Volunteer Coach Training Program

Coaching Youth Cheerleading
# Table of Contents

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION** ................................................................. 3  
**CHAPTER 2: WARM-UPS PART 1** .................................................. 3  
**CHAPTER 2: WARM-UPS PART 2** ................................................... 5  
**CHAPTER 3: ARM AND LEG MOVEMENTS** ...................................... 5  
**CHAPTER 4: FORMATIONS** ............................................................... 7  
**CHAPTER 5: CHEERING** ................................................................. 8  
**CHAPTER 6: JUMPS** ......................................................................... 9  
**CHAPTER 7: TUMBLING** ................................................................. 10  
**CHAPTER 8: ROUNDOFFS** .............................................................. 12  
**CHAPTER 9: STUNTING** ................................................................. 14  
**CHAPTER 10: TEACHING LIFE SKILLS** .......................................... 17  
**CHAPTER 11: DANCE ROUTINE** .................................................... 19  
**CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION** ......................................................... 20
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

KRISTIN DOAKES: Hi, welcome to the NYSCA coaches training video. I’m Kristin Doakes, president of Professional Cheerleaders Alumni, along with Michelle, Teresa and Cara. We’re excited to be here today to teach you the fundamentals of cheerleading and welcome you to this great sport. So let’s get started.

CHAPTER 2 - WARM-UPS PART 1

THERESA SKULLY: I’m Teresa, former Jaguars cheerleader, physical therapist, yoga instructor and also comprehensive Pilates instructor. Before you start any competition or performance it’s very important as a cheerleader to warm up all of your body parts.

We’re going to start with our legs apart and start with our neck; we start from the top and work all the way to the bottom. We tuck our head down and look at the floor while breathing in and then look to the sky, breathe in, and then look left and then right; tilt your ears down to your shoulders. We’re going to warm up the upper shoulders so squeeze and roll down and then this time squeeze really hard up to your ears, squeeze out all your tension, and drop your shoulder blades down to your back.

Next, swing your arms; and then go back and forward, and then open the chest, spread your shoulder blades. Bring one arm in front and hold here. It’s important that when you do your triceps stretch that you don’t press at the elbow. We want to hold for 30 seconds and then we open the chest and switch sides, hold it and then relax and shake out the arms.

Now we’re just going to do some twists, back and forth.

Now pick up this toe and point it to the sky and deepen into your stretch. Now it’s really important when you stretch not to bounce because you can actually cause muscle injury. You want to hold your stretch and if you’re right at that edge where it really hurts and you feel like you can’t hold it long enough then you come up a little bit. Then in about 30 seconds or so
release. Then we switch sides, making sure not to hold your breath. Holding your breath is not good. You want your muscles to get oxygen.

Now slowly straighten and put your hands on the floor. Then open your legs a little wider and deepen your stretch down where you are bringing your head close to the floor. I want you to really stretch that spine out. So I want you to feel that your spine is nice and straight. So when you are upside down I want you to open your chest so you don’t hurt your back.

In this position I want you to drop your butt and go into a deep squat. Bases need strong legs; it’s not about the arms, it’s about the legs. Bring your legs in closer and think like you are a crab. Now put your hands like you are in a prayer and hold it. Now hang your head and stretch your spine. We wanted to stretch the hamstrings with that particular sequence there because hamstrings is one of the biggest things we injure. So since we did some static stretching we’re going to do some dynamic stretching. So we’re going to do some kicks, so make sure you have some room. You want to take a step back and kick. We’re not going to bounce, we’re just going to use our muscle strength to kick as high as we can. Look up, look at your toe. So dynamic stretching, what the ladies are doing now, is very important to incorporate into your routines because after we hold the stretch if we don’t lengthen and move through that stretch our muscles will get tight again.

Let’s take it down to the floor with our legs wide. We’re going to do two things at one time. We’re going to place our hands over our head and we’re going to stretch our wrists by coming into a prayer mode. Just hold it and as you’re doing that we’re working abdominals by moving forward and holding. Now we go here, stretching the wrists out. You want the backs of your hands touching, and drop your wrists down and hold it. Pull your stomach in and lean forward and hold it and then come back up. Now we’ll do some side bends, back and forth, we want to move with it. Now, put your feet together, arms straight, and keep your body straight and lean forward and down you go, keeping that back nice and straight.

Now we move to the butterfly, where the soles of the feet are touching. You want the knees to go down toward the floor, open the chest like a proud peacock chest. Lean forward, and again when we’re leaning forward, we want the back to be straight. We’re going to change the arms and put them behind our backs and interlace the fingers, and then lean forward and hold it. So this is our chest opener; shoulders are really popular injuries in cheerleading, especially bases who are lifting a girl and pushing her up into the sky. So you don’t want any bad pinching in your shoulders.

