

# Audition Tips For Success

From the 2012 TBA clinic “Tips for a Successful Region Band Experience From Start to Finish! Three Perspectives: Student, Teacher, Clinician.” To view and print the complete handout from this and other TBA Clinics, go to: [www.texasbandmasters.org](http://www.texasbandmasters.org); select the RESOURCES tab.

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## **The Day-of Game Plan: From Wake-up to Result Posting**

### **I. Waking Up!**

a. Set your alarm and give yourself plenty of time to complete all of your morning activities and necessities in a leisurely fashion.

b. Dress appropriately—although at this particular audition the judges may not see you, sometimes looking good helps set the tone for your day.

### **II. Breakfast and Hydration**

a. Eat a balanced meal free of fats and grease that will weigh you down and perhaps add to your uneasy feelings. It's best to go with cereals, fruits, and breads.

b. Water, Water, Water! Dry mouth is one of the most common ailments that many wind musicians face when under pressure. The best way to combat this is to be 100% hydrated. This is more important than you will ever know! Avoid caffeine or energy drinks that proclaim to heighten your performance. You will have plenty of adrenaline and other endorphins to keep you going through the audition. Stimulants like caffeine will put you overboard.

### **III. Pre-Departure, Departure, and Arrival to the Contest/Audition Site**

a. Check, Check, and Re-check to make sure you have all of the necessary materials for a

successful audition—Music, Tuner, Metronome, Instrument and Lucky Rabbit's Foot!

b. Give yourself plenty of drive time to school to ride the bus. You need to be calm and relaxed so make sure all you do functions as a means to this end.

c. Upon arrival at the contest site, find your audition room and check-in with the monitor if possible. Next, find the warm-up area and restroom facilities. *Things not to do:* do not hang out in the hallways, do not listen to others play their etudes over and over, do not play your etudes over and over. *Things to do:* find a quiet place (if possible) and collect yourself, do a simple warm-up that focuses on the fundamentals while keeping you loose and relaxed, frequently check your room to make sure things are running on schedule, and be flexible, as most auditions are not perfect.

### **IV. The Audition**

a. This is not a life or death situation, so don't treat it as such! Freaking out will only add to the stress and tension of the situation. We play best when we are relaxed, so try and maintain your focus and BREATHE. It is scientifically proven that deep, through-the-nose breathing calms and focuses the mind.

b. Dry Mouth: As stated before, this is one of the most common

reactions to nervousness. Other than being as hydrated with water as you can be, another quick and effective way to provide almost instant relief is to have some kind of citrus beverage or citrus fruit handy. A quick drink or quick bite of a lemon will do wonders in this situation. A bottle of water with a squeeze or two of lemon in it is probably a great idea.

c. Listening to competitors audition can be deadly and can cause you to deviate from your game plan. Just because someone can play his or her etude twice as fast as you doesn't mean you should adjust your tempo.

d. You need a game plan!!! Sit or stand? Stand height? One page of music or two? These are things that you can easily forget. Sing the part in your head before your start and remember that adrenaline can sometimes influence your tempos a bit. You get a one breath, one note warm up on the first note of the etude...please use this!!! Take a deep relaxed breath and let all the tension out before you begin. All of this should take less than one minute. How will you begin each piece? What is your process for determining the tempo you should play? Generally, you should silently count off a few bars in your head before you begin playing, and the most difficult technical section of the etude should determine your

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tempo. Sing this section in your head to get your target tempo (that is, the tempo that you know you can successfully perform well).

e. Being In the Moment—Now is the time to think positively and to rely on all of the hard practice that you've done. All of the hard work is out of the way, so just play! Note-perfect auditions are extremely rare and auditions at this level are probably not won on notes alone. The key to performing well is to be focused IN THE MOMENT. What do you want each note to sound like in the grand scheme of the piece? Being in the moment means you don't think about a note you missed or a phrase you dropped. Those things are now in the past. Don't think about the hard section coming up – think, feel, and BE in the moment. Being focused in the moment gives you the best opportunity to perform to your potential.

f. Waiting to play again—Take advantage of the warm up times to keep everything relaxed and free. Do not savor your previous performance or wallow in grief over your less-than-best. Stay focused on the next etude and visualize yourself performing well.

### V. Post-Audition

a. RELAX!! Take a mental and physical break. Get to a quiet place and rest your eyes and mind.

b. Handle the results professionally. Be happy for others and take pride in knowing that you did the best you could.

### General Considerations

Warm up before you get to the audition site—perhaps some very light mouthpiece buzzing and 15 or 20 minutes or relaxed warm up. Resist the temptation to play too much. Because you have been getting in peak shape for the past few weeks (hopefully), you don't need a two-hour practice session before an audition. All you should need is some relaxed playing just to get comfortable.

Don't look up old friends, hang around and talk shop with other players, listen to other people warm up, or generally socialize. There will be plenty of time for that after you audition!

Don't warm up too much. Get comfortable and then put the horn away. Your chops will be there; blowing every few minutes just to check them will tire you very quickly. Spend time reading, relaxing, breathing deeply and being quiet. Walk in the room relaxed and refreshed, without fear and with confidence.

Drink gallons of water. Water fills your stomach and keeps you from getting hungry at the wrong time. It also keeps your body super-hydrated and therefore works to prevent dry mouth. It also gives you something to do and can have a calming effect on you if you are a little nervous. If you drink the equivalent of eight ounces of water every 10 minutes, you will find that you have to go the bathroom every 10 minutes, too. (Begin this routine earlier in the day as “transit time” for water from entry into your body to exit is approximately four hours.) Drink water only. Keep away from soda, tea, coffee, milk and other drinks that will stay in your mouth even after you brush your teeth. Water is the perfect drink. Learn to like it.

Concentrate on your goal. Playing the excerpts in your mind, not on the instrument. It's too late to practice now; you simply need to remind yourself of some of the pitfalls of each excerpt. It may help to write some thoughts down. Don't try some new breathing place or interpretation you overheard someone else use. Be confident of your style, even if it seems different from everything else you have heard that day. It may just be what the committee has been waiting to hear.

Forget about everyone else. It's useless to waste energy thinking about how well someone else sounds or warms up. Remain alone with your thoughts and your concepts. Keep away from distractions and concentrate on how you will project yourself.