

# A Band Director's Guide

## ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS AND REMINDERS



### ***Phi Beta Mu*** ***Mississippi Delta Chapter***

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## **PREFACE**

This is a simple guide developed to aid middle and high school band directors in the organization of their band program. The more organized you can be as a band director, the more successful your program can be. The information contained in this guide is sectioned off by month as a reminder of what you should be doing at specific times. While much of this information pertains to high school programs, middle school directors will be able to use much of this information as it pertains to their situation.

This guide was originally published as the brain child of a group of successful band directors: Jerry Ball, Badrae Hannah, Frank Adams, and Mike Smith. It was originally published in the 1990's and has been updated to reflect the changes that have occurred over the years in our ever-changing field.

The information contained is certainly not all-inclusive as every program and director is different and unique. Keep this guide handy and use it each month. Add your own individual notes and reminders for your program and your future planning.

# **TIPS TO KEEP MARCHING BANDS HEALTHY AND HYDRATED ON THE FIELD**

(NATA) National Athletic Trainers' Association

With the beat of a drum, the blow of a whistle, and the blare of the brass section, marching bands across the country are practicing formations and new musical routines in anticipation of the start of school year. Recognizing the unique needs of marching band performers, the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) has issued timely guidelines to ensure safety on the field and in the parade line.

“Marching band members, just like athletes, need to be well conditioned and prepared for the rigors of band practices and performances. These unique athletes are often in formations for long periods of time, wearing heavy clothing in warm weather conditions, and carrying instruments that require dexterity and strength,” said Brian Robinson, MS, ATC, chair of NATA’s Secondary School Athletic Trainers’ Committee. “It’s critical for band directors to work closely with school athletic trainers and medical professionals to develop a safety protocol to ensure band members march on the field fit to perform at their best.” NATA recommends the following tips for parents, band directors, medical professionals and marching band members:

## **Prepare for Activity:**

Students participating in marching bands should receive a general health exam prior to activity to make sure they are fit to perform. Be sure to discuss any pre-existing conditions with the physician

## **Put a Plan into Place:**

Develop a written emergency plan in consultation with an athletic trainer and local emergency medical service. Share it regularly and review it with the appropriate band directors/supervisors, school administrators and medical staff.

## **Get Ready to March:**

Band directors, athletic trainers and parents should ensure that students are physically and mentally conditioned for marching band activities. Encourage students to start with 20-minute walks outside and gradually increase distance of time approximately four weeks before the marching band season starts. Limber up with appropriate stretches and warm ups and cool downs after practice. Increase rigorous routines gradually so students can tone their muscles and increase strength. This will help to reduce aches and pains as well as fatigue from long practices and challenging routines.

## **Acclimatize to the Heat:**

Acclimatize students to outdoor warm weather conditions. Start routines slowly and build endurance. By working out and walking in the heat or non-air conditioned environments, students can condition their bodies to adapt and better perform in the heat.

### **What to Wear:**

Wear light or white colored shorts and t-shirts to avoid overheating during practice. This is especially important for anyone carrying heavy instruments for long periods of time. Save the formal attire – heavy hats, dark clothing and shoes – for dress rehearsals and get comfortable in them before game day. Be aware that the weight of the material and dark colors keep heat “in.”

### **Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate:**

Establish a hydration plan that allows band members to drink water or sports drinks such as Gatorade throughout practice sessions (about 7-10 ounces every 10 to 20 minutes). It is important to hydrate before and after routines. Without proper hydration, they are at risk of developing exceptional heat related illnesses. Make sure that band members have sports drinks and water and that they should always be available. Don't assume they care share with sports teams.

### **Seek Shade:**

Be smart when it comes to the sun. Stand in the shade during rest breaks or half time to cool down before and after practices and performances.

### **Fuel for Success:**

Incorporate healthy foods in the daily diet including, grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy and meat/poultry /fish to give them the fuel they need to exercise. A balanced and moderate approach is always the best bet.

### **Make use of Musical Instruments:**

Students should hold and manage sousaphones, drums, flutes and other instruments correctly to avoid ergonomic injuries.

### **Stay Fit in Formation:**

Since bands are often in formation and standing still for long periods of time – especially when on parade routes or during practice – students should move fingers, knees and toes slightly to keep circulation flowing and joints loose and flexible.

