



2025-2026
NMAA STATE SPIRIT CHAMPIONSHIPS
COMPETITION GUIDELINES & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

DANCE



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2025-2026 NMAA SPIRIT CHAMPIONSHIPS

COMPETITION GUIDELINES & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA: DANCE

INTRODUCTION

This document reviews the guidelines and performance criteria for the NMAA Spirit Championships for dance. In addition to the guidelines and criteria outlined in this document, all New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) bylaws and National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) rules apply. While some sport specific bylaws are included in this document, this document does not replace any section of the NMAA Handbook. It is the responsibility of coaches to be aware of, abide by, and enforce all guidelines, bylaws and rules set forth by the NMAA and NFHS as they apply to the sport of spirit (i.e., cheer and dance).

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ELIGIBILITY

The NMAA State Spirit Competition is open to all NMAA member high school varsity dance teams who meet eligibility criteria as set forth in the NMAA Handbook and as outlined below.

- Teams must compete in a minimum of three NMAA sanctioned competitions prior to the State Spirit Championships.
- Coaches, both head and all assistants, must have attended the Spirit Coaches Clinic.
- Only one team may represent a school.
- Entries must be submitted by the by Wednesday, February 18, 2026.

CLASSES

Teams must compete at the same classification level that the school participates in for basketball.

There are two classes in dance: A/4A and 5A

ROSTER INFORMATION & LIMITATIONS

All performers, including alternates, must be listed on the competition registration form submitted to the NMAA. In addition, a roster is submitted for each routine on the day of the competition. The following information and roster limitations apply:

- There is no limit on the number of performers on a dance team. However, each dance team is limited to four alternates, two student managers, one music person and four coaches.
- Each team will perform two routines; a performance roster is required for each routine. No more than four team members can be different from one routine than the other. If more than four team members are different from one routine than the other, an unsportsmanlike penalty violation will be issued by NMAA personnel (refer to points deducted for violation on the Technical Judge Sheet posted on the NMAA website).
 - The roster for the first routine must only list those performing in the first routine.
 - The roster for the second routine must only list those performing in the second routine.
 - A maximum of four athletes included in the first routine may be dropped from and not a part of the second routine.

- A maximum of four athletes who did not perform in the first routine may be added to and perform in the second routine; they must be listed on the roster for the second routine.
- Everyone, student and adult, listed on a team's roster must meet the requirements as stated in the NMAA Handbook, Section 7.19.5.D.4.

PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES

Each team must perform two routines specific to the following performance categories:

- Teams are required to perform a Pom routine.
- Teams are required to perform one of the following routines: Military, Jazz, or Hip-Hop routine.

Teams must declare the performance categories in which they will perform by the stated deadline on the competition registration form. Teams will not be allowed to change categories after the deadline.

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES & CRITERIA: POM, MILITARY, JAZZ AND HIP-HOP

This section includes information for each of the following performance categories:

- Pom (required)
- Military
- Jazz
- Hip-Hop

The following applies to all performance categories:

- Performances must incorporate criteria listed on scoresheets and demonstrate a level of excellence and quality of execution of the basic skills taught in the sport of dance. Teams are to use discretion in the selection of music, costumes, and choreography. Costumes may not inhibit arms, legs, and/or body movements; midribs are prohibited.
- Performance time for each team's routine is restricted to 2 minutes and 30 seconds (2:30).
- Music selection should fall in line with NFHS Spirit Rule 1-2-1b.
- Performances will be on a basketball court (94 feet x 50 feet).

POM (REQUIRED)

- Poms must be purposefully used at least 80% of the routine.
- Important characteristics of a pom routine include:
 - Creativity
 - Pom emphasis
 - Tempo variations
 - Color work
 - Visual effects
- Dance skills can be included but should not be artistic.
- Program concepts are allowed but not required.
- Pom motions/skills should display proper pom technique/execution.
- Dance skills should display proper technique/execution.
- Pom is more of a traditional category compared to a category like Jazz which is often more stylized.

- Excluding poms, props are prohibited.

