

“Your School Mascot, 2.0”

Reboot your mascot by creating a mascot program that will make your school and community proud

Ruben Martinez, ASB Advisor

Steele Canyon Charter High School, Spring Valley, CA - rmartinez@schscougars.org / (619) 315-9471

Michelle Krug, Mascot Operations

Steele Canyon Charter High School, Spring Valley, CA - michellekrug0094@gmail.com

The Basics

Basic Guidelines for Mascots

1. Be a positive representative of school spirit
2. Know the rules applying to mascots according to your state's/region's athletic governing body (CIF in California)
3. Meet the opposing team's mascot ahead of time at sporting events to discuss any mascot interaction. Play it smart, keep it fun, and keep it positive!
4. **NEVER** be distracting during the National Anthem
5. **NEVER** dress or undress in front of crowds. It's unprofessional to break character!
6. **NEVER** talk in costume
7. **NEVER** degrade the officials
8. Only use polite and appropriate gestures. Keep it appropriate!
9. Only encourage the crowd to behave in a positive and sportsman-like manner
10. Develop a positive relationship with on-campus groups like your cheer squad, your band, your choir, your spirit section, your school administration, and student leadership (if not part of it), as they are amazing allies when performing at games, rallies, etc.
11. Keep your mascot in constant motion. Someone is always watching!
12. Keep your mascot players in the best shape possible!!

Safety

Playing a mascot requires endurance. In a mascot suit, it can get about 10°F-20°F warmer than it is outside, not to mention that the suit can be heavy. Be aware of the following when asking mascot players to perform:

- Make sure they drink plenty of water and eat a light snack before a performance
- Keep track of how long they are performing. Beginners should start at 15 minutes and slowly work their way up to 30 minutes. Players should not be in a heavy mascot suit longer than 45 minutes
- Give mascot players as long of a break as possible before returning to the appearance
- Plan in advance where and when players can “switch” and/or take a break during an appearance

Importance of a Handler

Being in a mascot suit limits a student's ability to move and react, as well as limits vision.

Handlers are the “eyes-and-ears” of the mascot. Without them they are essentially sending a student to an appearance “blind,” and potentially into a dangerous situation.

The handler and the student in the mascot suit should create a break signal, much like “tapping out,” so that the player can inform handlers when it's time to stop. Handlers should always have a bag with them that contains water, some towels, a "barf bag" (if necessary). A brush to touch up the suit before it's time to make an appearance is also a good idea.

Respect the Suit

Clean your mascot suit regularly. Hang it to dry once it's worn. Get a fan for it, if necessary. Keep the suit out of sight when taken apart. Invest in a transport bag, such as hockey gear bags with wheels, to transport the mascot gear safely to appearances.

Make a commitment to your school's mascot gear. If any pieces fall into disrepair, get them fixed. If your suit does not have feet, wear tennis shoes that are at least the same color. If your suit lacks gloves, wear some winter gloves that are the same color. Avoid showing students skin because the mystery will be blown!

Want to enhance your mascot suit? Have fun outfits made that can be worn for certain seasons or events, i.e., a football jersey, basketball jersey, Santa Claus suit, Hawaiian shirt, ghost outfit (big white sheet with holes cut out for the eyes, cap and gown, etc.

The Next Level

Why Are Mascots Important?

When looking at a mascot program it's always a good idea to step back and remember why mascots are important. They are/will...

- symbols of school spirit on campus and in the community.
- create a goodwill ambassador for the school
- help keep school traditions alive
- relate to the feelings of the audience through characterization and improvisation
- a selling tool for your school and a marketing tool for merchandising
- a source of entertainment and amusement for children young AND old
- a rallying point

Establish The Character

What is your mascot's character most like? A goofball? Mischievous? Childlike? A dancer? Like an actor establishing a character on stage or on screen, establishing some basic character traits gives your mascot "life," making it more fun and much easier for your mascot to perform.

Limit Who Knows Who's In the Suit

The best way to create a sense of identity for your mascot is to limit the amount of people who know the true identity of the person inside. Why...? Simple...

Students playing mascots are no longer themselves - they turn into the mascot's character. The way they act will no longer reflect the person they are. The only way to make that transformation into your mascot is for people to not know who's in the suit. Some of the best students who step up to be your mascot are also some of the shyest kids on campus. Don't scare them off by telling everyone who's in the suit.

Keeping the identity of the student playing your mascot a secret creates an air of mystery and childlike awe. It works for Disneyland and it'll work for your school.

You probably won't be fired from student leadership and/or your mascot program if you "spill the beans" about who's in the suit. Just know that keeping it a mystery creates a more professional and fun setting for your mascot program if the student in the suit stays a nameless figure in the suit.

Train the Mascot Players to Be Pros

- Have a game plan prepared in advance for what the mascot will do at all appearances. Proper preparation and a professional attitude creates a sense of respect and pride for the mascot
- As a part of being prepared, be sure to meet with the people in charge of the event where your mascot is appearing. Get all the details and instructions your mascot needs to do a great job
- Reach out to mascot programs from other high schools, colleges/universities, and professional sports teams. You'll be surprised at how much other mascot teams want to help and share what they know
- If needed, train more players, but keep the team small - no more than 8
- Don't make it something that just anyone can do. Offer the opportunity to students who show TONS of school spirit, a STRONG work ethic, as well as to students who are fairly fit to perform
- Starting from the beginning? Begin implementing a professional approach as soon as possible. It doesn't matter if your mascot suit is "fancy" or not. You have to start somewhere, so start from the beginning! :-)
- Mascots are a big deal! There are awards for Mascot of the year pro sports, as well as job opportunities at colleges and in professional sports organizations. But at the end of the day, mascots tend to be the first thing kids of all ages will gravitate towards

Skits

You want your mascot to be awesome and gain a following? You gotta bring it! Go online, look up some funny skit ideas, and try them out during assemblies and halftime shows. It may be helpful to get some expertise from other mascot teams, your school's dance team, or simply ask a trusted mascot team member to help you get some moves. And of course, REHEARSE, REHEARSE, REHEARSE! :-)

Marketing

Help pay for your mascot program by creating a logo that you can use to put on gear, stickers, pennants, banners, cups, plush dolls, and anything else that you can sell to make money for your mascot program. It's fun and it will increase your mascot's presence on and off campus.