



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 25-27, 2019**

**Learning and Perfecting Drill with  
Ultimate Drill Book**

**CLINICIANS:  
Josh and Luke Gall**

**Demonstration Group: Vista Ridge HS Band**

**Bryan Christian, Reid Atkinson,  
Zach Santos, Directors**

# **Learning and Perfecting Drill With Ultimate Drill Book**

## ***A Director's Perspective***

Vista Ridge High School Ranger Band  
Bryan Christian, Reid Atkinson, Zach Santos - Directors  
2019 Texas Band Masters Association Convention  
Friday, July 26th, Exhibit Hall 4B: 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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### **DRILL SETTING APPROACH**

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The goal for setting drill is to establish a process that slowly layers the information students are accountable for while marching. If you are intentional with the focus and intent, students will get quality reps at a maximum rate. While this process will be slow at first, over time student learning pace and retention will drastically increase. In addition, if students learn drill with high retention, it will save time in the cleaning process that can be used, instead, for production enhancement.

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### **PRIOR TO REHEARSAL**

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For the Vista Ridge Ranger Band, the Ultimate Drill Book app provides a hands on tool for students to study their drill prior to rehearsal starting. Upon drill being loaded in the app, a "Remind" was sent to all students to download the drill. We found that the students were eager to see the drill and, via the app, could manipulate it down to a count-by-count basis. Students were not only watching the drill but beginning to make the connection between drill and music by being able to watch it with the audio track.

Over the course of the season, because of the access students had to the drill, we would often walk to rehearsal on a drill setting day and find a majority of students working on their own to learn the drill with the confidence that they were doing so correctly through the app. This became especially valuable during specialized instructions, such as follow-the-leaders, that you would not get from a coordinate sheet.

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### **STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS**

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#### **Step #1: Self Guided Learning**

Students get 5 minutes to learn a phrase of drill coordinates on their own. During this time the "front sideline rule" is HEAVILY reinforced meaning students are completely silent. Students find each coordinate in the phrase. For advanced students, using the UDB app, they begin to find their mindsets and cross counts. If students complete the coordinate under the

given time frame, they repeat the process until time runs out. Throughout this time, staff are actively searching for students who appear to be struggling and can assist them during this process.

### **Step #2: Students run to each set and verbalize coordinate**

The director runs (literally) the ensemble directly to each coordinate. Students should be able to go immediately to their point and stop. Once in their spot, students should point to the yard markers to which they relate and verbalize their coordinate: left to right first, then front to back. During this period, the director is evaluating how quickly the ensemble can get to each set. This process should continue until ALL students can get to their sets without hesitation. (Doesn't take long...but important to not move on!) Follow-the-leader pathways can also be established during this step.

### **Step #3: Drill becomes fundamental exercises**

The students add the marching fundamentals. Because students now know exactly where to end, focus should now be entirely on fundamental execution and equal step sizes. Essentially, this is a situational fundamental block like Across the Fields or Circle Drill. At the end of each set, students should continue to verbalize their coordinates. Director may choose to march facing dot for step sizes and focus on lower body technique first and then add the slide technique once those have been established. An example of an early season set sequence would be as follows:

- Set 0-1 (as needed to establish fundamentals)
- Set 1-2 (as needed to establish fundamentals)
- Set 0-2 (2-3x's)
- Set 2-3 (as need to establish fundamentals)
- Set 0-3 (2-3x's)
- Set 3-4 (as needed)
- Set 2-4 (2-3x's)
- Set 0-4 (2-3x's)

As the season progresses, the number of reps needed will start to compress as students get more comfortable with the process.

### **Step #4: Run as continuous sequence**

Students run sequence of drill focusing on direction changes and verbalizing count structure. Prior to rep starting they should point to each set to visualize their pathway. After a couple of successful reps, students should add a concert F focusing moving air to the last count of each set (breathing as needed).

### **Step #5: Add Music**

Prior to running the drill sequence, run music in place. Don't be afraid to make music comments. It needs to sound good now so they have a basis for comparison as they are moving. When moving, it is important that marching fundamental emphasis is still present

during this step in the process. If you have tech staff, they should be commenting almost exclusively either on marching fundamentals or air contribution (often both).

TIP: Step #5 will be easier for the students if you establish the foot structure via step-outs in music rehearsal PRIOR to setting the drill.

### **Step #6: Cleaning Drill**

This is a continuous process over the course of the seasons. During this step all students begin to focus on their mindsets and cross counts (counts where they cross a hardline). This is made EXCEEDINGLY easy through the Ultimate Drill Book App.

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## **REHEARSAL TIPS AND STRATEGIES**

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### **Set Tracks**

The quicker you can make music connections to the drill, the easier it will be to play while moving. Many ensembles utilize set tracks, music tracks that are broken down by set, to help this connection. Directors need a rudimentary understanding of Sibelius or Finale. Additionally, Ultimate Drill Book can also serve as a set track tool.

### **Half-time/Quarter-time met**

- Met is set to half tempo or quarter tempo
  - If written at 160 bpm, then 80 bpm or 40 bpm respectively
- Begins to establish internal pulse
- Allows students to feel the “big beats” with their feet
- Helps to diagnose phasing issues on the field

### **Prep Drill**

- Drill is done with drum major’s hands, including initiating the sequence
  - NOTE: Important that drum major has an in-ear metronome
- Students only vocalize the last count of a drill set and the first count of a drill set by saying “Prep -1”
  - Forces students to process tempo from hands to feet
  - Focuses students on completing the set into a direction change
  - Focuses students on step size adjustments going into a new set