

2026-2027 Ridge Youth Competition Cheer Season

Competition FAQs (updated 3/11/26)

1. When do Junior and Senior Rec Competition Cheer teams start practice?

- Junior Rec & Senior Rec Cheerleaders must be available to start on August 17th.
- Summer practices will begin on Monday, August 17th, at Astor Field.

Junior Rec Summer Practice Schedule: 6-8 PM

- Week #1: 8/17, 8/18, 8/19, & 8/20
- Week #2: 8/24, 8/25, 8/26, & 8/27
- Week #3: 8/31, 9/03 *see full day choreography dates below for this week.

Junior Rec Choreography Camp:

- Location: Evolution Gym in Bridgewater
- Dates : Tuesday 9/1 and Thursday 9/3
- Times: TBD (these will be full days)

Senior Rec Summer Practice Schedule: 5:45-8:15 PM

- Week #1: 8/17, 8/18, 8/19, & 8/20
- Week #2: 8/25 & 8/26 *see UCA camp dates below for this week
- Week #3: 9/01, 9/02, & 9/03 *see choreography dates below for this week

Senior Rec Choreography & UCA Camp:

- Location: Evolution Gym in Bridgewater
- UCA Camp: 8/27 & 8/28 (please hold 9-4 PM)
- Game Day Choreography: 8/24 (this will be a full day, exact times coming)
- Traditional Choreography: 8/31 and 9/4 (these will be full days, exact times coming)

2. When does the season end?

Junior Rec and Senior Rec end their seasons at different times.

- Junior Rec will finish early February.
- Senior Rec will end after Nationals in February.
- Nationals take place at ESPN in Orlando, Florida. **Dates to be announced.**

3. When are fall and winter practices?

Fall and winter practices will begin after Labor Day. Practice schedules will hopefully be confirmed over the summer once we receive BOE approval for our space requests.

Junior Rec Possible Practice Schedule:

- Evolution Gym on Sunday nights
- Ridge High School on Tuesday nights
- Practice days are subject to change until approval is given by the BOE.

Senior Rec Possible Practice Schedule:

- Evolution Gym on Sunday nights
- Ridge High School on Wednesdays
- Evolution Gym on Thursdays before or after the team tumble class.
- Possible additional stunt sessions on Tuesday nights.
- Practice for Game Day and Traditional routines will be separate. Schedule TBD once gym space has been approved.

Additional Practice Information:

- Junior & Senior Rec teams will practice one hour before the start of football games on the weekend.
- There will be additional Friday evening or Saturday/Sunday morning practices before a competition.
- Junior & Senior Rec teams will have practice on **Sunday, November 29th**, which is Thanksgiving weekend.
- Senior Rec teams will practice on **Wednesday, December 23rd**.
- Senior Rec teams will practice on **Sunday, December 27th** and **Sunday, January 3rd** of winter break.
- Junior Rec team will be OFF from **December 24th to January 2nd**.

4. Are practices mandatory?

Yes, practices are mandatory! If your cheerleader is on a Junior Rec or Senior Rec competition team, then all practices, games, and competitions are mandatory. As you know, cheerleading is a collaborative team sport, and if one girl is missing, then her stunt group cannot practice. As a result, the entire team suffers from her absence.

- Excused absences: Religious holiday observance and real illness or injury.
- **Note:** Cheerleaders who are ill or injured may need a note from a doctor.

5. How many competition teams will there be?

For the 2026-27 season, we plan to have two competition teams: Junior Rec and Senior Rec. EVERYONE is encouraged to attend tryouts regardless of their tumbling and stunting skills!

- Senior Rec: We plan to have tryouts for cheerleaders who will be in grades 6-8 for the 2026-27 school year. Sr Rec competes in two routines. Depending on the size of the team, not all cheerleaders will be selected to participate in both routines. Determination will be made at the conclusion of tryouts.
- **Note:** some 5th graders may be asked to try out for Sr Rec. This will be based on the needs of the team, and every year the make-up of our teams is different.
- Junior Rec: We plan to have evaluations for cheerleaders who will be in grades 3-6 for the 2026-27 school year.
- Athletes not selected for our Senior Rec team will automatically be considered for our Junior Rec team if they are age-appropriate for that division.
- Athletes not offered a spot on a competition team can register for a spirit team for their age level.
- Age Divisions for Sr Rec and Jr Rec will be determined after try-outs, as this is based on the ages of the athletes by birth year.