MILITARY

- Emphasis is placed on:
 - Synchronization
 - Choreography
 - Musicality
 - Technique
 - Execution
- Military is precision in style and incorporates sharp, concise movements that showcase:
 - Formation changes
 - Level changes
 - Visual effects
 - Group work
 - Ripples
 - Kicks
- Choreography should be carefully constructed to define the routine as military by incorporating a level of difficulty consistent with the goal of team precision.

JAZZ

- A jazz routine incorporates:
 - Stylized dance movements and combinations
 - Formation changes
 - Group work
 - Leaps
 - Turns
- Emphasis is placed on:
 - Technical execution
 - Extension
 - Control
 - Body placement
 - Team uniformity
- A team's jazz routine should have its own style distinguishing it from others while incorporating creative choreography that will capture the judges and audience.
- Props are prohibited.

HIP-HOP

- Routines should include street style movements with an emphasis on:
 - Execution style
 - Creativity
 - Body isolation and control
- The uniformity of all movements throughout the performance should complement the beats and rhythm of music.

- The following is allowed but not required and if incorporated, should serve a musical, conceptual or design purpose:
 - Tricks
 - Stunts
 - Acrobatics
- Props are prohibited.

PERFORMANCE ENTRANCE/EXIT: ALL PERFORMANCES

The following guidelines apply to all performances:

- Teams will be announced: *Now performing...*
- Teams will have 30 seconds after being announced to:
 - Enter the performance floor.
 - Set up props.
 - Assume position.
- Once a team is announced and proceeds to the performance floor, the team may not return to the area designated for teams standing by for competition (also referred to as the tunnel).
- The timing of a performance will begin with the first signal (i.e., stomp, clap, verbal cue, beat of music, etc.) and end upon the conclusion of the performance.
- Upon the conclusion of a team's performance, teams will have 15 seconds to exit the performance floor.

Music

The following applies to all performances on the performance floor and in the warm-up room:

- A music system will be provided. All music must be recorded on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Record music at the highest volume possible.
- Live music is prohibited during a team's entrance, performance, and/or exit.
- It is strongly recommended that a device with a direct auxiliary (AUX) port be used. Teams are responsible for providing their own adapters (i.e., lightning/USB/USB-C for AUX port or any other necessary AUX port adapter). Adapters will not be provided by the NMAA.
- Each team is responsible for providing a team representative to control (start/stop) music, including the volume on the laptop/tablet/smartphone.
- Prior to connecting to the music system provided, music must be cued and ready with the volume up all the way on the laptop/tablet/smartphone. Tablets and smartphones must be in airplane mode and cases removed.
- Recording equipment varies. The team representative controls the music, including the volume on the laptop/tablet/smartphone. In the event of a music malfunction during a performance, the team representative will make the determination whether to stop the music.
 - If the team representative stops the music, the announcer will direct the performing team to regroup and restart the performance.
 - There will not be a point deduction for a music malfunction.
 - A coach may not request that the routine be repeated once the team has left the performance floor.

JUDGES

Each performance will be evaluated and scored by a panel of performance judges with technical judges present to monitor and issue penalty violations if necessary. NMAA scoresheets will be used (available on the NMAA website).

Judging Panels: Performance Judges

There will be two panels of performance judges; each panel will consist of six judges (a total of 12 judges). Each panel will score one of the two routines performed by a team. If one panel scores a team's first routine performed, the other panel will score the same team's second routine performed.

Each panel of judges will be stationed at the concourse level with one panel stationed on the east side and one panel stationed on the west side. Teams will alternate which side they face for each routine; the performance schedule will indicate which side a team faces for each routine.

Technical Judges

Technical judges will monitor routines from the performance floor level to determine whether there are any safety violations and issue penalty violations accordingly. Refer to the safety section for more information.

SAFETY

Regulations

Safety rules always apply to all spirit teams. The violation of safety guidelines during the competition will result in penalty point deductions. Violation of any rules in the NFHS Spirit Rules Book and/or NMAA guidelines will result in a deduction from the total performance score for the routine in which there was a violation. Technical judges will determine safety guideline violations. Refer to the current NFHS Spirit Rules Book for safety guidelines.

