

Pirate Band

Marching Procedures

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Part I: The Rehearsal Atmosphere

In order to have a successful and productive marching rehearsal certain policies and procedures should be in place prior to ever stepping onto the rehearsal field.

Rehearsal Etiquette:

1. Once rehearsal begins, absolutely no talking is allowed on the field unless you are a staff member or drum major. Squad leaders are empowered to speak and give corrections when called upon. Corrections and instructions will come from the tower first and then from the field technicians. When rehearsal begins or right after a break the command “Stand By” will be given. “Stand By” means to stop what you are doing because rehearsal is about to begin or continue.
2. Students must have required materials at all rehearsals. This includes: an approved water jug, appropriate clothing including athletic shoes, drill cards, instrument and accessories.
3. Questions from the members are expected and encouraged. Please do not hesitate to ask them. However, make sure the question is circumstance appropriate.
4. The basic starting protocol for all fundamental exercises, both music and visual is as follows:
 - Eight “clicks” from the metronome and the exercise will begin.
 - On counts five and six of the initial eight counts the members will vocalize in eighth notes a short and percussive “dut, dut, dut, dut”
5. During rehearsal, members are expected to run in between sets.
6. Unless otherwise directed, you will begin and end movement of a particular set with your feet apart in the last count of the previous set (**prep step**) or the first count of the next set (**plus one**). This ensures a proper check of the change of direction technique into and out of a particular set. You will hold the “plus one” position until the person running the rehearsals says “Cover down”, “Reset” or “New command.” “Cover down,” means to adjust your position to the correct position. “Reset” means to go back to the beginning of the last command “New command” means that a new set of instructions is about to be given.
7. In performance of the marching production, upper bodies will be at the “to the box” when horns are in the playing position or “flat to front”. “To the Box” indicates that all woodwind and brass students should face a single point beyond the tower generally 50 feet outside of the performance field in line with the 50 yard line. “Flat to front” indicates that performers’ bodies will be parallel to the front sideline. Certain formations will be “to the box”, while others will be “flat to front”. These will be indicated by the director. It is understood that the members’ upper body facing will change dependent upon their position on the field.

Part II: Posture

Body Posture:

The single most important trait of a successful marching band is the ensemble body posture. The manner in which a member stands directly affects the level they will be able to play, spin, dance or march. Improper body carriage can put unwanted strain and tension on the body. Tension is the number one cause of poor performance no matter the section winds, percussion or guard.

In the beginning stages of teaching we all must stress some key points:

1. Relaxation of the upper body:
 - The shoulders are down and round
 - The neck, chest and arms are all soft.
2. The upper and lower body should be “separated” at the hips. The upper body can be imagined as the musical machine while the lower body is the visual machine. The two rely on each other to work effectively, but they must remain autonomous to be maximized.
 - Stretch abdomen up and away from the hips
 - Try to make the distance between your lowest rib and hipbone as tall as possible.
 - The back should be straight and flat. This method of standing creates a taller more dignified look to the ensemble, as well as teaches you a healthier, and more importantly, the correct way to stand up.
3. Proper Weight Displacement
 - The student’s body weight should remain on the front 2/3 of the foot at all times. (Also known as the “platform” of the foot) All motion, no matter the direction, begins from the platform. So, it would only make sense to keep the body weight on this area to be most efficient in our movement. Never allow your body weight settle into your heels.
4. As with any musical exercise, timing of all visual exercises is dependent on proper subdivision.
 - Moving together as a group is analogous to visual “tuning”.
 - In music we use our ears to tune, in a visual setting we use our EYES.
5. Without proper breathing techniques and breath support, our music would never reach a proficient level. Likewise, our visual fundamental will plateau if proper breathing is not occurring. It is vital that you stress the same breathing principles during all fundamentals, be them music or visual.

