



MASCOTS

CAMP

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Camp is a time to learn new skills while polishing up your old ones, and it's a chance to meet new people who share your same interests. It's a week of training that shouldn't be missed, especially for those newcomers. But unlike cheerleaders and dancers, mascots have their own agenda when heading to camp.

"There is rarely another time when you will be able to sit in a room with other mascots and hang out, swap stories, compare suits, and learn from each other," says Sammy Bearkat (who prefers his real name to remain anonymous). "Even when there were only a few of us at a particular camp, hanging out with other mascots was always my favorite part."

"Mascots are a whole different 'animal' compared to cheerleaders and dancers. We tend to be a little more rambunctious and more likely to do our own thing. It's a lot of fun being around other people who have the same silly view of life as you do."

As with any member of a school's spirit program, your job as a mascot is to represent your school in a positive manner, no matter where you are. Attending a Varsity summer camp helps you understand what it takes to be a successful mascot, among many other things.

At camp, you have the chance to learn so much about your important role. This is also your opportunity to meet other mascots and see how they manage their role at their school and in their community. It's at camp that you learn how to handle and act around young children and come up with your own walk

and personality while in character. Trained mascot instructors will guide you through the week and are there to answer all your questions.

"Instruction at mascot camp was always fun and informative," says Sammy. "Even by my third year at camp, when I had heard the same basic speeches a few times before, I always found something I could take back to make me a better mascot. Every instructor I've had at camp has always been first-rate. The instructors have been from both small and large universities and colleges. I always had fun interacting with them, and they were always trying to help improve my mascot skills."

The purpose of a mascot is to symbolize school and community spirit used to enhance the tradition and emotions of its audience through exaggeration, characterization, and entertainment. Another good rule of thumb is to make sure you know and understand a few general guidelines for mascots. Those include, but are not limited to, being a positive representative of school spirit, meeting the opposing mascot before games to discuss any interaction between the two of you, not dressing or undressing in front of the crowd, and not talking while in costume. Besides, what mascot wants to give away his or her identity?



Safety guidelines, that your instructors will most likely cover, must also be followed to ensure your safety as well as those around you. Mascots should never be used as spotters if dressed in costume and your head is covered. You must always be aware of the limitations of your costume, stretch before and after all performances, and drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Mascots must also use extreme caution when entertaining children.

Aside from all the rules, it's important that mascots realize how much they bring to the spirit world as they begin their training. Sue Ann Kawecki, a writer for cheerleaders, dancers, and mascots, states that as a mascot, you single-handedly have the power to make or break the crowd's involvement in a game.

"Mascots range from the most obscure to the obvious and from the outrageous to the modest," says Kawecki. "But regardless of their distinctive appearances and reputations, they all share a common purpose. That purpose is to add enjoyment to a game and to evoke unbridled enthusiasm from the fans."

Other than the simple guidelines, there are three building blocks to master before becoming a successful mascot. The first one is attendance. A mascot must be accounted for at every event. Once you have made yourself known, fans will look for you each time they come back. Mascots can sometimes have crazy schedules, but you have to learn how to manage your time wisely if you want to take on the position.

The second is endurance. You could be at a football game or at a random appearance, and there's no telling how long you will be on your feet. Not to mention that you might be in your costume during 100° weather, this ties in with the above mentioned safety guidelines. You must be in excellent physical shape and be ready to jump into any situation at any time.

The third is involvement. A mascot is a key player in the school's spirit program. And as a mascot, your sole responsibility is to build the crowd's excitement, or in other words, keep them involved in the game. You should be covered as long as you remember attendance, endurance, and involvement.

Just as it takes a certain kind of person to be the captain of a cheerleading squad or the starting point guard on a basketball team, it takes a certain person to be a mascot. After extensive training and having the determination and commitment, anyone can make a name for themselves as their school's mascot.