

Pointers For Parents

Have you ever said, "Well, if I had known ahead of time...?" Since you may be new to the spirit team experience, we, as "seasoned" (not old) parents, would like to share some things that we have learned. We hope our experience will help make your first year on the Spirit Team go smoothly.

Being on the team is a major commitment of time and energy for your daughter and, at times, for parents as well. It's an exciting time - watching your daughter perform, achieving her best! Although at times you may wonder, "How much more can we cram into one week?!", take the opportunity to become a part of this phase of her life. Become involved...make some marvelous memories together. Share these years, and enjoy them!

"HOW CAN SHE DO EVERYTHING?"

Helping your daughter juggle everything: grades, practices, performances, social and family events. We found these "stress-minimizing" suggestions helpful in staying on top of everything that needs to be done:

1. Help your daughter stay organized. Invest in an inexpensive monthly planner and encourage her to write everything on her calendar - assignments as well as school, spirit team and social obligations.
2. The advisors give the team members monthly calendars. On these calendars is all sorts of info that you need: practice times, performance times, birthdays and social events. Ask your daughter for an extra copy of this calendar. Put it on your fridge for reading while you're standing there trying to decide what to cook for dinner.
3. Other handy information to watch for is the weekly calendar. On this calendar, the advisors give a closer look at the week ahead. Such info includes what to wear to practice, special clothes for the day (i.e. sweatshirts or warm-up suit), practice and performance times, departing/arrival times for trips away from the school, parties and other social events.
4. Time management is a "biggie." If your daughter doesn't already budget her time wisely, this is a great time to begin and practice time management. For example, suggest to her that she take advantage of time between school and practice to knock out some of the shorter homework assignments. Her wise management of time will become a major asset when things become the busiest.
5. Encourage your daughter to keep up with her school work and not get behind in assignments. Tutorials are offered at school. Take advantage of them. If there is a potential problem in a subject, tutorials can often help before her grades slip below passing. When there is a borderline grade situation, sometimes showing up for tutorials carries weight with teachers. It shows the teacher that your daughter cares about that subject.
6. If she receives a failing grade, she becomes ineligible to perform. This is a major disappointment, especially during competition season, when she has to put so much time and energy into learning, practicing and polishing material.

"UP AND DOWN WE GO"

Dealing with moods.

1. Support your daughter and encourage her to keep going when the "going gets tough." The toughest times are during competition season.
2. Expect mood swings, especially during competition season when work so hard and there is so much to do. The team members get very tired and cranky!
3. Encourage your daughter to work as "part of the team."
4. Encourage your daughter to be constructive and positive in her ideas and suggestions; offer encouragement and support to team members.
5. If your daughter participates in individual competition, let her lead you in how to give her support. Some like to be left alone, others need their parents close by.
6. A special tip for parents of girls who compete individually: they never start working on their material as soon as we think they should!

"EAT AN APPLE INSTEAD"

Keeping a healthy spirit team member.

1. Make sure your daughter eats healthy food and takes vitamins, especially during the winter competition season.
2. She needs to drink lots of water - don't live on sodas.
3. Your daughter needs to get plenty of rest when she can. This is true all the time, but especially true during competition season.
4. Insist that your daughter take a container filled with water to summer and outdoor practices. Buy a good 2-quart size cooler with a handle. During those long hot practices she'll be glad she has her own water (she may not admit it, but she will). Even after school starts and those nice, "cool" practices move to afternoon hours, continue to take a water jug. Fill the container with lots of ice. She can put the container in her locker during the day and then fill it with water just before practice.



"DO WE NEED ALL THIS STUFF?"

Uniform tips and handy stuff to have in a spirit bag.

FYI: The dress uniform is owned by the school, so thank heavens you don't have to buy them. They are expensive. But your daughter is responsible for them.

1. Follow all washing and care instructions that the advisors give you.
 2. Order extra socks, tights, trunks and accessories.
 3. Have your daughter put her name or initials with a permanent marker on the tag inside every uniform piece you have bought, including both shoes! The school owns the warm-up suit, dress uniform and competition uniform, so don't write in those.
 4. The Spirit Bag is an amazing thing. You thought it was just something else to purchase. In fact, at times, it contains your daughter's life. Occasionally, take a trip through it. Look for all those notes about events and calendars she meant to give you. During your daughter's team life, this bag will go almost everywhere she goes with everything she needs in it.
- The bag is washable by hand with warm (not hot) water and mild soap. Hang outside to dry. After a few football games and competitions...these bags can get a little smelly!
 - Essential items for the Spirit Bag: hair brush, kleenex, feminine products, deodorant, scented body spray, container of bobby pins, safety pins, team makeup and hair accessories.
 - And some optional, yet handy items: clear rain poncho, plastic bag or small towel for wet football games, ibuprofen, Band-Aids, bottled water, extra pair of socks and other uniform accessories.
 - If you can afford it, it's a nice convenience to have her name monogrammed on the outside of the bag. When every team member's blue bag is thrown together on the floor and she needs to find hers...well, you understand.

