

# CHOREOGRAPHY FOR SUCCESS

## What coaches need to know about their routine

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### **Overview**

- Seminar is not meant to make you a professional choreographer, but we will try to give you a breakdown of how to construct various portions of routines for both entertainment and competitive purposes.
- Additionally, we will give some tips on what Judges are looking for in your routine.

### **Pre-Choreography Preparation:**

- The first step in deciding on competition choreography is deciding on which competition your team will attend.
- Knowing the style of the competition and knowing the score sheet are the most important things when it comes to your team's success.
- Know the costs of choreography
- All Companies and Events have different score sheets and philosophies and these will differ from those of different states and local organizations as well.

### **Decide WHO will create your routine**

#### **Outside Choreographer**

- Price – What is included?
- Representing a Company / Freelance?
- Safety – Insurance / AACCA?
- Experience / References?
- Style?
- Conflict of Interest?

#### **DIY – Do it yourself**

- Choose your optimal division
- Assess teams strengths and weaknesses
- Know the score sheet!
- Have a plan for music (done before or after?)

### **Highlighting your Strengths and Hiding your Weaknesses**

- When choreographing your own team, the most important thing to remember is to follow the intended score sheet.
- You must plan out your routine based on the point values for each category and the style of routine the company hosting the competition is looking for.
- If you are ever unclear, YOU are responsible for contacting the hosting organization to get a more clear understanding.
- Don't always try to "keep up with the Dunbars" --- highlight what is unique about YOUR TEAM
- Watching videos is a great way to get ideas for first time choreographers, but a CAUTION, if you're only doing skills that someone did "last year" --- it may already be passé by this year.
- Cheerleading is ever-evolving and using a previous skill / transition and changing it to make it your own is the most important skill of GREAT choreographers

### **Basic Routine Layout**

#### **The Opening:**

- Use a TEAM Strength. Highlight what YOU do best.
- Must be dynamic to grab the attention of the audience
- Not the time to show an individual skill or team weakness
- Must account for nerves

## **The Ending:**

- Want to end with a SOLID final impression
- Error at ending can affect overall impression
- Great place for a team skill like a pyramid that utilizes everyone
- Must account for fatigue

## **Stunt Sequence**

- Entrance
- Body Positions (Flexibility)
- Transitions
  - o Should be fast paced with impeccable control
- # of Bases (less bases will increase difficulty)
- Dismount
- Execution
  - o Technique
  - o Stability
  - o Synchronization

## **Pyramids**

- Entrance
- Structures: Vary final product
- Transitions: Must be fast paced, seamless and create visual interest
- Dismounts
- Execution is paramount to success!
- Difficulty
  - o # of athletes used
  - o Should include all athletes
  - o Single base skills when possible
- Number / Variety of Structures
- Transitions
  - o Twisting
  - o Release
  - o Inversions
  - o Connections

## **Tumbling**

- Use Synchronized Squad Skills vs. Individual Passes to maximize score
- Include standing tumbling and running tumbling (if required)
- Execution:
  - o Technique and body position in skills
  - o Height (tucks, layouts, fulls)
  - o Synchronization
  - o Landing
  - o Spacing and Formations
- Difficulty
  - o Type of Skill
  - o # of Athletes performing skills
  - o Combination Skills (Jump-Tumble) – Can increase tumbling difficulty
- Do not put in tumbling that is not ready to be performed!
  - o If you have to spot skills in the warm up area, your athlete may not be physically or mentally ready to perform this skill under pressure

## **Jumps**

**Execution** – evaluate the whole team, not just strongest jumpers in front

- Approach
- Height
- Flexibility
- Landing
- Visual Interest
- Synchronization
  - o Does this worsen in combinations?

### **Difficulty**

- Connected, Jump Combinations
- Consider progressions of jumps and difficulty
  - o Don't sacrifice jump skill to connect with tumbling

## **Cheer**

### **Words / Material**

- Regardless of cheer-style, words should be clear, easy to follow, loud and place the correct emphasis on “key” words
- Easy to follow BUT can also generate excitement / participation
- Should highlight team name, colors, mascots
- Should be designed to get crowd to yell back

### **Skills / Incorporation**

- Not the best time for elaborate pyramid/stunt sequences or running tumbling
- Motions need to be sharp and placed appropriately to maximize motion scores in the cheer
- Should enhance cheer / not detract
- Solid Execution
- Building at correct time to correlate to words
- Should match props: 5 letter spellout = 5 stunts (when possible)

### **Props (Signs, Poms, Megaphones)**

- Should enhance the overall effect
- Do not need to use all 3 types of props
- Use to encourage crowd participation
- Adds visual effect to the cheer

### **Formations**

- Use entire floor for maximum coverage
- Make sure front line and back lines make cohesive picture

### **Transitions**

- From Music to Cheer
  - o Final word should start after / at last beat of music
  - o Pay attention to details of having props set & ready
- From Cheer to Music
  - o Should keep cheering to the very end
  - o Can end in stunts or on the ground, stay focused on crowd
  - o Final words should not be used just to transition to set-up skills for the music portion.

## **Dance**

- Should include clear floor work, level changes, footwork and formation changes
- Judges are looking for sharp motions, good placement, synchronization and visual appeal
- Important to know the score sheet here! Dance is often the lowest point total on the score sheet which means very little dance is expected. However, at some competitions, the opposite may be true. Tailor your routine to meet the % of score on each score sheet.

## **Overall Performance**

- Are transitions seamless? Does one thing blend right to the next or are there too many 8 counts between skills?
- Do the minimum amount of athletes “cross center” in the routine or are the formation changes too far and chaotic?
- Sportsmanship of the squad as they perform is important! Judges are looking for athletes who appear to be having genuine FUN while performing rather than drawing attention to themselves as individuals.
- Team uniformity: does everyone look the same from hair bow to socks?
- Does music enhance and fit the skills performed in the routine? Sound effects can take away from the pleasure of performance if used incorrectly or used too much.
- Using too many clips of music is often a common mistake of coaches as well. Clips of music should run for 3-4 eight counts to help establish continuity in the routine.

## **Final Notes**

- It is ideal to compete multiple times throughout the season with ample time in between events to adjust your routine to suit the varying score sheets or update elements in your routine
- Athletes “get bored” with doing the EXACT same routine throughout the year and it is your job to keep things fun and evolving
- Challenge your athletes to try new things --- if they don’t have a goal to work towards, they will stay stagnant in the minimum skills they already have.
- Coaches need to be FLEXIBLE in their routines as well and don’t get caught up on an element that you LOVE, but simply isn’t working for the team.
- Practice routine in pieces and build up confidence and endurance before hitting the blue mat

***"When it comes down to it, a good coach realizes that you're not in competition with anybody but your own team. Your goal should be to beat your last performance."***