



# THUNDER ELITE 2025-2026

## POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

### PLANNED VS. UNPLANNED ABSENCES

We understand that life can be unpredictable, but attendance is critical for every athlete's success and for team progress. Planned absences—such as family vacations, school trips, or other known conflicts—must be submitted to your coach at least two weeks in advance for consideration. Approval is not guaranteed, especially during mandatory practice weeks. Unplanned absences, such as illness or emergencies, should be communicated to your coach by 3:00 PM on the day of practice. We know that family time matters too. That's why Thunder includes planned breaks and holidays throughout the year to support a balance between commitment to the team and time with loved ones.

### MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

#### Mandatory Events/Practices



- Practice the week before/after choreography (Elite teams)
- Choreography dates
- Practices the week of any competition
- Practices the week of any performance
- Any Practice after Christmas Break until the Aloha Competition

#### HIGHLY ENCOURAGED EVENTS!

- Thunder Tailgate
- Trunk or Treat
- Christmas Party

### UNPLANNED ABSENCES

#### Excused Absences

- Fever 102 or higher
- Contagious illness
- Lice (must be 24 hours free of lice before returning)
- Serious injury (with doctor's note)
- Death in the family

#### Unexcused

- Shopping, birthdays, or social events
- Homework/Studying
- Transportation issues
- Parent illness (non-emergency)



Have an unplanned absence? Contact your coach directly (not the office or email) by 3:00pm at the latest.  
Last-minute calls may still disrupt practice plans

### WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS IN CHEERLEADING

Showing up really matters in cheer because every athlete plays a vital role—there are no backup players. When even one person is absent, a stunt may not go up, timing can be thrown off, and formations may fall apart, affecting the entire practice. With limited weekly practice hours, there's little room to miss key skills, updates, or timing work that the team depends on. Consistent attendance builds confidence, helps the team function as one unit, and supports safe, successful performances. Beyond the mat, being present teaches athletes how to manage their time, honor commitments, and be accountable not just for themselves, but for teammates who rely on them.

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### Attendance Expectations

We understand that life happens—illnesses or emergencies may occasionally require missing practice. While we strive to be understanding, we also need to emphasize how crucial attendance is for individual progress and team success. Our teams only practice up to 6 hours per week, so consistent attendance is essential to our program's success.

### Unacceptable Reasons for Missing Practice

Missing practice for reasons such as homework, family birthday dinners, a parent having a migraine, holiday shopping or parties, or lack of transportation is not acceptable. These are non-emergency situations that can and should be planned around practice schedules. Missing practice for these reasons may result in your child being removed from their team's routine and could potentially lead to dismissal from the Thunder Elite program.

### Mandatory Practices

Attendance during these practices is critical for finalizing routines and ensuring all athletes are prepared and confident. Missing practice for these reasons may result in your child being removed from their team's routine and could potentially lead to dismissal from the Thunder Elite program.

### Post-Christmas Break Attendance Requirement

Missing practices after Christmas break, leading up to our next competition in January, is not an option. This period is especially crucial due to the gym break, and it is essential for athletes to quickly regain consistency and rhythm. Every practice during this time directly impacts team readiness and overall performance.

### Reporting Unplanned Absences

If your athlete must miss practice, please do not email the staff or call the gym's administrative line. Instead, contact your coach directly by 3:00 pm to give them adequate time to adjust their practice plan. Coaches spend considerable time planning each practice with specific goals in mind. Having team members missing without proper notice disrupts those plans and affects the team's progress.

### Competition Season Attendance

Attendance during competition season is more important than ever. Athletes must attend all practices to maintain consistency and remain competitive. When an athlete misses practice, it affects the entire team—formations are disrupted, stunts can't go up, and tumbling spacing and timing are thrown off. Cheerleading doesn't have a "bench"; every athlete is essential.

### Final Attendance Reminder

Our athletes work incredibly hard for only a few competitions each year, and we are in the midst of preparing them for success. Regular attendance is crucial to ensure that everyone is confident, prepared, and able to perform at their best.

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### **Injury**

If your athlete is injured, it is essential to maintain regular communication with your team coach regarding your child's illness or injury status. Keeping your coach updated helps ensure proper adjustments can be made to support your athlete's recovery and continued progress.