"I NEED GIFTS FOR TOMORROW"

Ideas and tips for gifts.

There are designated times during the year that the girls will be expected to give gifts to their Big Sisters. Even after you have your team calendars posted in all important locations at your house, your daughter will announce to you the dark and rainy night before it is needed, those famous words we have all heard, "I need gifts tomorrow!"

1. Be on the lookout for cute, inexpensive spirit-type stuff. Buy it when you see it and keep it till you need it. It's convenient to keep a small stock of things for occasional gift times.
2. Stock up on inexpensive gift bags, curly ribbon and tissue paper (school colors, of course).
3. Plastic picture frames, poems they compose themselves, body lotions and soaps, small stuffed animals, small photo albums, copies of a favorite photo, "survival kits" consisting of bobby pins, safety pins, hair accessories, etc., balloons, single flowers, and handmade items are all great alternatives to giving candy as gifts.
4. Flowers from parents and "Important Others" are appreciated by the girls on special occasions such as big games and competition day.



OTHER STUFF YOU WONDERED ABOUT

More FYI for Moms and Dads

1. Come to as many football games as you can. Believe it or not, the girls look up in the stands for you. It means a lot to them if you are there, even if they never mention it.
2. Plan to attend competitions in the winter and spring. Bring the families...grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins...everybody! The girls love to know you are all out there watching them perform their hearts out!
3. Purchase a Spirit Team Mom/Dad shirt or hat. Wear them to the football games, competitions and parades. This helps promote team spirit. It's great to help find each other in large crowds and your daughter can always find you when she needs more money!
4. Participating in solo or individual competition is optional, but can be worthwhile. Each competition has an entry fee, usually ranging from \$45-\$75, and she can enter as many competitions as she wishes, or as you have the \$\$. In addition, she must provide her own costume. (Usually only necessary for dance competitions.) The costume can be as extravagant or plain as you wish. She does not have to have a different costume for each competition. Borrowing a costume from a former or current team member can be an alternative to buying one. Sometimes solos are performed at competitions where the whole team does not perform. In this case, you are responsible for providing your daughter's transportation to the competition.
5. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS!**
If you or your daughter has questions, the first source of information should be her Big Sister. If they can't answer your questions, the Captain or Co-Captain, her parents, or the Booster Club President will be glad to help. If your questions still can't be answered, call the advisors at the school.
6. Take lots of pictures. Capture the moment on film, then share them with others. You will have no trouble getting the girls to pose for you. These are some **IMPORTANT** camera tips that come from lots of experience:
 - bring lots of extra film
 - put the film IN the camera
 - change the battery for the video camera
 - bring an extra battery for your still camera
 - take off the lens cap
 - don't drop the camera off the bleachers
 - learn when/when not to use a flash
7. The girls will have several fund raisers during the year. The money they raise together at a function goes toward the team. When the girls sell something individually such as mugs or candy, that money goes into a special individual account for each girl toward the cost of her out of town trip in the spring. If she does well and sells alot, she can fund-raise the entire cost of her trip.

"HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED"

Committees and other stuff for parents.

The best way to know what is going on is to get involved and become part of the "action." A Booster Club or Spirit Team is a great way to do it. Each parent is a vital part. There is a job and a place for everyone. Here are some of the areas in which you can help:

1. **Sewing Committe:** YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE A SEWING WHIZ to be a big help on this committee!
We do a lot of hand sewing and gluing of sequins to decorate costumes. At competition times we need as many people as possible to help with costume decorating. Many of the world's problems have been solved during sewing sessions!
2. **Fund Raising Committee:** This committee is responsible for the traditional annual fund raisers as well as any other activity that raises money for the team. Again, these activities need lots of help to be successful and they also provide an opportunity to get to know each other. Sign up to help at as many of the functions as you can.
3. **Telephone Committee:** This committee is our telephone tree which passes important reminders along to parents. Good way to be involved.
4. **Spring Show Committee:** This group of parents helps to organize the details of the Spring Show in April. Ticket sales, publicity, costumes and concessions are some of the responsibilities of this committee.
5. **Banquet Committee:** Each year in May, the Spirit Team has its end-of-the-year banquet at a location chosen by the girls. This committee's job is to work out the details of the banquet by choosing the menu and decoration theme. Several parents are needed to help with the actual decorating.
6. **Historian:** This committee takes pictures throughout the year and assists the Historian of the team in compiling a scrapbook.
7. **Money Counters:** Something we would all like to be...the advisors need people to help count money from fund raisers and help keep the girls' accounts up to date.
10. **Bus Chaperones:** Each time the team travels on buses, chaperones are needed, usually two per bus. With all the football games, county parade and competitions, there are plenty of opportunities to ride the bus. It's a fun way to get to know other parents, as well as the girls. (You get in the football games free as a bus parent!) And, when you're coming 'round the last corner to the school and the girls start singing the "Alma Mater"-well that's something every parent should experience at least once!

