

2023-2024 Hardin-Houston Local School Athletic Handbook



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Introduction and Expectations

Students at Hardin-Houston Local School are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities including our athletic teams. As team members, students will have the opportunity to learn and improve on skills associated with their respective sport, increase physical conditioning and strength, and work with others in **competitive** situations. Athletes are expected to follow the policies, rules, and guidelines of the school, coaches, Shelby County Athletic League, and Ohio High School Athletic Association. Athletes are expected to take seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing the school and community. Athletes will treat opponents with respect, respect the judgment of contest officials, and abide by contest rules. Athletes will not display behavior which is intended to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances. Athletes at Houston High School are not given special treatment, but they are held to a higher standard. If a student athlete fails to meet the expectations of a set forth in the handbook, it can result in disciplinary action and reduced playing time.

Philosophy

The Houston Athletic Department hopes to instill in its athletes through participation in its various sports programs a strong sense of community. The Houston Athletic Department strives to produce individuals who will be good citizens and be able to put the needs of all or others above themselves. The Houston Athletic Department makes very clear the fact that athletics is a competitive experience, and therefore, not all athletes receive the same participation opportunities in games and contests. This philosophy supports that athletics is a learning experience. All athletes, regardless of ability, will be afforded opportunities to develop certain skills and characteristics. While the administration at Houston takes great pride in winning, it does not condone “winning at any cost.” At all times, the athletic program must be conducted in such a way so as to justify it as an educational activity. Therefore, while being as competitive as possible on the playing field, we do so in such a way as to build and improve the following skills, traits and characteristics in our athletes: communication, cooperation, honesty, leadership, loyalty, organization, perseverance, self discipline, selflessness, sportsmanship, teamwork, time management, and work ethic.

Mandatory Preseason Meetings

The Ohio High School Athletic Association requires that a preseason meeting be held before each sports season. Furthermore, Houston High School has made these meetings mandatory for students to participate in athletics. The athlete and at least one legal guardian are required to attend one of these meetings to be eligible for their sport. The Mandatory Preseason material must be completed through the Final Forms System **prior** to participation in any practice, scrimmage, game etc.

Physical Examinations

All members of any team for Houston High School must pass a physical examination and return the required OHSAA form. The form must be signed by the student, his/her parent or guardian, and the examining physician. The completed form must be on file in the high school office **before** the student can participate in any practice, conditioning, or contest. Students who are late in completion of this requirement will jeopardize their eligibility to participate on a team. Physicals are valid for one calendar year. Physical forms can be printed from the school website.

Academic Eligibility

Following are the standards which must be met to maintain academic eligibility.

- All beginning seventh graders are eligible according to the OHSAA scholarship bylaw. After that, the fourth nine weeks of the previous year determines eligibility for the first nine weeks of the next year.

- Eligibility for each grading period (nine weeks) is determined by grades received the preceding grading period. Semester and yearly grades have no effect on eligibility.
- To be eligible, a student-athlete must be currently enrolled in a member school and have received passing grades in a minimum of **five** one-credit courses, or the equivalent, in the immediately preceding grading period. (Note: Students taking post-secondary options (college courses) must comply with these standards).
- For eligibility, summer school grades **may not** be used to substitute for failing grades received in the final grading period of the regular school year or for lack of enough courses taken the preceding grading period.

Students at Houston also have to earn a minimum of a 1.5 grade point average for the immediately preceding grading period in order to be eligible. Eligibility/ineligibility for grading period 1 starts with the beginning of the fall sports season.

Eligibility/ineligibility for grading periods 2, 3, and 4 will begin on the fifth school day of the quarter. The guidance counselor will make and distribute a list of students who are not eligible to participate in extracurricular activities for each nine weeks grading period.

Note: see Appendix A, p. 7, for Guidelines for Student Athletic Eligibility

Age Limitation

Grades 9 – 12: Once a student attains the age of 20, the student will no longer be eligible for interscholastic athletic competition notwithstanding where that 20th birthday falls in relation to the sports season.

Grades 7 – 8: If a student is 15 years of age prior to August 1, 2023, he/she is ineligible for junior high athletics during the 2023-24 school year. However, the student is eligible to participate in high school athletics as long as all other eligibility requirements are met.

