



# *Understanding All Star Cheer*

## *A Parent's Guide*

## ALL STAR

USASF stands for United States All Star Federation. It is fitting that the word “cheerleading” is not present. While All Star does stem from the sport of cheerleading, it is not identical. These are the four main components of an All Star cheer routine:

- Stunts
- Tumbling
- Jumps
- Dance

The sole purpose of a recreational, high school, or college cheerleading squad is usually to cheer for an athletic event, commonly football or basketball. Competing is an additional, sometimes even secondary, role of the cheerleaders. The primary purpose of All Star is to train and to compete against other training facilities. All Star does not cheer for another sport.

## The Parent Glossary

Here is a brief glossary of very commonly used terms in All Star. For a more extensive list, refer to the USASF Rules Glossary on USASF.net in the “SAFETY” tab.

**Stunt:** Refers to when athletes lift other athletes and these athletes perform body positions and skills while suspended.

**Tumbling:** This is the “floor” portion of gymnastics which is incorporated into All Star. It is an individual activity but can be performed simultaneously.

**Jump:** An airborne position not involving flipping. There are different types of jumps with varying degrees of difficulty.

**Base:** The athlete who lifts or supports the weight of another athlete.

**Flyer, Top Girl, Partner:** The athlete being lifted by the “bases.”

**Basket Toss:** Two bases interlock wrists to make a “woven” square. The flyer steps on this and is thrown. She may or may not perform tricks while suspended, depending on the skill level of the athlete/team.

**Pyramid:** Two or more connected stunts.

**Mount:** The way in which a flyer goes into a stunt.

**Dismount:** The way in which the flyer comes down from a stunt.

**Cradle:** When a flyer dismounts to a face-up position caught by a base or bases.

**Sponge:** When a flyer dismounts to a waist level stunt and then is placed on the ground.

**Prep/Prep-Level:** May also be referred to as a “half,” this means when a flyer’s foot is positioned at the shoulder level of the bases.

**Extension/Extended Stunt:** May also be referred to as a “full,” this means when a flyer’s feet are positioned at extended arm length of the base(s).

**Single-Leg stunt-** When a Flyer is standing on one leg in a stunt.



**Single-Based Stunt:** When only one person is basing a flyer.

**Double-based Stunt:** When only two people are basing a flyer.

**Release Move:** When a flyer is airborne, released from base(s).

**Tick Tock:** When the flyer switches weight from one foot to the other in a stunt.

**Running Tumbling:** Tumbling performed with a running entry.

**Standing Tumbling:** Tumbling performed without running or forward momentum.

**Walkover:** Performed forward or backwards when an athlete rotates hips over head without losing contact with the floor.

**Handspring:** Performed forward or backward when an athlete flips by jumping from feet to hands and returning to feet.

**Tuck:** Performed forward or backward when an athlete jumps or rebounds into an inverted "tucked" position and does not have hand contact with the floor.

**Layout:** Performed forward or backward when an athlete is straight-bodied while flipping.

**Full/Double Full:** A single or double twist performed simultaneously with the layout.

**Inversion:** When an athlete's waist and feet are above his/her head.

## The United States Age Grid

- Tiny: 5 & under
- Mini: 8 & under
- Youth: 11 & under
- Junior: 14 & under
- Senior: 10-18
- Senior (Worlds team): 12-18

To avoid the problem of eligibility changing during competition season, August 31 serves as the date to determine age eligibility. This means that an athlete's eligibility for each team is marked by how old he or she is as of August 31 prior to that competition season.

## The International Age Grid

Due to differences in the seasons in other countries, the age of an athlete on an International team (competing in the U.S. or outside) is considered the age that they turn in that calendar year of the competition. For example, if Suzie is competing in February of 2016 and she turns 14 in April of 2016, she can legally compete on an International Level 5 team even if she is only 13 while competing during the season.

- International Level 5: 14 & up
- International Level 6: 17 & up

## The Levels

When All Star was an infant of a sport, there were no levels. Team A competed against team B, because there were minimal rules and vastly fewer teams. Now there could be as many as 1,500 teams at an event! Levels are necessary to differentiate skill level in all aspects of All Star, mostly pertaining to tumbling and stunting. Below are the levels and a BRIEF example of some tumbling and stunting skills you may see in that level:

- **Level 1:** cartwheels, round-offs, forward and backward rolls, front and backwalkovers, knee or waist level single leg stunt, two-footed prep, straight cradles
- **Level 2:** backhandspring, front handspring, Level 1 tumbling connected to a handspring, prep level single leg stunts, extended two-footed stunts, half-twisting mounts, barrel rolls, begin basket tosses
- **Level 3:** running tucks, standing series backhandsprings, jumps connected to standing backhandspring, full twisting mounts to prep, full twisting dismounts, extended single leg stunts
- **Level 4-** standing tucks, running layouts, full twisting mounts to extended two-footed stunts, double twisting dismounts from two-footed stunts, release moves to extended single leg stunt.
- **Level 5:** standing tumbling to full/double, running tumbling to full/double, full, 1.5, and double twisting mounts, double twisting dismount from extended single leg, all advanced release moves
- **Level 6:** tumbling is comparable to level 5, free-flipping mounts, flipping tosses, 2.5 high pyramids (an athlete holding an athlete who is holding another athlete).

