

Moving Toward Success With Military Style Marching Band
Lufkin High School Panther Band
2021 UIL 5A/6A State Military Marching Champion

The Lufkin HS Band works on all marching band movement concepts in a fundamental block. Our fundamental block is set up with all marchers on a yard line at a two-step interval from left to right. Every marching rehearsal begins with students in our fundamental block. Our philosophy is that approaching marching band movement techniques in a sequential and logical fashion on a daily basis is the best way to arrive at a polished and intentional product.

Main Concepts

1. Posture and Carriage
 2. Stride Style
 3. Stride Size
 4. Footwork During Maneuvers
 5. Alignment
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Posture and Carriage

- Heels together, toes apart at a 45 degree angle
 - Hips slightly forward to where the weight of the body is positioned on the platform (the ball of the foot) when standing still
 - Engage your core (suck in your gut)
 - Pull up the top of the chest
 - Shoulders are slightly back
 - Head is slightly above parallel
 - The head position for the entire band is based off of the correct head position for brass players to hold their instrument parallel to the ground while maintaining proper mouthpiece angle to the face
 - The upper body looks exactly the same whether standing still or moving forward
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Stride Style

- Natural walking motion from the waist down
 - Rolling the feet
 - The bottom of the foot is shaped like the bottom of a rocking chair
 - Keep the platform up as long as possible during the stride
 - Don't let the platform "plop" down
 - The heel contacts the ground in a manner that does not jar or shake the body, and by extension should not affect the sound at all
 - One of the most crucial aspects of our stride style is the manner in which we use the platform of the "back foot" to control the way the heel of the "front foot" contacts the ground
 - Descriptors for how our stride style should look
 - Glide down the field
 - March without bouncing up and down
 - Look like you are standing at attention on a moving sidewalk
 - Drills to work stride style
 - Duck walk (done several times at the beginning of the season)
 - "Kick-&-1"
 - The forward march "Kick" should start and stop at the same time (instant), the toe points in order to keep the foot parallel to the the ground, and the left foot moves as far forward as possible without the marcher losing balance or bending the right knee
 - On the upbeat "&" after the forward march kick the marcher pushes forward with the right platform while also bringing the left toe up to set the foot up for a roll step
 - On count "1" after the forward march kick the body is perfectly balanced, with the hips directly between the right platform and left heel
 - March forward 6 steps at a time
 - Percussion plays down beats
 - March forward until halted
 - Snare play 8th notes, bass drums play "left, right, left"
 - CRUCIAL for foot timing.....ankles are in line with each other on the up beat
 - For the purposes of this clinic, we will not go into detail about how we do the Lufkin halt (due largely to the fact that our halt is very different from the way that most military bands execute a halt)
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Stride Size

- The standard military marching step size is 30 inches (6 steps to every 5 yards)
 - For a good explanation of the adjusted step size used during obliques please visit the NAMMB website under the resources/marching resources tab
 - We use yard tick marks and parking lot dots to identify step size and for alignment
 - Drills for teaching step size
 - Check your feet half way when marching six steps (step 3)
 - Check your feet after marching six steps (did you make it to the yard line or not)
 - March with your eyes closed while marching six steps and then check your feet
 - Student leaders fall out and observe
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Footwork During Maneuvers

Our practice is for marchers to look down at their feet when learning or reviewing maneuvers, momentarily disregarding upper body posture and instrument position. Once a maneuver is learned, we will freeze our feet on all of the different points within the maneuver to check foot placement and whether or not the body is balanced.

Key concepts for footwork include:

- Pivot points (the center of the platform should always go on the pivot point)
- Tight roping
- Understanding the centerline of the body and keeping your balance

Primary maneuvers (in the order that Lufkin students are taught):

- Stationary Commands (facing movements)
- Flank
- Countermarch
- To-The-Rear (keep both platforms on the ground!)
- Crossover (also known as wrap legs or wrap flanks)

How to look snappy (pop your turns):

- Turning sharply while marching is accomplished primarily with the lower body
 - Our favorite trick for working on snappy turns is to challenge students to “out fast” your neighbor
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Alignment

Alignment is a constant concern, must be refined daily, and is never going to be absolutely perfect.....but it can get pretty close!

Primary points of alignment from the judge's perspective:

- Left to right when marching toward the end zone and in the middle of the field
- Diagonals once the band gets outside the 30 yard line

Primary points of alignment that marchers should constantly check while marching:

- Front to back (files)
- Left to right (ranks or company fronts.....peripheral vision)
- Diagonals (harder to see, and harder to teach)

How to march in a straight line with your rank (the judge's perspective of the marcher's left-to-right alignment):

- Stand the same from the waist up
- Take the same size step
- March in tempo (fast steppers are ahead, slow steppers are behind)
- All marchers must place the same part of the foot on the same part of the yard line (in Lufkin we use the arch on the middle of the paint)

Maneuvers come with built-in alignment issues. Executing a To-The-Rear places the marcher behind once they are facing the new direction because the heel has flipped to the other side of the body. Executing a Countermarch, Flank, or Crossover can place a marcher too far in any direction based on students shifting their pivot points.

How to compensate for built-in alignment issues caused by maneuvers:

- Place the platform on the pivot point rather than the arch or the heel
- "Tight rope" for pivots by placing the platforms in a straight line underneath the centerline of the body (put your feet in a straight line under your belly button)
- Take a larger than normal step in the new direction after turning out of the final pivot of a maneuver

Dots:

- If you have an asphalt practice field, we highly recommend having dots painted in a 60x60 inch grid on the entire field
- Dots help to identify with great specificity any foot placement issues caused by maneuvers and personal tendencies

Final Thoughts

There is more than one way to successfully teach marching band movement concepts. While your teaching methods and verbiage are important, nothing is more important than your expectations and follow through. There is always something that can be improved, so never decide that you are finished improving.

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