

TOP 15 WSDDJA SUGGESTIONS FOR ACHIEVING A HIGHER SCORE

- 1) **KEEP ROUTINE TO A MINIMUM LENGTH**
For most choreographers, especially novices, filling each minute of dance is a struggle. As a result, parts of the routine start to look like “filler” instead of being strong and purposeful. Another problem with longer routines is the judges begin to notice a decrease in execution due to poor physical conditioning. If the routine is too long for your team’s conditioning level, energy decreases, showmanship drops and scores drop.
- 2) **INCREASE PHYSICAL FITNESS OF TEAM MEMBERS**
Poor fitness becomes evident after about 1 or 2 minutes of performance. Cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, muscle endurance, strength, weight control are all important and equal factors in fitness. Dance/drill routines require all out energy for a short period of time and would be considered “anaerobic”. Anaerobic training such as line sprints and jump rope sprints would be ideal activities to use for development.
- 3) **CONCENTRATE ON THE BASICS—NEVER SACRIFICE TECHNIQUE**
Whatever your chosen style is, work your fundamentals at each and every practice. In the early part of your season, spend as much time as possible on technique. As the season progresses closer to State, reduce the technique portion of practice, but don’t drop it out altogether. Think about a basketball team or a volleyball team. The team with the best fundamentals usually will perform better in a game situation.
- 4) **CHOOSE YOUR MUSIC WITH THE IDEA OF DESIGNING A “PROGRAM”**
Don’t just randomly put music together because each officer picks a great piece they want in the routine. Try hard to put a *program* together that people will remember once your music has stopped. Very often, after a team has left the floor, neither the audience nor the judges could tell you what music they had performed to, unless you have made an Impact on them in some way. Music selection is one of the most critical factors in the success of a routine. Stay away from the Top 40, everyone else will be using the same music and when you are the 50th team to use that music.. you’ve lost the edge.
- 5) **EDIT MUSIC CAREFULLY**
Use good CD’s and tapes to edit off of and on to. Whenever possible, have your competition tapes edited professionally or look for students in your building who have an expertise in this area. Radio stations may do this for free! Remember that more does not equal *better* when choosing your music cuts. Listen to which portion of the song best suits your choreography. Often times, teams will use the intro, verse and chorus of a song and cut to another piece, using the intro of that song, then a verse and a chorus. An intro is just that.. *an intro*. Your program only needs one intro. Spend more time understanding how a song is broken down into parts, just as choreography is. Edit wisely and eliminate all profanity.
- 6) **PUSH TO INCORPORATE DIFFICULT ELEMENTS...SKILLS YOU HAVE MASTERED**
Don’t add several difficult skills that cannot be executed proficiently. You may benefit slightly under Content, but you will be penalized more under Execution, if the skills are weak. Having the same one or two performers always doing the difficult elements can work if the rest of the team is executing complimentary moves, instead of squatting or just being “window dressing”, and providing it doesn’t happen over and over again.
- 7) **STUDY AND UNDERSTAND THE LINEAR SCALE**
Concentrate on those elements. Attend a judges clinic for a more intensive study of the linear scale and a clear idea of what judges are being taught to look for. Look at the routine against the linear scale. Are you really seeing a Superior routine?
- 8) **KICK LINE NO NO’S**
Don’t put the kick line at the end of a long routine. Performers lack the stamina to execute properly. No

matter where the kick line is in the routine...don't keep kicking beyond the team's ability to execute! Judges comment consistently about teams that just kick, kick and keep on kicking way past the performers' ability level.

- 9) **MAKE POM/PROP EXCHANGES AND PASSES UNPREDICTABLE AND SMOOTH**
Prop exchanges should be unnoticeable. Don't pull all team members to the boundary lines to exchange props leaving no performers on the floor. Each prop exchange should be a surprise. Prop drops should be just as interesting. Simply marching to the lines and tossing them across the line or into the audience is very predictable and uninteresting.
- 10) **ADD PERSONALITY TO YOUR ROUTINE**
Good choreography is like a good book. It should have an interesting intro to make your audience judges want to keep watching. It should be unpredictable, with peaks, valleys, twists and turns to add spice. Finally, it should have a clear and definite ending that doesn't leave the audience/judges wondering "Was that the ending or are they just transitioning?" Choreography should "flow" and not be choppy. Add surprise elements and learn to stair-step formations so your transitions look smoother. You will be able to add more formations, and you will move in and out of them much quicker (ideally 4 to 8 counts to change formation). Have a play day to work new choreography.
- 11) **USE SOMEONE NOT ATTACHED TO YOUR TEAM TO COME IN AND CLEAN**
Ideally this should be someone who has not seen your routine. They will be able to give you an impartial opinion. Listen to their comments and make the necessary changes. Don't waste their time by not listening. Clean one eight count at a time. Don't give up and move on until it is CLEAN! Even the most simple move can be dramatic and effective when executed perfectly.
- 12) **GATHER YOUR INFORMATION FROM VARIOUS SOURCES AND PROFESSIONALS**
If you cannot afford professional help, rent or buy videos for new ideas. Look to college students for help and dance/drill magazines for costume, routine and skill ideas. Don't be limited to MW or BET. Ask other coaches for their sources. Attend a camp, and get the instructors name and addresses. They may be willing to come in and help.
- 13) **DON'T USE A COMPLETE ROUTINE FROM CAMP OR FROM A VIDEO**
If you do, you run the chance of another team having the same routine. Judges are knowledgeable and recognize these routines. It will affect your scores in areas such as "originality" and "creativity". It is acceptable to take parts of routines, change the music and make it your own by "re-working" the choreography a bit.
- 14) **ACCEPT THE JUDGES SCORES AND LISTEN OPENLY TO THEIR COMMENTS**
Don't get angry or defensive. You have an emotional attachment to the routine and the performers, whereas the judges do not. When you have a panel of judges telling you similar things, you need to put your emotions behind you and open up to really hear and learn from the critique. Don't sift through, take things out of context, or have a negative approach. Listen to your tapes again a few days after the competition. You may be more receptive and you will hear more.
- 15) **TEACH GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP—BE A ROLE MODEL**
If a team is taught good sportsmanship, they will learn to win or lose with grace and they will learn to accept criticism with a positive attitude. A score and rating can then be a real educational tool. It is critical to teach our students how to handle a disappointment with good character and how to channel emotions in a more positive direction.