6. What skills are we looking at during the clinics for Sr Rec?

- First, everyone is encouraged to attend the clinics regardless of their skill level!
- The desired entry-level tumbling skills include standing and running back handsprings. No tumbling will be taught or spotted at tryouts. Cheerleaders must be able to perform tumbling skills **safely and independently on a NON-SPRING FLOOR.**
- **For Senior Rec, we will only be scoring back handsprings or higher.**
- The desired entry-level stunting skill is a single-leg stunt at a full extension level. These stunting skills will be practiced and evaluated at the tryout clinics.
- Flyers will be evaluated for a body position at an extension level (for example, a heel stretch).
- For our Traditional routine, a range of skills will be assessed at tryouts, including jumps, cheer, motions, dance, performance ability, showmanship, as well as tumbling and stunting.
- For our Game Day routine, overall performance, showmanship, voice, and proper motion technique will be assessed and scored.
- All skills presented will be evaluated according to the tryout score sheet for cheer, dance, jumps, stunts, and tumbling.

7. What skills are we looking at during the clinics for Junior Rec?

- First, everyone is encouraged to attend the clinics regardless of their skill level!
- Tumbling is not required, but all Junior Rec athletes are encouraged to be in a tumbling class.
- A range of skills will be assessed at evaluations, including jumps, cheer, motions, dance, performance ability, showmanship, as well as tumbling and stunting.
- No tumbling will be taught or spotted at evaluations. Cheerleaders must be able to perform tumbling skills **safely and independently** on a **NON-SPRING FLOOR**.

8. How important is tumbling?

- Tumbling is not the most important thing, but it is important for competitive cheerleading. Competitive cheerleaders by high school need to have tumbling skills higher than a backhandspring. Now is the time for your daughter to work on her tumbling skills!
- Girls who tumble and attend tumbling classes generally have better core strength and flexibility than those who don't tumble, and that carries over to other cheerleading skills.
- Cheerleaders are encouraged to continue conditioning and strength training in the off-season.
- Remember: We do not teach or spot tumbling at tryouts. Cheerleaders must be able to perform tumbling skills **safely and independently** on a **NON-SPRING FLOOR**.
- Competition team members will be invited to join our team tumbling classes at the Evolution Gym in Bridgewater. This is **highly recommended** for Senior Rec on **Thursdays** beginning in September. Tumbling contracts will be sent over the summer.
- Junior Rec will have an **optional** team tumbling class on **Thursdays** beginning in September. Tumbling contracts will be sent over the summer.
- Team tumble contracts are payable directly to the Evolution Gym and will hopefully be sent out in June (need to have days and times confirmed first).

9. How many are on a competition team?

- There is no set number per team.
- Team size will be based on skill level (stunting and tumbling) and the stunting positions needed.
- Teams are comprised of stunt groups (backspot, flyer, and two bases).

- For the Senior Rec Traditional routine, the majority of the athletes need to have tumbling for a routine to be competitive. This sets team size, along with the number of stunt groups that can stunt at a higher level.

10. Do we cheer for football games?

- Yes, we do cheer for football games. They will begin the first weekend after Labor Day.
- Games are typically on Saturdays and some possible Sundays. This includes both home and away games. Both competition teams, Junior and Senior Rec, will have home and away games as this is required to be eligible to compete as a Rec program.
- Playoffs and championship games continue in November **through November 22nd**, and cheerleaders are expected to participate. This will include **teacher convention weekend**, which is **November 5th-8th**.
- Game days and times vary depending on the grade and will hopefully be announced in August.

11. When are evaluations and tryouts?

- Location: Ridge High School-Gym B
- Cost: \$70
- Required clinics for **CURRENT Grades 2-7**
- Sunday 4/26: 5-8 PM
 - Instruction of tryout material (cheer, dance, and jumps) and stunt instruction
- Monday 4/27: 6-8 PM
 - Review of tryout material. Tumbling and stunting will be evaluated.
- Wednesday 4/29: 6/7:30 PM (optional)
 - Skill review session (for anyone with conflicts on 4/26 and 4/27)
- Friday 5/1: 5:30-8 PM
 - Individual tryouts in small groups by times to be assigned later.

12. What happens at evaluations and tryouts?

- Candidates will have the opportunity to practice jumps, motions, stunting, dance, and cheer.
- Candidates will learn a cheer and a dance and review the jumps on the scoresheet.
- We will be evaluating and scoring stunting and tumbling during the clinics.
- On the last day, athletes will be in groups of three or four for their individual cheer, dance, and jump scoring.

