

PARENT & CHEERLEADER HANDBOOK

Updated January 2025

Mission and Goals of Winthrop Viking Youth Cheer (WVYC)

Winthrop Viking Youth Cheer (WVYC) is an organization for children in kindergarten through 8th grade. Participants must be 5 years old by September 1st. At times, enrollment may warrant forming an additional team. At that time, if needed, athletes for the competitive team shall be chosen based on ability and commitment, (as defined by the appropriate coaching staff and/or selection committee), in a manner that provides equal opportunity to all, and which is approved by the WVYC Board of Directors. The remainder of the applicants that is allowed based on enrollment decisions by the Board of Directors shall comprise a game only team that does not compete.

We require enthusiasm, spirit, respect, participation, and attendance at practice to master cheers and competition routines, and to build on teamwork. Cheerleading offers young athletes a chance to learn skills involving motions, jumps, stunting, and dance—possibly to pursue high school cheerleading. Teams are organized by grade and can be by skill level to ensure team compatibility, safety, and skill development. Cheerleading is an athletic sport, involving strength for stunting, and stamina while you jump, cheer and dance. The goal of WVYC is to offer quality cheer instruction to youth athletes and work towards building a strong and dynamic youth program that will be long lasting and provide a foundation for upcoming Winthrop youth interested in cheerleading.

Winthrop Viking Youth Cheer is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is an independent league.

Mission

The WVYC program was created to work in conjunction with the Winthrop Youth Football (WYF) program. The Board of Directors and Coaches are non-paid volunteers who will work together to ensure children are given the opportunity to participate in cheer in a safe and fun environment. We will work together with Winthrop High School Cheer to create a feeder program, graduating athletes from our program ready to compete and succeed at the next level.

We work towards achieving our mission through committed volunteers, committed parents, and committed cheerleaders. Participants must be committed to attending and being on time for practices and games, improving cheer skills, working on flexibility and perfecting jumps, and to being focused at practices and games, listening and respecting coaches, and paying attention when learning new cheer material.

Commitment

Competitive cheerleading is a significant commitment. We expect cheerleaders to be at every practice. Cheerleading is unlike other sports as there are no subs waiting on the bench. Each cheerleader on the team has a position that coaches place them to showcase their strength and skill set while maintaining safety at all times. We cannot take requests from parents or cheerleaders to be in a certain position. When one cheerleader is missing from a practice, that means at least one entire stunt group is unable to practice their stunt and that the entire team is unable to practice their pyramid. Momentum is lost in the incredibly short season. Therefore, it is

imperative that cheerleaders attend all practices and are committed to the team. If a practice is missed, a cheerleader will be moved to a game day cheer. Losing a cheerleader from a routine means the choreography must be reconstructed which is unfair to the other cheerleaders and coaches who have put in the work and time. Cheer families are asked to kindly prioritize cheer ahead of other sports and activities throughout August – November.

