



BEING A CHEERLEADER

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# TEAM BUILDING

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How many times have you walked into the first practice of the season and thought to yourself, “These girls are never going to get along.” It’s quite normal to have those reservations on the first day. But if you’ve already been through two months of practice and things still aren’t clicking, it might be time to try something different.

As each new year begins, so does the process of getting to know the new members as well as helping them become a part of the team. Although your team will most likely bond at camp, especially if it’s away from home, it’s beneficial to start right after tryouts. There are several ways to achieve squad unity, and participating in team building activities at least once a week is a great way to do that.

## **HERE ARE A FEW GREAT IDEAS TO FOSTER POSITIVE TEAMBUILDING EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR TEAM:**

1. Have fun outside cheerleading or dance. Have a slumber party, get together at a local restaurant, pizza party, or pool party. It will give you and your team time to get away from the stress of games and practice, but still be together.
2. Fundraise. Sure, you have to work hard when you raise money, but you will be working hard together. From bake sales to car washes, you are sure to raise loads of money, all while spending time together and bonding as a team.
3. Reach out to your community. Community service is a great way to spend quality time with your squad while helping others at the same time. Volunteering at hospitals, charities, and city activities are just a few ideas to get you started.
4. Have “themed” practices. Come up with a different idea for the next few practices where the team can dress up (dress safely for stunting). This way they are getting the practice time in, but it breaks the monotony. Some ideas are decades (70’s or 80’s) or superheroes.
5. Have positive circles before games and practices. This reminds the team how much fun it can be, and helps them forget about the negative aspects of being tired, etc.
6. Attend a leadership workshop together, participating in such activities as a ropes course, trust falls, and obstacle courses.
7. Play teambuilding games. Set aside ten minutes each day at the end of practice and play teambuilding games. The games will challenge each team member’s ability to work together and knowledge of each other, all while bonding together as a team.

## **HERE ARE SOME GAME IDEAS:**

**Positive Pages** – Take a full sheet of paper and divide it into 4 equal boxes. Then place the name of each squad member on the team in the boxes, only one name per box. (This may take several sheets depending on the size of your squad. I.e., 4 sheets for a squad of 16. This makes one booklet.) Each person on the squad will receive this booklet to write their positive comments to their fellow teammates. Once everyone is finished, collect the booklets and divide them by names. Each team member will receive only the pages written about him or her. This creates his or her own book of “Positive Pages”.

**The Human Knot** – Have your team stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Each person then reaches in with their right hand and grabs someone else’s hand. Then they all place their left hand in and take hold of someone else’s hand. This is now the “Human Knot” that you must un-tie, without letting go of anyone’s hand. This is a great way for them to learn to work together and to communicate with one another.

**Turn Over a New Leaf** – you’ll need a “magic carpet,” or a single piece of tarp or small cloth 4’ x 5’, for a group of 8-12 participants. The object is to turn over the carpet without touching the ground surrounding it. This activity tests your team’s ability to work physically close together while observing exactly what the problem is and work toward a solution as a group through a process of trial and error.

**Get to Know Your Teammates** – Write questions on a piece of paper and put it in a basket. Each team member draws a question from the basket and must answer it honestly. Such questions could be “Who is your hero,” “What profession would you like to pursue,” or even something silly like “If you were an animal, which would you choose and why?”

## **HAVE A “SASSY” SLUMBER PARTY WITH YOUR TEAM!**

Teambuilding is undeniably one of the most important ingredients in creating a cohesive team. For all girl cheerleading squads and dance teams, the slumber party is the cornerstone of team unity. A team that hangs out with each other and enjoys each other’s company is a team that respects each other on

the field and has a great time all season long. If you're getting tired of the standard "Rent three movies" party, here are some fun games and projects that will up the fun factor at your next slumber party!

**My Left Foot** – Team members sit on the floor with no shoes and draw an object using only their left foot.

**Group Mural** – Tape butcher paper to the wall and have the team create a mural showing "The Life of a Lancer Dancer/Cheerleader." After the mural is complete, have each person explain what they drew and what it means.

**Light Switch Plates** – Buy one light-colored plastic switch plate for each individual. Provide stickers, adhesive letters, stamps, magazines cutouts, candy wrappers, acrylic paint, tissue paper, etc. to each person and let him/her decorate their switch plate. When complete, coat the plates with three parts white glue and one part warm water to preserve them.

**Circle Laugh** – Lie down in a circle with heads on stomachs and laugh.



**Limbo Contest** – You know the rules...:)

**Stepping Stones** – Place paper plates on the floor sporadically from one side of the room to the other so that team members can step on them to reach the other side without "falling into the

water." Divide into teams and give certain players disabilities such as one leg, can't see, etc. Teams must help get each other to the other side safely. Use this activity for teambuilding.