Now we’re going to go into the kneeling position, but put one foot in front. So this stretch is important for hip flexor muscles, which is the muscle in front of your hip. And when you stretch this you can change where the stretch comes from if you don’t keep your back straight – it’s all about the back. We lift up, and press your heel back and point your toes. This is a nice little
ankle warm-up at the same time we’re stretching out our muscles. Now we press up and bring our leg in and slowly come up.

CHAPTER 2 – WARM-UPS PART 2

THERESA SKULLY: We are going to do the backbend and we are starting on the floor. We are going to lay on our back and put our arms near our ears, and your fingertips are facing your heels. You press into your hands and your heels and lift up. Now take your first back bend gentle, and hold for a five count, and then slowly lower down, pull your knees in and rock it out.

We’ll do this stretch two times because it is a really intense stretch. Coaches you can spot by giving a little press into her lower back, and slowly come back down to the floor. Pull your knees in and rock back and forth.

The last one we’re going to do is the splits. You come down on your knees and you’re going to slide out and rock back and forth easy. Splits are really good stretching for the front of the thigh and the back of the leg. Your goal is to get your torso to come all the way down in your split; and you hold and use your hands to press up. If you don’t have a good split and you’re working on it then coming in here is a good way to work on it, too with your shoulders facing forward. You want to make sure that the toes are facing to the ceiling, knees facing to the ceiling; and eventually we want the knee completely under. But as we’re training it is ok to have the knee slightly forward.

So depending on your time it’s really important to get at least 10 to 15 minutes of your stretch in. I’d recommend on some of your slower days and your slower weeks to spend more time on your stretching so you allow enough recovery and flexibility in your muscles.

CHAPTER 3 - ARM AND LEG MOVEMENTS

KRISTIN DOAKES: Coaches, when you’re putting your cheers together there will be a lot of different motions that you can put together to make an endless amount of cheers. So we’ll go through some of the motions that you’ll do with your arms and legs and you can have fun with these and put them together.

So the first one we are going to do is clap, and then we are going to do clasp. And there’s a difference between clap and clasp as now they have their hands together. The prep for the jumps
you’ll do you’ll be in a clasp position. Then you’ll have daggers; these are in fists. Then you’ll have blades; sometimes you’ll do blades in your routines.

In most cheers you’re going to start in a ready position, with your hands on your hips. Then we have High V, and with the High V the arms are actually a little bit forward rather than all the way back. That’s a really good technique and you should be able to see them in your peripheral vision where your arms are. Then there is the Low V, and when we transition from High V to Low V, when I come together, this is called a “break” when you break between the High V and the Low V.

Then we have the T, and again their arms are slightly forward, and a Half T they keep their elbows up. In the Half T you want the arms parallel with the ground. Now we’ll do a Right L, and in the Right L their left arm is up and the right arm is pointed out and parallel to the ground. The Left L is the same thing just switched over, making sure the arm is parallel to the ground.

Next is a Right Diagonal and then a Left Diagonal. Next is a Touchdown, and sometimes it’s called a Goal Post, and your fists are facing forward like daggers. The arms are kept really tight by the ears and straight up and down – that’s the touchdown position. And then we move the arms straight down for Low Touchdown. The arms should be parallel with the tops of the thighs.

Then we have the Right Bow and Arrow and Left Bow and Arrow and remember to keep the elbows up the whole time. Then we have Muscle Man, and you’ll see that in some cheers as well. Then we have the Left Punch, and the arms go straight up. When you’re doing that in a cheer you want to make sure there is a lot of power with it and you are really sharp with your movement. And then there is the Right Punch, and remember to always be smiling because we are cheerleaders and we are always happy.

Then there is the Left K, where your left arm is up and your right arm is across your body, and then there is the Right K. Then there is the clasp behind your head. So behind your head your hands are together and your elbows are straight up to the ceiling so keep it really, really tight with your head. And when your arms go straight up this is a clasp over your head. You’ll see that when you are prepping for your jumps many times. And you bring your arms forward a little bit, just like we do with the diagonals and the High Vs.

Now we’ll put leg movements with it. With the leg movements we’ll start with the Right Lunge. Your right leg is bent and your weight is distributed evenly among your right and left legs; even though it’s a lunge all your weight isn’t on your right leg. You’ll put your arms into a Right K and that means your right arm is up and you are in a K position with the lunge. And then you can flip it around to make the opposite position and this is called a Left Lunge, Left K.
Now we’ll do a Right Half, High V. That means it’s half of a High V with the right arm up; and when we bring the arm down that’s a Half Low V on the right side. On the left side it’s a Left Half High V and when we lower the left arm that’s a Left Half Low V.

