



**PHYSICAL CONTACT GUIDANCE
POLICY**



Safe Touch Guidance Policy

1. Physical Contact

Physical contact should only ever take place in the interests of and for the benefit of the child, not for the adult involved.

There may be a number of circumstances in a cheerleading context when it is appropriate for an adult to touch (have direct physical contact with) a child. Participants and their legal guardians need to feel confident that contact between those coaching cheerleading and young people are safe and appropriate. Adults working in athlete need confidence that their actions cannot be misconstrued. Children and young people have a right to say what level of contact they are comfortable with and need to be empowered to speak out without any fear of negative reactions or punishment of any sort.

Physical contact between adult personnel and young people in cheerleading are appropriate when necessary to

- Safely support an athlete in a new skill to prevent injury
- Physical correction, such as body placement or physical alignment
- Catching from a fall (such as on a beam or bars) to prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- Treat an injury

2. Best practice guidance includes:

- Adults should always explain the nature of and reason for the physical contact with the young person or participant. This reason should be one that would be aligned with this Policy and would be justifiable to any other responsible adult.
- Unless the situation is an emergency, an adult should ask the athlete for permission, for example to aid the demonstration of a specific technique. They should include in this request where they intend to touch them. For example "To spot a walkover I will need to put my hand on your upper thigh and lower back, is this ok?"
- If the participant refuses or seems uncomfortable, do not do it. Ideally, get someone of the same gender as the participant to demonstrate the action.



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- Contact must never involve touching any part of the body that might cause anyone distress or embarrassment.
- For games or physical warm-ups that require touch, avoid contexts where touch could increase risk of allegation, discomfort, misunderstanding or inappropriate contact.
- Participants will be encouraged to voice concerns they have if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- 1-2-1 physical touch between personnel and participants out of sight of others must be avoided, no matter how innocent - it puts both persons at risk. Any physical touch should be in plain view of others.
- Well intentioned gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, if repeated regularly, can lead to the possibility of questions being raised by observers. As a general principle adults in positions of responsibility must be sensitive and responsive to the situation, surroundings and comfort level of the child or young person. When making physical contact, adults must always assess carefully how their actions may be interpreted both by the athlete and other observers.
- Stating that an inappropriate, suggestive or unwelcome touch is necessary for the athletes' skill development is never an acceptable excuse and will be taken very seriously by Beas Cheerleading.
- Coaches must avoid piggybacks, play fights etc. or any other such contact that could be misconstrued, make someone feel uncomfortable or blur boundaries between coaches and athletes.
- A culture of individual and collective accountability is important for encouraging people to speak out or share concerns