



Old Dominion University

Spirit Squads Handbook



***Please initial every section**

Tryouts _____

If there are any questions regarding the tryout process, please reach out to Tara Lynne Hilbert for clarification. The coaches will make the final decision as to who makes the team. This does not always mean who is the most talented individual. The coaches are looking for well-rounded individuals who will be good representatives of the University. If an individual has been disrespectful to athletes/coaches/the program, they have missed practices/games/appearances in the past, or they are not willing to put in the extra effort to improve the program, those individuals will not make the team.

The coaches may place an individual on a probationary status. If this is to occur, the coaches will let the athlete know and the coaches will also speak with the athlete about what they need to work on or improve to work their way off of probationary status. If the individual does not meet the requirements set by the coaches, they will be removed from the team.

To be considered for the team: All athletes **must** have a 2.0 cumulative GPA to be eligible to tryout. Athletes must have all paperwork completed and submitted on time. Athletes must be at every day of tryouts to be considered for the team.

Cheerleading Squad _____

Members of the ODU Cheerleading Squad will primarily lead cheers at home/away football games and Women's/Men's home basketball games. Certain squad members may also travel to FBS Bowl Game, Sunbelt Basketball Tournament, NIT or NCAA Basketball Tournament. The competition team and selected alternates may travel/compete at the NCA Cheer and Dance Championship held annually in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Dynasty Dance Team _____

Dynasty Dance Team members primarily dance and lead cheers at home football games Women's/Men's home basketball games. Dynasty Dance members may also travel to FBS Bowl Game, Sunbelt Basketball Tournament, NIT or NCAA Basketball Tournament. It will be up to the coaches' digression who will compete/travel for the NDA Cheer and Dance Championship held annually in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Appearance _____

The individuals who are selected to represent the spirit squads are held to the highest standard. These individuals need to make sure they maintain the All-American look throughout the year. Hair needs to be kept its natural color and any changes to color or cut (besides a basic trim and highlight touchup) need to be approved by the coaching staff. If the athlete takes it upon themselves to color their hair or get a drastic cut without the coaches' permission, they may have to get their hair recolored or have to sit out of games/appearances. **Acrylic nails are not allowed** throughout the season. If an individual gets acrylic nails put on over a break, they need to remove them before practice/game. Nails need to be kept a neutral color. A French manicure, pale pink, beige, or another neutral color is allowed. Acceptable jewelry on game days: pearl earrings, stud crystal earrings and stud nose rings. Unacceptable jewelry on game days:

Inappropriate image earrings, hoop earrings, necklaces, belly button rings, apple watches, bracelets, anklets, rings, and hoop nose rings. For the competition team: no jewelry or loose articles of any kind when competing. This includes earrings, belly rings, rings, necklaces, glasses, hair ties, and so on. Nails also must be short and no nail polish at all.

Practice Schedule _____

All practices are **MANDATORY**. Individuals who are not able to commit to every practice, should not tryout for the cheer or dance team. Practices will be twice a week during football season and will move to 3-4 times a week during competition season. Every practice is critical for the team's success. For competition: If you miss a practice, your spot can be filled by one of the alternates. When you come back, your spot may not be given back to you.

Athletes must arrive 10 minutes before practice start time. If you are late to practice, conditioning will be given to the individual. If you are not feeling well, you still need to be at practice to learn the material that is being discussed. If you miss for a medical reason, you need to bring in a doctor's note. You must contact the coach by noon the day of practice. Contacting the coach an hour before practice is unacceptable and the athlete will be benched from the next game. If it becomes a regular issue, the individual will be removed from the team. Family vacations, parties, formals, sorority meetings, ect. are not reasons to miss practice.

When picking your class schedule, you need to keep in mind that practices will be at night. No one should schedule a class that goes past 6:30 pm. If there is only one class offered for your major, you need to get approval from your coaches.

