American Dance

Education Support

Organizing a Rehearsal Schedule

By Joyce E. Pennington

Each time football season rolls around, it seems as though we are constantly struggling to get everything done in time for that all important halftime performance. Taking the time to lay out a weekly schedule will help you and your team accomplish your weekly goals.

Here are some tips that will help your schedule to flow more smoothly:

- Meet with your officers prior to each week of practice to discuss goals and rehearse routine details before the routine is taught or presented to the team. Make sure to show the officers the “trouble” spots in the routine.
- Set a schedule and stick to it. Roll call should take place 5 minutes after practice is scheduled to begin. Anyone not present is TARDY. After 15 minutes, they should be considered ABSENT so you can re-set the routine. Your rehearsals can never be effective unless everyone is there ON TIME!
- There should be at least 20 minutes of FORMAL STRETCHING led by the director or officers. Music can always motivate the group to stretch. If your team does extensive kicks or splits in their routine, you need to add 10 minutes of kicking down the floor and stretching for splits.
- After the routine is taught, it must be broken down and perfected. Take 8 counts at a time & analyze the various body positions: feet, legs, body, arms, hands, head, focus. It can sometimes be even more effective in smaller groups or squads. Remember, it is important that each position is uniform throughout the team. Repetition alone as well as general statements to the group is not effective. Be specific on your corrections with each individual person.
- After the routine is broken down, perfected and connected for memory, work on adding body energy and projection. This is the “icing on the cake” for your routine.
- Block the routine on the floor or football field for specific placement and spacing.

- Do not allow the team members to talk among themselves during practice. This breaks their concentration level and leads to “negative practice time” where nothing is accomplished. .
- If the dancers are losing their concentration or tiring easily, take short water breaks. Water is always cleansing to the mind and body.
- Begin and end each rehearsal with a team meeting. To open rehearsal, set goals to be accomplished during the days’ rehearsal. Let them know what you expect from them. In closing, analyze the rehearsal and let the team know the goals they reached and those not as well as what must be accomplished the next day to keep the pace of the week.
- Offer positive criticism as well as deserved praise. A curt or demeaning tone of voice will never produce positive results. Everyone responds to praise. Praise what you want to raise. Use motivational techniques such as ribbons, charms or medals for top performers of the day or week.

A sample week of rehearsals:
MONDAY- teach or review routine, work on memory and polishing points.
TUESDAY-perfect routine in squads; tryouts (if your team has weekly tryouts)
WEDNESDAY-set routine patterns; assign yard lines (inside); work in small groups.
THURSDAY-set routine on the football field/practice field; block each pattern and formation; work on transitions to each formation.
FRIDAY-rehearse with the band/music; final polishing; add SPARKLE!

The key to successful rehearsals is for each team member to ‘get down to business’ and concentrate on daily goals. A casual or un-planned rehearsal can cause your team to require double or triple the amount of preparation time. No talking at rehearsal. Raise your hand for questions. Focus on officer style and performance level. Strive for ‘QUALITY REHEARSAL TIME’. Be organized, have a schedule and STICK TO IT for a successful rehearsal week.