### **Monitor Band Members:**

Band members should be monitored at all times on the field for signs of heat illnesses by a parent, band director, certified athletic trainer or other individual.

### **Inspect Fields and Routes:**

Remove debris, water, rocks and other hazards from the field or parade route. These small obstacles can lead to twisted ankles, bruised knees, scraped elbows or other injuries.

### **Stock the Kit:**

Stock a first aid kit and keep it on site for medical emergencies. Include supplies for wound management and bee stings, such as elastic wraps and band aids, disposable ice packs, tape and wound cleanser, among other items.

## JULY

1) Summer Band Camp Preparations (these should actually have begun in March or April of the previous year):

- Get ready for camp. Bring in section leaders the week before and use them to your advantage. This will make them feel special and also take much of the work load off of the staff.
- Mow practice field
- Line off practice field
- Copy Music, drill, coordinate sheets
- Props for show – design, build
- Camp Schedule
- Rooms for sectional rehearsals reserved
- Check with additional staff – make sure they know the schedule
- Assignments/Instructions for Staff
- Instrument Check-Out Forms
- Parent volunteers to have water/Gatorade, snacks, fruit, meals, first aid

2) Pass out Band Handbooks - Include:

- Calendar of Events
- Student Expectations
- Decide on your Grading System – When, how, what, why?
  - Music Pass-off (memorized or not?)
  - Scale/rudiment Pass-Off
  - Test all students
  - Marching Fundamentals Pass-Off
- Uniform Expectations
- Handbook Agreement
- Travel Permission Forms
- Medical Forms
- Drug Testing Consent Forms (if your district requires)

3) Calendar of Events – Get these dates on the school calendar in the office. Check on conflicts with testing. Should include:

- Summer Camp dates
- Rehearsal dates & times
- Football games
- Marching festivals/competitions
- Concert Festivals
- Parades
- Concert dates (Spring, Winter, Preview)
- Clinic dates and sign-up deadlines
- Fund Raiser dates
- Deadlines for fees

4) Begin collecting required signature forms:

- Medical Forms – keep in a 3 ring binder to take with you on all trips
- Travel Release Forms – keep these in a file folder
- Handbook Agreement – keep these in a file folder
- Drug Testing Consent Forms (if your district requires)
- Handbook Agreement Forms signed by student and parent

5) Fit students in Band Uniforms – Have a Parent Committee ready to handle this.

6) Begin collecting band fees – Always write a receipt for money collected.

7) Get Lions All State Band Music to Students. Visit the website ([www.misslionsband.org](http://www.misslionsband.org)) for tryout information and dates

8) Pictures for football program – Who, When, Where, Dress

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## **AUGUST**

**SCHOOL BEGINS! Be at all in-service faculty meetings. Become an active member of the faculty – you will need their support during the year.**

1) Administration: Speak with your principal about how many away ballgames you will attend and if you can use a pep band instead of taking the full ensemble.

2) Sectionals: Sectionals are not just for concert band. Break up into smaller groups at least one day a week. So many problems can be identified and corrected when you have a room of like instruments. It is time consuming but very efficient.

3) Begin after school band rehearsals for marching band

- Days & Times posted and handed out to students and parents.
- Daily rehearsal expectations
- How to get to and from the practice field
- Rehearsal attire
- Procedure for changing clothes
- Procedure for recording absences and excused absences
- Field Set-up crew (yard line markers, front ensemble equipment, water coolers, etc)
- Water/Gatoraide – Students should carry their own water bottle with them on the field.

4) Friday night football games begin:

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Expectations for riding the bus
- Halftime Announcer
- Halftime announcement
- Contacting visiting Band Director
- Procedure for getting to the field and into the bleachers
- Seating arrangement for bleachers (home & away)
- Expectations for students in the stands – behavior, playing, bathroom, weather
- Halftime Procedure – Where to warm-up, Entering & Exiting field

5) Marching Festival Entry forms and fees

- Decide which festivals/competitions you want to participate in
- Fill out & send in Entry Forms
- Entry Fee – Band Booster Funds or School Funds (requires a Purchase Order which take time)

6) MHSAA (Mississippi High School Activities Association) & MBA (Mississippi Bandmasters Association):

