

# Oakton High School Color Guard Handbook

<http://www.oaktonbands.org/marchingband/colorguard/>  
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## Mission Statement

The Oakton High School Color Guard Program provides an opportunity in a safe learning environment for students to participate in representing their school, to grow as individuals and team members, to teach performance skills, and to build self-confidence and self-esteem.

## Vision Statement

During the Winter season, the Oakton High School Color Guard will create and perform a program that rewards students for their training and development of performance qualities as a part of the Cougar Band Program.

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## **GOALS**

1. Have fun
2. Learn and apply new skills
3. Be competitive

## **RULES**

1. Treat each person with respect.
2. Practice to perform.
3. There is no "I can't." There is always "I will try."
4. Breathe.

## **General Etiquette Rules**

1. **We maintain a positive environment. Unkind words, harsh words, curse words, and profanity of any kind are not allowed at any time, including outside of rehearsal.**
2. **At all times, and especially when wearing Oakton Color Guard attire, you are considered a representative of Oakton High School and Oakton HS Color Guard. Act appropriately. Please see *the Uniform Policy*.**
3. **You must be on your best behavior while at rehearsal and in performance venues. Making negative comments about other students, staff, parents, volunteers, or performing groups is not permitted.**
4. **Be dependable.**
5. **Be your best.**
6. **No member shall ever correct or comment negatively on another member's or section's performance. Specifically, approaching someone to give them constructive or negative unsolicited feedback is strictly prohibited. If you want to help someone but are unsure of how to approach them, ask the staff for assistance.**
7. **Do your color guard duties (carrying flags, guard box, music, etc.) without being asked.**

## **Forms**

Students are required to submit:

The required registration form for each season. These can be found on the [Oakton Bands website](#).

# POLICIES & PROCEDURES

## Attendance Policy

Every member plays an integral role in the color guard program. All other activities and appointments must be scheduled around rehearsal and performance dates and times. Social plans, dental/doctor/optometry appointments, jobs, group project meetings, homework, and other appointments or commitments cannot interfere with rehearsals or performances.

1. Attendance at every rehearsal and performance is **mandatory**. Attendance means arriving 10 minutes before rehearsal begins.
2. Any absence may cause the student to **not** perform (it can be dangerous for others if a student does not know their drill or choreography due to missed rehearsal). **This is up to staff discretion.**
3. Communication is key. You must submit the absence form for all absences.
4. Three or more unexcused absences will result in suspension from the team.
5. If a member is absent for a rehearsal, they must learn what they have missed before the next rehearsal, or they may not be allowed to participate with the group for safety concerns.
  - a. Members can access the video drive or other online resources to learn about missed information or ask another member. They should **not** ask staff what they have missed after their absence.
6. Excused Absence Policy
  - a. An absence is excused if **both** of the following criteria are met:
    - i. The member completes the absence form at least 3 days before the planned absence.
    - ii. The absence is **not** related to any of the following events or activities: social plans, dental/doctor/optometry appointments, jobs, studying, and other appointments or commitments of this nature. **Generally, if it can be scheduled in advance, you must schedule around rehearsals and competitions.**
  - b. Illness is an excused absence.
    - i. If you attend school, you must attend rehearsal unless you are contagious or too ill to observe rehearsal. You must attend rehearsal, even if you are not able to participate.
    - ii. If you do not attend school, you may not come to practice. However, you must still notify the staff via the absence form to inform us of your absence from school and rehearsal. We will worry about you if you are a no-show, and can contact a parent or guardian to confirm your attendance at rehearsal.
    - iii. The staff understands that extended absences due to illness may occur. If this is the case, the staff may choose to count your extended absence as one (1) absence, as long as you are not attending school during your illness.
7. Unexcused Absences
  - a. All other absences not addressed in the Excused Absence Policy are unexcused.
  - b. **Video Assignments** are mandatory unless specified otherwise; if a video assignment is not completed, it will count as an unexcused absence.
8. Partial Attendance
  - a. If a member has an unavoidable conflict with either a rehearsal or a performance, it is highly encouraged that the member make every effort to attend a portion of the rehearsal possible. However, we do understand that conflicts do happen. Please follow the attendance form policy and submit an absence form at least 3 days before the rehearsal date that will be missed.
  - b. Attending part of a rehearsal will allow the member to avoid having an absence altogether, provided that the member can attend a significant portion of the scheduled rehearsal, as determined by the staff.

