

Marching Band Visual Guidelines

The following pages are intended to give you additional insight into the visual program that is used by the Marching Band. We learn by doing! This book alone will not make you a better marcher. You must put these suggestions into practice and work to refine and master them.

Necessary Equipment

Clothing: The proper clothing is a must. Comfortable walking shoes must be worn at all times during rehearsals. Hats and sunscreen are required to keep you from becoming “sun stupid”.

Equipment: Each performer is responsible for his/her own equipment. Instruments, flags, props, etc. should be present at all times, and in good working condition. Bring a water bottle especially for outdoor rehearsals.

Drill charts and coordinate sheets: Section leaders, Drum Majors and staff will have drill charts available during rehearsals. You will receive coordinate sheets for each musical selection. Please have these with you at every rehearsal. We suggest you transfer some of this information to your music as you are rehearsing.

Rehearsal Etiquette

- In order to have the most productive rehearsals possible, the instructional staff has established guidelines for etiquette during rehearsals. The following guidelines are needed to keep order and thus make efficient use of rehearsal time. At no time do we wish to convey a “boot camp” type of atmosphere, but these few guidelines are absolutely necessary to avoid wasted time and undue lack of concentration.
- Due to the large arena in which we work, it is essential that the majority of the talking be limited to the staff. Corrections and instructions will come from the directors and staff. The Drum Major will repeat the instructions for the continuation of rehearsal. Questions are expected and encouraged under proper circumstances, simply raise your hand. The Drum Major will call on you – direct your questions to the Drum Major.
- Unless otherwise directed, you will end movement of a set with your feet on count one of the next phrase so you are always practicing the proper direction change. you will hold that position until the person running the rehearsal will ask you to adjust, reset, or move on.
 - When “dressing a form”, your equipment should be in performance position. You will look to your dress points and adjust.
 - “Set it” means to physically step off your position according to the drill charts/coordinate sheet once a set is checked you should stand at parade rest (no talking) facing the proper direction.
- When the Drum Majors’ hands are up, you should have your equipment in playing position. We will not call “horns up” prior to each start. Section Leaders will help set forms. Their experience is greatly appreciated and much needed in the learning process.
- You will start each move with your feet apart in the last count of the previous move. Instruments will come up to proper playing positions with the Drum Majors’ hands go

up. Instruments will go down to a carry position only when the Drum Majors' hands are down. You are expected to move quickly to each set. Talking and visiting between rehearsal sets wastes SO much time!

- Come to rehearsals with coordinate sheets and music! Always bring a pencil to rehearsals if we need to make changes to the drill or music.
- When given a break, use for the intended purpose. Get off your feet and drink some water. Do not waste energy in gossip groups.
- BE ON TIME!! Never miss a rehearsal. If you are late, you are responsible for any changes made. We will not alter our rehearsal schedule so that you can learn what you missed. We will march your hole if it is cleaner.
- Leave whatever you need or whatever you bring with you (water coolers, jackets, etc.) at the front or back of the field in sections (not in the pit area) for easy access. Once rehearsal begins, no one is permitted to leave the field unless given permission by the person running rehearsal. Here's a hint: Go to the bathroom before rehearsal!
- Don't second-guess the staff or Drum Majors. If you have a problem, voice it after rehearsal is over. Do not let it affect your performance quality or attitude during that rehearsal.

Drill Charts and Coordinate Sheets

Each page of your coordinate sheets should have the following information recorded in order to aid in the understanding of the drill:

- Set number
- Counts to the set
- Coordinates
- Intervals...ALWAYS KNOW YOUR INTERVAL!
- Dress point
- Corresponding music measures, rehearsal numbers/letters, etc.
- Subsets, if any
- Any special instructions (equipment moves, facings, body moves, etc.)

You may need to add some of the above information. Please bring a pencil to every rehearsal to make additional notes and any changes

READING DRILL CHARTS/COORDINATE SHEETS: The following is an explanation of the correct way to read/translate your coordinate sheet or drill chart.

- Side One (1): As you are standing on the field, facing the front sideline, it is the right half of the field.
- Side Two (2): As you are standing on the field, facing the front sideline, it is the left half of the field.
- Front Sideline (FS): The line that spans from one goal line to the opposite goal line on the front side of the field.
- Back Sideline (BS): The line that spans from one goal line to the opposite goal line on the back side of the field.
- Front Hash (FH): The hash marks that run parallel to the front sideline and cross each yard line. 32 steps from the front sideline. (HS is 28 steps)
- Back Hash (BH): Same as above, except these hash marks are the ones closest to the back sideline.
- Behind (beh or b): The directional term that moves away from the front sideline.
- In front of (inf or f): The directional term that moves toward the front sideline.
- Inside (in): the directional term that moves inward, toward the 50 yard line.
- Outside (out): the directional term that moves outward, away from the 50 yard line.

Your first coordinate will give your position in relation to the yard line closest to you. Your second coordinate will give your position in relation to the FS, FH, BH, or BS, depending on which is closer.