**Beach Volleyball** – Inflate a beach ball and have a contest to see who can keep the ball up the longest (freshmen, sophomores, etc.) using different body parts or rules.

**Sunglasses** – Buy cheap sunglasses and have team members decorate them with art supplies.

**Friendship Anklet/Bracelet** – Buy different colored beads and string. Have team members make bracelets using five or six different colors. Before placing the beads on the string, ask each team member to share something personal that coincides with the color of the bead (i.e. red - name someone you love, blue - something that makes you sad, yellow - something that makes you happy). Once the anklets/bracelet are completed, have team members swap with someone on the team so that everyone has an anklet or bracelet made by one of their teammates.

**Face Painting** – Go to a party store, stock up on all different kinds of face paint, and paint elaborate drawings on each other's faces. Use this as practice for the next family event at your school. Your team can volunteer to paint children's faces!

**Do-It-Yourself Fashion** – Divide into teams. Assemble a variety of supplies for each team. Have them create an outfit for one teammate in five minutes. Have the models dance and model the creations.

**Edible jewelry** – String Life Savers, Fruit Loops, or other candies with holes onto licorice laces to make necklaces or bracelets.

**Hula Hoop Contests** – See who can hula the longest!

**Friends' Favorites** – Make a list of categories, such as favorite color, TV show, movie star, store, vacation spot, teacher, etc. Have each team member fill it out and collect all lists. Read each list one by one and have everyone guess the identity of the writer.

**Embarrassing Moments** – Have each team member write down his/her most embarrassing moment. Collect them and read them one at a time, letting the team guess whose it is.

**Mystery Snacks** – Divide into teams. Blindfold one person from each team and have them taste a variety of snacks and guess what it is. Keep score.

**Pillow Tag** – Give the freshmen a pillow and play freeze tag.

**Pillowcase Hop** – Have a contest where players step in a pillowcase and hop in a relay race.

**Pillow Signing** – Give each team member a pillowcase and have each guest sign it. Use it for sweet team dreams.

**Scavenger Hunt** – Make a list, divide the squad into teams, and set a time limit. The first team to collect all items or the team with the most items at the end of the hunt wins!

**Sleeping Bag Races** – Instead of hopping in a pillow case, lay in a sleeping bag and wiggle in a shuttle relay race style.

**Sleeping Bag Secret** – Spread the sleeping bags on the floor. Choose one person to be “it” and have her go outside. Have each team member get inside someone else’s sleeping bag and cover up except for one exposed body part. Have “it” come inside and guess who is who.

**Mini-Show** – Have one person lie face up on a bed or couch with her head hanging off the end. Tie a scarf over the top half of her face so only her mouth and chin show. Use eyeliner to draw two eyes on her chin, and add a mustache or lipstick. Have her talk about an important dance team topic.

Adapted from: Penny Warner’s *Slumber Parties: 25 Fun-Filled Party Themes*. Published by Meadowbrook Press. 2000.

### TRY THIS TEAMBUILDING GAME

As you get to know your new teammates better at practice, reserve some time before your season officially starts to get to know each other on a more personal basis. Take turns asking and answering the following questions during squad bonding time: sleepovers, movie nights, dinners, and on breaks during practice. These questions will start discussions that will lead to building bridges between teammates, developing trust, and hopefully, creating long-lasting friendships. Have fun and get talking!

1. What is your least favorite TV commercial?
2. If you were going to write a TV show about yourself, what type would you write: a soap, comedy, romance, drama? Why?
3. When you feel sad/angry, what do you do to express yourself? What do you do to feel cheerful again?

4. If you could trade places with someone, who would it be?

5. What is your most treasured memory?

6. What is one talent you would like to possess?

7. Share something about your family that you are proud of.

8. What do you want to be doing ten years from now?

9. What person has most influenced your life?

10. What is your favorite holiday?

11. If you could travel to any place in the world, where would you go first?

12. If you could offer one piece of advice to your parents, what would it be?

13. Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not?

14. What is the best/last book you have read?

15. What one thing would you place in a time capsule that would be discovered by future generations?

16. What is the most beautiful thing you’ve ever seen?

17. What article of clothing that is worn by your mom and dad embarrasses you the most?



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18. What future discovery are you looking forward to the most?

19. Finish this statement: "The best thing about today is..."

20. Describe your room.

21. Name three things for which you are thankful.

22. What is the best movie you've ever seen?

23. What are you most looking forward to in the next three months?

24. Do you believe in angels/miracles?

25. When do you feel most lonely?

26. Of the five senses - sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing - which one could you live without, and which one couldn't you bear to lose?

27. What do you think people like in you the most/least?

28. What is your favorite quote?

29. What do you miss most about your childhood?

30. Is there anything else you would like the group to know about you?

