

## Marching Fundamentals

*A guide is needed for all members to detail the instructions for marching fundamentals.*

The details of learning marching fundamentals can be overwhelming to new members. Rookies need to have the information printed out so they can practice or review at home with correct instructions. *Instructors should be careful not to teach too many skills at each session.* This guide and the Vocabulary for Marching Band should help the members and staff in developing uniformity of marching technique and instructions. This could be a section in the Band Handbook given to each member. The staff and Drum Majors use verbal commands for initiating marching fundamentals. Everyone should give verbal commands in rhythm *using the same cadence and tempo.* All CAPITAL letters are the accented or emphasized syllable. Basic skills (“basics”) are presented here in the order that they should initially be learned.

Start with a session explaining drill charts, terms and learning methods in a *seated classroom environment* (Marching 101.) The band room works fine for this. Do not *assume* the students understand the terms and basics, even the veterans. Give them a *brief overview* with the printed “Terms” and these detailed instructions so they can use them as a reference on the field or at home. Remember *Multiple Learning Styles*—See the print, Hear the explanation, See the demonstration and Do it! Review the detailed information for the first items to be taught. (Fall-in, Posture, Parade Rest/Standby, Attention, Halt, Mark Time and Forward March) *Keep in mind the Spiral Learning Model* in teaching marching fundamentals (and everything else!)

Many contemporary bands are taking a *more casual, less military approach* to performing these basic fundamentals. Rather than using verbal commands for attention they might say “go to attention” or simply “ready!” There are Pros and Cons to almost everything we do, and a change from the band’s past approach needs to be weighed carefully. For an advanced band that has great rehearsal etiquette and focus, the casual approach can work well. For a novice and/or less disciplined band, the precise, military approach works well in making progress to a more focused, disciplined band that rehearses great. Another consideration is how uniform the “call to attention” or any other fundamental appears. For example, if the “horns up” move is done with rhythmic precision, it carries over into the show where that exactness is required. Many directors feel that you should *never miss an opportunity to move with exact precision*, which carries over into everything you do. More on rehearsal ideas in Chapter 6

There are several marching technique videos available that are excellent to show to rookie members and student leaders. (If “a picture is worth a thousand words,” a video must be worth a million words.) See Resources at the end of the chapter.

The following section details a military approach with verbal commands.

## *Fall-In*

This is used as a command for students to take their position as instructed. They are to be in place but relaxed. The right foot is in place. No talking is allowed. For example: “Fall-in in block band.” (“Fall-in at Parade Rest” can be specified)

## *Posture*

*Good posture is the most basic element of good marching and playing.* Uniformity must be maintained when moving and at halt.

- Chin up slightly
- Stand tall (as if someone were lifting you from the top of your head)
- Legs straight (but do not lock knees)
- Heels—Back of shoulders—Back of head in alignment (as against a wall or pole)
- Stomach in
- Rib cage expanded/Chest out
- Shoulders relaxed, pulled back and down
- **Shoulder exercise**—shoulders up towards ears, pull shoulders back, then down
- Eyes look straight ahead or direction of focus
- **Posture exercise**—raise up on the balls of the feet slowly for four counts and down for four counts—maintaining balance and posture

## *Parade Rest/Standby/Rest Position*

The purpose of Parade Rest/Standby is for the band to be in a uniform position ready to move to attention or to listen to instructions (or relax/at ease.)

Verbal Command:

**Band — paRADE Rest (Move)**

1      2      3      4      1

- Good posture
- Feet 22 ½” apart (one 8 to 5 step size)
- Toes angled out slightly (some bands keep toes straight ahead)
- Instruments should be held uniformly in each section  
(there are many options for each section—but *it must be uniform*)
- Instrument should be ready to move easily and smoothly to Attention
- No talking
- No moving
- Focused attitude

## *Attention*

The purpose of Attention is for the band to be in a uniform position ready to begin marching or bring instruments up to playing position. *Any group of students* can be taught to stand at Perfect Attention and look great! A novice or developing band must *rehearse standing at attention*. (Explain the importance. Take pride in it. Make a game of it. “Let’s practice standing at perfect attention for 30 seconds.” Then keep adding on. Rehearse Attention anytime the band does not do it well *just like anything else*.)

