

CHEER STARS

Performance Cheer

Information guide for coaches

Mini and Primary divisions



Belgian Cheerleading Federation | Version for the 2027 season

About this guide

This guide explains how the Cheer STARS model applies to Performance Cheer in the Pom and Hip Hop disciplines, and how coaches can align choreography, training and competition preparation with it. The BCF presentation Cheer STARS PC is the primary source. The additional guidance translates the presentation into practical coaching decisions for Mini and Primary teams. In the star sections, judging focus explains what judges look for during the routine, while Coach guidance turns those observations into practical training priorities.

Important: Teams are not ranked against one another. Each star recognizes a separate development goal demonstrated during the routine

Content

About this guide	2
Contents	2
1. Purpose and philosophy	3
2. How the system works	3
3. The stars at a glance	4
5. Building a routine for Cheer STARS	14
6. Using the results after the event	14
7. Frequently asked questions	15
8. Benefits for athletes and coaches	16

1. Purpose and philosophy

Traditional ranking can place strong emphasis on scores and comparison at a young age. Cheer STARS shifts attention towards development, sound fundamentals, teamwork and enjoyment while preserving a genuine competition experience. We also believe this will reduce drop out.

From	To and what it means for coaches
Ranking	Separate development goals. Build the routine around what the team can demonstrate, not around beating another team.
Difficulty first	Technique and mastery first. More complex material only adds value when athletes retain control.
One overall result	Seven specific recognitions that show where the team is strong and what needs further work.
Competition pressure	A positive performance opportunity with clear and achievable goals.

What remains important?

- All routines must comply with the applicable rules for the division and level. (see ICU safety rules & regulations)
- Safety always remains the highest priority.
- Coaches remain responsible for selecting a realistic, well-practiced and age-appropriate routine.
- The competition remains a genuine performance opportunity: athletes demonstrate what they have mastered as a team.

2. How the system works

A Performance Cheer team can earn seven stars: Safety, Complete Routine, Technique, Synchronization, Performance, Creativity and Hit Clean. Judges apply each criterion separately. A team may therefore earn any combination of stars.

Key judging principles

- The routine must comply with the applicable BCF and competition rules.
- Judges assess what the team shows on the competition floor, not what was planned or achieved in training.
- One minor isolated imperfection will not be taken into consideration for the stars.
- The Hit Clean Star is stricter: a clear error in one of its listed categories prevents that star.

How results and stars are communicated

Judges record the official result in the Cheer STARS Google Sheet. After the judges validate the seven decisions, the awards desk prepares a certificate for each team showing the stars earned.

3. The stars at a glance

Star	Awarded for	Coach question
Safety Star	A legal routine without safety deductions.	Is every movement legal, age-appropriate and safely prepared?
Complete Routine Star	All required components for the team's discipline are clearly present.	Can the judges identify every required Pom or Hip Hop component?
Technique Star	Correct execution and body control across the routine.	Do the athletes show control in the selected material?
Synchronization Star	Timing, uniformity and precision.	Does the team perform as one unit?
Performance Star	Energy, natural expression, engagement and projection.	Do the athletes actively perform throughout?
Creativity Star	Purposeful variety and original use of choreography.	Does the routine show thoughtful, age-appropriate creative choices?
Hit Clean Star	No clear timing, prop drop where applicable, interruption, major execution or formation errors.	Can the team perform the routine cleanly under competition pressure?



SAFETY STAR

Promotes safe participation and legal routines.

Core principle: Safety comes first. Every movement, transition and skill must be legal and safely executed.

Key question

Was the entire routine performed legally, without a safety deduction?

Award criteria

- The routine is executed fully legal.
- No safety deductions are issued.
- No illegal skills are performed.
- No warnings are given.

Coach guidance

- Check every element against the current ICU rulebook for the correct division and level.
- Review the discipline-specific content, floor contact, transitions and the use of poms or other permitted props where relevant.
- Choose elements the athletes can repeat safely when tired and under competition pressure.
- Film a full routine and carry out a separate legality review before the event.

Judging focus

Situation	Interpretation
Star likely awarded	All skills and movements are legal; no safety deduction is issued.
Star not awarded	An illegal skill or other illegal element is performed, or the legality judge issues a safety deduction or warning

Coaching focus (training priority): The safest choice is not necessarily the simplest choice, but it is one the team has technically mastered and can perform legally and consistently.