X-arms are when we bring the arms together across the chest and make sure to let your girls know if you want right over left or left over right. Determine what move you’re doing coming out of that and whatever feels natural for the next move. For our purposes we’ll do left over right in front. So this is X Arms and we’re going to put it with a Right Front Lunge. Make sure the right foot is forward and parallel and the back leg is straight. Keep your toes pointed forward and then we’ll come together and clean. When we do that you’ll count for your girls one-two and then they’ll come together clean. You can do the X arms with the Left Front Lunge and then clean, one-two. Notice they came together really clean and that count after one-two when they hit their legs that lets you know that your whole squad is together and you want to make sure that you hit that really strong and it’s a good way to show your confidence and finish really nicely out of a cheer.

CHAPTER 4 - FORMATIONS

KRISTIN DOAKES: So coaches, after you’ve done all your arm movements and leg movements you’re going to put it all together and create a dance routine. The first thing you want to do is choose your music. Make sure it has clean lyrics and you choose the radio version of your music and then count out the beats and figure out the right tempo so it’s not too fast and not too slow and then you’ll figure out what positions you’ll want your girls in. Get out a pen and paper and write down the number of girls on your squad and just put down Xs on what the formations are. We’ll show you formations now of what you can include in your routine. So when you practice with your squad each day you want to make sure that they are in two lines, which our girls are here today. These girls are actually in Windows right now and what that means is that the girls in the back line can see me and I can see them. So that way you have the full attention of all the girls on your squad. So these girls are in two lines and they are in the ready position. Now they are going to go into what we call a block formation – and that’s a really good formation to use when you’re mapping out your routines for choreography. You want to put your shortest girls in the front and your tallest girls in the back so your height always makes sense and everyone can be seen. When we move into a block formation we’ve mapped it out already and we know how many girls are here and notice how the lines go straight back and rows that go across. So this is Row 1, Row 2 and Row 3 and this is Line 1, Line 2 and Line 3 so that way you are referencing where the girls are when you are mapping out the routines.
So we have the block formation that we are showing here so the girls in every other row take one step to the left and now they are in Windows. One way to reference that they are in line is from the front I can see each one of the girls and coming around to the side they are in a perfect diagonal. So they can reference themselves and know that they are in the right line by just looking in their peripheral vision and finding out exactly where they are in that diagonal to get the right formation.

OK, so they are going to come from here and go into a triangle formation. Again, you want to do shortest to tallest and these girls knew exactly where to go because beforehand I had a piece of paper and I marked out my Xs and what I wanted my formation to look like and that transition was nice and clean and they weren’t bumping into each other. So think about that when they’re changing formations and you’re mapping it out that this girl isn’t coming up from the back and up to the front so that she doesn’t have a long way to go on that transition.

So right now they are in the Triangle formation and the last thing you want to think about is their height variation. Level changes can make a huge impact in a dance routine. So the girls will show you level changes now: we’ll have high, medium and low. This is a really cool way to finish your routine as you can see everybody, they have a nice strong ending pose and you’ve got level changes and a good height variation there.

CHAPTER 5 - CHEERING

KRISTIN DOAKES: So coaches, after you put all those arm movements and leg movements together into a cheer you can put words to it and you can make it really simple and generic like “Go, Team, Go,” or “Go, Fight, Win,” or you can make it specific to your team. So when you are doing your cheer you want to make sure that your girls are really loud and they’re speaking from their diaphragm and yelling. You want their voices loud and commanding. So either the coach can call a cheer or you can appoint a caller. I’m going to appoint Gabby to be the caller of our cheer. What she is going to do is basically command the attention of the other girls on the team and she’s going to set the pace for the cheer. So Gabby will call at a rhythm of what she wants the cheer to be. It’s either going to be fast or slow but the other girls are going to follow the pace that Gabby sets. So Gabby, go ahead and call your cheer. “Go, Team, Go.” OK, stop. So Gabby doesn’t want her squad to be very loud. So Gabby is going to do it again and this time she is going to really mean it. “Go, Team, Go. Go, Fight, Win. Go, Team, Go. One, Two.”
CHAPTER 6 - JUMPS

CARA COSMATO: Hi, my name is Cara. I’m a former gymnast, competitive cheerleader and a former member of the ROAR of the Jaguars. Today we’re going to teach you the staple for cheerleading, the toe touch, as well as some other jumps that are very important to the sport. I’ll teach you technique, arm position and how to do the best toe touch you’ve ever done. So let’s get started.

OK girls, in order to do a toe touch you have to do a prep, you can’t just jump off the floor; you have to use your arms. So there are two options you can teach your cheerleaders: You’re always going to start with a clasp and then you can either go up to a High V or you can start with a clasp and go up above your head with that same clasp position. Whenever we do these preps you’re going to use counts. Everything in cheerleading is done with counts, usually we use an eight-count so I’m going to demonstrate those counts with the prep.

OK girls, I’m going to teach you how to mark a jump. Every time you mark a jump you’re going to jump off of the ground and keep your feet together and your toes pointed. You never want to mark a jump just standing on the ground because you want to get your body used to getting up off of the ground like you would do in a jump. I’m going to demonstrate it with the count and the arm motions I taught you earlier and then I’m going to have you do it for me and I’ll count for you. So we’re going to start: five, six, seven, eight…one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, one. Now I’m going to stand back here and you’ll show me that motion. Very good girls.