Uniforms/Accessories

- Uniforms are loaned to all cheerleaders and include a skirt or shorts and top. All uniforms must be returned clean and dry, and in the same condition they received it in, or they will be fined the current cost of the uniform. Uniform contracts are considered signed as you register, and proper care should be taken. Failure to return the uniform by the date communicated or returning the uniform in a poor condition and not paying the current retail price to replace the uniform, will result in not being allowed to register for youth cheer and a communication notice sent to other organizations informing them of the matter.
- Each cheerleader will also receive a hair bow that is theirs to keep but must be worn at games and competition. A fee will be incurred for the loss and replacement of the hair bow within the season. It is encouraged to keep the bows for the next season if the coach decides to use them in the future.
One pair of sneakers will need to be purchased (not included in registration price) – brand is designated by the Coach.
- Pom-poms will be provided and then collected at games and cheerleaders are expected to treat them properly and not throw them around.
Cheerleaders must act appropriately while wearing the uniform and remember that they represent the organization and their community. The uniform and accessories that are chosen by WVYC are mandatory. The uniform is to be worn only at games and competitions, unless otherwise notified by the coach (example: inclement weather). The uniform should not be worn while eating or drinking colored beverages.
Cheerleaders will not make any alterations to their game uniform unless approved by the WVYC Board. Uniforms must be returned at the end of the season. If any alterations are made or uniform is not returned, parents/guardians will be held financially responsible to replace uniform at current cost.
- Cheerleaders will be issued practice shirts to be worn at practices. Coaches may elect cheerleaders to wear practice shirts at certain games. Practice attire will be specified by coach; however, sneakers are mandatory at all practices and games.
- Additional items that are typically purchased that are not included in the registration price include:
 - White, no-show socks - mandatory for games and competition
 - Sneakers – designated by coaches.
 - Sports bras with clear straps for competition
 - Navy leggings or cheer pants (sold at Pro Shop)
 - Viking sweatshirt or Cheer Jacket (sold at Pro Shop or Sparkle Gear) – not mandatory.

Practices and Games

Practices

Practices are designed to teach cheers, competition routines and other important information. Practices are held at least twice per week for all competition teams and are between 1 – 2 hours per practice (depending on team). Additional practices will be added, especially as competition gets closer, and timing of practices may extend if a stunting clinic or choreographer is present.

The season typically begins mid-August (around August 12th). Practices are scheduled at the discretion of the coaches, as they try their best to balance availability of practice space and choreographer's schedules. We understand that Cheer is not the only sport/activity that a cheerleader is involved in. We kindly request that during the cheer season that cheer is prioritized ahead of other sports/activities – if this commitment cannot be made, competitive cheer will not be the right fit.

Oftentimes stunting clinics and competition choreography begins in August. These practices are especially critical that everyone is in attendance as a choreographer is working with the cheerleaders and setting the foundation for the season. August practice schedule may be different than September through November. Coaches do the best they can to communicate practices in advance but having a consistent schedule is not always possible. Kindergarten and game only cheerleaders will practice once per week for 30 minutes prior to a game, or at Coach's discretion and weather permitting.

Competition cheerleaders should arrive approximately 5 minutes early to practice and be ready to start practice on time. Parents of young children are encouraged to have them use the restroom prior to practice. When practice is held outdoors, there is not a bathroom facility available. Parents must return to pick children up on time and are not permitted to stay during practice. Parents who will be late to pick up need to contact the coach and alert them to any emergency.

The following steps will be taken for cheerleaders who are not picked up by the end of practice: 1) Contact parent or guardian listed in TeamSnap, if no response then; 2) Contact emergency contacts to take custody of the cheerleader. If this action is required three times, we reserve the right to dismiss your cheerleader from the program without a refund.

Cheerleaders are to participate in all aspects of practice. Practices include but are not limited to, cheer/chant review, running, stretching, strength training, conditioning, stunting, tumbling and jump conditioning. Sneakers are to be worn throughout the entire practice. Cheerleaders are to wear their practice shirts and their hair should be pulled back into a ponytail. No excessive jewelry/accessories, gum or peanut products are allowed during practices. Any violations of these rules will result in the cheerleader not being able to participate in practice thereby forfeiting her participation in the week's game or event. Practice times and locations are to be determined by the WVYC Board and coaches. Additional practice time may be added for competitions as needed and if available.

Summer Clinic

Summer Clinic will be held over 2 days in August for all grades. We partner with Winthrop High School Cheer to lead cheerleaders through cheers, motions, and jumps. Parents will drop off their children wearing sneakers and with sunscreen and bug spray already applied.

Cheerleaders should always bring water to practices/games. While the clinic is not mandatory, this is the primary opportunity for competition cheerleaders to learn and practice new cheers. If a competition cheerleader does not attend this clinic, it will mean that cheer videos will need to be used to practice as the only other practices will be 15-30 minutes before games. Game day cheerleaders will have practices to review cheers, but the clinic is fun for team bonding and a great opportunity to work with the high school cheerleaders.

