

## Improve Your Marching Band Rehearsal Efficiency



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Nothing here is an original idea. Marching band directors love to share. The CBDNA Athletic Bands Symposium is my favorite annual clinic and I never miss it. We all freely share ideas and materials because no one wants to hear or see a bad band!



Resources during presentation

**UNHBANDS.ORG/NHMEA2018**



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Links to materials, presentation, and external resources

# TIME

**We can all use more rehearsal time!**

**Concerns/Complaints**

- **Warm-ups or rehearsal procedures take too long; need to jump right into learning/cleaning**
- **Concert and marching band are often combined**
- **Don't want to spend more time on marching band than necessary**



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Some directors skip the warmup altogether or complain that it takes too long. There is always a long list of items we need to work on but spending time on fundamentals will save time in the long run.

## VISUAL WARM-UP

- Starts off each outdoor rehearsal
- Streamlined way to practice basics
- Assigned block allows for easy attendance
- Practical skill: memorized drill vs. responding to commands
- Can work in techniques that don't have practical commands



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We teach it in chunks in the fall. Students get a printout (half-sheet size) to refer to. Attendance2 is the app we use for attendance. Manual Sort Order puts them in order by ranks in block for quick attendance. Other apps may allow a seating chart to put students in the block, which is even better. You're just looking for holes.



### Visual Warmup

Grouping	Execution
Ball	Windy/CG – Roll down 8
	DU/Isouas – Lunge left 8
	Windy/CG – Roll back up 8
Upper body rotations	DU/Isouas – Lunge right 8
	Mark time 16
	Rotate upper body left 4 (still marking time)
Posture stretch	MT 4
	Rotate upper body front 4
	MT 4
Mark time/hold transitions	Rotate upper body right 4
	MT 4
	Rotate upper body front 4
Step-outs	MT 4
	Stretch up on toes 4
	Lower back down 4
Is and Is (forward)	Hold 8
	Mark time 4
	Hold 4
Replacements (forward)	Mark time 4
	MT 4
	MT 4 with step out front on 1, back on 3
Is and Is (backward)	MT 4
	MT 4 with step out back on 1, back on 3
	MT 4
Replacements (backward)	MT 4
	MT 4 with step out front on 1, back on 3
	MT 4
Forward/backward transitions	MT 4 with step out back on 1, back on 3
	MT 4
	MT 4
Prep	Forward march 8
	Mark time 8
	Forward march 8
Step-outs for direction changes	Mark time 8
	A – Forward march 4
	B – Mark time 4
Multi-gait	A – Forward march 4
	B – Forward march 4
	A – Forward march 4
B-count diamond to left (shifting)	B – Forward march 4
	A – Forward march 4
	B – Forward march 4
B-count diamond to right (shifting)	A – Forward march 4
	B – Forward march 4
	A – Forward march 4
Multi-gait	B – Forward march 4
	A – Forward march 4
	B – Forward march 4

Grouping	Execution
Is and Is (backward)	Backward march 8
	Mark time 8
	Backward march 8
Replacements (backward)	Mark time 8
	A – Mark time 4
	B – Backward march 4
Forward/backward transitions	A – Backward march 4
	B – Mark time 4
	A – Mark time 4
Prep	B – Backward march 4
	A – Backward march 8
	B – Mark time 8
Step-outs for direction changes	A – Backward march 8
	B – Backward march 8
	A – Backward march 8
Multi-gait	B – Backward march 8
	A – Backward march 8
	B – Backward march 8
B-count diamond to left (shifting)	A – Backward march 8
	B – Mark time 4
	A – Backward march 4
B-count diamond to right (shifting)	B – Mark time 4
	A – Backward march 4
	B – Backward march 4
Multi-gait	A – Backward march 4
	B – Backward march 4
	A – Backward march 4
B-count diamond to left (shifting)	B – Backward march 4
	A – Backward march 4
	B – Backward march 4
B-count diamond to right (shifting)	A – Backward march 4
	B – Backward march 4
	A – Backward march 4
Multi-gait	B – Backward march 4
	A – Backward march 4
	B – Backward march 4

Notes:  
Horns snap up on count 1 of moving sets (forward march, backward march, mark time, shifts)  
Horns snap down on count 1 of a halt after a moving set.



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PDF and Word document are on the website.



Video of an early season Visual Warm-Up (not perfect!)

## Benefits and Drawbacks

### Benefits

- Ensures all techniques are covered
- Practical application of memorization skill
- Can work in techniques that don't have a practical "command" in block
- Makes taking attendance easy
- More fun to march to music

### Drawbacks

- Takes a while to learn the first time
- Difficult to start in the middle if needed
- Can get stale, but can do different things, focus on specific techniques instead of this when needed



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Created track in Garage Band and exported at various tempos. I think changes in the music at each section helps with memorization (and to keep it interesting), but makes it difficult to start in the middle. If you want to, you can chop up your files into smaller chunks as well and add 8 clicks beforehand in Garage Band. You can create separate files for the chunks or insert the 8 clicks between segments in one file and then chop up in Audacity or other audio editing program.