It is a privilege to be put on both the cheer team and the dynasty dance team. At practice there is not to be complaining or questioning authority. The coaches/captains are there to help the team succeed as a whole. This might mean they do something differently than you would have done it. Athletes are to be respectful at all times and can/will be removed from the team if not. Athletes are expected to give it their all and understand that dance and cheer are both team sports and the coaches will do what is best for the team as a whole.

There will also be a mandatory work week for each team during the summer. This takes place in July and practices will take place in the morning and evening all week. Athletes will stay with upperclassmen throughout the week (or make their own housing arrangements) and will be responsible for their own meals.

Athletes will have to stay on campus during the entire duration of spring break. Missing practice during spring break will result in immediate dismissal from the competition team. Those individuals not selected for the competition team will be traveling to cheer/dance on the basketball teams at the Sunbelt tournament. Do not make plans during this time.

Workouts _____

It is expected that all cheerleaders and dancers are in athletic shape. This does not mean that all athletes will look the same. This means that all athletes will be working out and will be eating healthy during the season. Each team has specific requirements in place and the requirements could change throughout the season. Cheer is required to run and track 3 miles a week. Dance is required to have 3 workouts a week for at least an hour and show proof to Coach Dominick.

Games _____

All games are **MANDATORY!** The only reason an individual should miss a game is because there is a death in the immediate family or they are IN a wedding. If it is for a wedding, the individual needs to bring it to the coaches' attention at the beginning of the season.

There will be games that are close to holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter) **you are still required to be at these games.** Family vacations are not an approved reason to miss a game. If you miss a game, this may lead to dismissal from the team. **Everyone must attend the holiday games and practices.** The football game schedule is attached to this document to look at prior to tryouts. If an athlete is to miss a game, they will not be eligible for the competition squad and will not be allowed to travel to Daytona with the team. If an athlete is unable to be at all of the games, the athlete should not tryout this season.

Athletes need to show up to games on time. Every game will have a designated meet time set by the coaches. If an athlete is going to be late, they need to call the coach to let them know why they will be late. If an individual is late to a game, that individual will have to run bleachers before the game and will be sat from the first quarter of the game. If this becomes an ongoing issue, the athlete will be removed from the team.

The coaches will ask for documentation for any reason an individual is not attending a game. If an athlete cannot show proper documentation or lies to the coach about why they are missing a game, this will lead to immediate dismissal from the team.

There is a copy of the football schedule on the last page. **Please be sure you are able to attend ALL games before trying out for the cheer or dance.** There will also be a spring game in April. The same rules still apply.

Nationals _____

NCA/NDA College Nationals are held in Dayton Beach, Florida at the beginning of April every year. Going to nationals is a privilege for members of the spirit program. It is up to the coaches if they believe their squad is ready to compete in Daytona. The individuals who will take the floor in Daytona will be picked by the coaches. For cheer, we will take a total of 24 athletes. For dance we will take up to 20.

(Those on the cheerleading competition team are required to come in with their stunt group to do their stunts 5 times BEFORE practice starts - every practice)

The coaches will look at the team as a whole and see who is best fit to represent the program. Just because an individual was selected to be on the competition team in the beginning, does not mean they can't be replaced by an alternate. If an athlete doesn't show up for a practice/game, is repeatedly late, has a bad attitude, doesn't get along with coaches/teammates, skills digress, academics start to slip, or any other reason, the coach can fill that athlete's spot with an alternate. Your spot is **not guaranteed** and may change; even the week before we leave for Daytona.

Alternates _____

There will be alternates who are expected to be at all nationals practice to learn the routine. An alternate can replace an individual on the competition team at any period of the season. If an alternate is putting in the work and a member of the competition team is

not trying to better themselves, they will be replaced. On the other hand, if an alternate is not learning the routine in case of injury or illness, they will not travel with the team to Daytona.