Verbal Command:

## Chapter 5: The Visual Program

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**Band — ten HUT (Move)**

1 2 3 4 1

- Great posture
- Left leg closes to right leg (right foot stays in place)
- Toes angled out 45° (some bands keep toes together which is easier to get uniformity)
- Instrument held in both hands (hands in playing position on instrument)
- Uniform instrument height in each section (match mouthpiece height within section)
- Arms relaxed—Elbows out slightly
- No talking
- No moving
- Focused attitude

### *Halt*

*Halt* stops the movement of either *Mark Time* or *Forward March*.

Verbal Command:

**READY — HALT (Left foot stops) (Right foot stops)**

1 2 3 4 and 1

- On count 4 the left foot stops in place. (subdivide count 4)
- If *Attention* is toes apart, then left toe is placed out 45° on count 4 and right toe is out 45° on the next count.
- On the second count of 1, the right foot stops in place and all motion ceases.
- A position of *Attention* is assumed.

### *Mark Time*

*Mark Time* is marching in place with no forward motion.

Verbal Command:

**Mark Time MARK (Hold) (Move)**

1 2 3 4 and

- On the “and” of count 4 the left heel is raised so the bottom of shoe is even with the top of the right shoe (just below ankle). The left toe stays down.
- If *Attention* is toes apart 45°, then toes move together (parallel) on counts 1 and 2.
- On count 1 the left heel is lowered to the ground and the right heel is raised to the top of the left shoe (just below the ankle).
- The motion continues with the left heel down on counts 1 and 3 and the right foot down on 2 and 4. Heels are up on the “and’s.”
- The balls of both feet remain planted on the ground.
- The knees will move forward in a natural motion.
- The movement should be continuous and smooth.  
(some older band styles call for a snap & freeze motion)

## Forward March

*Forward March* is the basic technique to moving forward with a smooth glide step. (Other techniques are used for Show Band and Big Ten style with exaggerated leg lift/chair step. There are resources to see for this style. This style is difficult for high school musicians to do while playing.) Forward March is typically done from a *Mark Time* but it can be done from a *Halt*, but is somewhat awkward. The following style is generally called the *glide or roll step*.

Verbal Command:

**FORward** —            **MARCH** (Check) (Move) (Step)

1            2            3            4            and            1

- Out of a *Mark Time* (counts 1 2 3) the right foot should Lock (Check) in place on count 4. Some bands count out loud on count 4 using “Check” or “Lock.”
- On the ‘and’ of count 4 the body should begin its motion by moving forward leading from the center of the body (but not leaning forward.) The right foot and leg *initiate the body motion by pushing forward*.
- Also on the ‘and’ of count 4 the left foot should move forward with the *toe raised up* and the heel down low enough to just clear the ground, as in kicking a ball. See Figure 1.



Figure 1

- On count 1 the left heel should be down and the toe pointed up at a 30-45° angle.
- Also on count 1, the right heel is up and the right toe is down. See Figure 2.
- If *Attention* is toes apart, then toes move together (parallel) on counts 1 and 2.
- The body should be motionless from the waist up.
- Good posture should be maintained. Do not lean forward.



Figure 2



Figure 3

*Forward March* continues with the left heel down on counts 1 and 3 and the right heel down on counts 2 and 4. Most band styles call for the toe pointed up at a 30-45° angle. See Figure 3.

Forward March *Style*—see 9. *STYLE* below for leg style options.

## *Horns Up*

Instruments must be brought up to playing position with a quick, precise movement. This is part of the visual performance and often *the first impression*. At times, a slow *Horns Up* is effective (e.g. in a ballad) taking three counts and in place on count four. Be consistent whenever possible.

Verbal Command:

**Band —      Horns UP      (Move)**

1      2      3      4      1

- Horns move quickly (snap) to playing position
- Each section needs to be uniform in instrument carriage (Flutes and brass **must be parallel** to the ground)
- Arms at 90% in an inverted V (brass instruments)
- Slow *Horns Up* can be coordinated to fit the music (usually 3 counts)

## *Horns Down*

Instruments must return to the attention position with a quick precise movement. At times, a slow *Horns Down* is effective (e.g. in a ballad).

Verbal Command:

**Band —      Horns DOWN (Move)**

1      2      3      4      1

- Horns move quickly (snap) to position of attention
- Slow *Horns Down* can be coordinated to fit the music (usually 2-4 counts)

## *Dress Right/Left/Center*

*Dress Right, Left and Center* are movements to check and adjust alignment in a block or linear formation.

Verbal Command:

**Dress [Right] Dress      (Move)**

1      2      3      4

- Horns move quickly (snap) to Horns Up position (usually Tubas keep the instruments at Attention Position)
- Head snaps to the direction called
- Maintain good posture
- Quickly adjust alignment
- Band member on end of line (dress point) keeps head forward and checks location of feet
- *Dress Center* aligns to designated center of line, members to right do a *Dress Left* and members to the left do a *Dress Right*

### *Ready Front*

*Ready Front* returns band members to the attention position.