- Visit the MHSAA website ([www.misshsaa.com](http://www.misshsaa.com)) and download the band information manual
- Visit the MBA website ([www.msbandmasters.com](http://www.msbandmasters.com)) and download forms

- Begin filling out and sending in forms:
    - ✓ MBA dues
    - ✓ State Band Clinic Nomination form & student fees
    - ✓ State Marching Evaluation Entry Form
    - ✓ MHSAA/MBA Marching Championship forms
    - ✓ MHSAA State Concert Evaluation form (Band Bulletin IV)
    - ✓ Submit purchase orders early – the process takes time
  - Read through the manual and information and be familiar with it
- 7) Mississippi Bandmasters Association Meeting – Saturday near the end of the month
- 8) Mississippi Indoor Association [www.msindoor.org](http://www.msindoor.org)
- August - MIA Meeting (follows the August MBA Meeting)
- 9) Band Parent Meeting (Band Booster Club) – When, Where, Time, How often? Always have an agenda planned ahead of time.
- 10) Budget – You must have a budget for the year, and submit it to your band boosters and principal.
- 11) Begin serious planning for spring trip (if you are taking one) – use travel agent or plan it yourself?
- 12) Appoint a student crew to move and set up front ensemble sound equipment. Assign specific jobs to each and have them practice until they can do it in under 1:30.
- 13) Beginner Band recruiting Parent Night Meeting. Meet with all parents of beginner band students to go over expectations of beginner band and how to obtain an instrument. Your local Music store representative will be happy to assist you with this.
- 14) Begin fundraising for Indoor Groups – MIA & WGI (Indoor Percussion and Color Guard)

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## **SEPTEMBER**

### 1) Football Games:

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Expectations for riding the bus
- Halftime Announcer
- Seating arrangement for bleachers (home & away)
- Contacting visiting Band Director
- Getting to the field and into the bleachers
- Halftime Procedure – Where to warm-up, Entering & Exiting field
- Expectations for students in the stands – behavior, playing, bathroom, weather
- Halftime announcement

2) MHSAA forms and fees due September 15: Band Bulletin IV, Marching Evaluations, State Marching Championships

3) MBA forms due September 15: State Band Clinic, Student Nominations, Director registration form and dues

4) MHSAA Student Eligibility List due to MHSAA Office September 15

5) Marching Festival/Competition? Some happen at the end of September.

6) Submit Conference/Workshop request and Field Trip Request to Administration for State Band Clinic

7) Submit Conference/Workshop request to Administration for Midwest Band Clinic

8) Lions All State Band: Schedule time to work with students who are auditioning. Encourage them to take private lessons.

9) Make plans to attend MBA State Band Clinic. (hotel reservations, travel)

10) Make plans to attend the Midwest Band Clinic in Chicago (hotel reservations, registration, travel). It is the most informative clinic you will ever attend.

11) Winter Guard International [www.wgi.org](http://www.wgi.org) (Indoor Color Guard)

- Sign Up for WGI Regional Events
- Develop Show Concept

12) Mississippi Indoor Association [www.msindoor.org](http://www.msindoor.org)

- Sign Up for Events
- Develop Show Concept

13) Pass-offs: By now, most of the music should be learned. There is no substitute to hearing each student perform their responsibilities individually. Have them send in their pass-offs on email, smart music, or Google Voice. Google Voice has no financial charge and is easy to use. All the students have to have is a cell phone.

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## **OCTOBER**

### 1) Football Games and Marching Festivals:

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Expectations for riding the bus
- Halftime Announcer
- Seating arrangement for bleachers (home & away)
- Contacting visiting Band Director
- Getting to the field and into the bleachers
- Halftime Procedure – Where to warm-up, Entering & Exiting field
- Expectations for students in the stands – behavior, playing, bathroom, weather
- Halftime announcement

### 2) State Marching Band Evaluations – Second Saturday in October

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Feeding students

3) Begin Selecting Music for Christmas/Winter Concert

4) Hand out music for Concert Band Auditions – if you do these in November. Some do this in April/May. Requirements? (scales, prepared music, sight reading, rudiments). Procedure – During class or after school, by recording? Who will listen and score?