Now I’m going to teach you our first jump and it’s called a Right Herkie. I’m going to sit on the floor and show you how I want your legs to be and then I can show you the jump in action. There is a Right and a Left Herkie. We’re going to do a Right today. So you’re going to have your right leg out, and you want your toe pointed. You’re going to have your left knee bent so your heel is behind your butt. Your arms are going to be in a T position. So this will be the motion in the air. We’re going to prep the same way that I taught you – five, six, seven, eight…one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, one. So we make sure our toes are pointed, smiles on our faces and a T in the air. I’m going to show it and then you are going to do it for me. Now if you notice how high these girls got they are using their arms for their power and swinging and lifting themselves off of the ground. That is a key part to the jump.

The next jump we are going to do is the staple of cheerleading, the toe touch. I’m sure you’ve all seen it and now we’re going to perform it. Basically the toe touch is going to be a straddle on the ground. You learned it in stretching but I’m going to show you again. So in the air your legs are going to be out and your toes pointed and your arms in the same T motion. You’re going to prep
with the same way I taught you with the clasp. Coaches, if you’d like to change it and start with a High V you are more than welcome to do that.

All right girls, I’m going to demonstrate it for you and then you’re going to show me. The clean after the jump is very important because it shows the control and that you have landed your jump and you’re confident and smiling about it whether or not it was the prettiest thing you had ever done or not.

OK, now I’m going to count for you. If you noticed, all their toes were pointed. There were smiles on their lips and their T’s were right in line with their shoulders.

The pike jump is one of the more difficult jumps that an athlete would do in this sport. It’s ok if they don’t master it right away; it’ll be a progression to get to this point. As we learned in stretching, it is really important to stretch your hamstrings in order to be proficient at this jump. So the position in the air your feet are going to be straight out in front of you with your toes pointed. Your arms are going to be in candlesticks right in front of you. Your head is going to be down looking at your knees. Every time you do a pike jump you are going to want to turn from the center of your formation; you’re going to want to turn all the girls a little bit catty corner. That way they can see the full jumping motion.

OK girls, it’s going to be the same prep we did before with the clasp. Coaches, most of the time we don’t use a High V, we use a Clasp for this prep. Again, we’re going to use our arms to swing through and get us some height. I’m going to demonstrate and then you’ll show me. And also, coaches, you have an option if you would like for them instead of cleaning to the side you can have them clean to the front. It’s your choice. Jumps are really important for adding that extra kick to your routine but again stretching is very important for getting the height. Also, don’t compromise form or pretty straight legs and pointed toes for the height. It’s ok for the girls’ toe touch to be low as long as they are mastering the correct form.

CHAPTER 7 - TUMBLING

CARA COSMATO: Another staple of cheerleading would be the acrobatics that we see that amaze us in a cheerleading routine – that would be considered tumbling. Today we’re going to show you a couple basic moves in tumbling. I wouldn’t suggest teaching these girls any high-level skills unless there is an experienced cheerleader or cheerleading coach that is within reach that you are using for your team. But, if you’ve never cheered before, I’ve got some great moves that you can teach these girls and that you can use in your routines.

The first one is a cartwheel. It’s very basic and most gymnasts, cheerleaders or any acrobatic athletes will start with this move. In order to do a successful cartwheel we’re going to need to teach a handstand first. You want to make sure that you have good core strength and that you can
keep your body in a straight line. The girls by my side are going to demonstrate what a handstand looks like. They’re going to have their legs squeezed together and their toes pointed, and they’re just going to hit a handstand, squeeze their core, and then step out of it. I’m going to let them show you what a proper handstand looks like. That’s very good – if you notice, when they go up their feet hit right together, they’re straight and they could stay up there for days if we let them, and they came down with control.

Next, we’re going to have them stand to the side and do a prep into a cartwheel, which is going to start with their dominant leg. If you’re a righty and you take off running with your right leg you are right leg dominant. If you take off running with your left leg then you are left leg dominant. We have a righty and a lefty so you are going to be able to see both ways. For a prep for a cartwheel you are going to have your dominant leg forward and your arms up and you are going to push off of that dominant leg to go into your cartwheel skill. The girls are not going to do a full cartwheel right now, they’re just going to do a cartwheel into that handstand position and then come down.

I’m going to show you with my athlete here as a coach how we can help transition these athletes into the position to feel that core strength. She’s going to go into her handstand and I’m going to stop her in the middle, have her squeeze her stomach and make sure she’s really tight, and then she’s going to come down.

Another drill, while doing the cartwheel, you’re going to start facing one way and as you end the cartwheel you’re going to end facing the exact opposite way. Most athletes who have never done a cartwheel before make the mistake of the gingerbread cartwheel where your hips are facing the front the whole time. This is not the correct way to do a cartwheel.