Exercises to develop an ensemble body posture:

1. The “**Hindu**” is a yoga exercise developed to help understand how it feels to stand correctly all the while creating a uniform posture throughout the ensemble. It is executed as follows:
 - Begin by standing with the “best” possible posture. It is important that we begin each day with our best posture. This is the only way the group can continue to develop and progress their visual identity.
 - Feet are shoulder width apart; hands are at the side in a relaxed position.
 - Breathe in deeply for four counts (be sure the members are using the proper breathing techniques)
 - Roll head over in four counts while simultaneously breathing out for four counts.
 - Roll shoulders back, up, around and forward in four counts while again breathing in for four counts.
 - Roll/Stretch upper spine over in four counts/breathe out
 - Roll over lower spine, top to bottom, in four/breathe in
 - Release knees in four counts/breathe out and hang completely relaxed
 - **STAY RELAXED AND HOLD**
 - Breathe in deeply for four counts and reverse the process to build the perfect posture.
 - After reversing the process and completing the head roll:
 - Bring your left foot into your right so that your toes and heels are together in four counts/breathe in
 - Releve onto the platform in four counts/breathe out
 - Stretch the arms/body in circular motion towards sky for eight counts, breathe in
 - Release the arms in eight counts, but maintain a tall body posture, breathe out
 - Stretch body down from the releve position in four counts, so that you are as tall as possible with your weight on the platform, breathe in
 - Arms to playing position in four counts, breathe out

***Remember to stack and extend the vertebrae (creating as much space as possible between each individual vertebrae) on the way back up. You should feel taller and your back should be perfectly straight. Hips are rolled forward. The sternum and ribs are lifted off of the diaphragm and hips.

Use this checklist when correcting posture:

- Head is facing forward, the chin is slightly up
- Shoulders are relaxed and aligned through the lower back
- Spine is extended through the skull
- The upper body is “lifted” off the lower body
- Pelvis is centered (Not slightly back as in the anatomical position, tuck your tail)
- Body Weight is distributed so that it falls on the platform
- Heels and toes are together

Holding the Horn:

Your horn should not be held with any kind of force or tension. Your hands are only used as a platform for your horn to rest upon. Relaxation must always be maintained in the fingers, hands, arms, shoulders and back or unnecessary tension will occur. All horns will be held by the fingertips not gripped in the palms. Proper breathing must always be maintained while holding the horn. This method of holding the horn will seem awkward at first, but as with anything will become easier with practice.

Instrument specifics:

- All bell-front brass will hold their horns 10° above parallel.
- Box position is achieved by lifting the chin and arms to a position approximately 25° above parallel. “Box” should not be achieved by arching the back or allowing the hips to fall forward.
 - The “box” position is not intended for the woodwinds, percussion or sousaphones!

Exercises to teach proper horn carriage and motion:

Hinging is an exercise designed with two purposes in mind. First and foremost it is an exercise to teach the correct way to raise and lower an instrument from the set position to the horns up position. But, just as important is the fact that it is a timing exercise designed to teach the members how to use their eyes as a method of visual “tuning”. Its process is as follows:

- The horn will be raised and lowered in various counts (i.e. four, three, two, or one).
- The horn locks into position on the final count of each group. An absence of motion will occur on this count.
- These phrases should be like visual crescendos with each phrase moving to the final count.
- Analogies are often helpful when teaching a successful horn move.
 - Have your students imagine the horn is attached to rubber bands from all angles and must be pulled and/or pushed through the air.

Three Stationary positions used during marching band

1. Attention: described at the bottom page four
2. Parade Rest: feet open in parallel position (open shoulder width apart), and hands folded in front of body
3. Check or form check: stand feet together in closed parallel position, horn up or down depending on the previous drill move

Part III: Movement Principles

Marking Time:

Although the modern marching band rarely marks time in a performance venue, it is an important fundamental of pulse and body control that must be mastered. Some key points must be understood in order to perform the mark time effectively.