## Make your own!

- Make a list of the techniques you want to include
- Put in order and indicate # of counts for each (essentially building the handout)
- Have fun with Garage Band or similar application putting together something that fits the counts.
- Can also use existing music with the memorized routine OR write routine to fit structure of existing music



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Also possible to add voiceover if you want. May take a few attempts, though!



## MUSIC WARM-UP

- Many resources available here
- Use published warm-ups or use your own (or mine!)
- Set warm-up routine means you know how long it will take
- Ways to incorporate drumline and even guard



Nothing earth-shattering here. Sibelius file and PDFs of score and parts available for download. I'm an unashamed Carolina Crown fangirl and take inspiration from their approach. "Inside the Circle" is a comprehensive program. Great but overwhelming. Condensing favorite exercises down to one set warmup saves time. DRAWBACK: can get stale, but there's nothing saying you can't teach them additional exercises on the fly to mix it up every once in a while.

Write or copy over drumline exercises to fit each winds exercise and/or even include guard in warm-up (e.g. ballet positions for long tones, drop spins for articulated 8ths, etc.)

**WMB Winds Warm-Up**

8-Count Tones

Flute

Clarinet

Alto Sax

Tenor Sax

Baritone Sax

Euphonium

Trumpet 1


Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Trombone

Baritone B.C.

Tuba


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[Link to PDF of score.](#) Score and parts available on website, plus Sibelius file.

## REHEARSAL SYSTEM

- Good for teaching and cleaning drill
- Takes some persistence at first but once one group learns it they will set the example
- Minimize extraneous talking, overuse of commands



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Inspired by systems used by many marching arts organizations.

Drum major on the podium models at ease/attention to band, band follows.

Set clearing procedure:

ONE

Brings hands to attention position, band follows. "All in" command gives only if needed.

Brings hands to conducting position, band moves instruments to appropriate position.

Remaind band of instructions. Count off, go through [etc].

Check off, give an attention. Performers thank.

CHORUS (players check off, band follows, what you need wants to change.) 3 seconds.

"Adjust" (players move to where they should be, stand at attention. 5 seconds).

Brings hands to sign to signify horns down.

Moves to at-ease position, band follows.

Start: Gives instructions from scaffolding. All on field lines.

Signs, give ahead! Staff members and drum majors on field give instructions.

Others listen and are quiet.

"Wrap it up" 5-10 second warning to wrap-up on sign.

Instructions given for drum to not rest, band begins if necessary, cyle begins again.

Repeat takes 10 seconds of music, then when necessary.

WMB: Follows lead of the drum major – their body position informs your position.

Freezes at end of music and THROUGH "check" period. Do NOT move until "adjust"

Remaind Remains throughout rehearsal.

LISTEN

- "Plus one" – upon completion of the move, take the first step in the direction of the following set and freeze. Hold the last note until you cut.
- "Minus one" – Start with your feet where they are at the completion of the previous move.
- Both cases – when your right foot is on the "one" line.
- "Gush and go" – get a drink and take a quick breather, then get back on line (before asked) longer breaks will be given of during band camp.
- Sets will be taught in groups of about three, with larger set groupings ("chocks").
- While a particular set is being addressed, members of the section will raise their hands to indicate they are listening.
- If the staff asks a question or checks for understanding, every member will reply (and loudly).
- Feet will be needed to be in a certain position or person will be made to move from field, but don't put anything between the sideline and an imaginary line parallel to the back of the podium.
- On breaks or when we go without equipment, post as a section.

<b>Drum Major #1</b>	<b>Drum Major #3</b>	<b>Graduate Staff #2</b>
Perussion Drum Major	Woodwind Drum Major	Quadrant D
Quadrant A	Quadrant C	Dr. Beat/Pf.
Podium/Ladder Set-Up (pre)	PA Set-Up	Podium/Ladder Set-Up (post)
Form collection	Timer	Windwind assistance
<b>Drum Major #2</b>	<b>Graduate Staffer #1</b>	Water
Brass Drum Major	Uncovered Quadrant (Roster)	
Quadrant B	Lighting	
Yard Markers Set-Up	Podium/Ladder Set-Up (post)	
Attendance	Brass assistance	
	Water	



## GENERAL TIPS

- These will take time to implement. Be patient and persistent!
- Cheap dot markers: pizza box stackers (aka “Barbie tables”)
- Performance efficiency
  - Use silent count-offs
  - Streamline drum major changes



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Pizza stackers: Box of 1000 for ~\$10 + shipping. We spray painted different colors and had students label each with their dot number. Can also have students decorate their own. Break off one leg to make it easier but they can stick into ground or artificial turf.

Noticed a lot of downtime in shows. Silent count-offs – rather than calling band to attention, mark time, and then an aural count-off (which causes phasing issues) simply have them watch the DM for a visual “one, two, one-two-three-four.” Build the horns up into the count-off as well. A few missed count-offs in rehearsal is all it takes to get them used to watching. “Fall in” or similar command also helps.

If you have a drum major change between tunes, have the next one move to the center before the previous tune is over so they can change quickly during applause and, hopefully, start the silent count-off before the applause finishes dying down. Maintains the excitement and energy level.



[bands.unh.edu](http://bands.unh.edu)



Thank you!



My dog Willa is cute.