COMPLETE ROUTINE STAR

Encourages teams to demonstrate all fundamental Performance Cheer components.

Core principle: Presence is the focus. Each required component must be deliberate, recognizable and completed.

Key question

Can the judges clearly identify every required component?

Judging focus & coach guidance

Component	What judges identify	Coach guidance
POM		
Pom motions	Sharp pom motions..	Include visible motion sequences with purposeful pathways, placement and intent.
Formations and transitions	Distinctive formations and clean transitions	Use formations that read clearly from the judges' viewpoint and finish every transition.
Turns	One or more recognizable turn elements.	Select turns athletes can complete on balance and within the choreography.
Jumps	Recognizable jumps or leaps.	Make the preparation, shape and landing visible rather than hiding the jump in a transition.
Flexibility skills	A clearly presented flexibility element.	Choose an age-appropriate shape athletes can enter, hold or pass through with control.
Variations in levels	Purposeful changes between standing, kneeling, floor or other legal levels.	Use level changes as deliberate choreography, not as accidental or unfinished movement.
HIP HOP		
Hip Hop movement vocabulary	Recognizable Hip Hop movement choices suited to the team and music.	Use authentic, age-appropriate movement vocabulary rather than generic dance movement alone.

Component	What judges identify	Coach guidance
Groove and rhythm	A visible relationship between the movement, pulse, rhythm and accents.	Build groove into sequences and transitions instead of showing it only in one short section.
Footwork	A recognizable sequence using deliberate steps, direction or weight changes.	Choose footwork athletes can complete clearly, rhythmically and with control.
Formations and transitions	Distinctive formations and clean transitions	Use formations that read clearly and transitions that remain part of the performance.
Levels and floorwork	Purposeful use of different levels and, where included, safe and controlled floorwork.	Ensure level changes and floorwork are intentional, legal and fully completed.
Dynamics and musicality	Variation in energy, texture, speed or accents that reflects the music.	Show clear contrast without sacrificing control or team unity.

Decision rule: A failed, interrupted or unrecognizable attempt does not demonstrate the component. Difficulty and technical quality are assessed separately.



TECHNIQUE STAR

Rewards correct execution and body control.

Core principle: A simple skill performed correctly is more valuable than a difficult skill performed incorrectly.

Key question

Were the skills performed with correct technique, control and stability?

Judging focus

Area	Positive indicators	Further development needed
POM		
Pom technique	Sharp crisp motion with power	Loose control, unclear pathways or poms that obscure the intended line.
Arm placements	Accurate placement, full extension and consistent angles.	Repeated bent arms, unclear positions or inconsistent angles.
Body positions	Posture, alignment and shapes remain controlled.	Collapsed posture, unstable shapes or loss of alignment.
Footwork	Clear weight transfer, placement and controlled direction changes.	Unclear steps, crossed timing or repeated loss of balance.
Turns	Prepared entry, centered rotation and controlled finish.	Uncontrolled preparation, travel, incomplete rotation or unstable finish.
Jumps	Clear shape and controlled landing.	Weak shape, uncontrolled landing or repeated balance loss.
Flexibility skills	Correct alignment and a controlled entry and exit.	Forced range, poor alignment or loss of control.
HIP HOP		
Grounding and groove	Movement shows an appropriate base, pulse and relaxed control.	Movement repeatedly appears lifted, rigid or disconnected from the rhythm.
Weight transfer	Weight changes are clear, balanced and support the intended movement.	Unclear placement, unstable changes or repeated loss of balance.

Area	Positive indicators	Further development needed
Footwork	Steps, directions and rhythms are deliberate and clearly completed.	Footwork appears uncertain, incomplete or repeatedly loses rhythmic clarity.
Isolations and body control	Body parts move independently and intentionally with controlled range.	Unintended movement, limited control or unclear initiation of the isolation.
Coordination	Upper and lower body actions connect clearly and purposefully.	Movements conflict, lose shape or become difficult to recognize.
Dynamics and texture	Changes in energy, speed, resistance and attack remain controlled.	Dynamics appear accidental or cause a loss of technique.
Floorwork	Entries, movement on the floor and exits are safe, controlled and musical.	Heavy, unsafe or unfinished transitions to or from the floor.
Style clarity	The movement quality remains recognizable and appropriate to the selected Hip Hop style.	Generic execution with little connection to the intended style or music.

