 - Cheerleaders arriving less than 30 minutes before the game start will not participate in the first half of the game (including halftime).
- **Game Day Adjustments:** Halftime routines are designed to include all cheerleaders. If a cheerleader is unable to attend, routines may need to be modified to accommodate those present.
- **Food and Drink:** Only water is allowed during the game. Please ensure cheerleaders are properly fed before arriving at the field. Snacks will be provided during a quick break after

halftime during the third quarter. Please do not bring additional food or drinks to your child during this break.

Sideline Etiquette

To ensure safety, discipline, and a professional appearance during games:

- Cheerleaders must remain attentive and follow coach instructions at all times.
- While cheering, cheerleaders should maintain a friendly demeanor, a bright smile, and a positive attitude that reflects the spirit of the team.
- All cheers and chants should be loud and clear, but not screamed or yelled, to ensure proper projection and enthusiasm.
- When not actively cheering, participants must stand in their assigned positions with hands behind their backs and poms in hand. Running around, stunting, or tumbling while in line is not permitted.
- Failure to follow these guidelines or repeated reprimanding may result in the cheerleader sitting out a quarter, half, or the entire game.

Parents are kindly asked to refrain from distracting their cheerleader during games. Cheerleaders are expected to remain with their coaches and squad until the game concludes, including during the third-quarter break.

Field Rules

NYFL/CCYFL enforces strict regulations regarding sideline and field access. Only coaches, spotters, cheerleaders, football players, and chain crews are permitted on the field. All volunteers must be cleared by the league prior to the beginning of practice season.

In Case of Injury: Do not run onto the field if a player is injured. Each field has a certified EMT on-site to handle emergencies. Parents will be allowed onto the field only after an injury assessment has been completed and permission is granted by the EMT staff.

NYFL maintains a strict policy of non-involvement in custody disputes. If such issues arise, you will be asked to leave practices or games. Initially, a warning will be issued; continued issues will result in suspension and eventual banning. Further action may be taken at the board's discretion. Please note, no refunds will be provided under these circumstances.

Cheer Program Leadership

Cheer Director: Ann Martinez | 805-709-2707 | nipomocheercoach@gmail.com

Director's Message

As a leader of this program, my goal is to inspire and empower every cheerleader to grow not only in their skills but also as individuals. Cheerleading is more than just a sport—it's about building confidence, forming lifelong friendships, and learning the values of hard work, teamwork, and perseverance. I am committed to providing a positive and supportive environment where every participant feels safe, valued, and encouraged to push beyond their limits. Remember, success is not just about perfect routines but about the dedication, respect, and spirit you bring to the team every day. Together, we can accomplish amazing things. Let's make this an unforgettable season, filled with growth, joy, and unity.

I am so proud to have you as part of our cheer family!