We’re going to demonstrate the correct way to do a cartwheel and then I’m going to show you as a coach how you can do a drill to work this technique. Did you notice how her focus was on one wall and when she came up it was on the other wall. So we’re going to do the same thing, she’s going to stop on a handstand and I’m going to twist her hips, and put her in that direction. If you notice that when she comes up her hands are by her ears the whole time and her focus is up and it’s a good, clean, strong ending. So girls, if you want to demonstrate one more time the proper way to do a cartwheel – toes pointed and make sure you land really strong.
CHAPTER 8 – ROUNDOFFS

CARA COSMATO: Next we’re going to show you how to do a roundoff. A roundoff is a little more advanced skill but it’s still safe to do if you have no previous experience as a cheerleader or gymnast. The same technique as far as the coaching goes, you would want them to master the cartwheel using that same hip technique before they ever move onto the roundoff. A roundoff is essentially the same thing as a cartwheel but instead of landing one foot after the other you are going to squeeze your feet together at the top and land with both feet together in the end.

I have two demonstrations here as we have a couple ways to get into the roundoff. They are going to show you just a step roundoff, which again is similar to the way we started the cartwheel. You’ll see, they are going to squeeze their feet together and land at the same time. Actually, they are going to end this skill with a rebound. A rebound is when both of your feet land together and you jump up in the air. Notice when you jump up in the air you want your athlete to have a hollow body with their arms up, focus up, you want your legs squeezed together and your toes pointed. This is going to prepare you if you want to add a technique after the roundoff. So go ahead ladies and do a step roundoff. This is a spring floor so it depends on what kind of surface you are going to be practicing on, or what elements you are going to have to work with. If you noticed, Gabby kind of went flying when she landed that’s because the floor we are on is springy. If you are on a gym floor or outside you may not get that bounce but the importance of keeping that control is still very, very important.

Now we’re going to do a hurdle. A hurdle is a technique of getting into this skill and it’s going to give you more power. You’re going to step with your opposite leg and you’re going to hurdle up in the air with your dominant leg and push off of that dominant leg. So for Gabby it’s going to be her left leg; so she’s going to step with her right, hurdle with her left, and push off of her left to get some power for that roundoff. They’re going to do a step hurdle roundoff.

The last technique we’re going to show you is the same hurdle but to get even more power to do those acrobatic skills that are way high in the air and flips we’re going to need so much power so we’re going to teach a step, step, hurdle, roundoff. Again, there is really no difference with this technique except that you are getting a running start so you are going to have more power. So ladies, I really need you to squeeze your core, squeeze your butt under and your legs and control that rebound. You don’t want to compromise your form for height; it’s not about how high you get. So go ahead – step, step, hurdle, roundoff.

The next skill we’re going to teach you is we’re going to add a back handspring to the roundoff. This skill is really a showcase to this segment. It’s a very challenging skill and it’s really getting
up to a higher level of acrobatic skills. I wouldn’t suggest doing this unless you’ve mastered the cartwheel, you’ve mastered the handstand, you’ve mastered the roundoff rebound and everything is really in control. Also, what’s needed for this skill to be completed is a really strong back bend and a really strong back walkover. I’m going to demonstrate both of those with my athletes here. Just lay down and do a bridge push-up and then kick over. That would be a back bend kickover. This is preparing the athlete for that backwards motion they’ll be doing with the back handspring. As a coach with someone who has never done that I’m going to show you how to spot. If someone has never done this they may not have a lot of strength and they may not be very flexible in their back so you’re really going to have to help them. She’s going to push up into the bridge and as the coach I’m going to lift her up and make sure that her hands are right by her head and if I let go she can hold herself. If she can’t master this then we can’t move onto the back handspring. For the kickover I’m just going to help her get over and make sure she hits that handstand in the middle of her kickover.

Then we’re going to move on to a back walkover, which would be the next step advancing from the bridge kickover. As a coach I’m going to find her dominant leg. So she’s kicking with her right leg I want to stand on the side of the leg she is kicking so I can help throw her over. You’re going to support her back so whenever she’s kicking over you’re lifting her back up in case she doesn’t quite catch herself with her arms; and I’m also going to help kick her leg over. She is very good at this skill obviously; she is able to hold herself up and kick over.

Before we do the back handspring – we’ve mastered the bridge, we’ve mastered the back walkover – and the last thing we are concerned about is we’re really going to be landing hard on our arms and our shoulders. We’re going to be putting a lot of stress on them and if you’re on a hard surface you want to make sure that you’re using the right technique so you don’t have any injuries from that.