### **Dismissal**

We hold a high standard of respect within our gym and reserve the right to do business with whom we choose. Thunder Elite may remove any team member from their team, program, or class at our sole discretion. Both athletes and parents are expected to treat all Thunder staff with courtesy and respect.

Consistent "drama" or "pot stirring" may result in your child's dismissal from our program. Parents must agree to address any concerns related to the program, staff, cheerleaders, or other parents directly with the staff. Publicly airing grievances is not acceptable. Parents must also agree to accept staff decisions as final and made with the best interests of all parties in mind.

### **Facility and Practice Guidelines**

Athletes are expected to attend practice on time and wear the appropriate assigned practice clothing. If the proper shirt is not worn, Thunder Elite will provide one and charge the cost to the athlete's account.

Fingernails must be kept short, and fake nails or long dipped nails are not allowed. Food and drinks are not permitted in the gym, except for water bottles filled with water only. Chewing gum or consuming it at the gym is also prohibited.

Athletes must keep the gym, lobby, and bathrooms clean by discarding all garbage and taking personal belongings home. Thunder Elite is not responsible for lost or stolen items. A "Lost & Found" is available in the lobby for misplaced belongings.

### **Team Fundraising Guidelines**

Mandatory team fundraisers will take place throughout the season. These will include activities such as Christmas raffle baskets and a burpee-a-thon. All money raised during mandatory fundraisers will benefit the entire team, contributing to activities, extra team shirts, additional team fun nights, and more.

### **Individual Fundraisers**

You may not use Thunder Elite's name or likeness to run personal fundraisers. All fundraising efforts involving the gym's branding or reputation must be approved and coordinated through Thunder Elite.

### **Equipment**

Athletes are not permitted to use Thunder equipment without prior approval. While using equipment, athletes must handle it appropriately and with care. Misuse of any Thunder equipment will not be tolerated and may result in immediate dismissal from the program.

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### Athlete Image

Athletes' hair color must be a natural tone. No piercings may be worn in the warm-up room or on the performance stage. Jewelry will result in point deductions from the team's score. Girls must wear WHITE no-show ankle socks and a no-show/nude bra. Injured athletes must wear the exact competition wear listed on their team's itinerary. Exceptions will only be made if the athlete is in a hard cast. Hair and makeup must match the tutorials provided. Tutorials are available at: [www.thunderelite.com/teams](http://www.thunderelite.com/teams). Athletes must remain in uniform throughout the entirety of the competition. Walking around in blankets or pajama pants is not permitted. Athletes will not be permitted to put their cell phones in their bras, skirts, or waistbands.

### During Performances

Coaches will be standing at the front of the stage during performances for confidence, security, and support. Coaches will not move for spectators.

### Awards

Athletes must be in full uniform for award ceremonies. No backpacks, cell phones, water bottles, cameras, or other items are allowed on stage during awards.

### Representation

Make sure you are doing your best to represent yourself, your team, and our gym in the very best light possible at all times. Your words and actions during competitions directly reflect Thunder Elite's teams, families, and business. Keep conversations positive about other gyms, routines, cheerleaders, judges, etc. Only say things that you would be proud of others hearing. Negative words or actions could discourage potential new families from joining Thunder Elite. Representing our gym well helps to grow our community

### Respect for Other Teams

Competitions can be crowded, uncomfortable, and emotionally charged. Remember to be patient and considerate of others who are there to support their children, just as we are. Avoid standing, walking, or causing distractions during performances—whether it's our teams or others. Show respect for all athletes and families present.

### Parents' Conduct

Parents are encouraged to attend events locally and nationally. If you have concerns or disagreements about judging, decisions, or philosophies, talk to your child's coach or an owner first. Negative discussions between parents or speaking negatively to your child about the program will not be tolerated. Such behavior could result in dismissal from Thunder Elite.

### Outside Training

To maintain the highest standards of safety, consistency, and skill development, Thunder Elite does not allow athletes to participate in outside training with any local cheer programs. This includes private lessons, team practices, clinics, open gyms, and camps hosted by other local gyms. Our athletes train within a specific progression system to ensure proper technique and safety, and outside instruction may conflict with these standards. College-hosted clinics and camps are permitted.

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