## Rehearsal Policies & Procedures

1. Arriving at rehearsal “on time” means at least 10 minutes early. *Use this time to get your equipment, change, warm up, transport equipment to rehearsal space, review technique and choreography, and generally prepare for the rehearsal.*
2. No chewing gum is allowed at any time during rehearsal. In some rehearsal spaces, food or beverages besides water are also not allowed. You will be made aware of the procedure at each rehearsal space before the first rehearsal at that space.
3. Appropriate rehearsal attire is required. You must be in rehearsal attire before practice. “Appropriate rehearsal attire” includes:
  - Comfortable workout attire
    - i. Stretch pants, athletic shorts, tank tops, t-shirts, sportbras, appropriate undergarments
    - ii. No loose or baggy clothing. Ankles must be visible.
  - Gym/tennis shoes with socks
  - Hair must be completely pulled back off the face and neck and secured. Loose hair that falls into the student’s face can cause an unsafe situation when we are learning new skills.
  - No jewelry should be worn at rehearsals or performances. Stud earrings are acceptable.
  - **You must bring a water bottle.**
  - School clothing attire policies will apply at all times.
4. Cell phones must be on vibrate or mute during rehearsal. You are not permitted to check your phone unless you are on a break. If you are expecting an important phone call, you may leave your phone with a staff member. If it rings, a staff member will give it to you.
5. All members must come to every practice. Exceptions are made only for those who are sick or have sudden or serious family concerns. See the Attendance Policy for further information.
6. If you are struggling, you will enlist someone to help you *outside* of practice.
7. Do not spin while the staff is giving whole-group instruction.
8. Do not move or talk at the end of a repetition until you are told to “relax.” *Performance is a quality improved through practice.*
9. If the staff is working with another group that does not involve you, you should be working quietly on parts of your show while paying attention in case the staff needs you.
10. There is a difference between being given time for water and being given a “break.” Time for water is short and mandatory. Breaks may be a bit longer and are optional.
11. The staff is not the only source of information when you are at a rehearsal. Please be sure to address your questions to your fellow guard members before you address them to the staff. You may also consult the video guide and count sheets.
12. Deciding not to do the assignment given is **not** tolerated. Not doing the choreo being taught or rehearsed is unacceptable, unless the student is injured. If this is the case, the staff will find a modified way for the student to participate in rehearsal. It is expected that each member participates and does the repetitions in rehearsal. Doing this, staff can help with technique and safety so every member has the best experience possible.
  - a. If a member is injured, they must do what is best for their health and communicate that to staff.
  - b. If a member is sitting out for 2 rehearsals in a row, there needs to be medical intervention and a doctor's note specifically listing what the member can and cannot do so the rehearsal and program can be modified for the member's participation. Members must communicate this with staff beforehand.
    - i. We understand that sometimes it is beneficial not to participate in a rep due to a mistake or injury; the above policy applies to sitting out of multiple reps or significant amounts of rehearsal.

## **Performance Policies & Procedures**

1. Show shirts and appropriate shorts/show blacks are required on show days.
2. You may not leave the performance venue early unless you have it approved in advance by one of the staff members, and the person picking you up has filled out the required form in advance. (See the FCPS forms webpage for this form.)
3. You may not go anywhere alone while at a performance venue. You must always be with at least one other guard member.

## **Discipline**

Color Guard is a sport of the arts, but it is still a sport, nonetheless. It may be necessary for the color guard instructors, band directors, or other band staff to discipline a member of the guard, just like a coach would discipline members of their team. Examples of disciplinary action include spins, running laps, throwing tosses, arriving early or staying late at practice, and assigning the member additional duties for the remainder of the season. This could also include removing a member from parts of the performance if warranted. In all situations where discipline is warranted, every attempt will be made to instill responsibility for the member's actions and to use a form of punishment that will further enrich the member's overall color guard experience.

## **Technique**

One of the most important aspects of color guard is having good technique. Technique is the application of methods to demonstrate skills. A color guard only has good technique if we all strive for and achieve the technique as a unit. The technique program used by each color guard is at the discretion of the color guard staff. How we spin in the OHSCG may be different than other schools or other instructors you have had in the past. Disagreeing with or questioning the technique of the instructors will not be tolerated. The instructors have combined experiences to create a technique program appropriate for the current level of the OHSCG.

## **Equipment and Maintenance**

The maintenance and care of the Color Guard equipment is incredibly important. Equipment must be stored and cared for correctly. Equipment should never be lent out, left out, or unattended for any reason. It should be cleaned and handled with care per the given instructions. Only color guard members are permitted to practice with the equipment. No member should ever allow another person to spin their equipment, even if that person participates (-s -d) in color guard during another season.

