



Our Mission:

To utilize *GroomTeam USA, Inc.*® as a vehicle to encourage continued education, growth, pride and the competitive spirit within the pet styling industry.

GroomTeam USA, Inc.® is a non-profit organization which encourages professional pet stylists in this country to maximize their grooming education and skills and offers them the opportunity to represent the United States of America at World Team Competitions. Team selection is based on points accumulated at various GroomTeam USA, Inc.® sanctioned contests held throughout the country over a two-year period. GroomTeam USA, Inc.® sends the top point earners as a team, to compete at the World Team Championships.

GroomTeam USA, Inc.® is entirely funded through generous donations from within the pet styling industry including major corporate sponsors, auctions held at shows and merchandise sales. The Board of Directors, Officers, Associates and many helpers, all volunteer their time. The concept of GroomTeam USA, Inc.® was founded in 1987. Due to the beliefs, the potential and cooperation of US pet stylists and our supporters, GroomTeam USA, Inc.® has thrived over the years.

Definitions

GroomTeam USA, Inc.® will hereafter be referred to as *GT USA*

Competitor – Any person who enters into a grooming competition where *GroomTeam USA, Inc.®* points are to be awarded.

Board of Directors and Officers – A group of individuals conducting the business of *GroomTeam USA, Inc.®* as described in the Bylaws set forth by the organization.

GroomTeam USA, Inc.® Member – Board member, Officer, Coordinator, Representative or a competitive groomer (past or present), who has accrued points through competitive pet grooming at *GroomTeam USA, Inc.®* Sanctioned competitions and has been recognized for their accomplishments.

Volunteers – Anyone who gives their time for no compensation.

Show promoter – The person, company or entity who is responsible for conducting the event.

The accused – A general term. Any person or entity having a complaint lodged against them.

Standards of Conduct & Sportsmanship Rules

Whenever people gather together to compete and achieve goals, some rules are needed to help everyone work together efficiently, effectively, and harmoniously. By earning points at a sanctioned *GT USA* competition, contestants have a responsibility to *GT USA* to adhere to certain rules of behavior, sportsmanship and conduct. All members of *GT USA* share this responsibility. The purpose of these rules is to be certain that members understand what conduct is expected and necessary. These rules and policies have been put in place to benefit and protect everyone involved within the competitive pet styling arena.

Lodging a Complaint

Any association, organization, person or persons, may make a complaint against any person, persons or entity for conduct alleged to have been detrimental to the best interests of competitive pet grooming, *GT USA* sanctioned grooming events and/or *GT USA*.

One example in the connection with any kind of scene or altercation occurring in conjunction or relationship to a grooming competition is as follows:

If an individual new to the pet grooming profession were to view the incident, would they be inspired to grow their career through similar educational events, trade shows, enter the grooming contest area or seek out advice from open level competitors or individuals associated with GT USA.

The *GT USA* Board of Directors, Advisory Board or official show promoter staff will have the power to investigate any matters brought to their attention in connection with Unacceptable Activities or appoint a committee to investigate the infraction.

If after such review, the Board of Directors or Advisory Board believe that sufficient evidence exists to warrant a counseling session, a session will be held for both Oral and Written Disciplinary Actions. If more advanced discipline is required, they shall appoint an investigative committee. The investigative committee may not include any member of the Board of Directors. The investigative committee shall perform their investigation independent of the *GT USA* Board.

The Board of Directors shall act upon said findings. By a majority vote, they may vote to dismiss the complaint, reinstate the competitor, continue the suspension from point earning opportunities for a stated time or have *GT USA* member status revoked for a determined amount of time.

GT USA will not involve itself in any arguments, disputes or disagreements of a personal nature between competitors, judges, show promoters or vendors. Any private, personal, civil issues should be dealt with by the involved parties only and not brought to the public light.

Unacceptable Activities

We expect each person to act in a mature and responsible way always. If a member has any questions concerning any rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed below, please contact a *GT USA* Board Member, Advisory Board Member or the Show Promoter.