Athletes do not need to be an alternate if they don't want to. If an athlete decides to not be an alternate, they will still get to cheer at games and events, but will not have to attend competition practices. This decision will not be held against that athlete at tryouts the following year.

Group Stunt (Cheer Only) _____

A stunt group may be asked to represent the program in the group stunt performance in Daytona. If a stunt group is interested, they need to ask the coaches and see if the coaches feel it will be a good fit. The group will need to practice on their own time and they will need to submit a video to qualify. If the group qualifies, they will perform on the Bandshell in Daytona on the designated Saturday.

Those individuals who are traveling to College Nationals (alternates included) are responsible for fundraising \$500. If the athlete does not raise this money during our fundraisers, they will be responsible for paying the remaining amount out of pocket. If the athlete does not raise their money, they will be unable to attend nationals.

Travel _____

The individuals who are picked to travel are up to the coaches' discretion. Athletes may ask what they need to approve on in order to travel, but should not question why other individuals are traveling. Traveling to away games, promotional opportunities, championships, as well as competitions, is a privilege not a necessity. Displaying the proper behavior during these events is expected of all individuals chosen to travel.

Spirit members who are selected to travel are a representation of the spirit program, athletics, and the University. At all times, Spirit Squad member's behavior shall be exemplary. Behavior which is loud, boisterous, rude, rowdy, offensively harsh, etc., shall subject a student athlete to discipline. Old Dominion University cheerleaders/dancers will travel to and from all events as a team; Spirit Squad members may not make personal travel arrangements.

When traveling, the spirit members need to look uniformed. Hair should be done, casual make-up on, and warm ups with assigned shirts should be worn on the plane or bus. Traveling should be looked at as a business trip and athletes should treat it as such. When on the bus or plane, talking should be kept to a minimum. There is absolutely no yelling, bad mouthing the team, or cursing. While traveling: drinking, drugs, going off on your own, going into others hotel rooms, ect. will not be tolerated. If an individual cannot abide by these expectations, they will not be removed from the team immediately and depending on the severity, the whole team will not be allowed to travel in the future.

Appearances _____

There will be appearances scheduled throughout the year. Every cheerleader is required to participate in the events they can make it to. Athletes are required to attend at least 3 events. The same individuals should not be attending every event. Having to do your homework last minute is not a reason to miss an appearance. This is a large part of being a cheerleader/dancer at ODU. Every athlete is expected to be at appearances.

Chain of Command _____

When reaching out for a concern, please go through the proper progression. When there is any issue, it is expected for the athlete to be the one to get in contact with the coaches. The coaches will not be in contact with the athlete's parents unless there is an emergency. When reaching out to the coaches, please state who you are in case they do not have your number saved in their phone.

If an issue is to arise with a team member, that individual is expected to speak with their teammate face to face in order to resolve the issue at hand. If there is no resolution, then reach out to your coaches.

- If you will be late for practice/game:
 - Cheer: Rachel Ayers
 - Dance: Dominick Fink
- If you are having an issue with a team member
 - Talk to that team member **first**, if it is not resolved, **then** reach out to your coach
 - Cheer: Rachel Ayers
 - Dance: Dominick Fink
 - If you still need help: Tara Lynne Hilbert
- If you have an issue happening with a coach
 1. Please reach out to the coach first and try to come to a solution
 2. Both teams – Tara Lynne Hilbert
- Any other questions or concerns
 1. Reach out to your coach
 2. Reach out to Tara Lynne Hilbert

Important Numbers:

Tara Lynne Hilbert – (757) 705-4779 Email: tcannon@odu.edu

Rachel Ayers – (757) 362-7986 Email: rayers@odu.edu

Dominick Fink – (757) 735-1031 Email: dfink@odu.edu

Fundraising/Dues _____

For both the Cheerleading and Dance team, there will be a one-time fee of \$200 due at the first August practice. Spirit members will need to pay this fee before they are able to receive their practice wear or uniforms. There will be an additional \$500 fee for those girls on the competition team.

