

# ***A Practical and Streamlined Approach to Teaching Marching Fundamentals***

**Featuring Members of the Stephen F. Austin High School Band**  
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## **Training your students as "musician-athletes"**

- Implement a physical fitness plan
- Benefits include...
  - Shocks students out of their "summer" bodies
  - Develops physical and mental stamina
  - After a strenuous workout, marching fundamentals seem easy
  - Provides environment for immediate relationship building
- How and when?
  - First two weeks of summer band - one hour every morning
  - Remainder of summer band - short, 10-15 minute work-out every morning
  - During the school year - short work-out, 1-2 times per week
- Examples of basic "Crossfit" exercises and formats
  - Exercises
    - Burpees
    - Squats
    - Scissor Kicks
  - Formats
    - Tabata
    - AMRAP
    - Ladder

## **Using the circle for maximum accountability and visibility**

- Provides clear line of sight between every student and teacher, assisting with...
  - Visual reminders of exercises, fundamentals
  - Performance assessment
  - Peer motivation to support positive performance
  - Student accountability

## **Establishing a solid foundation**

- Posture
  - Establishing quality posture is the foundation of quality marching programs
  - The 5 Points of Alignment
    - Ankles, Knees, Hips, Shoulders, and Ears
    - Allows for clear, tangible discussion of posture, and how to improve it
  - The "S Curve" Exercise
    - Equal, even motion over space and time
- Pliés and Relevés
  - Focus on maintaining posture, using 5 points of alignment
  - Great way to begin developing dance vocabulary

## **Putting it together**

- Slides/Upper Body Facing
  - Focus on maintaining posture, using 5 points of alignment
  - Relationship of ears to shoulders remains constant
  - Hips and shoulders move in tandem to establish the slide position

- Pointe Exercise
  - Focus on maintaining the length of the leg and moving from the hip
  - Work to maintain posture (top three points of alignment) throughout
  - The hip and ankle work in conjunction
- "50/50" Exercise
  - All motion is based upon "50/50" weight distribution
  - Applies leg motion learned in pointe exercise, while layering in new responsibility of weight transfer
  - Results in accomplishing "one step forward" and "one step backward"
- The 2-Step Step-out
  - Applies all previously discussed movement concepts in a very short exercise
  - Helps to create a more realistic performance scenario
  - Use step outs as often as possible, especially during "off the field" rehearsals
  - Recreate performance scenarios as closely as possible, as often as possible
- Putting it all together
  - Sequence the entire fundamental package together in a short song
    - Using a song can help keep you to your rehearsal schedule
    - Using a song for a visual warm-up at a contest can help keep your students at ease

### **Taking quality movement fundamentals "on the move"**

- Circle Drill
  - A simple way to work on basic marching technique while utilizing all of the advantages of the circle
  - Provides opportunities to discuss additional drill-related skill sets, including spatial awareness, pathways, upper body orientation, and more
  - Provides a great environment to work on utilizing a visual source of tempo
  - Add musical responsibilities to these exercises as often as possible
- "Happy Fun Time"
  - Develops the skill of marching at upper tempos
  - Can be utilized with any simple marching exercise
  - It is important to teach students how to operate outside of their comfort zone
- Create exercises based on material in your show

### **Movement fundamentals within the scope and sequence of your marching band season**

- First week of summer band
  - Spend the majority of your time establishing visual fundamentals
  - Give your student leaders the opportunity to teach/reinforce concepts
- Remaining weeks of summer band
  - Split visual time evenly between fundamentals and drill
- When school begins
  - Visual fundamentals are typically rehearsed during band class
  - Go outside during the school day and rehearse playing and moving
  - Always work to tie musical and visual responsibilities together

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