



Marching Band Fundamentals and Definitions

Set/ Ready Position

Historically, this was referred to as “attention”, and is still used in that form by many groups.

It is characterized by the following:

- ✓ Feet and heels are together.
- ✓ Legs straight (knees not locked)
- ✓ Body position at 60/40

The easiest way to do this is to slowly rock forward on your ankles. Stop when you feel your weight leave your heels and press on the balls of your feet. This should put a straight line rising from the balls of your feet, through your hips, and your chest.

- ✓ Chin pointed slightly upward 10 degrees
- ✓ In the down position, mouthpieces should be at the level of your eyes, and with the exception of the saxophones, and bass clarinets, and instruments should be perpendicular to the ground and 12” from your body.
- ✓ In the up position, brass bells should be angled upward 10o, and the elbows and the lower arms should form a 45o angles to the instrument. Flutes should be parallel to the ground, and other woodwind instruments should be in their correct playing position.

As this is a “muscle memory” activity and everything we do is practicing for a “show experience”, we want you to practice the same characteristics for a particular set that you would in a performance situation. For example, if set no. 23 is being rehearsed, some individuals may have their horn in playing position while others are in a down position. The following will be announced:

“**Set or page number...**” followed by a length of show “**one set**”, or “**one sixteen**”

“**Set!**” – At this time members should as quickly as possible become set for the move in which they are to execute.

Tempo or conducting will then begin.

When the metronome is used there will be four clicks, followed by four clicks accompanied by “duts”. If conducting is used there will be four conducted beats followed by performers “dutting” the last four. In either event, movement initiation begins on count eight and the set moves on the next count one.

Forward march

→ Count 8 – Keeping your leg as straight as possible, snap your left heel out pointing your heel down. Keep your ankle still which will result in your toe pointed up.

During this motion, your heel should be pointed down and may even graze top of the turf as they pass your alternate leg. Your knees may bend slightly, but under no circumstances should a bicycle motion be used.

→ Count 1 – Your left heel touches the turf and your left toe remains high. From the front the bottom of your shoe should be visible.

As always, your legs should cross on the “and”, “te”, or the “upbeat”.

→ Count 2 – Your right leg mirrors your left.

Things to remember:

- Your heel hits on the beat and your foot rolls to its toes at the end of the beat.
- At the beginning of the beat your toes should be as high as possible.
- Do not wobble or sway left and right.
- Keep your feet pointed straight in front of you and in their respective lanes (do not tight rope)
- Avoid a bicycle motion.
- As always, your upper body should not move and all posture, horn angle, or shoulder considerations remain.
- Take equal size steps. Don’t start with large steps and then try to take small steps in order to not overshoot your spot or vice versa.

Backward march

→ Count 8 – snap to the balls of your feet

→ “And”, “te”, or the “upbeat”– slide your left leg back staying on the balls of your feet and keeping your leg straight

→ Count 1 – Your left leg (always on toes or balls of feet) arrives.

As always, your legs should cross on the “and”, “te”, or up beat

→ Count 2 – Your right leg mirrors the left.

Things to remember:

- Stay high on your toes
- Keep your heels the same distance off of the ground (do not bounce up and down)

- Do not wobble or sway left and right.
- Keep your feet pointed straight in front of you and in their respective lanes (do not tight rope)
- Slide your toes across the turf (do not pick up your feet)
- As always, your upper body should not move and all posture, horn angle, or shoulder considerations remain.
- Take equal size steps. Don't start with large steps and then try to take small steps in order to not overshoot your spot or vice versa.

Sets and Direction Transitions

As you transition from one set or phrase to another, there will often be a direction change. Uniform changes in direction take practice, but being aware of the following will help.

- ✓ All transitions will occur on your right foot, on the last count of the previous phrase.
 - ✓ If you were motionless in the previous phrase, initiate each move in the manner described above.
 - ✓ If you are moving from one phrase to the next and will be moving in the same direction, (forward to forward, or backward to backward) plant your right foot and pivot to the new direction keeping your shoulders towards the sideline.
 - ✓ If you are traveling backwards and transitioning forward, leave your right foot behind you (still on the balls of your feet, pivot, and with your left foot still in front, lift up your toe and set your heel down on count one.
 - ✓ If you are traveling forward and will be transitioning to backward, you will execute what will be termed as a “freeze, touch, go”.
- Step one - “**Freeze**” all movement on the last count of the phrase. This will leave your right foot forward and your left behind you.
- Step two - “**touch**” the turf in front of you with the toe of your left foot on count one of the new phrase. Your right foot should be flexed so you are now on the balls of both feet.
- Step three – The “**go**” refers to sliding your left foot back in correct backward marching form on count two. This will allow your left foot to arrive behind you on count three.
- This may help with any confusion. Count the following “15, 16(freeze), 1(touch), 2(go), 3, etc.”
 - Continue with proper backward marching technique.
 - If this definition seems awkward, repetitive practice will provide reinforcement.

Some important basics to remember about marching.

➡ Practice one way! Almost everything we do is muscle memory. Therefore, every time you do anything, do it correctly. When you sometimes try harder, you are confusing yourself. When you try to “switch on” a great effort, you are not building the needed muscle memory. Train yourself that there is one way to stand, one way to march, one way to... This is what allows you to think during a show and recover if necessary. This is what allows you to tune or address balance issues while marching. In addition, keep trying. If you are new, don't be discouraged. You may think “I can't do this” but in reality your muscles aren't remembering yet. The only thing that will teach them to remember is repetitive practice.

Remember, everyone was new at one time. Even the best marcher on the field started just like you.

- ➡ Maintain posture at all times, even when transitioning. Even before movement begins, bad posture is the first clue to identifying future problems. Bad posture during transitions is one of the first clues to inexperience, as muscle memory has not yet taken over.
- ➡ Do not move in holds. You can't fix set problems until you move again. Once again, train yourself in practice so muscle memory does the work.
- ➡ High toes when forward marching and straight legs when backward marching are the first clues to high quality attention to detail.