

Trying Out for Cheer? Tips for Success

It's no secret: cheer tryouts are a big deal. To ease anxiety, think of your tryout the same way you would an important exam – your performance positively correlates with amount of time you spend practicing and preparing.

Here are some pointers to help you earn top-ranked tryout scores:

Before Tryouts:

Make an informed decision.

Before you commit to tryouts, think critically about whether you have the time / passion to devote to the team. Make sure to factor in any potential financial obligations. Some teams require members to pay an annual fee, or pony up for uniform/camp expenses. When considering your potential time commitment, include the time you may need to spend fundraising.

Start sooner rather than later.

As soon as you commit to trying out, begin brushing up on your skills and practicing with others. By procrastinating, you only cheat yourself out of precious prep time.

Ask questions.

Find the date, time and location of tryouts. Figure out what forms/waivers you need to complete in advance. Make sure you know the wardrobe requirements, and what the tryout itself entails. There's no such thing as a silly question!

Focus on physique.

Cheerleading requires a lot from our bodies. Make sure yours is up for the challenge. This means maintaining a balanced diet, getting adequate sleep, and exercising regularly.

Find a mentor.

Reach out to past or present team members to seek advice. Veteran members can give you a better sense for what the coach / judges typically like to see in tryouts.

Practice to the max.

When you're practicing on your own, it can be tempting to simply mark through routines. But, practicing the moves full out will make the routine feel more natural at your tryout. Plus — the more you practice, the more you can focus on details, like sharpness and body positioning.

Attitude is everything.

Coaches often keep an eye out for attitude — even at tryout clinics. Smile, encourage others, and thank anyone who helps you out. You'll stand out as someone who works well with others.

The Night Before:

Knock out homework.

Remember, you're a student first and a cheerleader second. Before you start reviewing tryout material, complete any necessary schoolwork. Late night studying can interfere with a good night's sleep, which you'll need to perform at your peak.

Plan your outfit.

To avoid undue stress on the big day, choose your ensemble in advance. Opt for pieces that are clean, orderly and comfortable. Pay attention to details — many tryouts have specific requirements for hair, makeup, socks, and shoes. If no outfit guidelines exist, make sure you keep your hair out of your face, your makeup natural, and your shoes socks simple/clean. ALWAYS keep jewelry at home.

Pack it in early.

Even if pre-tryout jitters make it difficult to fall asleep, turn out the lights and focus on taking long, deep breaths until drift off. Along with rejuvenating our muscles and joints, sleep enhances memory — a must for any cheerleader trying to keep track of difficult routines.

At The Tryout:

Maintain poise and professionalism.

When standing before the judges, avoid distracting behaviors. Remember, cheerleaders are ambassadors for their schools and communities. Fidgeting, playing with hair, and chewing gum indicate a lack of professionalism and can pull judges' attention away from your skills.

Move past mistakes.

If you mess up, just keep going. Slap on a smile, pick up where you left off, and stay calm. Everyone makes mistakes, but judges want to see that you can handle them with grace.

Confidence is key.

Be the cheerleader judges can envision on the football field. Keep your head up, make eye contact and, of course, smile!