Verbal Command:

<b>Ready</b>		<b>FRONT</b>	(Move)
1	2	3	4

- Head and instrument returns quickly to *Attention* position

### *Right/Left/About Turn*

*Right, Left or About Turn* is a simple maneuver to get the members to face 90° to the right or left or 180° to the rear. Some bands use a military right, left, and about face in addition to or instead of the *Turn* maneuver. *Turns* are recommended since they are easier to do than the military facings. Further, they are rarely used in a show so little time needs to be devoted to them.

Verbal Command:

<b>RIGHT</b>	<b>turn</b>	<b>ready</b>	<b>MOVE</b>	(Hold)	(Step)	(Step)
1	2	3	4	1	2	3

- On count 1 left foot does one mark time
- On count 2 right toe rotates 90° to the right, pivoting on heel
- On count 3 left toe rotates 90° to the right, pivoting on heel

Verbal Command:

<b>LEFT</b>	<b>turn</b>	<b>ready</b>	<b>MOVE</b>	(Step)	(Step)
1	2	3	4	1	2

- On count 1 left toe rotates 90° to the left, pivoting on heel
- On count 2 right toe rotates 90° to the left, pivoting on heel

Verbal Command:

<b>aBOUT</b>	<b>turn</b>	<b>ready</b>	<b>MOVE</b>	(Hold)	(Step)	(Step)	(Step)	(Step)
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5

- On count 1 left foot does one mark time
- On count 2 right toe rotates 90° to the right, pivoting on heel
- On count 3 left toe rotates 90° to the right, pivoting on heel

## *Backward March*

*Backward March* is the basic technique to move backwards. Most bands do this style on the balls of the feet and keep the heels off the ground. This demands a little more balance but reduces the chance of bouncing and stumbling.

Verbal Command:

<b>BACK</b>	<b>MARCH</b>	<b>READY</b>	<b>Move</b>	(up on toe)	(Step)
1	2	3	4	and	1

- Out of a *Mark Time or Forward March* the right foot should go up on the ball of the foot on count 4
- On the ‘and’ of count 4 the body should begin its motion by moving backward leading from the center of the body (but not leaning.) The right foot and leg initiate the body motion by pushing backward.
- Also on the ‘and’ of count 4 the left foot should move backward with the heel raised up and the toe down.
- On count 1 the left toe should be down.
- Toes (balls of the feet) should be on the beat and heels stay up.
- Legs should remain straight.
- The body should be motionless from the waist up.
- Good posture should be maintained. Do not lean forward or backward.

## *Slides*

*Slides* are done in the context of the drill or in a Box to the Right (or Left) Exercise or Slide Exercise. The purpose of the maneuver is to keep the body orientation/shoulders *flat to the front* and instrument direction (when playing) to the front. This is typically done while marching towards an end zone and facing front. It is not done with a verbal command but with instructions and then:

Verbal Command:

<b>ONE</b>	<b>TWO</b>	<b>READY</b>	<b>MOVE</b>
1	2	3	4

- At a halt, feet are facing the end zone and upper body and instrument are facing front (90° to the right or left). Shoulders should be squared flat to the front.
- Hips should be at a 45° angle.
- Forward or backward march while maintaining this body orientation.
- At times this can be very difficult for the flutists and adjustments may be necessary.

## *Crab Step* (Percussion)

The *Crab Step* is done by the battery members instead of the *Slide* for ease of playing the drums. Generally the battery automatically substitutes this move for the *Slide* in the drill or exercises. On occasion the entire band might utilize the *Crab Step* for effect, however adequate time would need to be devoted to its mastery. It also is not done with a verbal command but instructions and then:

Verbal Command:

<b>ONE</b>	<b>TWO</b>	<b>READY</b>	<b>MOVE</b>
1	2	3	4

- Moving to the right—on count 1 the left leg crosses over the right and takes a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size step.
- On count 2 the right leg takes a  $1\frac{1}{4}$  size step to the right.
- Moving to the left—on count 1 the right leg crosses over the left and takes a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size step.
- On count 2 the left leg takes a  $1\frac{1}{4}$  size step to the left.
- Maintain good posture and avoid bouncing.