Example:

4 out 50(1) / 4bFS

Translation: *4 steps outside the 50-yard line on Side One of the field, and 4 steps behind the front sideline.*

Posture and Definitions

Marching is very different than walking. The first step to proper movement is learning to correctly understand and utilize the concepts of posture/alignment and centering.

- **Posture/Alignment:** This is the relationship of the head to the pelvis to the heels. This also relates to centering and balance. Everything builds off the fundamental position of attention (see below). We will constantly work on achieving correct and uniform posture from the band.
- **Centering:** Understand that the pelvic area is the center of the body. Both upper and lower body should align with this area. Placement of the center of body will impact alignment, balance, and all movement because this is where all purposeful movement begins. The center of the body is a “box” that originates from the lower sternum to 2-3 inches below the navel. When initiating movement in any direction, it is imperative that this area is the first to break the plane of motion. Do not lean into the first step or in the direction of movement.
- **Balance:** This is achieved by equally distributing your weight on both feet. This is vital for movement done on one leg (turns, change of direction). Balance is dependent on the centering of the individual.
- **Alignment of Foot to Knee:** The knee should always be aligned over the second and third toes. The knee must “face” in the same direction as the foot. This is vital to avoid knee injuries.
- **Muscular Development:** This involves the training and heightening of the muscles to fulfill movement requirements, to support movement efforts, and to provide the student with the fullest range of movement potential.
- **Initiation of Movement:** The performer must know which part of the body will begin any given move. Clarity from performer to performer is critical.
- **Stationary position of Attention:**
 - **Feet** – Heels together, toes at a 45-degree angle to each other, weight equally distributed throughout feet
 - **Knees** – Straight, but not locked
 - **Hips** – Level and drawn under slightly, removing some of the natural curve to the spine
 - **Back** – Spine lengthened, arch removed by tilting hips under, separate the upper “block” of the body from the lower “block” by lifting the weight out of the hips and lengthening through the top of the head
 - **Chest** – Lifted, body held erect and balanced equally (but not resting on the hips), do not lift/tilt the chest so much that the back arches
 - **Shoulders** – Shoulders square and falling equally, lengthened away from the ears
 - **Neck** – lifting up through the top of the head, ears pulled back to be in line with the shoulders (avoid forward head posture). Align ankles, hips, shoulders and ears.
 - **Chin & Eyes** – Forward and set on a point 10 degrees above horizon
 - **Arms (with no instrument)** – Elbows slightly bent and aimed to the rear, light fist
 - **Arms/Hands (with instrument)** – Based on individual instrument

- The position of “parade rest” will build off of “attention” and will be reviewed for each instrument/section.

Spatial Relationships, Intervals, and Pathways

Holding form becomes priority to all other individual responsibilities when learning drill. Good marching technique is useless if the forms are unreadable as we move.

An interval is a designated distance from the center of an individual to the center of the next person in a horizontal alignment. Clean interval makes the forms readable. Many bands can set up a drill page; the problems arise when we move from set to set and do not understand the concept of interval for each drill set.

Distance is the space between individuals in a vertical alignment – front to back.

Step Size: When moving from set to set, each marcher must take even-sized steps to each arrival point. This is called an adjusted step. Discrepancies in step size cause spatial problems in the drill. Often a performer takes too big of a step in the beginning of a move and then shortens stride length when approaching their coordinate. This causes a form of distortion. The feet will move slower with the shorter step size as well, causing tempo errors as well. Changes of step size need to be immediate and must be done together as an ensemble. Controlling the body, inertia, and proper foot placement accommodates good spacing.

A pathway is the intended direction to each subsequent set. Most pathways are in a straight line. If marchers do not march in a straight line, interval problems occur.

Dress points help you judge interval as you move from set to set.

Marching Definitions

The “glide step” or “roll step” is used to facilitate the best music production possible. Every step leads with the bottom of the heel, not the knee. Toes are extended up – you should roll and press from the outside of the foot to the inside. Do not lean into a step off. Do not crouch! The legs should be straight on the beat. The sole of the foot is flat when moving through the “and” of the beat. The crossing leg is bent at the knee. This technique should be very smooth, hence the name “glide step”.

“Jazz Run” is the technique used to increase step size without losing sound control. On the count before the first step, lower the body while keeping the back straight. Extend the left leg with the toes contacting the ground, not the heel. Push off in a lateral motion, not in an upward motion.

“Lateral Slide” the upper body remains facing the front sideline as the lower body moves left, right or diagonally in the direction of the next set or segment of the drill. Generally used for short segments and melodic enhancement.

“Back slide” is a motion in reverse of the forward stride. The concept is the same – straight legs on the beat. The heels do not contact the ground. Stay up on the toes at all times. The toes stay in contact with the ground as you slide back. Stand straight and tall. Posture is critical. The upper body is motionless so you can play well. As the speed increases, the legs will be bent slightly so you don’t bounce.

Flutter step – used primarily in the guard. Feet move quickly, out of time. Posture is dictated by equipment use or choreography during count segment.