There will be fundraising throughout the year that every member of the spirit squad is required to participate in. If someone does not participate, they will not be able to receive the benefits that the other members do.

Stipend _____

In order to be eligible for a small stipend, the athletes overall cumulative GPA (not semester GPA) must be a 2.75 or higher. New members will not be awarded any stipend their first semester on the squad. The coaches will pull a grade report in August before the Fall semester starts and again in December after the Fall semester has been completed.

Study Hall _____

All freshmen are required to attend study hall their first year on the team. They will be required to complete 3 hours of study hall. Sophomores - Seniors who have below a 3.0 will also be required to attend study hall for 3 hours a week. If an athlete does not complete their hours for the week they will have extra conditioning and if it happens again, they will have to sit out of a game. Everyone is here to be a Student First and Athlete Second.

Collegiality _____

As a representative of the Old Dominion Spirit Squad, you are to represent the program in a positive light. With social media increasing in popularity athletes need to be aware that the media, faculty, college administrators, other coaches, and future employers will be looking at their accounts. Inappropriate material found on social media that shows a lack of collegiality will not be tolerated within the program. This includes but is not limited to drinking underage, displaying any type of drug or illegal substance, displaying a lack of respect for the program, coaches /or athletics, and so on. Clothing (tops and bottoms) must be worn in every picture. If you are of age to drink, you may not display anything that says ODU cheer/dance while doing so. If a vet/alumni/coach asks you to take something down, please do so. We have had individuals in the past removed from the team due to alumni sending in photos of current members representing the program in a negative light. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Alcohol/Drugs _____

During the individual's time as an Old Dominion Spirit Squads member, the use of any type of drug is absolutely prohibited. Not only is taking/using drugs illegal by law, it will not be tolerated by any members of the program. Random drug screenings can/will be issued if the coaches deem it necessary. If an individual is found guilty of using any type of substance, they will be immediately removed from the program. No athlete should smell of smoke at any time and needs to be sure they are not bringing smoke smells into practices/games.

Alcohol should only be consumed by those individuals of age to legal drink. At no time should any individual on the teams take a picture/video while in ODU spirit attire. If an athlete is of the legal age, they need to still represent the program in a good light and need to be aware of their choices when they are out. If any individual is to represent the program in a negative light, they will be removed from the program.

Going to *The Edge* bar (Norfolk or VA Beach) is **NOT ALLOWED**. This is a rule set in place by ODU athletics. If any individual is to be seen going to the Edge, they will be **immediately** removed from the team.

We are looking forward to this season with all of the athletes selected for The Spirit Squads. This is a privilege for everyone selected and should be looked at as a job. Those individuals should always be on time for events, should look the part, and should be respectful of the other individuals on the team as well as their coaches. Every job has expectations and consequences if those expectations are not met. Please understand that we don't only care about your athletic ability, we want all of our athletes to be successful adults. At the end of the day, the team comes before clubs, sororities, and other extracurricular activities. If any athlete feels like they are unable to fulfill the necessary requirements, they should not try out until they are able to meet all the requirements.

_____ I have read and agree to everything that is expected out of me as an Old Dominion Spirit Squad member.

_____ I do not understand what is expected out of me as an Old Dominion Spirit Squad member.

Athlete Signature: _____ Date: _____

2023 Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time
Sept. 2	at Virginia Tech	TBA
Sept. 9	Louisiana	TBA
Sept. 16	Wake Forest	TBA
Sept. 23	Texas A&M-University Commerce	TBA
Sept. 30	at Marshall	TBA
Oct. 7	at Southern Miss	TBA
Oct. 21	App State	TBA
Oct. 28	at James Madison	TBA
Nov. 4	Coastal Carolina	TBA
Nov. 11	at Liberty	TBA
Nov. 18	at Georgia Southern	TBA
Nov. 25	Georgia State	TBA