So we’re going to demonstrate what is called a Rebound and you do it with your shoulders. She’s literally going to bounce on her shoulders and this is going to prepare her for that back handspring. If you see her hands it’s really small, but it’s just that motion of being able to use your arms to get you to push over. So we’re going to do a standing back handspring first; like I said we’ve already mastered those skills but if I were to spot her and this was her first time she’s going to be in the seated position. This is where you want your athlete – you are actually supporting them at this point. She’s leaning back into you and you’re supporting her under her legs and behind her back. When she sits back she’s going to reach her hands over her head and her head is going to be looking at her hands the whole time and she’s going to flip back. So as I spot her I throw her legs over. Again, it’s very easy for her because she has done this but you need to keep in mind as a coach that if you don’t have the strength to get the girl over it’s not a wise idea. Somebody needs to really be in control of that athlete in case something goes wrong.
So now we’re going to add this new skill, the back handspring with the running roundoff that we showed you earlier. Again, this is an advanced skill so these girls are going to be able to demonstrate it on their own. If you noticed, it was very powerful, it was very clean, nice skills.

**CHAPTER 9 - STUNTING**

**CARA COSMATO:** Stunting is another part of cheerleading and it’s probably the fans’ favorite part of cheerleading. It’s the most exciting; they’re getting tossed up in the air; and at the same time the moms of the fliers are cringing because they hope the bases catch them. We’re going to teach you the safe way to stunt so you can really wow your audiences but they can trust you that you are doing it safely.

I first have to mention about stunting that there are rules for high school level cheerleading that there has to be mats. There would be a blue foam cheer mat before you can stunt. Mostly the cheerleaders would put the mats down when they are working in a gymnasium. Not only is this the standard for high school sports but also a highly, highly, highly recommended safety precaution. You are putting these girls up in the air and human error is possible, it does happen where people can fall and that is a reality. But it can be done safely and if you take the necessary precautions and add extra spotters, have mats and if you can do all these things you can really have some really cool stunts the safe way. That being said, I’m going to teach a couple basic stunts that if you have never had stunt experience you can do this without fear of anything going wrong and you can really impress your audience.

So this is probably the most novice stunt we are going to teach. It’s called a thigh stand. First let me explain the roles within a stunt. The bases are going to be holding the flyer in the air. Most of the time the flyer will be smaller than the bases and our back spotter, which is normally the tallest girl so she can really reach up there, support the flyer and catch the arms of the flyer.

For the thigh stand the bases do a left and a right lunge. Their knees are going to meet and their feet are going to meet right in the center. This is going to be a really stable base for the flyer to stand on. Next, the flyer is going to put her dominant leg on the base’s thigh. If you notice her grip, she’s gripping behind the leg and her foot to really support the flyer. We do this with counts, like we do everything, so we’re just going to count one, two – and the whole group is going to work together to dip and stand up on the other base’s leg. The back spotter’s role in this is really guiding her up there and ensuring that she’s safe from the back side. It is up to the flyer to stand up straight because there is nobody there in
front of her so she has to really feel a line pulling through her center so she’s kind of holding her weight so it’s not all on the bases and she’s also very stable up in the air.

So we’re going to do the stunt – one, two, down and up. And when your flyer gets up into the air you want a huge smile and a nice strong High V or whatever motion or a sign or a pom-pom, because that is where everyone is looking. To come down safely from this stunt the bases are going to grab hands with the flyer and they’re going to count again one, two and she’s going to pop off to the front. The back spotter’s hands never left the flyer’s hips and she supported her the whole time and guided her down.

The next stunt we are going to teach you is called the Teddy Bear. I would consider this more of a moderate level stunt as opposed to the novice level one we showed you earlier. As your bases and your flyers and your back spot really get comfortable with each other you can start progressing in the difficulty of your stunts.

This is great for games and performances and to maybe add it after a dance. It’s a real crowd pleaser and it’s not too difficult. The bases begin by facing each other. The flyer’s dominant leg is again going to be in the hands of her base. She’s going to hold on right on her ankle and her thigh, and the other base will do the same thing after she gets up. The back spot is again going to grab her hips and aid her in getting up. We’re going to do the same counts – one, two, down, up – and then she’ll be in a split. So as you see as soon as she comes up this base grabs exactly where the other one did so she has a really even surface to stand on and again she has a big smile and a High V and it also showcases her flexibility. To come down from this safely we are going to bring her feet together and we’re just going to bring her down slowly and controlled.

The last stunt we are going to teach you is the Half. This is the most expert stunt that we will teach you today. Again, the stunt world goes on and on. You can create new things, but you really want to have the basics first and everybody starts with the Half. It’s going to be a little bit more difficult than the Teddy Bear that we just showed you because the flyer is actually going to stand on the base’s hands.

We have a new role, the front spot. Their responsibility, instead of the athlete being solely responsible for keeping herself from falling forward the front spot is going to aid in that. She’s going to place her hands wherever she can reach – maybe her ankles, maybe the front of her thighs, her shins. If we go up to extensions she would grab the bases wrist to help support that flat surface for the athlete’s foot.