5) Mississippi Marching Band Championships – end of the month. If you choose to participate, make a big deal about this week. Have a dress rehearsal performance for the parents prior to the big day. This will give the students momentum and an extra performance run.

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Feeding students

6) Mississippi Indoor Association [www.msindoor.org](http://www.msindoor.org) & Winter Guard International [www.wgi.org](http://www.wgi.org)

- Music - Obtain copyright for music early
- Order Uniforms
- Floor Design
- Audition dates
- finances

8) Lion's Band: After marching season is over, have all of the students trying out for Lion's Band play for their peers. This is a great way to encourage other students and also a performance opportunity for the students who are auditioning.

9) Homecoming: Is there a parade? Does the band play at halftime?

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# **NOVEMBER**

1) Football Games, Play-off Games:

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Feeding students

2) Lions All State Band Auditions

3) Begin Selecting and ordering Concert Festival Music.

- Make sure you select your required piece from the appropriate classification list.
- Check the band information manual for information and requirements for your warm-up and selected piece.

4) State Band Clinic student fees due by beginning of December

5) Mississippi Indoor Association [www.msindoor.org](http://www.msindoor.org) & Winter Guard International [www.wgi.org](http://www.wgi.org)

- Music - Obtain copyright for music early
- Order Uniforms
- Floor Design
- Prop Design

6) Copy and begin rehearsing Christmas Parade music and color guard routine.

7) Begin developing your recruiting plan for Beginner Band.

- Clear dates with principals
- Schedule recruiting concert
- Schedule dates with Music Company Representative

8) Chair auditions (some do this in the spring): If you are fortunate enough to be able to split your concert band, auditions can be a great time to enhance your deficiencies. You can make the chair audition anything you want it to be in order to improve different aspects of the program. Make the tryout music an etude that can be used for an honor band or college audition.

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## DECEMBER

- 1) Christmas Parade(s) – schedule, uniforms, weather plans (cold, rain)
- 2) Christmas/Winter Concert – send out reminders. When, where, time, dress, admission
- 3) MBA State Band Clinic
  - Combine with another school for student rooming and travel in order to cut cost.
- 4) Regional Band Association Director & Student fees due
- 5) Various University Honor Band Audition recordings due
- 6) Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference
- 7) MBA Wednesday night student housing form due first week of December
- 8) Mississippi Indoor Association Meeting at MBA State Clinic (Pay Dues to MIA - currently \$400 per group)
- 9) Mississippi Indoor Association [www.msindoor.org](http://www.msindoor.org) & Winter Guard International [www.wgi.org](http://www.wgi.org)
  - Prop Design
  - Order Customized Drum Slips (on2percussion)

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# JANUARY

- 1) Finalize Concert Festival music selections
- 2) Order Judges scores for Concert festival pieces.
- 3) Begin after school sectionals for concert band. If you bring in instructors to teach sectionals (this is highly recommended), make sure you finalize the schedule with them. Reserve rehearsal/sectional rooms.
- 4) Clinic/Honor Band weekends begin
  - Get permission from administration to participate in these weekend clinics since they all require missing school on Friday.
  - Get field trip permission forms on each student participating.
- 5) Contest Preparation – make arrangements to have other successful band directors (active or retired) come in to listen to your ensemble and give advice.
- 6) Mississippi Indoor Association [www.msindoor.org](http://www.msindoor.org) & Winter Guard International [www.wgi.org](http://www.wgi.org). Shows start usually last weekend of January through beginning of April. MIA Championships are scheduled around WGI Championships as well as MBA Concert Evaluations.
- 7) Beginner Band Recruiting. You may need to begin your recruiting process now. Each school district is different.
- 8) Marching Band: Start organizing your marching show for the fall now. Music arrangers, drill writers, all need to be decided on during this month. Once the show is decided on, plan a show reveal and invite next year’s incoming freshmen. This will get them excited about high school band and works great as a recruiting tool.

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## **FEBRUARY**

### 1) Clinic/Honor Band weekends

- Get permission from administration to participate in these weekend clinics since they all require missing school on Friday.
- Get field trip permission forms on each student participating.

### 2) Make arrangements for Color Guard and Drum Major Auditions

- Dates
- Reserve gym
- Hire instructor
- Hire judges – always use outside judges to alleviate any hint of unfairness.