Games

Games are held on a weekly basis and can take place on Saturdays or Sundays according to the Winthrop Youth Football schedule. Games usually begin the weekend after Labor Day and run through the end of October. Some teams have a bye week. Games in November can occur

if WYF makes playoffs. WVYC cheers at all home and away games (between 8 – 10 games), rain or shine! Kindergarten is the only team that cheers at only home games and is partnered with another youth cheer team. Kindergarten will have at least 4 home games, but we look to add a few other home games depending on WYF schedule. All Cheerleaders will be required to arrive 30 minutes prior to the game, unless told otherwise by the coach. Games may be scheduled on a day that conflicts with a competition. If this occurs, we will look for an adult volunteer that completes a CORI to accompany our game only cheerleaders to the game.

Cheerleaders' game schedule will have an arrival time and game time which can be found in TeamSnap or communicated by the Coach. Upon arrival, they should be ready to begin warm-up and stretch. Cheerleaders should always arrive at games in proper uniform, including hair bow and cheer sneakers, or other attire based on coach communication. If a cheerleader is not in an appropriate uniform, she will not be allowed to participate.

During games, cheerleaders are to always stay in formation and in ready position. Games are not a time to socialize with teammates or people in the stands. Cheerleaders must always be focused on the game and the coach to be prepared to lead the fans to cheer for the players. The game schedule is determined by Winthrop Youth Football and is subject to change. Game schedules and updates are also posted at www.winthropyouthfootball.com. Parents are asked to help keep the bleacher areas clean and trash free and are reminded that they are also representing the team, program, and town. No parents or family members are allowed on the field.

Cheerleaders must cheer with their team unless ad-hoc approval is given for a certain game by their cheer coach and the cheer coach of the team you wish for your child to cheer with.

Competitions

Competitions typically take place on a Saturday in October and during the first or second weekend of November. Teams may compete in anywhere from 1-3 competitions between October and November.

Inclement Weather

There may be occasions when practices are held outdoors. Practices will be held when there is a chance for rain. If it is raining close to practice time, a decision will be made to continue with practice based on the duration of the rain and whether lightning is in the area. If no alternative space is available, practice will be canceled. Please make sure you or someone is always available to pick up your child in case of an emergency. In most emergency situations, we will contact parents on their cell phones. In addition, if practice is canceled, a make-up practice session may be held, in addition to regular practice, on a non-scheduled practice day.

Attendance

Cheerleaders are required to attend and be on time for ALL practices, games, and performances.

Competition practice attendance is crucial. If your cheerleader cannot attend a practice, is tardy more than twice, or does not participate in practice then his/her participation in competition may be at risk. The coach reserves the right to remove your cheerleader from the competition team and will have him/her participate as a game day cheerleader. Refunds are not granted for this reason. Competition routines are highly dependent on teamwork and every cheerleader plays a vital role in the ability to practice for competition. Absenteeism causes significant time to be spent re-working the routine and is unfair for the cheerleaders who are on time and present.

If your cheerleader will be late for practice, we ask that you text or call your coach in advance so that she will be informed of the tardy and can adjust what was planned for the practice.

The inability to attend practices as a result of unforeseen personal conflict and/or illness requires immediate notification to your child's coach. The coach and/or Board of Directors will manage each situation on a case-by-case basis as appropriate. Coaches will want cheerleaders to still attend practice even if they cannot participate so that they are still listening and learning the adjustments.

Refunds

Refunds are generally not provided after July 1st because WVYC pays upfront and ahead of the season beginning for many of the services and items we provide to cheerleaders.

Volunteering

WVYC is a volunteer organization made up of parents of past and/or current cheerleaders. Volunteers are crucial to the ongoing operation of the program. Parents may be asked to volunteer or share on social media certain fundraising events, or assistance in rolling mats.