Attendance at School

To participate in any athletic event, including practices, scrimmages, and contests, students must attend at least one-half day (4 periods) on the day of any scheduled activity. Students who have been assigned out-of-school suspensions will not be permitted to attend any athletic activity scheduled for that day. Any exceptions to this must be approved by school administration. Student athletes that participate in “skip days” or any other deliberate, unexcused absence from classes will be ineligible to participate in their respective sports until reinstated by the administration. Penalties for such actions will include a denial of athletic privileges. Dismissal from the team will be considered. The administration may review continuous excessive absences from school (excused & unexcused) for athletic eligibility. Possible disciplinary action for excessive absences may include denial of participation and dismissal from the team.

Attendance at Practices / Contests

Athletes are expected and required to attend all scheduled practices and contests of the team. Athletes should not miss practices or contests unless there are acceptable reasons or extenuating circumstances. Acceptable reasons for absences may include personal illness, death in the family, weddings, and court-appointed visitations for custody reasons and/or emergencies. Athletes must notify coaches in advance (if possible) when they are going to be absent. Absent students will be given more severe penalties if the reason given turns out to be false or a “sick” student is observed in public on a day he or she was absent. Reasons which are not acceptable for missing practices or contests may include (but are not limited to) work, cannot find a ride, not scheduled to compete, injury (students are expected to attend all practices and events while injured if possible), JO volleyball, AAU basketball, all-star cheerleading squads (or any other non-school sports teams or camps), being fitted for cheerleading uniform, being fitted for tuxedo, hair appointments, nail appointments, other prom related activities, hunting, open gym for another sport, etc. Student-athletes should understand that missing one practice or one game is a serious matter.

Families are encouraged not to plan vacations or other family activities during an athlete’s time to be committed to his/her team. Any absences from practices or contests can result in disciplinary action and reduced playing time. Unexcused absences will be treated in the following manner:

First unexcused absence: Warning, extra conditioning, possible reduction of playing time

Second unexcused absence: Denial of athletic privileges for one contest, extra conditioning, possible reduction of playing time after athletic privileges are reinstated.

Third unexcused absence: Dismissal from team

Note: Above listed penalties are minimum penalties. A longer denial of athletic privileges and dismissal from the team may be considered at any time depending on the nature of the offense. Punishment for students missing practices due to Out of School Suspensions will be handed down by the principal as part of the OSS punishment.

Parking

Athletes are required to park in the designated student parking lot while attending all practices and home contests. Parents picking up students from practice and games should park in designated parking spots. Please do not park in the bus parking zone, handicap areas or other areas not designated for parking. For away contests, students may park and parents may pick up students in the back parking lot (near the track).

Bus Transportation / Driving Vehicles

Athletes are required to ride the bus to all sporting events. Athletes are to remain at the event until its conclusion. Athletes are to ride the bus back to Houston after the event is over. Athletes may not ride home with parents unless there is a family

commitment or emergency. Parents must submit their desire to take their athlete from an event to the coach. If clarification is needed on whether or not the reason is permissible, the coach will contact the athletic director. Permission will not be authorized on the day of an event except for a family emergency. Athletes are never to drive themselves in any circumstances to or from events or ride with other students to or from events. In cases where it is impossible for a student to ride the bus, the student's parent, legal guardian, or a school employee must transport the student to or from the contest. When driving to or from practice or any other school event, it is unlawful for a student under the age of 17 to transport more than one non family member in his or her vehicle. Parents are to be responsible for picking up their children from athletic trips in a punctual manner. There will be no food or drink of any kind permitted on the bus. Everyone must remain seated and out of the aisle at all times. In situations where male and female teams share a bus, the teams must sit separately. Females will sit in the back of the bus. Males will sit in the front (or vice versa). When possible, there will be empty seats between the two teams. A coach or advisor will sit between the teams. Under no circumstances will male and female students be permitted to share a seat on the bus.

