

Travel & Competition Tips

Preparation & Safety

This information is offered by the USASF Mentoring Leaders Committee as a resource to our member program owners. All information provided is a suggestion. Always refer to your program owner for specifics regarding your program.

Travel Preparation & Safety

PLAN AHEAD

It is recommended that travel plans are made least several months in advance. Work with your program director to obtain travel dates and hotels.

FLIGHTS

Determine which competitions will require a flight and check rates early. We recommend booking flights at least three months in advance. Check with your program director to see what the guidelines are for travel planning. Some programs require athletes to be present the night before two day events. Some programs may not let you go a day early, or leave Sunday night due to possibility of late awards ceremonies. We recommend that you book flights that can be changed, allowing you more flexibility. Being flexible is key to planning.

HOTELS

Determine for which competitions you will need a hotel.

- Some event producers require teams to book hotels through a specific housing company. Prior to booking any hotel, check to see if your program director has authorized you to book independently from the program.
- Other event producers allow teams to book hotels on their own. Your program may already have a block of rooms at a particular competition.
- If you are unsure of how many nights you need, book the maximum number of nights. Just make sure you take a look at the hotel's cancellation policy to ensure that you can cancel if you decide not to stay all nights.

TRAVEL SAFETY

Know exactly what time your program expects your athlete to arrive at the competition.

If flying, book a flight that is scheduled to arrive the day before (clear through your program owner), to avoid any issues due to weather or flight cancellations. Here are some tips for flying to competition:

- Pack your uniform or costume and anything else you absolutely NEED in a carry-on bag that you bring on the plane and have with you at all times!
- Eat at your normal times, have foods with lots of nutritional value and hydrate with water.
- Arrive at the airport two hours before your flight is scheduled to leave.
- You may want to plan transportation prior to flying (bus, taxi, or rental car).
- If there is a lay over involved during winter months try to avoid airports prone to lots of delays or cancellations due to weather.
- The week of travel, keep a close eye on the weather for all cities you will be traveling through. If you have a concern, call the airline in advance to see if there is a possibility to reroute due to weather issues.
- If you are at the airport and having flight issues, remain calm. An airline employee will always do their best to help you arrive at your destination, especially if you remain calm. Try multiple forms of communication at the same time if there are multiple people in your party. Have one person call the airline, another reach out to the airline Twitter handle and yet another work with someone from the airline at the airport. Sometimes one person might not be able to get something done, but someone else can.

If driving, a good rule of thumb is to take the estimated travel time and multiply it by 1.5. For example, if it takes two hours to drive somewhere, allow at least three hours. If it takes six hours, allow nine hours. Here are some tips for driving to competition:

- Make sure your car is safe to drive. Check the oil, tire pressure, and have inspections up to date.
- Eat at your normal times and have foods with lots of nutritional value.
- Don't speed! It isn't worth a possible accident. If you are running late communicate with the coach/program owner as soon as you know things are not going as planned so that they have as much advance notice as possible.
- Bring cash for parking as many venues have CASH ONLY parking.

Competition Preparation & Safety

Competition Preparation

Competition Day should be stress free! The key to this is planning.

- Timing: Plan enough time to eat, do make-up, get dressed, get to the venue, park your car, and meet the team. Use the “1.5 rule” here as well. If you estimate all of this to take two hours, allow three. If you are at the competition early, your athlete can watch the competition, get something to eat, etc.
- Bring cash- Some competitions are CASH ONLY admission.
- Awards- Make sure you know what time awards are and what time the coach expects you back for awards.
- Hair & Make-up- Make sure you know how hair and make-up should be done. If you need help, reach out to a veteran parent.

Competition Health/Safety/USASF Guidelines

- Eat Right. Your athlete needs to eat a good meal right before meeting with his/her team. Most of the time, the warm-up and competition process can take 1-2 hours, so your athlete will not be able to eat much during that time.
- Educate the Coach. Make your coach aware of any disorders or health issues that your child may have and what might need to be dealt with, e.g. Asthma, Diabetes, Epilepsy, Anxiety, etc. Give the coach any supplies or medications your child may need, such as an inhaler, epi-pen, etc.
- Keep your belongings. When you drop off your athlete, take all of their valuables with you. Most times there is not a secure place for the athletes to place their belongings in the warm-up room or while they compete.
- Ask Questions. When you drop off your athlete, check that a coach is there to take responsibility for your child. You may want to confirm your program's policy on competition day. Are athletes supervised at all times? Is there a buddy system in place?
- Keep your child safe. Know where to pick your child up after he or she performs. YOU are responsible for your child at competition. After he or she competes and the coach ensures that he or she is back safely with you, you should be with your athlete at all times to ensure his/her safety.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Take extra measures to provide an emergency plan for your child in the event they are separated from their coach/team or you.
- Do not block judges view of the performance floor with tablets, cameras, or signs.
- Learn the flow of the “rooting section,” and do not block aisles. Know the meeting places designated by the coach that are in compliance with the venue space.
- You aren't the exception to the rule when it comes to no-entrance areas, judges stands, or climbing over stantions or barriers. Many event producers can or will penalize your child's team for your inability to follow posted rules that are there for your safety.
- Know the schedule provided by the coach to insure your athlete is present for all practices and/or team meetings. Never leave a minor athlete unattended or unsupervised.
- Cover Up. When not in the warm up room or on the competition floor, all athletes in crop tops must cover bare midriffs.
- Competitions are recruiting free zones! While some parents may think they are helping out their program by making contact with athletes and parents from other programs in an effort to bring them over to theirs, they're not helping. Enjoy the event, be the friendly group of parents that other parents would like to be a part of, support your child and coaches so they have the most successful competition that they can, and let your child enjoy their moment in the spotlight!