THUNDER ELITE COMPETITION GUIDE 2026-2027



WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST ALL-STAR CHEER COMPETITION

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW!

WWW.THUNDERELITE.COM

MEET OUR TEAMS!

ALL-STAR CHEER: PREP & ELITE

All-star cheerleading is a team sport that combines stunts, tumbling, jumps, pyramids, and dance into a routine performed at competitions. Teams are grouped by age and skill level. At Thunder Elite, our Prep teams perform two-minute routines and compete on one day of each event. Our Elite teams perform two-minute-and-thirty-second routines and compete on both days of two-day events. Both programs build skills, confidence, and teamwork while giving athletes the excitement of representing Thunder on the competition floor!





ELITE TEAM THEMES:

FROST- MICHAEL JACKSON

LIGHTNING 4ORCE: STAR WARS

Prep Teams

- **Baby Bolts: Tiny Level 1.1 Prep**
- **Flurries: Mini Level 1.1 Prep**
- **Black Ice: Youth Level 1.1 Prep**
- **Cyclones: Junior Level 1.1 Prep**

Elite Teams

- **Frost: Youth Level 2**
- **Lightning 4orce: Senior Level 4**



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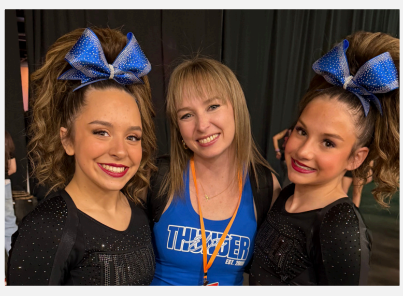
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM ARRIVAL TO PERFORMANCE



Spectator Tickets	Your athlete's admission is already taken care of, but spectators will need to purchase their own tickets. Each event or venue sets its own ticket prices and admission policies. Thunder Elite does not control these costs. Review the ticket information before competition day and purchase in advance when required.
Arrive Ready!	Arrive with your athlete dressed in their competition uniform, with hair and makeup finished and jewelry removed. Allow extra time for traffic, parking, admission lines, and finding your team. Your meeting time means being with the team and ready—not pulling into the parking lot!
Meet Your Team	Your itinerary lists arrival, performance, and awards times. Check it and Band for your meeting location, and arrive ready to join your coaches. Keep Band notifications on for updates throughout the day.
Head To Warmups	Athletes go backstage with their team and coaches to warm up and get focused. This area is for athletes and coaches only. Families head to the spectator area and get ready to cheer!
Find Your Spot & Bring the Thunder	If the event offers priority parent viewing, follow staff instructions for lining up and entering. Coaches stand at the front of the stage throughout the routine, so consider their position when choosing your view. It's time to perform! Prep routines are 2 minutes, and Elite routines are 2 minutes and 30 seconds. Cheer loudly, celebrate their hard work, and enjoy the moment! Afterward, clear priority viewing for the next team's families.







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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE STAGE TO AWARDS



Pick Up Your Athlete

After performing, teams watch their routine replay backstage. Coaches then bring athletes to the designated pickup location. Parents supervise after release until the next team meeting. Confirm when and where to return, and greet your athlete with encouragement: “We loved watching you!”

Enjoy The Time in Between

Plan to stay from your team’s meeting time through awards and coach release—there may be several hours between performing and awards. Enjoy food, cheer pins, pictures, and supporting Thunder teams around your commitments. Keep checking Band, and keep athletes in uniform.

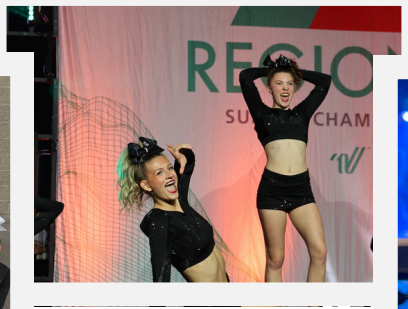
Celebrate At Awards

Athletes attend awards in full uniform, leaving bags, phones, water bottles, cameras, and other belongings with family. Celebrate their effort, congratulate other teams, and show great sportsmanship as placements are announced.

Before You Head Home

Stay and cheer on other Thunder teams if your schedule allows! Follow your coach’s final instructions and confirm your athlete is released before leaving. Elite families: check your itinerary for the second day’s schedule!







COMPETITION READY!

A LITTLE PREPARATION MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE



Follow team wear instructions:

- uniform, bow & cheer shoes.
- White no-show socks
- No-show bra.
- Prep: black underwear
- Arrive with hair & makeup finished.
- Short nails—no fake nails allowed
- Remove jewelry & piercings

- Read your team's itinerary
- Check parking, bag & re-entry rules
- Pack water bottles
- Bring hair ties, bobby pins
- Bring makeup for touch-ups
- Charge your phone
- Pack a portable charger.
- Turn on Band notifications.
- Label belongings with your athlete's name



ATHLETES STAY IN UNIFORM THROUGHOUT THE COMPETITION. SAVE BLANKETS AND PJS FOR THE TRIP HOME. KEEP PHONES IN BAGS OR WITH FAMILY—NOT TUCKED INTO UNIFORMS. INJURED ATHLETES FOLLOW TEAM COMPETITION WEAR INSTRUCTIONS UNLESS THEY ARE IN A HARD CAST.