Behavior at Contests

Athletes are expected to behave in a manner that represents our school and community in a positive way. Athletes are expected to follow all contest rules. Athletes should demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times. Athletes should demonstrate hustle throughout the contest (i.e.- run on and off the field and court). In sports where it is required, uniforms should be tucked in completely at all times. Athletes are not to leave the bench area or field of play at any time during the contest. At no time should athletes leave the field to enter areas where spectators are present.

Locker Room and Bench Area / Team Tents

Locker room and bench areas in all sports (including baseball and softball) are off limits to anyone other than team and certain school personnel. No spectators should ever be in the locker room, bench or dugout area, or the tent area (track and cross country). Team members are not permitted to communicate with spectators during contests. Water and other supplies should be brought to the contest by athletes and coaches (not delivered to the bench by parents while the contest is going on). Parents are not permitted to coach their children from the stands or sidelines. Such behavior is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

Roster Reduction / Cutting

In some circumstances, students may have to be cut from teams. The reasons for cutting could include (but are not limited to) limited number of roster spaces, student's ability, behavior, attitude, etc. If cutting is necessary, the coach of the team will have the final say based on observations of tryouts, initial practices, and past experiences with the student.

Chain of Command

Whenever there are any questions or concerns about athletics at Houston High School, they should be addressed to the appropriate person. The athletic chain of command is as follows: (1) coach of the team which is in question; (2) head coach of that sport (if different); (3) athletic director; (4) principal; and (5) superintendent.

Cheerleading

Cheerleading is considered a sport at Houston High School and is treated as such. Cheerleaders are expected to follow all rules established by the Houston High School Athletic Department and the cheerleading advisors. Students who want to tryout for cheerleading must first be academically eligible. Tryouts will be held as near as possible to the conclusion of the winter sports season. Tryouts will be conducted to complete the following squads of cheerleaders: varsity, junior varsity, eighth grade, and seventh grade. There will be 12 members on the high school cheerleading squad. Girls in grades eight through 11 are eligible to try out for the high school squads. Girls in grade six are eligible to try out for the seventh grade squad. Girls in grade seven are eligible to try out for the eighth grade squad. The evaluation of students for the cheerleading squads will be based on tryouts, teacher evaluations, a sport specific test, attitude, and coaches' decisions. During the tryouts, the students will be observed and evaluated by the coach. The candidates for cheerleading must attend a series of training clinics before the tryouts are held. Students in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11 who receive the top twelve point totals will be assigned to the high school squad. If there are not enough athletes to fill one of the junior high teams, the spots may be filled with athletes from the other grade-if so determined by the advisor(s), along with the athletic director.

NOTE: Cheerleaders are the only athletes that are permitted to wear jewelry at contests and practice. They are allowed to wear one stud earring in the lobe of each ear. No other jewelry is permitted. Fingernail polish may be red, white, silver and/or clear. No other colors will be worn during contests and pictures. When traveling to away games, cheerleaders are to dress appropriately before and after the games. Travel suits or another form of appropriate dress should be worn. The cheerleading uniform should not be worn when traveling (unless it is under the travel suit and not visible).

NOTE: Due to the fact that cheerleading uniforms become the property of the student, cheerleaders must pay for the entire cost of their uniforms.

Uniforms / Dress

Students who represent Houston High School as members of its athletic teams may be issued uniforms, warm-ups, and practice gear which are owned and provided by the school. Money to purchase these items comes from the athletic department, athletic boosters, and in some cases, private donations. Students are expected to take care of these items. Students will bring the correct uniform and warm-ups when competing. Uniforms and warm-ups are only to be worn at the contest when the athlete is competing. Uniforms and warm-ups are not to be worn at school, in public, or anywhere other than athletic contests where the

athlete is competing. Exceptions may be made on special days at school with the approval of the coach and athletic director. When the season is completed, school-owned uniforms, warm-ups, and practice gear must be returned or the cost of the items will be added to the school fees of the student. In some cases, students may be requested to purchase a part of the school uniform which may include coordinated shirts, socks, etc. Students will keep any parts of the uniform which they purchase. Some sports teams at Houston High School issue practice uniforms. These practice uniforms are to be worn at all practices unless the coach specifies otherwise. Practice uniforms are to be taken care of and turned in at the end of the season. Students in sports that do not have practice uniforms are expected to dress appropriately for their sports. Earrings, jewelry and other items that are prohibited during contests are not allowed to be worn during practice. Athletes are to dress nicely when representing the school at contests. A high standard of dress will be required of the athletes.