Members are expected to perform equipment maintenance throughout the season, which may include: properly taping equipment, such as taping the tips of weapons and having correct cheater tapes on the flag. If a piece of equipment is not functioning normally, please inform a staff member immediately so it can be fixed or it can be replaced. Spinning damaged or poorly maintained equipment is dangerous; it is imperative to properly maintain equipment.

Equipment is to be stored and transported in a designated flag bag at all times. There are no exceptions to this.

We spin 36" Elite 3 Rifles. We spin 36" sabers – the best brand is King, but Excaliburs are more affordable. We spin metal, Spanish hilt.

## **Uniform Policy**

To complete the look and feel of the program, performers will be given a uniform. This uniform must be treated with the utmost respect. While in uniform and your guard jackets, you are considered a representative of Oakton High School and the Oakton HS Color Guard. You must be on your best behavior.

1. Act with dignity, grace, and respect in uniform and in guard gear (shirts, jackets, etc.).
2. Treat your uniform with respect.
3. You are never to be in “partial uniform.” The uniform is either entirely on or entirely off.
4. You are not to run in uniform.
5. You are not to eat in uniform without your guard jacket covering it. You may only drink water.
6. Public Displays of Affection (PDAs) are not permitted while you are in uniform.
7. Following each performance, you must inspect your uniform for any marks, damage, or wear and tear. If there is something, you must notify a staff member immediately. They will provide instructions on how to repair it.
8. Hair color is not to change once the competition and performance season has begun.
9. Nail extensions or fake nails are not to be worn for the performer's safety.
10. **Uniforms are generally fragile and will have specific laundry instructions. Uniforms will be laundered at the end of each season before they are returned.**

### **Academic & Physical Eligibility**

All students must meet the Oakton High School requirements to be eligible for participation in a sport. All students must have a current physical on file with the activities office.

All students must also complete:

1. Emergency medical contact form
2. Medical (if necessary)
3. Color Guard Agreement
4. All forms required for marching band registration

### **Staff**

Our experience in color guard gives us the skills to plan, rehearse, and perform fall color guard activities. The staff's overall goal is to instruct students in developing physical skills and positive attitudes for success in the color guard program and their lives. To facilitate an open relationship among staff, parents/guardians, and members, we have included this section, which outlines the staff's responsibilities.

The staff's duties include:

- General Supervision:
  - Administer the color guard program.
  - Plan and run appropriate rehearsals to prepare for upcoming competitions.
  - Plan and run the audition process for each season.
  - Ensure students adhere to the behavior code as described in the handbook.
  - Discipline members, as outlined in the handbook.
  - Assign duties and responsibilities to color guard captains & members and evaluate their performance of these duties.
- Technical Program & Show:
  - Establish clear goals at the beginning of each season for individual members and the color guard.
  - Develop a technical or “basics” program that provides the tools needed to achieve the current show's vocabulary.
  - Design a show at an appropriate level for maximum achievement.

- Order uniforms and equipment for each season.
- Write work, including flag, rifle, saber, and movement, as required to fill the current season's show and in line with the color guard's ability level.
- Ensure that the vocabulary and work in the show is in line with the current technical program.
- Constantly develop the technical program and the show vocabulary to allow the membership to achieve excellence at their current competitive level and within their abilities.
- Administrative Tasks:
  - Prepare and publish the current season's handbook.
  - Confirm that all members have turned in a current, signed handbook & agreement.
  - Confirm that all members have a physical on file and an emergency medical form signed by a parent.
  - Communicate rehearsal and performance schedules to members and parents
  - Oversee that the correct forms for all after-school group activities are submitted.

### Contacting Staff Members

Guard Instructor: Mr. Malcolm Wood, [awood1@fcps.edu](mailto:awood1@fcps.edu)

Band Director: Jamie VanValkenburg, [jgvanvalkenb@fcps.edu](mailto:jgvanvalkenb@fcps.edu)

E-mail is always the best way to contact us. You are also welcome to speak with us before or after rehearsal.

### **Student Leadership**

At the end of each school year, the band program accepts applications from those students who are interested in being part of the Band Leadership for the upcoming year. Our leadership students are notified at the Band Banquet in June that they will be on the leadership team the following year. As a member of the band leadership, the guard leadership must fulfill any leadership team duties assigned by the band director, staff, or drum major(s) during the fall marching band season. Guard leadership responsibilities are the same for both Fall and Winter seasons and include, but are not limited to:

- Leading stretches,
- Assisting the staff (in a private setting) in identifying problem areas or concerns within the show/work,
- Encouraging all team members to achieve their full potential by providing one-on-one assistance to those members who are struggling and,
- Being an example to other members of the color guard.