- All motions should be smooth.
- The heel should rise to approximately one inch off the ground.
- On the downbeat both heels should be on the ground, and then the foot is immediately lifted so that the heel is at its highest point on the upbeat.
 - Even though both heels land on the downbeats, the motion should remain constant at all times. An absence of motion should never occur.
- Upper body should remain completely still.
- The hips should not break when performing a mark time correctly. They must remain at the same level

Forward Technique:

The forward technique is broken down into three separate exercises:

1. By the Numbers
2. Subdivided
3. In Tempo.

All motion no matter the exercise begins with the center of body. Pushing off with the platform of the right foot will create the necessary momentum for each exercise. The feet should always move in a straight line from where they begin. Do not allow one foot to cross the “line” of another. Likewise, do not allow the toes to turn out away from the center of the body. This can create safety situations at extended step sizes and accelerated tempos.

1. By the Numbers

- ***Step size is not important at this stage of the learning process. The technique should be the focus!***
 - Roll up the left foot in four even counts – Left heel should be equal to the height of the right anklebone. [vocalize “up, two, three, four”]
 - Push out in five even counts– Weight should be centered in between the back edge of the heel of the left foot and the platform of the right foot. Both legs are straight(downbeat). Remember step size is not important! [vocalize “push, two, three, four, place”]
 - Roll through the left foot for three even counts – Be sure to roll through all areas of the foot. Weight should now be over the platform of the front foot with the back leg straight. [vocalize “two, three, four” – count 1(or place) was on previous set]
 - Pass for four even counts – Bring right foot forward so that toes are even and entire right foot is approximately one inch off the ground. [vocalize “pass, two, three, four”]
 - Push out in four even counts – Continue from step two

2. Subdivided – vocalize 16th note subdivision throughout the exercise
 - This is the next evolution in learning the forward march. At its most basic form it is a sped up version of By the Numbers.
 - The body weight is shifted to the platform of the right foot on four.
 - Initiation of knee/forward motion begins on the “&” of four.
 - Forward motion continues on the “a” of four. This should be lead by the center of the body and then the knee with the momentum created by pushing from the platform of the right foot.
 - The left foot makes contact with the ground on count one.
 - Release of the right foot occurs on the “e” of one.
 - The legs will again pass on the “&” of count one.
 - Forward motion continues on the “a” of one.
 - The right foot makes contact on the next beat.
 - Continue the process.

3. In Tempo - vocalize “push(four), &, place(one), two-seven, tendu(eight), close(one)”
 - This is the forward technique in its full form.
 - Motion should be lead by the center of body and then the knee with the momentum created by pushing from the platform of the right foot.
 - The legs should be straight on the downbeat with a slight break in the knee on the off counts.
 - The legs will always pass on the off counts

There are some common problems we all must focus on in order to appear uniform while moving as well as to be able play at the highest possible performance standard.

1. Improper upper body carriage – It must appear as if you are standing still
2. Leaning into and out of the step off – This is most often caused by not leading the motion from the center of the body or by improper weight displacement on the foot.
3. Upper body not centered over the lower body on the move – Again caused by not leading the initial motion from the center of the body.
4. Extreme upper body motion while on the move – Usually a culprit of not separating at the hips, not rolling from the back edge of the heel all the way through the foot, or by lifting the foot too high off the ground and thereby slamming the heel on the ground versus placing it. The heel should graze across the surface of the ground.
5. Timing Tendencies – count two will probably be slow while count eight to one will be fast

Halting from Forward Motion:

- On the last beat of the phrase instead of rolling through from the heel to the toe we will do what is known in ballet as a tendu (pronounced “ton-doo”). To execute this, lead with the platform by planting and rolling the heel towards the ground while allowing your opposite foot to meet your planted foot. This

method of halting will allow for greater control of the body when halting motion.

Backward Technique:

Our backward technique carries the same basic concept as the forward technique. It is however broken down into two exercises: Subdivided and In Tempo. All motion, no matter the exercise begins with the center of body. Pushing off with the platform of the right foot will create the necessary momentum for each exercise. The feet should always move in a straight line from where they begin. Do not allow one foot to cross the “line” of another. This can create safety situations at extended step sizes and accelerated tempos.