DEDUCTIONS

All deductions issued for a performance by a technical judge and/or designated NMAA personnel will be documented on a Technical Judge Sheet (available on the NMAA website).

Penalty point deductions are issued for the following violations:

- Violations of the NFHS Rules Book
- Unsportsmanlike conduct as outlined in the NFHS Rules Book and/or NMAA guidelines (including roster violations)
- Landing or stepping off the designated competition area (i.e., complete hand, foot, and/or other body part)
- Exceeding time limits (entrance, performance, and/or exit)

Refer to the Technical Judge Sheet (available on the NMAA website) for point deductions issued for violations.

SCORING: PERFORMANCE SCORE FOR INDIVIDUAL ROUTINES AND COMPETITION SCORE

A performance score will be calculated for each team's routine. Each team's performance scores will be averaged to calculate an overall competition score for each team. NMAA scoresheets will be used (available on the NMAA website).

Performance Score for Each Routine

The following applies to calculating the performance score for each routine performed by a team:

- Each routine is scored by a panel of six judges. The six scores will be averaged for a final performance score for each routine.
- If there are any penalty point deductions, they will be subtracted from the combined scores of the six judges before averaging the performance score for the routine in which there was a violation(s).

Competition Score – Combined Score for Both Routines

The following applies to calculating each team’s competition score:

- The competition score is the average of both performance scores of each routine performed by a team.
- The performance score for each routine will be combined and averaged for a competition score.
- The competition score will be used to determine competition winners.

All scores are final. Technical protests or appeals will not be accepted. Requests to watch a recorded performance when a coach disagrees with a score and/or a penalty violation will not be granted. By participating in the state spirit competition, each team acknowledges that the scores, judges’ decisions, and validated point totals from scoresheets are final.

AWARDS

Trophies for Top Place Team Finishers

State championship trophies will be awarded to top place team finishers in each division and class. Medals will be awarded to each member of teams finishing in first place.

State championship trophies will be awarded based on the number of teams competing in a class.

- 1-4 teams competing in a class: A 1st place trophy will be awarded.
- 5-6 teams competing in a class: A 1st and 2nd place trophy will be awarded.
- 7 or more teams competing in a class: A 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophy will be awarded.

Tiebreaking Procedures

In the event of a tie, the team with the highest performance score for a routine will be used to determine ranking among the tied teams.

For example:

Team	1st Routine	2nd Routine	Competition Score Total
1	98	95	193
2	96	97	193
3	94	99	193

- Teams 1, 2 & 3 would be in a three-way tie all having the same competition score (combination of both routine performance scores). Therefore, the highest performance score for a routine would be used to determine ranking resulting in the following:
 - 1st Place: Team 3 with the highest performance score of 99
 - 2nd Place: Team 1 with the second highest performance score of 98
 - 3rd Place: Team 2 with the third highest performance score of 97

If tied teams have the same performance scores for routines regardless of routine order, a trophy will be awarded to the tied teams for the place in which they tied. The team that traveled the furthest would take the trophy home and a duplicate trophy(s) would be mailed to the remaining tied team(s).

For example:

Team	1st Routine	2nd Routine	Competition Score Total
1	98	95	193
2	95	98	193
3	94	99	193

- Teams 1, 2 & 3 would be in a three-way tie all having the same competition score (combination of both routine performance scores). Therefore, the highest performance score for a routine would be used to determine ranking resulting in the following:
 - 1st Place: Team 3 with the highest performance score of 99
 - 2nd Place: Team 1 and Team 2 would tie with each having the second highest performance score of 98.
 - 3rd Place: Not applicable since the top three place finishers finished in 1st and 2nd place.

RESOURCES

Provided below is a list of resources for coaches. Some resources have been referenced in this document while others have not but serve as a resource for coaches preparing their teams for the NMAA State Spirit Championships.

- NFHS Rules Book
- [NMAA Handbook](#)
- [NMAA Spirit Bylaws](#)
- [NMAA Spirit Webpage](#)
 - Dance Guidelines & Performance Criteria (this document)
 - Scoresheets for each performance category
 - Technical Judge Sheet
 - Dance Rubric Handout
- [NFHS Learn: USA Safety Cheer & Dance Safety Certification](#)