## *Plus One Step/Minus One Step*

*Plus One Step* and *Minus One Step* are fundamentals used in rehearsals to improve change of direction and transitions from one page of drill to the next. This advanced technique need not be introduced until a few weeks into the season. The *Plus One* is executed at the end of a drill move by adding one count or step **in the next direction**. For example, in an eight count drill move, marchers would take step nine in the *direction and step size of the following move*, hold for three counts and return the feet together to location on count 8. Some bands do not return to the leg closed position on count 8 making it difficult for the staff to read and adjust placement.

(Move)-----Step (Hold) ----- Close  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5

*Minus One* starts a drill move by presetting the right foot from the last count of the *previous direction and step size*. This is executed on count 5 of the count-off (verbal or Dr. Beat®):

(Count-off)                      Step back      (Hold)-----Move  
 1 2 3 4 5                      6 7 8 1



## *High Mark Time*

*High Mark Time* is mark time with an exaggerated leg lift. This is used by show and big ten bands and occasionally in competition shows to create an energetic look for a few counts, usually four to eight. It is also an excellent balance exercise, especially when done very slowly. Big Ten and show bands sometimes do this as a chair step—lower leg not pulled in against knee.

Verbal Command: (Explain this is High Mark Time)

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>MARK</b>	(Hold)	(Move)
1	2	3	4	and

- On the “and” of count 4 the left foot is raised so the middle curve of the foot is against the right knee and the toe is pointed down at a 45° angle.
- On count 1 the foot is down.
- On the “and” of count 2 the right foot is raised to the left knee (as above)
- On count 2 the foot is down.
- As a balance exercise: 1. Hold each of the “and’s” and counts and/or 2. Move very slowly in rhythm (eighth note = 60 bpm)

## *Touch and Go*

*Touch and Go* is the technique used for reversing direction when not changing the body orientation (forward march to backwards march). It is not done with a verbal command but instructions.

- The last count of the forward or backward motion is a “stab step”—both heels off the ground.
- Count 1 of new direction is a re-placement of the left foot in spot.
- When going from backward march to forward, the re-placement is on the heel.
- The left leg and abdominal muscles initiate the move on the “and” of 1.
- On count 2 the right foot continues in the new direction.
- Maintain upper body posture.

## *Hip Shift*

The *Hip Shift* is the technique used in a Slide to change from a Forward March to a Backward March while maintaining the same direction of motion. (i.e. Forward March towards an end zone in a Slide, continuing in the same direction and changing (using a Hip Shift) to Backwards March. It is not done with a verbal command but instructions.

- While moving in a Slide, on count 8 the right foot is a “stab step” (toe down, heel up) straight to the front sideline.
- During counts 8 thru 1 the hips should rotate to the right while the left foot changes from forward to backward (heels off the ground). This should be a smooth motion.
- The shoulders and instrument maintain flat to the front position.
- By count 2 the body is now in a Backward March/Slide and continues.
- Once the *Hip Shift* from Forward to Backward is comfortable, the *Hip Shift* from Backward to Forward should be learned using the same procedure.

## *Jazz Run*

*Jazz Run* is an advanced technique utilized to cover large distances (usually 3 or 4 to 5) and create a great deal of motion. It is not done with a verbal command but instructions. It is usually preceded by a Forward March and not a Halt.

- On count 8, right toe goes out at a 45° angle and knees bend to lower the body center of gravity.
- On count 1, left toe goes to a 45° angle.
- Foot should contact ground in this order: toe—ball—heel with very little weight placed on heel.
- Maintain good posture and avoid leaning forward.
- On the ‘and’ of the last count of Jazz Run, the body should begin to return to normal tall marching position.

## Balance Exercise—*Mark Time 4 and freeze on 1*

This is a basic exercise to unify the step-off technique, balance and step size.

Mark time 4 counts and Forward March 1 freezing all motion on count 1

- Left heel is down and toe is up
- Right toe is down and heel is up
- Body weight should be centered and balanced on both feet
- Good posture is maintained
- Hold this position motionless
- On command, smoothly shift weight forward so *left* foot is flat with all of the weight over the *left* foot. *Right* toe is down and heel is up.
- Check alignment, step size and posture.
- On command, smoothly shift weight backward so *right* foot is flat with all of the weight over the *right* foot. *Left* toe is up and heel is down.
- Check alignment, step size and posture.
- Also do exercise Mark Time 4, Forward 1 and Freeze on 2 (then to 3, then to 4)