Athletic Pictures

Houston High School athletes will be required to attend a team photo day. Team and individual photos will be taken. These pictures may appear in newspapers, in our programs, on our school website, etc. Team and individual pictures are meant to be a representation of the athlete in his or her team uniform. The dress code that is to be followed at contests will be followed during team and individual pictures. Therefore, no jewelry (unless it is the approved jewelry for cheerleaders) will be worn during the pictures. In some cases, athletes are required to wear their hair in a specified manner. The final decision of what is appropriate and inappropriate dress will be left up to the coach and athletic director.

NOTE: These photos may be purchased by the student or parents if they wish. It is not required that any photos are purchased.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Athletes are not permitted to use or possess any illegal drugs. Furthermore, athletes are not allowed to use or possess any form of alcohol or tobacco. Athletes should not be at parties where people under the legal age are consuming alcohol or using tobacco. Athletes should not be in vehicles where underage people are using tobacco or alcohol. Athletes should not be in or around any situation where illegal drugs are present. Any student who uses or possesses alcohol, tobacco, or drugs will be subject to the following denial of athletic privileges:

- 1st Offense Denial of athletic privileges from team contests (approximately ¼ of the season)
Baseball 6, Basketball 5, Cheerleading 5, Cross Country 3, Golf 4, Softball 6, Track 3, Volleyball 5,
- 2nd Offense Dismissal from team

Other Guidelines and Rules

1. Student-athletes who have repeated violations of rules and/or the athletic code may be subject to a denial of athletic privileges from all athletic teams for up to one calendar year.
2. If a major rules violation occurs at or near the end of a season, the penalty would be carried over to the next sport in which the student-athlete participates.
3. If a student-athlete is dismissed from a team, or if he/she quits a team during the season, he/she is not eligible to join another team until the season for the current team is complete. This includes any conditioning or pre-season work for the next sport. Students will be allowed to start another sport if there are extenuating circumstances approved by the principal and athletic director.
4. The appeals process for student-athletes is to go in this order: 1) Athletic Director 2) Principal 3) Superintendent

Awards

Members of athletic teams will be recognized for their efforts and achievements during each sports season. High school students and their parents will be invited to attend athletic recognition programs which will be scheduled after the completion of the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Junior high students will be-recognized at the all-school awards assembly. Following is a description of the awards and/or recognition for Houston Wildcat student-athletes:

Junior High Junior high student-athletes will be eligible for a certificate upon successful completion of each junior high season.

Freshmen Freshmen (or any first-time high school participant) student-athletes will be eligible for a set of numerals with their year of graduation upon successful completion of their first high school season. Freshmen student-athletes will be eligible for a certificate upon successful completion of each freshman season.

Junior Varsity Junior varsity team student-athletes will be eligible for a certificate upon successful completion of each junior varsity season.

Varsity Varsity team student-athletes will be eligible for a varsity letter, chevron, and a certificate upon successful completion of their first varsity season in a sport if they meet the established criteria for earning a varsity letter (see below). Members of varsity teams who do not meet the established criteria for earning a letter will receive a certificate. Second-year varsity letter winners will be eligible for a paperweight, a chevron, and a certificate. Third-year varsity letter winners will be eligible for a plaque, a chevron, and a certificate. Fourth-year varsity letter winners will be eligible for a trophy, a chevron, and a certificate.

Criteria for Earning Letters

BASEBALL A team member (unless a pitcher) must play in a minimum of ½ of the total innings. A pitcher must play in a minimum of ½ of the league games.