1. Subdivided – vocalize 16th note subdivision throughout the exercise
 - This is the first evolution in learning the backward march.
 - The body weighted is shifted to the platform of the right foot on four.
 - Initiation of move/backward motion begins on the “&” of four.
 - Backward motion continues on the “a” of four. This should be lead by the center of body with the momentum created by pushing from the platform of the right foot. There should be no bend in the knees.
 - The left foot makes contact with ground on count one.
 - Release of the right foot occurs on the “e” of one.
 - The legs will again, pass on the “&” of count one.(pass position is the same as forward march)
 - Backward motion continues on the “and” of one
 - The right foot makes contact on the next beat
 - Continue the process.

2. In Tempo - vocalize “push(four), &, place(one), two-seven, stab(eight), close(one)”
 - This is the backward technique in its full form.
 - Motion should be lead by the center of body with the momentum created by pushing from the platform of the right foot.
 - The legs should be straight on the downbeat with a slight break in the knee on the off counts.
 - The legs will again pass on the off counts

Many of the same problems will occur during the backward as in the forward. We all must continue to focus on them in order to appear uniform while moving as well as to be able play at the highest possible performance standard.

1. A concern specifically associated with the backward march is often students will relate to high so that little to no body control exists. The students should only relate to their platforms and no higher. Also, many times the back heel will be higher off the ground than the front. Both heels should be equidistant off the ground.

2. Improper upper body carriage – It must appear as if you are standing still
3. Leaning into and out of the step off – This is most often caused by not leading the motion from the center of the body or by improper weight displacement on the foot.
4. Upper body not centered over the lower body on the move – Again caused by not leading the initial motion from the center of the body.
5. Extreme upper body motion while on the move – Usually a culprit of not separating at the hips or by lifting the foot too high off the ground and thereby slamming the platform on the ground versus placing it. The platform should graze across the surface of the ground.
6. Timing Tendencies – count two will probably be slow while count eight to one will be fast

Halting from Backward Motion:

- On the last beat of the phrase, your right foot will roll down toe to heel and the left foot joins by coming in flat on the following downbeat.

Standard exercises to work forward and backward motion:

The following exercises will work common problems of timing and step size transitions with the forward and backward technique.

1. Isolation of counts eight, one and two in tempo
 - This exercise is meant to work the timing problems associated with count eight and the first and second step. In working the forward or backward march, isolate all three counts and make sure the students are in tempo and that the proper technique is being used.
2. 8's & 4's – forward and backward
 - This is a standard 8 to 5 stride exercise to develop the forward or backward march. When teaching and developing this exercise remember to have the students maintain a consistent step size from step one to step eight. It is more important that they learn to keep a consistent step rather than hit the yard line. Although it is frustrating at first, the students will benefit more from this technique. If the students learn to take the same size step from step one to the end of the phrase, then they will not only have to adjust the first step rather than all steps in a visual phrase. This will easily transfer later when cleaning drill.
3. Variations: 2's & 4's, 3's & 4's to work on the first and second step respectively
4. Step size drill in various counts (8, 12, 6, 16 etc.) – forward and backward
 - This exercise is used to develop step size transitions of the forward and backward march. You can choose any combinations of step sizes. The important thing to look for is that the students maintain a consistent stride through all steps of a particular step size. Also, the students must learn that the step size changes on count one of the new phrase. Many young marchers will either anticipate the step size change by increasing the final steps of the previous phrase or take too

small of a step one into the new phrase and therefore play catch-up the rest of the exercise. Consistency of step size is absolutely imperative in the development of a professional movement ensemble.

Slides:

99% of all motion in a competitive marching show will be executed from some version of the slide position. It is a necessity that this position be created with no tension present anywhere in the body. The process is as follows.

- Turn the body from the lower abdomen up
 - The members should focus on the abdomen and sternum facing the direction of the slide. This will help to insure appropriate technique and the least amount of tension
 - The members' hips should divide the angle the upper body is executing.
- Shoulders should be down and round
- Open chest area at all times
- The upper body posture should remain the same no matter the position.

Common Problems:

- Tension creeping into the shoulders and chest area
- Not fully rotated in either direction
- Chest area begins to collapse

Standard exercises to develop the proper slide position:

The following are exercises developed to work common problems of the slide position. The name of the exercise is derived from the “turret gun” of a tank.