## Team Placement Based on Leveling System

The above are examples of the most common skills you may see in a routine at each level. Please remember a few things about your daughter/son's placement on a team (age/level):

1. Every gym is different and has a different mission statement. An athlete may be placed on a different level team at any given gym based on what that program values and even based on that program's turnout at tryouts. Because an athlete is placed on a certain level team, does not necessarily qualify him/her as an athlete at that level. Ensuring the gym is the right fit for your athlete may be more important than what you feel is the right team for her.
2. Age, tumbling ability, stunting ability, loyalty and work ethic, are all factors that may affect team placement. If you are unsure of why your daughter/son was placed on a particular team, just ask! Remember, the owner/coach will be much more receptive to an inquisitive parent than an attacking one.
3. Your athlete's level of stunting could be different than his/her level of tumbling which would definitely make placement ambiguous.
4. There are only essentially five levels. If your daughter or son participates in All Star from the age of 8 to 17, she could spend two years at every single level. If she starts at age 3, she could potentially spend three years at each level! Not rushing your athlete before he is ready to progress will help alleviate anxiety and allow him to maintain his enthusiasm for the sport. Just because your athlete is repeating a level, DOES NOT mean he/she failed the previous year. Very often, children are placed at a certain level one year and are executing the minimal requirements (or able to execute advanced requirements but not in a routine setting), and the next year or two are able to contribute more advanced tumbling/stunting with superior technique.

## Competitions

There are many companies that offer All Star competitions. Many are called "Regionals" or "Nationals." It is up to the company to determine what qualifies as a "Regional" or a "National." Some companies have 10 National competitions, while others have just one. There is no all-inclusive National competition. A team can earn a bid to The Cheer-leading World Championship at some of these National events. "Worlds" is the only competition run solely by the USASF. It occurs every year in Orlando, FL in the month of April.

## The Routine

A traditional All Star routine is 2 minutes and 30 seconds. It includes stunting, tumbling, jumps, and dance. The routine is done to a customized mix of music.

## Scoring

Scoring is starting to become more standardized. In general, a team is judged on the following categories, and score sheets can vary from company to company:

- Standing Tumbling (Difficulty & Execution) Full team skills are rewarded with the highest difficulty.
- Running Tumbling (Difficulty & Execution) Looking for full team skill.
- Jumps (Difficulty and Execution) Most companies look for 4 advanced jumps (Toe touch, hurdler, or pike).
- Stunts (Difficulty & Execution) Some companies also award for building creativity.
- Pyramid (Difficulty & Execution) Some companies also award for pyramid creativity.
- Basket Tosses (Difficulty & Execution) Most of the time these are done in sync.
- Dance (Footwork, Movement on the floor, Difficulty of Moves, and Showmanship)

## Deductions and USASF Rule Violations

**Deduction:** Points taken away from the final score due to one of the following occurrences in a routine:

- Stunt Fall (usually more points are taken if one or more athlete's torso touches the floor)
- Athlete Fall (usually hands, or torso touch the floor when attempting to land tumbling. This deduction could be taken on jumps, dance, or transitions as well).

### **Rule Violation**

- Boundary Violations (Stepping off of the performance surface)
- Time Limit Violation (If the music/routine exceed 2:30)
- Safety Violation (A skill that is performed is not in accordance with the USASF rules for that level)
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Coaches, Athletes, or Spectators associated with a particular team)

## All Star Prep

Introduced in the 2013-2014 season, the All Star Prep Divisions were started so that programs could offer a program that was:

- Less Expensive
- Less time commitment
- Possibly shorter season

Programs use All Star Prep for different reasons. Some use it for their half-year teams. They will start a team, or a number of teams, in the fall. Some programs just use it as a preparation for their traditional All Star teams. Maybe the majority of the team has never done All Star before, so they use this team as a transition into the sport.

### **These are the differences between All Star Prep and Traditional All Star:**

- Routine is only 2:00 minutes (as opposed to 2:30)
- No basket tosses
- If All Star Prep is offered at a 2-day competition, they only compete 1 of the days.
- Practice less than traditional All Star
- The score system may not be as strict for All Star Prep. A Prep team could possibly max out in a category without FULL team skill.