Reasonable standard: Technique is assessed across the routine. One small, isolated imperfection does not automatically remove the star when the athlete recovers immediately, and the overall standard remains clear.

Award criteria

- Achieved: the selected skills demonstrate correct technique, body control and stability.
- Development point: simplify the skill or continue training when control, technique or stability is not yet sufficiently demonstrated.



SYNCHRONIZATION STAR

Rewards teamwork and uniform execution.

Core principle: The choreography should look shared rather than like separate individual performances.

Key question

Did the team perform the routine with timing, coordination and team unity?

Judging focus

Aspect	Positive indicators	Further development needed
Timing	Athletes start, accent and finish movements together.	Repeated differences in counts, starts or finishes.
Uniformity	Matching placement, shapes, levels and movement quality.	Visible differences in placement or execution across the group.
Precision	Clear lines, deliberate pathways and finished movements.	Movements appear unfinished, blurred or inconsistent.
Formations	Spacing and transitions remain coordinated.	Athletes arrive late, drift or leave unclear spacing.

Coaching focus (training priority): Train timing, coordination and team unity as separate development goals, then combine them in complete routines.



PERFORMANCE STAR

Rewards active performance and connection with the audience.

Core principle: Athletes perform; they do not merely execute skills.

Key question

Did the athletes sustain energy, natural expression, engagement and projection?

Judging focus

Aspect	Positive indicators	Further development needed
Energy	An age-appropriate level of energy remains visible throughout.	Large sections lose intensity or appear hesitant.
Natural expression	Expressions suit the athletes, style and music.	Expression is absent, forced or uncomfortable.
Audience engagement	Athletes connect with the audience and judges.	Frequent downward focus or limited awareness beyond the choreography.
Projection	Movement, focus and confidence reach beyond the team itself.	Movement feels small, inward or disconnected.
Commitment	Performance continues through transitions and recovery after mistakes.	Athletes stop performing between elements or after an error.

Coaching focus (training priority): Performance should be trained in sections, transitions and full routines. Athletes do not need identical facial expressions, but the team should share a confident performance intention.

Coach guidance

- Train performance not only during full-outs, but also in short sections and transitions.
- Encourage natural, age-appropriate expression; avoid exaggerated or uncomfortable expectations.
- Teach athletes to re-engage with the routine after a mistake without losing their performance completely.



CREATIVITY STAR

Recognizes purposeful and age-appropriate creative choices in choreography.

Core principle: Creativity should strengthen the routine without sacrificing clarity, safety or execution.

Key question

Does the routine use formations, levels, transitions and music in a varied and thoughtful way?

Judging focus

Area	Positive indicators	What does not qualify on its own
Formations and space	Varied, readable formations and purposeful use of the floor.	Many formation changes that remain unclear or unfinished.
Levels and visual variety	Intentional contrasts in levels, directions and groupings.	Random level changes without a clear choreographic purpose.
Transitions	Original transitions that connect sections smoothly.	Complex transitions that interrupt timing or technique.
Musical interpretation	Movement choices reflect accents, rhythm and character in the music.	Copying the beat without variation or clear intention.
Originality	The routine has an unexpected element.	One isolated trick or pose that does not influence the wider choreography.

Proposed decision rule: Judges should recognize creative quality across the routine. The star should not become a difficulty contest or depend on one isolated highlight.



HIT CLEAN STAR

Recognizes a routine completed without clear performance interruptions or major errors.

Core principle: Clean rewards repeatability and clean competition-day execution.

Key question

Was the routine completed without a clear error in any of the listed categories?

Judging focus

Category	What it means	Examples
Timing error	A clear loss of timing that disrupts the shared choreography.	An athlete misses counts, starts late or finishes a sequence at a visibly different time.
Prop drop where applicable	A pom or another permitted prop is dropped unintentionally. This category is not applicable when the routine uses no prop.	The item reaches the performance floor and must be recovered or left behind.
Interruption	An athlete stops or clearly loses the choreography.	Freezing, restarting after several counts or leaving a section unfinished.
Major execution error	A substantial error changes or prevents the intended element.	A fall, failed turn, uncontrolled landing or flexibility element that cannot be completed.
Formation error	A clear mistake materially affects the intended formation.	Wrong position, collision risk, large spacing error or missed formation change.