- Each candidate will show their jumps individually and perform their dance and cheer as a group.
- Tumbling skills will be evaluated, and **only skills that can be performed independently will be scored. Tumbling will be on a NON-SPRING cheerleading performance mat.**
- Tumbling skills that will be evaluated will be a cartwheel, round off, round off backhandspring, tuck, layout, and full twisting layout (standing and running).
- **For Senior Rec, we will only be scoring back handsprings and higher.**
- Teams are chosen based on scores as well as team need. All scores are confidential, and all decisions are final.

13. What position should my daughter try out for?

- There are limited numbers of positions for flyers on each team.
- All candidates **MUST** be open to trying new positions.
- At the evaluations/tryout clinics, candidates may be asked to try two positions in a stunt group.
- **Please encourage your daughter to be open to trying something new. Every year, the makeup of our teams change, as do stunting positions. This is an important part of the evaluation/tryout process.**

14. When will the competition teams be announced?

- Information on team placements will be sent out no later than **May 9th**.
- Athletes **not** selected for our Senior Rec team will automatically be considered for our Junior Rec team if age-appropriate, or they can consider a spot on a spirit team.
- **All cheerleaders offered spots on competition teams will need to accept their spot and make their first payment by May 16th.**

15. What should my daughter wear to the evaluation/tryouts clinic?

- Absolutely **NO JEWELRY** allowed.
- Athletic shorts, t-shirt or tank top, socks, and cheer shoes (if you don't have cheer shoes, sneakers will work).
- Nails must be short, and hair must be pulled back.
- Coaches cannot be responsible for holding earrings or other jewelry.

16. When are cheer competitions?

- Competitions are on weekends, and they begin in October. Senior Rec will compete through Nationals, and Junior Rec will compete through the end of January.

- Cheerleaders must be available on weekends during the competition season.
- **Competition dates will include Teacher Convention weekend.**
- **Senior Rec will attend Regionals** (date and location TBD).
- The number of competitions attended will vary by team. Senior Rec may attend 6-8 competitions, and our Junior Rec team may attend 4-5 competitions.
- The schedule for competitions (through December) and games will be available by late August. Competition dates for January and February will be available in November.
- Sunday, October 11th, will be our annual Cheerfest. Attendance is required for ALL teams, and this is a full-day event.

17. What are the uniform and accessory requirements for Junior Rec? What are the costs?

- We are using the same uniforms as last year. 2026 pricing for uniforms is coming soon.
- Uniform fitting day will be held on **May 16th**.
- Cheer shoes can be sized and ordered on uniform fitting day.
- Boy cut briefs or any black spandex go under the skirt. They are available on our online store. Midriffs are required and can be ordered on uniform fitting day. These midriffs will be worn under the top.
- RYSI operates an online store for additional team items, including jackets, practice clothes, bags, parent's clothing, etc.
- Pom poms for the games are included in your registration fee for your first year with RYSI only. Replacement sets can be ordered through the registration process.

18. What are the uniform and accessory requirements for Senior Rec? What are the costs?

- We are using the same uniforms as last year. 2026 pricing for uniforms is coming soon.
- Uniform fitting day will be held on **May 16th**.
- RYSI owns the white game day skirts, and those will be given to your daughter. They must be returned at the end of the season.
- Senior Rec team will need to order the required lightweight indoor cheer shoe. Cheerleaders will need a second pair of shoes for the games. Shoes will be available on uniform fitting day. Additional details coming.
- Boy cut briefs or any black spandex go under the skirt (no visible logos should be on the briefs or spandex).

- RYSI operates an online store for additional team items, including jackets, practice clothes, bags, parent's clothing, etc.
- Pom poms for the games are included in your registration fee for your first year with RYSI only. Replacement sets can be ordered through the registration process.

19. What are the costs for the Junior Rec competition team?

- Registration fee will be two payments of \$600.
- The first payment of \$600 will be due by **May 16th**. The second payment will be due by August 1st.
- Registration fees cover RYSI fees for insurance, fields, lights, facility use, gym rentals, competition entrance fees, professional clean up sessions, and competition poms and bows, choreography camp, professional music, instruction, and practice apparel.
- Additional costs include the following: suggested team tumble class at Evolution Gym, uniforms, shoes, and accessory items.