### **PUT IN SAME FORMAT:**

#### **1. Floating Turns**

##### **a. Back to Front**

- Back step on 1
- Turn on 2 to right (Foot & Shoulders 60°)
- Continue on 3 - Right Foot crosses over (Foot & Shoulders 120°)
- Regular step on 4 (180°), FM on 5 6 7 8, Halt

##### **b. Front to Back**

- Forward on 1
- Turn on 2 to right (Foot & Shoulders 60°)
- Continue on 3 - (Foot & Shoulders 120°)
- Regular step on 4 Right Foot crosses behind (180°),  
Back march on 5 6 7 8, Halt

## A Natural Approach to Marching

### *A simple approach to the initial teaching of forward march*

The first attempts by rookies are often very awkward looking and uncomfortable for the student. There are so many checkpoints and details to think about for *Posture* and *Forward March* (see above) that it is overwhelming for the rookie marchers. This does not create confidence from the start. An easy approach that utilizes the *Spiral Learning Method* (teach one thing at a time) is to start with a simple walk (every rookie can do that!) and add a detail one at a time. The following is a sequence that will instill confidence.

1. Line up on the yard lines in company fronts at 2 step spacing.
  - a. Rookies *always* interspersed with veterans.
  - b. Staff faces members using *occasional* short comments, corrections, encouragement (no yelling—creates chaos)
2. Walk 80-100 yards *with great posture*. Stop. (\*Turn around, regroup, comments)
3. Walk full field with great posture, *staying in line* (roughly) with members on either side. Rookies can turn their heads (for now.)\*
4. Walk full field *adding heels on the beat* with Dr. Beat at 120 mm.\*
5. March (we are now marching) *adding toes up*.\*
6. (Some of the checkpoints may slip & reminders will be needed and/or review.)
7. At next rehearsal, start at #3. Next rehearsal #4. Etc.
8. At this point, this exercise becomes *Marching Aerobics* as a *daily* exercise.
9. STYLE—straight leg or more relaxed? Many variations of style are possible.
  - a. Forward March—More relaxed is easier for high school members, looks more natural, allows better playing
  - b. Backward March—Legs straight, on the balls of the feet, heels do not touch the ground
10. Introducing *simultaneous playing/spinning and marching* needs to be approached in a similar manner. The following section on tracking presents an “Introduction to Playing/Spinning and Marching.” It is suggested that the initial exercises be done in *full block band*. The Color Guard should be included in these exercises starting with simple flag spins.

## Intro to Playing/Spinning and Tracking

*Tracking is a very important exercise for playing/spinning while marching.*

Marching and playing/spinning at the same time is one of the most difficult tasks to master for the rookie, particularly for the wind instrument players. An exercise that greatly helps the transition from *standing and playing* to *playing in motion* is the tracking. It is simply marching and playing easy scales and exercises (or basic flag spins) and eventually show segments in a block formation in a straight marching situation like on a track (hence the name). Tracking can be done anywhere there is a level surface and some distance, including the practice field. This exercise is helpful in both small and large sections and full band. In small sections, instructors have the opportunity to hear and help the individuals. (*Rookies should never march next to each other.*) Tracking should begin in band camp.

*At the beginning*, use the following sequence in Block Band:

1. Mark Time 8, continue Marking Time while playing 16 *legato* quarter notes on a unison Bb concert ending with a whole note tied to an eighth note (release on 5.) MM = 120
2. Same as above but Forward March while playing. Mark Time on whole note and Halt on release. Rookies will need to force themselves to play, even though it is difficult to hold a steady tone. (It will get easier!)

*Students should concentrate on smooth glide step and no motion from the waist up.*

Use Dr. Beat (or Battery) to help maintain the pulse.

3. Mark Time 8, continue Marking Time while playing 4 quarter notes on each step of the Bb concert scale up and down. Play last note as a whole note and Halt on the release on count 5.
4. Same as above but Forward March while playing. Mark Time on last note as whole note and Halt on release.
5. When this is somewhat comfortable, play the scale in half, quarter and eighth notes as in the Daily Warm-up.

It will take more than one session for the rookies to get comfortable tracking with scales. It needs to be done daily for several weeks, gradually adding other scales and rhythmic exercises from the *Daily Warm-up*.

*Show segments* usually work best in like-instrument sections:

1. 8–16 measure phrases from the show material should be added.
2. A sequence should be used of *continuous marching* while alternating playing and not playing. (Focus on one thing.)
3. Tracking is also a good endurance builder.
4. The segments in the show that are difficult should be tracked *regularly* throughout the season.
5. As the season progresses, periodically play the rhythmic Warm-ups in motion.