The following list of Unacceptable Activities does not include all types of conduct resulting in disciplinary action, up to and including Oral or Written Warnings, Suspension, Revocation or Termination. Nothing in this list alters the at-will nature of the show; either a member or *GT USA* may withdraw, suspend or terminate any association with *GT USA*, with written notice, with or without reason.

1. Violation of any organizational rule; including any action detrimental to *GT USA's* efforts to uphold its mission while operating efficiently, cooperatively, and covering the cost of operating the organization.
2. Careless action, which endangers the life or safety of another person or pet.
3. Being intoxicated or under the influence of a controlled substance while in the competition ring or preparing a pet for competition; except medications prescribed by a physician which do not compromise the safety of the pet or competitive performance.
4. Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence or making threats of violence toward anyone on the tradeshow grounds or when representing *GT USA*.
5. Negligent damage of property.
6. Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by a *GT USA* official, judge or sanctioned show promoter staff member.
7. Publicly threatening, intimidating or coercing fellow competitors, show promoters or their staff or *GT USA* officials on or off show grounds at any time through any social media outlet, for any purpose.
8. Engaging in an act of sabotage; negligently causing the destruction or damage of tradeshow attendees, competitors, sponsors, show promoters or staff members or *GT USA* officials property or reputation.
9. Spreading malicious gossip and/or rumors; engaging in behavior which creates discord and lack of harmony within the pet grooming industry; interfering with another competitor during a grooming competition or making a public display or un-sportsman-like behavior towards any individual involved in or at a sanctioned *GT USA* event and/or public social media posts.

10. Immoral conduct or indecency either physically or electronically during a sanctioned *GT USA* event.
11. Using *GT USA* related images without express consent and authorization.
12. Obscene or abusive language, indifference or rudeness toward fellow competitor, judge, sponsor, tradeshow attendee, show official; or any disorderly/antagonistic conduct on the sanctioned show grounds or public online forums.
13. Competitors must comply with the official rules of each individual grooming competition supplied by the sanctioned show promoter.
14. Show Promoters must comply with the official *GT USA* sanctioning policies.

Reporting Unacceptable Activities

Anyone who has **directly** witnessed an infraction of Unacceptable Activities involving a member of *GT USA* should bring the perceived infraction to the attention of the *GT USA* Board of Directors, Advisory Board or official show promoter immediately. Our goal is to quickly resolve issues while individuals are still at the show site. A *GT USA* Leader is present at most shows and show staff is always present.

It will be the opinion of *GT USA*. and/or the Show Promoter to decide on Unacceptable Activities not listed above and what level of Disciplinary Action should be taken.

Contact information can be found at WWW.groomteamusa.org. Complaints must be submitted in writing, within seven (7) days of perceived infraction. Complaint forms can be found online at the *GT USA* web site as well as at the registration desk at all *GT USA* Sanctioned shows.

All other concerns should be brought to the attention of the Show Promoter/Contest Coordinator utilizing the protocol and timeline established for the specific contest in question.

The following disciplinary actions apply to any *GroomTeam USA, Inc.*® member.

Discipline Procedure

Under normal circumstances, *GT USA* Officers and Board members are expected to follow the procedure outlined below. There may be situations, however, in which the seriousness of the offense justifies the omission of one or more of the steps in the procedure. Likewise, there may be times when the organization may decide to repeat a disciplinary step.

Unacceptable Activities which do not lead to immediate termination may be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Oral Reminder
2. Written Warning
3. Decision-Making Suspension
4. Revocation

To ensure that the *GT USA* organization functions properly and efficiently, everyone must conform to certain standards of conduct, sportsmanship and other rules and regulations. When problems arise, a *GT USA* official will work with the individual(s) to mutually reach an effective solution. If, however, individual(s) fail to respond to counseling, or an incident occurs requiring formal discipline, the following procedures will be enacted.

Step One: Oral Reminder

A *GT USA* representative will meet with the member to discuss the issue. They will make sure the member understands the nature of the issue and the expected remedy. The purpose of this conversation is to remind the member of exactly what the rule or conduct expectation is and to remind the member it is their responsibility to meet *GT USA* expectations.

