

What's Winterguard?

Winter Guard is an indoor (gym or arena) activity which involves dance, flag work, rifle work, and sabre work set to edited recorded music. Performances utilize innovative costuming, colored floor tarps and, sometimes, theatrical backdrops ingeniously designed to be set up and broken down in seconds.

The movement is highly stylized and largely influenced by dance. Choreographers and designers often help meld the music, equipment work, and movement. Some units use expressive make-up and facial accents to convey their show theme. Elaborate props - which must be able to be assembled and disassembled rapidly to fulfill rigid competition time requirements - and colored or painted vinyl floor tarps are frequently used to transform the gym floor into a temporary stage. Props, flats, and floors, along with the musical score and equipment routines, are used to take the audience to another place or time. Show music range from classical, pop, movie soundtracks to the rock group Queen though a new copyright rule has been imposed stating that if music is copyrighted, a group must have permission from the holders of the copyright in order to use that music.

Organizations

WGI - Winterguard International	(www.wgi.org)
NTCA - North Texas Colorguard Association Dallas/Fort Worth, TX	(www.ntca-wgi.org)
TECA - Texas Education Color Guard Association San Antonio, TX	(www.go-teca.org/)
TCGC - Texas Color Guard Circuit Austin & Houston, TX	(www.texascolorguardcircuit.org)

What's Winterguard?

The WGI and NTCA have developed classes based on the talent level of the performers and designers. (School enrollment size is not considered for class designation.) In this way, a unit will compete against other units with similar skills, abilities and experience.

Winterguard units will be classified by WGI standards. It is up to the instructors to decide what class best suits their unit's ability and growth at the beginning of the season.

The classes are divided into 2 major categories:

- Scholastic - members are from the same school
- or
- Independent - members are not affiliated with any particular school.

	Scholastic	Independents
The NTCA has the following classes:	Cadet Novice Regional A (RA) Scholastic AAA (SAAA) Scholastic AA (SAA) Scholastic A (SA) Scholastic Open (SO)	Independent A (IA) Independent Open (IO) Independent World (IW)

Cadet (not used by WGI)

- This class is exclusively for elementary and junior high guards (excluding 9th grade members). Units competing in the classification will be judged using the WGI Regional A Class criteria and sheets.
- This class is designed to expose the students to the activity, promote beginning level techniques and develop individual training.

Timing: minimum performance time - 2 ½
 minimum equipment time - 2 minutes
 maximum performance time - 3 ½ minutes
 interval between performances - at least 7 minutes.

Novice (not used by WGI)

- Units with members from the same high school and/or middle school feeders, and have under one year of experience. A guard should enter this class only one time (i.e., groups who competed in novice class last year should now compete in a Regional A or Scholastic AAA class).
- This class is for first year guards, units with 80% 9th graders, and junior high schools with 9th grade members. Equipment and movement will focus on the training and achievement of the most simple beginning skills. Groups may choose to do a standstill show.
- The purpose of this class is to help the performers grow in the very elementary principles and efforts in handling equipment and movement. The concept of layered skills will probably not exist. Shows will likely “set, move & spin”, presenting one skill at a time.

Timing: minimum performance time - 3 minutes
 minimum equipment time - 3 minutes
 maximum performance time - 4 minutes
 interval between performances - at least 7 minutes

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Regional A (Scholastic Regional A “RA”) (not used by WGI)

- Units with members from the same high school and/or middle school feeders, with members of beginning to intermediate levels of ability, and approximately 1-3 years of experience. Groups in this class plan to compete locally.
- Equipment and movement will focus on the training and achievement of the most simple beginning skills.
- The purpose of this class is to help the performers grow in the very elementary principles and efforts in handling equipment and movement. The concept of layered skills will probably not exist. Shows will likely “set, move & spin”, presenting one skill at a time.
- Units competing in this classification will be judged using the WGI Regional A Class criteria and sheets.

Timing: minimum performance time - 3 minutes
minimum equipment time - 3 minutes
maximum performance time - 4 minutes
interval between performances - at least 7 minutes

Scholastic AAA (not used by WGI)

- Equipment and movement will focus on the training and achievement of the basic skills.
- Tosses use a limited variety of releases and catch points and typically take place from a stationary position. Dimensionality is limited and phrases are often very short with much built-in recovery time.
- Movement is mostly demonstrated by moving from place to place. There is usage of simple turns and leaps and performers occasionally explore level changes around the body. The triad is never completely used with elements most often being presented singularly and occasionally presented two at a time.
- Performer role, character, and emotional development is evident but at a basic level with minimal changes.
- Units competing in this classification will be judged using the WGI A Class criteria and sheets.

Timing: (see 'A' class)

Scholastic AA (not used by WGI)

- Equipment and movement will focus on the training and achievement of the basic skills but with more variety than the Scholastic AAA units.
- Tosses will begin to display more variety of releases and catch points. There is more exploration of basic dimensionality of equipment. Some layering of efforts should begin to occur. Phrase length is still primarily short (16 to 24 counts) with occasional longer phrases (24 to 36 counts) and recovery time is still apparent.
- The movement range of dynamic qualities is broadening. There is increasing usage of two elements of the triad simultaneously with occasional use of all three. The concept shows a greater use of artistic effort and a variety of methods of creating effect.
- Characterization is more developed and changes in the emotional character are beginning to be explored. Units in this classification will be judged using the WGI A Class criteria and sheets.