I highly recommend, just like the mats, to have spotters. And you can never have too many. The rest of our spotters are all going to circle around so in case something goes wrong they will catch the flyer. That is always the most important thing. A cheerleader will take a black eye or a busted lip or whatever you need to do to catch that flyer before she hits the ground.
The athlete is going to put her dominant foot into the base’s hands so she’s got both of her hands on the flyer’s foot in a cup position. As she goes up into the stunt the base’s hands are going to move in this direction so she’s actually going to be holding the foot with an even surface for the flyer to stand on. As the flyer, her responsibility is to really keep that straight line; it’s almost like someone is holding a string right through her mid-section just holding her up straight. Her feet, she doesn’t want to toe or heel too much, she wants to keep them completely straight. So it’s really the responsibility of everyone involved to make sure this happens.

We’re going to get into it the same way we did with the other stunts with a count of one, two. She’s going to put her other foot into her other base’s hands; the back spot is going to be under her rear and push her up. As soon as she gets her up in the air she is going to grab onto her ankles and kind of lift up to keep that weight off of her bases. The front spot is going to step in as well and she is going to get down in front and support the athlete coming up and again, reach until she can’t reach anymore and if she feels she’s needed she’ll hang on right there. The spotters, as they are circled around, are just going to have their hands up the whole time looking at the flyer in case something happens to her. Again, the flyer has a big smile and sharp motion. The fluid counts work a little better for this stunt because there is so much going on. This is the first form of dismount for this skill. The bases are simply going to dip, bring her feet together, and ease her down to the ground. The back spot and the front spot are going to let go of her ankles and reach for the athlete’s hips and help ease her down to the ground. There should not be any force when the cheerleader’s feet hit the ground; they should be very light and controlled. As soon as the flyer came down she rose up and caught her bases by the shoulders and everything is very in control and she stood up clean.

We’ll do this stunt again and show you a little bit more advanced dismount. You should really be able to master the control and have the girls working together for awhile before moving onto this skill. It’s called a cradle. We do the same motion as we did for the come down; it’s going to go one, two but instead of the bases dipping down and bringing the feet of the flyer together they’re going to throw the athlete in the air and catch her. She’s going to land and her arms are going to be around her bases and she’s going to be in the cradle position and then she comes out and stands up.

So we’re going to do the same count: five, six, seven, eight; press one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, hit one. If you noticed, the front spot switched her grip to grab on the bottom side of her feet. This enables her to really get that pop to throw the athlete in the air and also the front spot, because she’s in the front, she’s going to have to turn to the side to catch the feet.

We’re going to do it one more time because if you noticed, there may have been a little bit of the bases not going down together or the athlete moved her hips as she came down and that’s why they traveled, but the spotters were here in case anything went wrong. We’re going to do it again and really try to do it straight up and down.
Now we’re going to showcase all of the stunts together. As your squad gets comfortable with each other and your stunt groups get really confident you can put it all together to showcase their talents.

CHAPTER 10 - TEACHING LIFE SKILLS

MICHELE BROWN: Hi, my name is Michelle and I’m a former NFL cheerleader, success life coach and founder of The Cheerleader In You. Today I want to discuss the characteristics of a cheerleader. As cheerleading coaches you have a huge opportunity to have a positive impact on the youth today. You’re going to be able to help them develop key life skills like confidence, a positive attitude, good sportsmanship, enthusiasm, leadership, respect and just having the ability to project their energy and smile.

Today we’re going to get started with confidence. Confidence is really imperative when you are working with cheerleaders. Number one, they are projecting their energy to rally a group, to bring spirit to the audience, so you want to have them be able to instill a value of confidence and the way you do that is to help them believe in themselves. It’s important to have them understand that every step of the way, whatever they are learning and perfecting as they are going along, those are wins. So girls, whenever you are practicing or learning a new routine it’s really important that you pat yourself on the back and believe in yourself. It’s important to have them understand that every step of the way, whatever they are learning and perfecting as they are going along, those are wins. So girls, whenever you are practicing or learning a new routine it’s really important to have them believe in themselves. It’s important to have them understand that every step of the way, whatever they are learning and perfecting as they are going along, those are wins. So girls, whenever you are practicing or learning a new routine it’s really important that you pat yourself on the back and believe in yourself. Allow yourself to be happy that you had a win for that day. So often we get caught up with the bigger picture, the end result, and we forget to give ourselves recognition and compliments for the job and the journey along the way. So girls, as you’re practicing and as you’re learning a new routine it helps you build your confidence by allowing yourself to realize how good you are actually doing.

Also, another way to build confidence, and coaches this is important too: Have your cheerleaders imagine in their minds that they are professional cheerleaders, or dancers or tumblers or Olympians. Ask them what would it feel like, how would you act, how would you behave if you were one of those role models. It’s good to use your imagination to step into a role. Pretend that you are actresses. When you’re acting as if you are a professional cheerleader, tumbler, dancer you will become that role so that builds confidence. Maybe you’ve heard of “fake it until you make it.” It’s truly an art to be able to work with kids so that they can start to build that confidence and believe in themselves.

