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## Tips for the Drum Major



In this document I have included my thoughts and tips when training your marching band and also before stepping off on a Parade. Some tips are very logical, but others DM's may not have considered.

Remember - **“We are all community musicians giving our time for the enjoyment of others and ourselves.”**. Keep it enjoyable but still insist on correct drill and therefore showing your band in its best advantage.

### Be firm with your band but speak with respect and never ridicule others

#### Commanding the band's Attention.

1. When you stand out the front of your Band, especially for the first time, expect respect from your band. The easiest way to gain their attention is to call the Band to “Attention”. The best way to gain their respect is to lead by example. Eg Know your drill, speak with respect and have a smart appearance.
2. If there is someone who is continually talking, stop what you are saying and look at them until they remain quiet.-don't say anything until they remain quiet. **OR** as you are talking to the Band, wander between the files and stop alongside that person without appearing to pick on them. They will get the message.

#### Always make sure you can do whatever you expect of the band.

3. When standing in front of the Band and giving commands, ensure you stand at “Attention”.
4. Make sure you are standing erect, pull your shoulders back and stand at the correct stance at attention.

#### You as Drum Major need to lead by example.

5. Give commands clearly and slowly so that they are audible from the rear ranks.
6. Don't be afraid to ask the band **“Do you have any questions”**

#### When training your Band, do things in a logical sequence.

7. Ensure that you know the layout of the Band and quickly place players into position.
8. Call the Band to “Attention”
9. Show them how you expect them to stand at “Attention’. ( NBCA manual will assist )
10. Show them your expectations of standing at ease.

### Before Parade or training commences

11. Explain to the band details about the parade / training so they clearly know what idiosyncrasies might appear in the march, such as length of the march, tramlines, roundabouts, road narrowing, so the band has a mental image of how the parade will unfold, particularly for newcomers.

### Don't be too eager to step the band off playing at training

12. Don't stand talking for long, rather step the band off and go for a march – not playing.
13. **BUT** before doing that, remind them of the **manner of coming to the halt**.
14. To move the Band off, call "**Band, by the centre, quick march**". Notice the gap between the words of command. It gives the band time to think about what you are saying.
15. **The usual method of bringing the band to the halt** is one double beat on the bass drum on the left foot, followed by another double beat on the next left foot, then on the next left foot count 1, 2 3 on each step then halt with the right foot coming down alongside the left.
16. At marching rehearsal, I ask my band even now, to call out in loud voice after the 2<sup>nd</sup> double tap, "one, two, three, halt". **Especially when teaching new players to march**.
17. Do that 5 times and you will be amazed how well the band will respond. Each time, get them to call out 1,2,3 halt. Do that at each rehearsal and your band will dramatically improve the crash halt when required. The Crash halt is something many bands **cannot** carry out correctly.
18. What this does is instills in the players' mind those numbers after the second bass drum beats and they will hear it in their heads even when playing and coming to the halt on crash halts.

### Halt the Band. – Give them praise.

19. Teach your band that when stepping off to take a short pace of about  $\frac{3}{4}$  step. This will avoid players leaning back as they try to take a full first step.
20. Just practice stepping off then coming to a halt. Do it 5 times with only around 9 paces between stepping off and the first double tap of the Bass drum.
21. Ensure your players have a straight back, shoulders back.
22. I teach my band to have a straight right arm when swinging the arm and bring them up to just below shoulder height. You may wish them to only bring half way – up to you. Closed fist thumb on top. Like banging in a nail with the bottom of your hand. Arm straight.
23. Remember – between playing music on the march, ensure your band **look the part with their drill**.

### Remember the drill / music formula - 70% drill and 30% music.

24. **You can be the best sounding band BUT if your band's drill is ordinary, that is what the public will see and remember.**

**Remember - it's no harder to look smart as a marching Band and as a Drum Major.**

Enjoy your marching

Jeff Hale