Decision rule: One clear occurrence in any category prevents the Hit Clean Star. A minor adjustment that does not interrupt the choreography, timing or intended formation should not automatically count as an error.

Coach guidance

- Choose choreography the team can repeat under competition pressure.
- Practice recovery so one error does not create a second error.
- Use full-run video to identify recurring timing and formation problems.
- Simplify material when clean execution is not yet repeatable.

5. Building a routine for Cheer STARS

A strong Cheer STARS routine is not created by checking the stars after choreography is finished. Build the routine around the criteria from the start.

Recommended approach

1. Confirm what is legal, realistic and age appropriate.
2. Map the six Complete Routine components for the team's discipline.
3. Select discipline-appropriate movement and skills that the athletes can execute with control.
4. Build formations, level changes and transitions around the elements the athletes have mastered.
5. Train timing, precision and spacing as separate goals.
6. Add performance quality and projection to every section.
7. Review creativity across the whole routine rather than relying on one highlight.
8. Test the complete routine for repeatability and simplify where errors recur.

Order of priorities when in doubt

Priority	Reason
1. Safety and legality	Every other goal depends on a safe and legal routine.
2. Technique and control	Sound execution creates the foundation for clean and confident performance.
3. Completeness	All required content must be recognizable.
4. Synchronization	The team must present the choreography as one unit.
5. Performance and creativity	Expression and variety should strengthen material the team already controls.
6. Additional complexity	Add it only when the earlier priorities remain stable.

6. Using the results after the event

A star that was not earned is not a punishment. It identifies a development goal that was not demonstrated clearly enough on that day. Convert the result into a specific training action.

Star not earned	Possible meaning	Next training focus
Safety	Illegality or safety deduction.	Rules knowledge, routine adjustment and safe repetition.
Complete Routine	A discipline-specific component was missing, failed or unclear.	Check the Pom or Hip Hop routine map and present the missing component more clearly.
Technique	Repeated technical errors or limited control.	Fundamentals, drills and simpler progressions.
Synchronization	Timing, uniformity or precision was inconsistent.	Counts, placement, spacing and transition practice.

Star not earned	Possible meaning	Next training focus
Performance	Energy, expression, engagement or projection was inconsistent.	Performance blocks and confidence in transitions.
Creativity	The routine showed limited purposeful variety.	Formation, level, transition and musical interpretation work.
Hit Clean	A clear error occurred in a listed category.	Identify the cause and improve repeatability or simplify.

7. Frequently asked questions

Are teams still ranked?

No. Teams earn stars against fixed development criteria.

Does a routine need maximum difficulty?

No. Technique, synchronization, performance and clean execution can be shown through material the athletes have mastered.

Does one small mistake always remove a star?

No for the overall quality stars. Judges use the full routine and a reasonable standard. Hit Clean is stricter and uses the listed error categories.

Must every athlete use the same expression?

No. Expressions should be natural and age appropriate. The team should still share energy, engagement and projection.

Does Complete Routine assess quality?

Its primary focus is whether every required component for the team's discipline is present, recognizable and completed. Technique and synchronization are judged separately.

Do Pom and Hip Hop use the same Complete Routine and Technique criteria?

No. The judging principles are shared, but the required components and technical indicators are specific to each discipline. Judges use the Pom criteria for Pom teams and the Hip Hop criteria for Hip Hop teams.

8. Benefits for athletes and coaches

For athletes	For coaches
Less pressure from direct ranking.	Clearer feedback for training priorities.
A positive competition experience.	A stronger focus on fundamentals and safety.
Clear goals and recognition for progress.	Support for routine planning and progression.
Greater confidence and motivation.	A framework for long-term athlete development.
A stronger sense of teamwork.	Specific goals for technique, synchronization and performance.

Why this matters: Cheer STARS helps keep young athletes engaged, develop strong foundations, participate safely and experience healthy competition.