Second is you always want to have a positive attitude. Having a positive attitude is really important in life. You always have a choice in how you want to see a situation. You can look at a situation as bad or negative or you can look at it as positive or perhaps as an opportunity.
Coaches, it’s really important that you point out the difference with your cheerleaders. Things are going to happen in life, people are going to fall down, someone is going to miss a routine so it’s really important to have a positive attitude and choose to see the good in the situation. Everyone is learning and growing and developing and so when you can instill in a positive attitude in your youth that will help them become more confident.

The next characteristic that we want to help instill is good sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship, girls. Maybe you have heard of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would want done to yourself. That’s part of being a good sport. Either your teammates who you are dancing with and performing with and cheering with; so it’s really important that you treat them with that same respect and just how you would want to be treated.

The next concept that you want to help instill in your cheerleaders is enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can be hard sometimes, right? You’re feeling sleepy, you’ve got to come to practice, it’s hard to drag yourself out of bed. Well enthusiasm is necessary. One way to help your youth develop enthusiasm is with a little activity that I call “I’m excited.” It’s kind of funny, it’s kind of silly, but I’ll tell you what. It changes your physiology and it teaches the girls that they can choose how they want to be in any given moment. They can act enthusiastic, therefore they will become enthusiastic. So this activity is called the “I’m excited.” Now, when you’re excited you’re enthusiastic, right? So, here’s what you do. You’re going to get down real low, you’re going to take your right fist and pump it in the air and shout “I’m excited, I’m excited, I’m excited!” It’s fun and it’s silly but that’s what enthusiasm is. It’s bringing out that energy and projecting it outward. Sometimes when things aren’t going right or people feel sluggish you need to get things moving and shift the energy to a more positive momentum and that breeds enthusiasm.

So the next characteristic we are going to talk about is leadership. Now leadership is really important in a group – not being domineering or commanding or telling others what to do. So when you are working with your cheerleaders you want to explain that the difference between leadership and just dominating is that leadership is demonstrating your ability to lead by example. Following the rules; being a positive example for others; teaching the youth how to interact with one another so they help their teammates shine.

So, I’m sure in practices sometimes a leader will arise and that’s good; it’s just as important to be a good leader; there are times when it’s important to be a good teammate and follower. And recognizing the difference and being ok with it is good for all to shine. Leaders breed more leaders so teaching the youth that it’s ok to allow others to shine as well.

The next concept I want to go over has to do with smiling. Smiling is important. When your cheerleaders are out and about just the essence of smiling will shift their energy. So it’s really important as you are going through practices, even when they’re not performing, that you get them in the habit of smiling. It changes the dynamic of everything and actually it will help people and help the children improve their practices and performances.
The last concept I want to talk about is respect. Being respectful is imperative in any aspect of life at any age. But now, as cheerleading coaches, it’s really good to instill that level of how to be respectful. Again, we talked about the Golden Rule, do unto others as you would have done to yourself, treat others how you want to be treated. That’s part of being respectful. Also, when the coach is talking make sure your youngsters are listening and paying attention. When others are performing make sure they are paying attention and giving that respect. It’s what you put out you get back and teaching the youngsters about that is really crucial.

So those are some of the top characteristics that I would recommend to instill in your cheerleaders. You coaches will have such a powerful impact and I’m really excited for the influence you are going to have over them.

CHAPTER 11 - DANCE ROUTINE

KRISTIN DOAKES: Coaches, the times you spend with the girls in the afternoons, in the morning or whenever you have your practices with them remember that that is your time with these girls and during that time you don’t know what happened before their day or how their day at school was or what’s happening at home when they leave their time with you so make sure that the time you spend with them is very valuable and you’re talking to them and building up their self confidence and give them positive encouragement. Use the rule, for every negative thing you say try to end it with two positives. When you are correcting a girl don’t make one girl feel like “she was on me the whole time at practice today.” So really try to distribute, and maybe use another girl as an example to correct everybody rather than pointing someone out so just be mindful of things like that with the girls’ confidence it will help a lot.

When they do perform their routines at the end, once you’ve put it all together, you’ll notice the confidence that they have. They’ll have really great smiles and great energy. So we’ve put all the moves and everything we’ve gone over today we’ve put into a dance routine and put some choreography with it. The girls are going to show spirit and all of that self confidence that you instilled in them is going to come out when they perform. They’re going to do a great job. They’re going to show you formation changes, level changes, a little bit of the arm movements and a lot of personality when they are performing.
CHAPTER 12 - CONCLUSION

KRISTIN DOAKES: OK coaches, we’ve had a great time today teaching you the fundamentals of cheerleading and we hope you have a safe and exciting season.