BASKETBALL	A team member must play in a minimum of ½ of the total quarters OR ¾ of the games.
CHEERLEADING	A team member must complete the season as a member in good standing of the varsity cheerleading squad and have been a varsity cheerleader for ¾ of the contests.
CROSS COUNTRY	Team member must finish as one of Houston’s top 7 runners in a minimum of 1/3 of the team meets and participate in 75% of the meets. Multi-Sport Athlete Eligibility, participate in all eligible meets and must be a top 5 Houston team runner in 50% of all meets attended.
GOLF	Team member must score in a minimum of ½ of the matches played (minimum of 5) OR play in a minimum of ¾ of the matches.
SOFTBALL	Team member (unless pitcher) must play in a minimum of ½ the total innings. Pitcher must play in minimum of ½ the league games.
TRACK	Team member must average a minimum of ¾ of a point per meet and participate in 75% of the meets. Multi-Sport Athlete Eligibility, participate in all eligible meets and must average a minimum of 1.5 pts per meet attended.
VOLLEYBALL	A team member must play in a minimum of ½ of the games OR ¾ of the matches.

NOTE: Seniors in good standing on a team will automatically earn a varsity letter. In the case of injury, any student athlete will receive a letter if it is unquestionable that he or she would have earned the letter if the injury hadn’t occurred.

Special Awards

BASEBALL	Offensive Award, Defensive Award, Wildcat Award
BASKETBALL	Offensive Award, Defensive Award, Rebounding Award, Wildcat Award
CHEERLEADING	Spirit Award, Wildcat Award
CROSS COUNTRY	Top Runner, Most Improved Runner, Wildcat Award
GOLF	Low Stroke Average, Most Improved Player, Wildcat Award
SOFTBALL	Offensive Award, Defensive Award, Wildcat Award
TRACK	Most Points in Track Events, Most Points in Field Events, Wildcat Award
VOLLEYBALL	Offensive Award, Defensive Award, Wildcat Award

NOTE: Wildcat Award is given to a deserving team member who displays outstanding attitude, desire, dedication, effort, leadership, and sportsmanship.

NOTE: A player is not eligible for any recognition or award if he/she does not complete a season due to academic ineligibility, dismissal from the team for any reason, or quitting the team.

Scholar Athlete / Booster Scholarship

One senior boy and one senior girl will receive the \$250 Scholar Athlete Award/Houston Athletic Boosters Scholarship at graduation. To be eligible for the award, a student must meet all of the following requirements:

- 1) Must have at least a 2.5 accumulative grade point average;
- 2) Must have lettered in a minimum of two sports at the varsity level;
- 3) Must display outstanding attitude, desire, dedication, effort, leadership, and sportsmanship.

The winners of this award will be selected by the varsity coaches, athletic director, guidance counselor, principal, and superintendent. The award winners will be selected using the following criteria in this order:

- 1) Athletic Achievement. Must have lettered in a minimum of two sports at the varsity level.
- 2) Academic Achievement (Minimum 2.5 GPA)
- 3) Leadership
- 4) Character
- 5) Need

Duration of Season

Student athletes will be expected to follow all rules in the Houston High School Athletic Handbook and all rules of their individual sports from the first day of official practice of that sport until the completion of the season. **The season is considered complete when the coach’s responsibility of supervision of athletes is over after the last contest is completed.** Upon the completion of any athletic season, an athlete may take up to one week (7 days) off prior to reporting to the next immediate ensuing season.

Weight Room

The weight room is opened up to all students at scheduled times. Coaches may also schedule times for their teams to have exclusive access to the weight room. Weight training and conditioning can be very beneficial to all athletes if done consistently and with proper form. No students are allowed in the weight room at Houston High School unless a certified, board approved monitor or coach is in the weight room with them. Proper attire must be worn when in the weight room. This includes closed-toed tennis shoes. Additional weight room rules are posted in the weight room.

Supervision of Students

The safety of student athletes is of the utmost concern of the administration and athletic department of Houston High School. Students at all contests and practices must be supervised by a certified, board approved coach. Coaches are not certified until

they have completed the following steps: Background Check, Pupil Activity Validation four-hour class (first aid), CPR training, Sudden Cardiac Arrest training, Coach Education Classes (Fundamental of Coaching and Concussion) required by the OHSAA and school board approval. Anyone, including parents, are not allowed to supervise students unless all of these requirements have been met. Students while at school must remain in supervised areas. If supervision cannot be provided, students are not allowed to remain at school.