20. What are the costs for the Senior Rec competition team?

- Registration fee will be two payments of \$800 for cheerleaders competing in both Traditional and Game Day routines.
- Registration fee for cheerleaders competing only in the Game Day routine will be two payments of \$600.
- The first payment will be due by **May 16th**. The second payment will be due by **August 1st**.
- Registration fees cover RYSI fees for insurance, fields, lights, facility use, gym rentals, competition entrance fees, professional clean-up sessions, competition poms and bows, choreography camp, professional music, instruction, and practice apparel.
- Additional costs for Senior Rec include the following: team tumbling once per week at Evolution Gym (classes will run from September through February and is payable directly to Evolution), uniforms, shoes, wrist/ankle weights, and travel costs for Nationals.
- Fundraising will be required.

21. Will Senior Rec attend Nationals in FLORIDA at ESPN?

- Yes, any athlete accepting a spot on the team will need to be prepared to travel to nationals. They will need to make the financial and time commitment required for this team.

- Attending Nationals requires that this is your daughter's primary activity, as we cannot make exceptions for other sports and activities.
- Travel would take place in late January or early February. Dates to be announced.
- Dates will be confirmed once the 2027 package is released.
- Team parents will need to manage the fundraising to help reduce costs for travel.
- Cost per person to attend Nationals is approximately \$1200. The 2027 pricing for Nationals is coming soon.
- Airfare and meals are separate.
- All team members are asked to travel on the same flight and are required to stay with the team.
- Airfare will be booked as a group flight as early as October. Payments will be due at the time of the booking.
- UCA hotel/event package deposit of \$100 will be due on October 4th. This includes the cheerleader plus any family traveling with her. Each cheerleader must be accompanied by a parent or be chaperoned by another parent on the team (NOT a coach).
- Balances for travel packages will be due in early January, and they will be payable directly to UCA Varsity Spirit.
- All team members will be expected to participate in fundraising to reduce the cost per cheerleader, cover coaches' travel costs, offset gym rental fees, bus transportation, team registration fees, and additional team expenses during Nationals.
- Competition dates for December-February will NOT be available until later this fall. All team members are required to attend ALL competition dates.
- Additional practices will be added before Nationals.
- Please note that weekday practices for Senior Rec will continue at Evolution if there is no gym space available at Ridge.
- In order to attend Nationals, the team needs to secure a bid (invitation) to Nationals at a Regional competition in November/December in either New Jersey, Pennsylvania, or New York.
- Again, team members will need to be available on Teacher's Convention Weekend.

22. What is the refund policy?

- Competition fees are NON-REFUNDABLE after **August 1, 2026**.
- **Prior to August 1, 2026, 50% of the first payment will be refunded.**
- Uniform and pom pom fees are NON-REFUNDABLE.

23. What divisions will Senior Rec compete this year?

- Senior Rec will compete in both Game Day and Traditional Divisions. Depending on the size of the team, not all cheerleaders will be selected to participate in both routines.
- Determination will be made at the conclusion of tryouts.

24. Are there alternate positions available for the Senior Rec Traditional routine?

- There is a possibility that a limited number of alternate spots could be offered.
- This will be based on the needs of the team and the skill level demonstrated at tryouts.

25. What are the additional commitments for the Senior Rec team?

- It is highly recommended that all Senior Rec team members participate in our team tumbling class on Thursdays from September to February at Evolution Gym.
- Winning teams tumble together as the UCA score sheet requires synchronized tumbling. Occasionally, this class may be used as an additional practice.
- All team members need to tumble over the summer in a class that fits their schedule.

26. Are there any preseason dates for the Senior Rec team?

- **May 16th** is Uniform Day. All Senior Rec cheerleaders will need to attend. Senior Rec cheerleaders will need to be sized for their white game day skirts, so attendance is required.
- Senior Rec Preseason Practice Dates: dates coming after tryouts
- Senior Rec Optional Summer Workouts: dates coming after tryouts

27. What are the important dates?

- Registration Opens: March 15th
- Evaluations & Tryouts: April 26th, April 27th, April 29th (optional), and May 1st
- Uniform Day: May 16th
- Season Starts: August 17th
- Cheerfest: October 11th
- Senior Rec Preseason Practice Dates: dates coming after tryouts
- Optional UCA Stunt Camp for Junior & Senior Rec teams: August 12th or 13th (exact date and times coming soon)