Timing: (see 'A' class)

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A (Scholastic A "SA"/ Independent A "IA")

- These are the units who customarily compete at a national level of Scholastic A Class within WGI.
- Guards in this area are at a level where members and staff have a complete understanding of the basic principles of performance and design.
- Units here may also occasionally explore more intermediate concepts and encourage performers and designers to broaden their skills. Units competing in this classification will be judged using the WGI A Class criteria and sheets. Units will be encouraged to maximize the achievement of these criteria.
- Independent A has an age limit of 22 years old.

Timing for all "A" classes: minimum performance time - 4 minutes
 minimum equipment time - 3 ½ minutes
 maximum performance time - 5 ½ minutes
 interval between performances - 8 minutes

Open (Scholastic Open "SO"/ Independent Open "IO")

- This class is for a highly competitive unit, which is too advanced to find any competition in the Scholastic A Classes, but is not ready for the demands of Scholastic World Class.
- Guards in this area have a greater experience level. Both staff and performers have the talent to grow beyond the basics, exploring a higher level of design and performance techniques.
- Units competing in this classification will be judged using the WGI Open Class criteria and sheets. To stay an Open Class competitor, units must stay within 15 points of the WGI Block score for corresponding week.
- Independent Open has an age limit of 22 years old.

Timing: minimum performance time - 4 minutes
 minimum equipment time - 3 ½ minutes
 maximum performance time - 6 ½ minutes
 interval between performances - at least 9 minutes

World (Scholastic World "SW"/ Independent World "IW")

- This class is for the most highly developed programs. This is the most advanced level of competition for guards with the student talent, design, staff, rehearsal time, and budget capabilities.
- The designation World Class indicates the unit is competitive on the national level.
- Students here will be challenged to expand their technical and performance base to achieve their fullest potential within programs that utilize advanced concepts of design. Units competing in this classification will be judged using the WGI World Class criteria and sheets. To stay a World Class competitor, units must stay within 15 points of the WGI Block score for the corresponding week.
- Independent World Class has no age limit.

Timing: minimum performance time - 4 minutes
 minimum equipment time - 3 ½ minutes
 maximum performance time 7 ½ minutes
 interval between performances - at least 10 minutes

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Practices

FMHS practices are held on various week nights and sometimes on Saturdays. Practices are usually held in one of the FMHS gyms and the FMHS Field House. If the FMHS facilities are unavailable, practice will be held at a nearby middle school gym.

Contests

FMHS competes, on average, in 10 contests within a season. FMHS competes in the NTCA (North Texas Colorguard Association - www.ntca-wgi.org) circuit as well as the WGI (Winter Guard International - www.wgi.org) contests.

Contests are generally held from January through early April with local circuits accounting for most of the competitions nationwide. WGI (Winter Guard International) sponsors widely attended Regional Championships leading to the national championship typically held in early-April. The NTCA conducts, at the end of the season, a Solo & Ensemble Championship and a Winterguard Championship.

Retreat: when scores and awards based on ranking are presented at the end of the competition.

Judging

Units are judged on the effect of the show's design and the aptitude of the members in movement and equipment work. Expectations and timing are different for the varying classes (explained below) of unit with longer shows and more stringent requirements as the units ascend to the highest class, "World Class." Competing guard units receive a score out of 100 based upon general effect, individual technique, and individual performance.

Each of the classifications (A, Open, & World) has its own judging criteria broken down into five captions; each having a separate judge.

They are:

1. Individual Analysis - Equipment

This judge critiques the performers on how they handle their equipment as well as crediting the designer on what they choreographed for the performers. So, they are judged on what they are given and how well they do what they have been given, but strictly relative to equipment (i.e. flag, rifle and saber).

2. Individual Analysis - Movement

This judge critiques the performers on how they move as well as crediting the designer on what they have choreographed for the performers. So, again they are judged on what they are given and how well they do what they have been given, but strictly relative to movement (i.e. dance, theatrics, gesture, anything to do with the body).

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3. Ensemble Analysis

This judge critiques all of the technical aspects of the program.

How well does the show flow?

How it is written to the music?

What has been designed and how it works or doesn't?

How are the performers executing the composition?

4. & 5. General Effect

These two judges look at the performance from an emotional standpoint.

How much entertainment value does the show have?

How well is the repertoire being performed?

This caption is very technical but is really based on the emotional aspects of a program be it in your face or intellectual.

The judges follow these criteria when judging a unit regardless of class. Just take the verbiage from each caption and apply it to beginner, intermediate or advanced qualities and that is pretty much how you come up with the 3 different point scales.

Solo & Ensembles Contests

NTCA has the following classes: Flag Solo

Weapon Solo (rifle & sabre)

Mixed Solo (flag, rifle & sabre)

Ensembles

Solo & Ensemble competitions are usually held on Saturday mornings but can, due to scheduling conflicts, be scheduled on Friday nights.

This class would be used for any individual who is currently enrolled in a public or private secondary school (NOTE: a person could be a member of an independent winterguard yet compete in a high school class solo if they are currently enrolled in high school).

In the event that there are not at least three entries in the weapons category, the weapons and mixed classifications will be combined. Ensembles will be defined as groups of two (2) to four (4) performers.

Timing: - minimum performance time is 1 & ½ minutes
- maximum performance time is 3 minutes
- interval between performances is at least 4 minutes.

Each class is judged by an individual judge.