Locker Room Use

Athletes are required to use the locker room or bathroom in the big gym for the purpose of changing clothes for practice. Students must also store all belongings in the locker rooms / bathrooms in the big gym. Bathrooms in the school building should not be used for this purpose. Students are reminded to lock valuable items in a safe place. Coaches can assist with this when necessary.

Multiple-Sport Athletes

Multiple-sport athletes are defined as athletes that participate in two sports in the same season (i.e.- baseball and track). In order to be a multiple-sport athlete, the following guidelines must be adhered to and the following criteria must be met. The athlete must petition the athletic director at least two weeks prior to the start of official practice. The athlete must desire to excel in both sports. The athlete must have an excellent behavior record. The athlete must have an excellent attendance record. A meeting must be scheduled between the athlete, at least one parent, the athletic director and all coaches involved. The coaches must be able to work out a plan where the athlete will not miss practice time. This means the coach may have to stay late to allow the athlete to practice. The athlete will not be able to practice unsupervised or during the school day. The athlete must declare a primary sport that takes priority when there are contests on the same day. An athlete will always be required to declare a team sport as a priority over an individual sport. Individual sports are those sports where an athlete can advance in the tournament without his or her team (cross country, golf and track). In the case where there is an individual competition with team implications, the athletic director will serve as the mediator of that conflict and work with the coaches to determine the sport of preference for that instance. Athletes can compete in two sports on the same day (i.e. baseball and track). The athlete will never be able to drive him or herself to events. Either school personnel or a parent will have to transport the student. A contract will be developed and signed by all parties notifying them of all conditions the athlete and coaches must follow in order for the athlete to participate in two sports.

Certified Athletic Trainer

Wilson Memorial Sports Medicine will be providing Houston High School with a certified athletic trainer at no cost to the school to work with our high school athletes. The coaches and our trainer are responsible for the physical well being of our athletes. The trainer will be there to treat injuries and to help rehabilitate athletes that have been injured. If an athlete is injured at practice or a game, the parents may be notified by the trainer or the head coach. Benign bumps, bruises and sprains will not require the coach or trainer to notify the parents. However, if an injury or condition meets any of the following criteria, the coach or trainer will notify the parents.

- 1) The injury or condition is considered serious.
- 2) The injury is a head or neck injury or a concussion.
- 3) The injury or condition requires observation.
- 4) The injury or condition could lead to reduced playing time.
- 5) The injury or condition causes concern for the coach or trainer for any reason (repeated injury, mysterious injury or condition, etc.)

The final decision for when an athlete is ready to return to practice or competition will be made in conjunction between the coach and trainer. They may and will consider input from any medical doctor. If a medical doctor determines that an athlete needs to be removed from a sport for a set amount of time, the coach and trainer cannot let that athlete return until the amount of time is over. Once a medical doctor clears an athlete to return to play, it is still the responsibility of the trainer and coach to determine when the athlete is ready to be 100% active in practice or games.

The 50% Transfer Rule

Maximum allowable contests in all OHSAA-recognized sports and formula for determining eligibility under the 50% transfer consequence

Sport	Maximum # of Contests as per the OHSAA Board	Transfer Student Eligible Up To
Baseball	27 Games	Game 13
Basketball (Boys and Girls)	22 Games	Game 11
Cross Country (Boys and Girls)	16 Meets	Meet 8
Golf	16 Matches	Match 8
Softball	27 Games	Game 13
Swimming	16 Meets	Meet 8
Track and Field (Boys and Girls)	16 Meets	Meet 8
Volleyball	22 Matches	Match 11

Houston High School Athletic Contract

We have received, read, and understand the contents of the Houston High School Athletic Handbook. We agree that the student athlete who has signed below will follow and abide by all of the rules and regulations which are contained in the Houston High School Athletic Handbook. We understand that violating any rules set forth in the handbook can result in disciplinary action including warnings, extra conditioning, denial of athletic privileges, and dismissal from the team.

Please Print and Sign names below. Detach this page from the handbook and return this page only to your coach. Keep the handbook to be used as a reference throughout the season.

Print Student Name: _____

Student's Signature

Date

Print Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date