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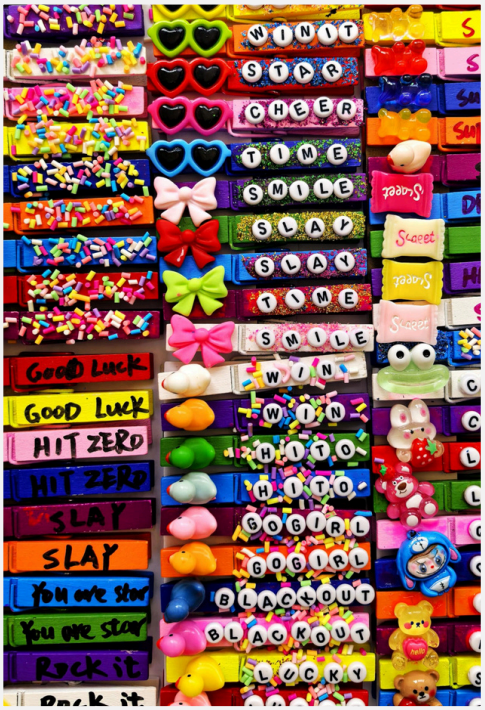
PINS, PRIDE & MEMORIES!

Some of the best competition memories happen beyond the mat! From surprising someone with a cheer pin to cheering alongside your Thunder family, these little moments make the day special. Bring your team spirit, make a new friend, and enjoy the traditions that make all-star cheer so much fun!

SMALL PINS, BIG SMILES!

Cheer pins are a fun competition tradition! Decorate clothespins with Thunder colors, team names, and encouraging messages like “You’ve got this!” or “Good luck!” Bring them to secretly clip onto other athletes’ bags and spread a little kindness. Need inspiration? Check out the examples in Candy’s office! Pin only on the outside of bags, never open them or touch anything inside, and save pinning for downtime.



SHOW YOUR THUNDER PRIDE

Cheer proudly for our athletes and support other Thunder teams whenever your schedule allows! Bring kindness to the stands, hallways, and awards ceremonies. Speak positively about other gyms, athletes, and judges, congratulate other teams, and keep others’ views clear during performances. Our athletes learn from us—let’s show them great sportsmanship every step of the way!



SHARE YOUR THUNDER MOMENTS

From getting ready to celebrating after the routine, competition days are full of memories worth capturing! Share your team photos, cheer pins, behind-the-scenes fun, and proud moments. Tag us on Instagram so we can celebrate with you!

@thunderelite

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MORE THAN THE SCORE



Every competition is a chance to grow, build confidence, and celebrate what our athletes can accomplish together. Scores and placements are part of the experience, but so are stronger skills, brave moments, and teammates supporting one another!

WHAT DOES "HIT ZERO" MEAN?



Hitting zero means performing a routine without deductions—points taken off for certain mistakes or rule violations. It's an accomplishment worth celebrating! It doesn't automatically mean a win, though. Difficulty, execution, and other performance criteria also affect the final score and placement.

BE THEIR BIGGEST FAN

Competition butterflies are normal! Keep things calm and encouraging, remind your athlete their coaches and teammates are there for them, and let their coach know if they need extra support. Let coaches handle routine feedback while you enjoy being their biggest fan. After performing, start with "We loved watching you!" Give your athlete room to share how they felt, and celebrate effort, confidence, and teamwork without comparing them to others. Questions about scoring or decisions should go directly to a coach or owner.







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THE CHAMPIONSHIP CLIMB



A bid is an earned invitation to an end-of-season championship. Each championship has its own qualification process, and winning a division does not always guarantee a bid.

THE U.S. FINALS | RECOGNITION WORTH CELEBRATING

A Golden Ticket, also called a Gold Bid, provides paid entry to The U.S. Finals and is usually awarded to the highest-scoring eligible team in an awards ceremony. Thunder Elite does not attend The U.S. Finals, but earning this recognition is an accomplishment we proudly celebrate! Receiving one does not add the event to our competition schedule.

THE REGIONAL SUMMIT ELIGIBLE: LIGHTNING 4ORCE & FROST

An end-of-season championship closer to home. Teams qualify by placing in the top three of an eligible division at a designated qualifying event. This is a separate championship, not a qualifying round for The Summit.

THE SUMMIT ELIGIBLE: LIGHTNING 4ORCE

Held at Walt Disney World in Florida for eligible Junior and Senior teams. Bids are awarded at qualifying events based on scores and event bid rules. Watch for Monday night bid reveals after qualifying competitions—we'll share details so families can tune in!



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LET'S BRING THE THUNDER!



Our athletes have put so much heart into preparing for this season, and we can't wait to watch them take the floor! Every practice, new skill, and challenge they've worked through together has helped them get to this moment. Thank you for the rides, the early mornings, the hair help, and the encouragement you give along the way. Your support means so much to your athlete and our entire Thunder family. Come prepared, cheer proudly, take those pictures, and enjoy watching your child do something they love. The friendships, progress, and memories will stay with them long after the final awards ceremony. We're proud of our athletes, grateful for our families, and ready to make this a season to remember!

STAY CONNECTED

Your team's Band group is your first stop for competition itineraries, meeting locations, and updates. Keep notifications on, check posts before leaving home and throughout the day, and respond when coaches request a check-in.



QUESTIONS?

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REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN!