



TV
VARSITY

BEING A CHEERLEADER

TRYOUTS

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Whether this is your fifth or your first year trying out for a cheerleading squad or dance team, having that nail-biting nervous feeling in the pit of your stomach is actually quite normal. You know, tryouts are a lot like taking a test. You can study and prepare for it, but excessive nervousness can affect your ability to perform at your best.

The key to a successful tryout, or anything having to do with athletics for that matter, is preparation. It's imperative that you begin brushing up on your skills, practicing with others, and getting yourself in shape several weeks beforehand. If you're one of those people who waits until the week of, you might end up working yourself so hard in such a short period of time that you're too sore to perform all the skills you're capable of doing. This is your time to shine, so that's definitely something you don't want to happen.

You should ask as many questions as possible... throughout the week and before tryouts. You should find out not only what is required of you at tryouts, but what will be required of you if you are selected for the team.

"The best piece of advice I can give to perspective cheerleaders/dancers is to ask as many questions as possible," says Former Louisiana State University Tiger Girls Coach Emily Knight. "You should find out everything you need and want to know about that particular team. Do they offer scholarships, and if so, what kind? What type of training should I be doing prior to tryouts? What do I wear to tryouts? If you don't ask, you'll never know."

Even for those of you who've prepared yourselves physically, there's still a chance that you could psyche yourself out come T-Day. So here are a few things to help you keep your cool prior to and at tryouts.

PREPARING YOURSELF BEFORE TRYOUTS:

- Eat healthy and be sure to get plenty of rest the week before.
- Get in shape. If you aren't already on a workout plan, be sure to start one at least a month prior to tryouts. You'll need strength, endurance, and flexibility to be a successful cheerleader or dancer.
- Be sure to find out the time span of tryouts. Is it two weeks or two days? Also, find out if there are any special events that you should attend or at least be aware of (i.e. a stunt, tumbling, or dance technique class, mock tryouts, etc.).

- Talk to past or present team members. They can be an excellent source of information about the style of cheer or dance the coach is looking for. Most people would be flattered that you're asking for their help.
- Take a blank tape or CD to record the tryout music.
- Every time you practice, even while you're just learning, do all the moves full out and sharp. This will help it become natural.
- Have confidence in yourself - at clinic and on the day of tryouts. A simple smile and a great attitude can show a great deal to the judges.

The Day Of:

- Dress to impress! If you feel good about the way you look, it'll be easier for you to concentrate on what you need to do. Make sure your attire is appropriate - some teams require a specific outfit, so be sure to check that out. It's always a good idea to wear your school or team colors.
- Your hair should be neat and pulled away from your face.
- Don't lose your professionalism, especially for those trying out for a college team, by stopping to fix your hair, scratch an itch, or smile at a friend in the audience. And never wear jewelry (unless you're instructed to) or chew gum.





etc.)? Cheerleading is a huge commitment, and coaches want people on their team who are dedicated and willing to put in the time.

- Know what skills are required of you at tryouts (i.e. standing/running tumbling, stunts, etc.). Talk to the coach before or during the clinic and find out the main things he or she will be looking for.
- What are you required to wear during tryouts? Ask someone who has been on the squad before. What does the coach or what do the judges prefer you to wear?
- Does the squad have an open gym for tumbling and/or stunting? If so, have you been going? If not, are you taking tumbling or stunting private lessons? Look for a gym that has cheerleading tumbling classes, not just regular gymnastics.
- Are your parents supportive of you trying out? Along with emotional support, there will be the occasional expense while on the team including coaching, uniform, camp, and competition fees. Be prepared to participate in fundraising events, collect sponsors, or pay a little out of your pocket if they aren't willing to help. Most teams are really good about working with budgets though.
- Practice/master your skills before tryouts. Don't injure yourself trying to learn a new skill the week before tryouts. Find something you can do really well, like a stunt or tumbling pass, and perfect that.
- If you have to perform a dance routine, try to get a copy of the music so you can practice at home.
- Be prepared to give your all at clinic, the coaches are always watching!

THE BIG DAY:

- Do you have all the necessary forms filled out/signed? Make sure you remember to bring them with you!
- Know your material!
- Already have what you are going to wear picked out so you aren't freaking out five minutes before you're supposed to leave.
- Relax! If you've prepared yourself, that's all you can do.
- Remember: If you mess up, pick it back up and keep going. Coaches like to see that you can handle the pressure.

- Know your technical stuff. Again, make sure you've done your research on what the judges/coaches are looking for so your style can match.
- If you make a mistake, don't panic and stop what you're doing. Show your leadership abilities by handling mistakes graciously and with confidence. Pick up where you left off, and take slow, deep breaths to keep yourself calm and relaxed.
- Smile! Be peppy and energetic. Always show enthusiasm.
- Always keep your head up, and never look down. Make eye contact with the judges.

TRYOUT CHECKLIST

- Don't stress out! Even if this is going to be your first tryout experience, all you can do is your best.
- Stay healthy!
- Have you done your homework on the squad you're trying out for? Do they mainly concentrate on competition, cheering at games, etc.?
- Can you devote a significant amount of time to this squad? What are your other obligations (school, athletic, extracurricular,