### **Parent/Guardian Volunteers**

Engaged parents are part of the success of the program. We need a variety of parent/guardian volunteers. These volunteers do the following:

- Drive students to competitions

- Chaperone students
- Operate vending booth at competitions if applicable
- Transport floor/props to and from competitions
- Take videos/photos of the students
- Organize orders for t-shirts, Oakton CG bags, Oakton CG jackets
- Represent color guard interests and support music programs at OHS at Oakton Band Boosters meetings
- Send email updates to other parents
- Take measurements and alter uniforms
- Take inventory of uniforms, flags, and if possible, arrange for these items to be resold
- Helping students set up before the show by unfolding the floor and moving props

Contact the guard instructor for how to volunteer. We need the support of all our volunteers to succeed! Volunteers make our program run and they are just as important as our performers and should be treated as such.

## **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

Each member will be responsible for paying all pay-to-play costs. Additionally, the color guard may decide, as a group, to purchase additional personal equipment (such as bags, jackets, t-shirts, etc.), these costs will be communicated to the member and his or her parents/guardians in a timely fashion and will be payable directly to the vendor. Fundraising through the band booster organization is available to guard members to offset the pay-to-play costs of participating in both winter and fall guard. We also do group fundraising to support the Band and Color/Winter Guard.

The marching band sets fees for the fall season. Please see the band boosters for the financial obligation.

Fees pay for uniforms, flags, rifles, sabers, equipment maintenance, show design, instructor fees, competition registration, and other miscellaneous costs.

### **First-time performers:**

For new students, several other items contribute to the spirit and identity of the Oakton HS Color Guard. These items are required for purchase:

|        |      |
|--------|------|
| Jacket | \$75 |
| Bag    | \$45 |

### **Returning performers:**

Embroidery is \$13.

Gloves are optional. If you choose to purchase gloves, performance gloves must be nude/black in color. Gloves will be required for spinning upper-level weapons for the safety of our members. Ask fellow members or staff for recommendations if needed. Knee pads are highly recommended.

### **Incidental Purchases**

Other items required for participation, but not purchased by the group, will need to be purchased on an individual basis. We have attempted to create a list of those items below for your convenience. Not all of these items will be required, and some are strictly optional.

- Appropriate undergarments for the uniform
- Make-up as dictated by the show design and the staff members
- Hair styling products as dictated by the show design and staff members

#### Fundraisers

All members will be required to participate in marching band fundraisers as dictated by band policy. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

**FINANCIAL AID IS AVAILABLE! PLEASE CONTACT [awood1@fcps.edu](mailto:awood1@fcps.edu) IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY IN PAYING THE FEES**

## SCHEDULE

The schedule for rehearsals must be flexible to accommodate instructor and student availability. The most accurate schedule is linked [here](#). Weekly schedule updates will be posted in the Schoology.

### **THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE IS NOT FINAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE!**

Winter Guard Rehearses Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the afternoon/evenings.  
There are competitions and camps on some Saturdays that members are required to attend as well.

An exact schedule will be posted to the Schoology closer to the start of the season.

# **OAKTON HIGH SCHOOL COLOR GUARD AGREEMENT**

## **HANDBOOK IS LOCATED AT: [OAKTONBANDS.ORG/GUARD](http://OAKTONBANDS.ORG/GUARD)**

### **Student Agreement**

I have read and understand the information presented in the OHS Color Guard Handbook located on the OaktonBands.org website. By signing below, I agree to abide by the guidelines listed herein. I acknowledge that by signing below, I am making a commitment, not only to myself but to the other members of the color guard. My fellow members will depend on me to attend all rehearsals and performances, be prepared for rehearsal, and meet all the other obligations outlined in the handbook. I understand that if I am unable to or choose to work or act in a contrary manner to the standards and expectations listed in the handbook, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, which may include my being removed from the team.

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Print Student Name

Signature

Date

### **Parent/Guardian Agreement**

I have read and understand the information presented in the OHS Fall Color Guard Handbook. By signing below, I agree to support the guidelines listed herein. I acknowledge that if my student does not follow these guidelines he or she will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action which may include being removed from the team. I also agree to pay the full cost outlined in the pay-to-play costs section of the handbook as determined by the Oakton High School Band Boosters. I understand active and engaged parents are part of the success of the program.

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Print Parent/Guardian Name

Signature

Date

### **Special Notes:**

- If you do not return a signed copy of this form with both your signature and your parent/guardian's signature, you will not be allowed to participate in rehearsal.