1. Turrets in place:
 - Begin in Set Position
 - Bring the horns to playing position in four counts.
 - Rotate the upper body 90° to the left in four counts
 - Hold this position for eight counts
 - Be sure to have students focus on being completely relaxed.
 - Rotate 180° towards the right in eight counts
 - Hold this position for eight counts
 - Be sure to have students focus on being completely relaxed.
 - Rotate 180° towards the left in eight counts
 - Hold this position for eight counts
 - Be sure to have students focus on being completely relaxed.
 - Repeat until instructor calls last time.
 - Rotate 90° to the front in four counts.
 - Return the instrument to carry position in four counts.
2. 8's & 8's with the turret:
 - This exercise is the same as Turrets in place, but instead of holding for eight counts in between every rotation, the students either forward or backward

march. Be sure to address the “Common Problems” in the *Forward/Backward march* and *Slide* sections mentioned above. As you begin to add layers of complexity and simultaneous responsibilities to the exercises (i.e. adding turrets to a forward or backward march) the students’ weaknesses will become much more obvious. Do not allow even the most minor problems to “slide” by...otherwise they will eventually turn into major ensemble issues.

Advanced Exercises:

Only after the above outlined exercises are mastered should the ensemble begin to execute the following. The students will be given simultaneous responsibilities of movement, dress and technique in the following exercises.

Prepping – The following exercises use a specific technique when preparing a change of direction. All direction changes will be prepped half the angle of the direction change being executed. In addition, all preps will be performed with a *tendu* (as mentioned in the “Halting from Forward Motion” section).

1. Box drill (in various counts):

- On the final count of each phrase, prep the next phrase at a 45° angle (The prep step is 45° because the total angle of the direction change is 90°. The only difference occurs on the last phrase when the prep step will be to the final closed position.

#1	#2
Forward march	Forward March
Forward slide left	Backward slide left
Backward march	Backward march
Forward slide right	Backward slide right
Forward march	Forward march
Forward slide right	Backward slide right
Backward march	Backward march
Forward slide left	Backward slide left

2. Diamond drill (in various counts):

- On the final count of each phrase, prep the next phrase straight/parallel to the yard line. The only difference occurs on the last phrase when the prep step will be to the final closed position.

#1	#2
Forward march left at a 45° angle	Forward march right at a 45° angle
Backward march left at a 45° angle	Backward march right at a 45° angle
Backward march right at a 45° angle	Backward march left at a 45° angle
Forward march right at a 45° angle	Forward march left at a 45° angle

3. Jumbo diamond drill (in various counts):

- On the final count of each phrase all angle moves will be prepped straight/parallel to the yard line while all straight moves will be prepped at a

45° angle. The only difference occurs on the last phrase when the prep step will be to the final closed position.

- #1(forward motion on slides), #3(backward motion on slides)
 - Forward march left at a 45° angle
 - Forward slide left **or** backward slide left
 - Backward march left at a 45° angle
 - Backward march right at a 45° angle
 - Forward slide right **or** backward slide right
 - Forward march right at a 45° angle
- #2(forward motion on slides), #4(backward motion on slides)
 - Forward march right at a 45° angle
 - Forward slide right **or** backward slide right
 - Backward march right at a 45° angle
 - Backward march left at a 45° angle
 - Forward slide left **or** backward slide left
 - Forward march left at a 45° angle

4. Slide exercise:

- Forward march eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Forward Slide Left eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride, prep on counts seven & eight, your feet should be turned in
- Backward Slide Left eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Backward eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Backward Slide Right eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride, prep on counts eight & one, your feet should be turned out
- Forward Slide Right eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Forward eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Forward Box Position eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Forward eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride & Halt

5. Triangle Drill

- Forward march 16 counts (this takes you two yard lines ahead, and one dot to your left) You do not march straight forward, but rather at an angle to your left
- Forward slide Right eight counts at an 8 to 5 stride
- Backward march 16 (straight back to your original position)