The member will be informed the Oral Reminder is the first step of the discipline procedure. The *GT USA* representative will fully document the Oral Reminder, which will remain in effect on record for three (3) years. Documentation of the incident will remain in the confidential file and will only be shared with the *GT USA* Board and the event Show Promoter unless another disciplinary event occurs.

Step Two: Written Warning

If the member's actions do not improve or if the member is again determined to be in violation of *GT USA* rules or standards of conduct, a *GT USA* representative will discuss the problem with the member, emphasizing the seriousness of the issue. The member will need to remedy the problem. The member is now at the second formal level of disciplinary action. After the meeting, a *GT USA* representative will write an official memo to the member summarizing the discussion and document any agreement to remedy the situation. A copy of the official memo will be kept on file with *GT USA* and provided to all show promoters.

The Written Warning will remain in effect for three (3) years. Documentation of the written warning will remain in the confidential file but will be shared with the *GT USA* Board and all *GT USA* Sanctioned contest Show Promoters for their information.

Step Three: Decision-Making Leave / Counseling Session

If the actions of the member do not improve within the three (3) year period following the Written Warning, or if the accused is again in violation of *GT USA* rules or standards of conduct, they may be placed on Decision-Making Leave. The Decision-Making Leave is the third and final step of *GT USA* disciplinary process.

Decision-Making Leave is a disciplinary suspension rendering the competitive member unable to have points awarded at the next two scheduled Sanctioned Grooming Competitions or a time period determined by the Board of Directors.

Non-competitive members may be placed on a Decision-Making Leave for thirty (30) to ninety (90) days. Suspension of duties during this time period and length of Leave is at discretion of Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board.

Members undergoing a Decision-Making Leave must make a choice to abide by the *GT USA* rules or to terminate their association with the organization.

All Sanctioned Show Promoters will also be notified of this Decision-Making Leave. It will be their choice to suspend the member from their future shows.

If the accused member's decision, following the Decision-Making Leave, is to abide by *GT USA* rules and standards of conduct, a *GT USA* Representative will submit a letter to the member. The Representative will outline the commitment to *GT USA*, including the consequences of failing to meet this commitment. The member will be required to sign the letter acknowledging receipt. A copy will be placed in the accused member's *GT USA* file.

The accused member will be permitted to continue participation in *GT USA* events and/or duties. The contestant member will be permitted to return to point earning status at future Sanctioned Shows. The member should understand that if a positive change in behavior does not occur or if another disciplinary problem occurs within the next three (3) Years, the member risks permanent suspension of participation in *GT USA* Sanctioned events and/or duties.

If the member is unwilling to make such a commitment, member's status will be revoked.

Crisis Suspension

If a member commits any of the actions listed below, or any other action not specified but similarly serious, they will be suspended pending an investigation of the situation. Following the investigation, they may have membership status revoked without any previous disciplinary action having been taken.

1. Theft during a grooming competition or during a grooming industry tradeshow.

2. Threat of, or the act of, doing bodily harm during a grooming competition or a grooming industry tradeshow.
3. Deliberate and/or negligent action which endangers the safety of a pet or person.
4. Willful or negligent destruction of hotel or showground properties.

The provision of this Disciplinary Policy is not a guarantee of its use. *GT USA* reserves the right to suspend a point holding competitor at any time, with or without reason. Additionally, *GT USA* reserves the right to prosecute any past or present point holding competitor, *GT USA*, Board Member, Officer or official representative for any of the above infractions.

The *GT USA* Board of Directors may instill a penalty greater or lesser than provided in these guidelines as final action.

Grounds for immediate and permanent termination of *GroomTeam USA, Inc.*® status

If any recognized member, (past or present) or volunteer is convicted in a court of law of any crime relating to animal cruelty, abuse or neglect they shall be immediately and permanently stripped of any *GT USA* status and shall be instructed to immediately cease the use of any *GT USA* related logo items, use of the name of *GT USA* in any advertising or promotional material and shall be asked to return any products exclusive to *GT USA* honorees. The accused shall have their name and biography permanently removed from the *GT USA* website.