### 3) Create and distribute the itinerary for State Concert Evaluations

### 4) Begin selecting music for Spring Concert

5) Beginner Band Recruiting. You may need to begin your recruiting process now. Each school district is different.

6) Contest Preparation – make arrangements to have other successful band directors (active or retired) come in to listen to your ensemble and give advice.

7) Pre-festival Concert: Two weeks before Evaluation, play the concert music for the parents. If you are able, bring judges in to make comments. This is great trial run for the students. Create and distribute the itinerary.

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## **MARCH**

1) Secure Judges for Color Guard and Drum Major auditions

2) State Concert Band Evaluations (may be in April):

- Bus Requests
- Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
- Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
- Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
- Bus Lists
- Feeding students

3) Finalize music selections for Spring Concert

4) Beginner Band Recruiting

- Procedure
- Clear dates with principals
- Schedule recruiting concert
- Schedule dates with Music Company Representative

5) Decide on Summer Camp Dates – get them on the school calendar

6) Begin preparations for Band Banquet

- Appoint parent/student committee
- Date/time/Location
- Caterer/Menu
- Decorations
- Guest speaker
- Cost/tickets
- Order trophies & begin deciding on awards
- Order John Phillip Sousa and Louis Armstrong Awards if necessary

6) Pre-festival Concert: Two weeks before Evaluation, play the concert music for the parents. If you are able, bring judges in to make comments. This is great trial run for the students. Even do a sight reading run through.

7) If you are planning a Spring Trip, have a mandatory meeting with all of the students and parents going on the spring trip. Go step by step over the itinerary and expectations. This will give the parents a good feeling about letting their child go and also answer any questions they may have.

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## APRIL

- 1) Color Guard and Drum Major Auditions.
- 2) Spring Concert? Possibly in May.
- 3) Band Banquet – continue preparations. Possibly in May.
- 4) Decide on Music for Marching Show.
- 5) Get music to Drill writer ASAP.
- 6) Make arrangements for Summer Band Camp staff and marching season.
- 7) Recruiting – hit the 5<sup>th</sup> grade recruiting trail. Have your plan and follow it.
- 8) Update next year’s calendar and send it out to students and parents.
- 9) Get student commitments for next year’s marching band
- 10) Student Leadership for next year?
- 11) Concert band auditions for next year? Requirements? (scales, prepared music, sight reading, rudiments). Procedure – During class or after school, by recording? Who will listen and score?
- 12) State Concert Band Evaluations (may be in March):
  - Bus Requests
  - Arrange for Bus Drivers & Chaperones
  - Arrange for someone to pull band trailer
  - Arrange for Water/Gatorade for students
  - Bus Lists
  - Feeding students
- 13) If you are planning a Spring Trip, have a mandatory meeting with all of the students and parents going on the spring trip. Go step by step over the itinerary and expectations. This will give the parents a good feeling about letting their child go and also answer any questions they may have.

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## **MAY**

- 1) Spring Concert? Possibly in April.
- 2) Band Banquet? Possibly in April.
- 3) Order or make arrangements with seamstress or company for Color Guard and Drum Major Uniforms.
- 4) Check on practice field – does it need mowing, seeding, fertilizer, watering?
- 5) Check on Music and Drill for Marching Season.
- 6) Make arrangements for repair of school instruments.
- 7) Inventory all school-owned instruments and equipment.
- 8) If you are going to take the band on a Spring Trip next year, begin planning now.

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# JUNE

## 1) Camp Details

- Copy Music, drill, coordinate sheets
- Props for show – design, build – use parent volunteers, ag shop, vo-tech, art department
- Camp Schedule – send to students, staff, instructors
- Rooms for sectional rehearsals reserved
- Assignments/Instructions for Staff
- Instrument Check-Out Forms
- Parent volunteers to have water/Gatorade, snacks, fruit, meals, first aid

## 2) Order T-Shirts for Marching Season

3) Check on practice field – does it need mowing, seeding, fertilizer, watering?

4) Make arrangements for Band Camp: water/Gatorade, snacks, fruit, food, tents – seek donations from parents and businesses

5) Check on Music and Drill for Marching Season

***Family: Make family time and vacation time. This is the only time of year to enjoy your family away from your band responsibilities. Take advantage of it. It will pay off in the long run.***

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