



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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**Sightreading, My Favorite Contest
Preparation**

**CLINICIAN:
Barbara Lambrecht**



HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

TEACHING YOUR BAND TO SIGHTREAD
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by Barbara Lambrecht, University of Texas at El Paso

Sight reading is a test of music literacy. It is your job to make sure your students are literate. Teach the fundamentals of music, all year, every day, every rehearsal, and sight reading will be easy for your students.

TONE

1. Use these words, or others of your choosing, to describe the tone you want students to strive for: beautiful, clear, steady, firm, supported, rich, resonant, vibrant, colorful, characteristic.
2. Breathing exercises at the start of rehearsal get the body ready. Work for noiseless intake and full exhale.
3. Move lots of air.
4. Starting in your beginning classes, stress correct posture and position (hand, arm). Younger band students should focus on correct formation of the embouchure. Continue to monitor older students. Don't forget that posture affects the air intake and support, and therefore, the sound. Also remember that for all instruments, tension in the body comes out in the sound. Work for relaxed, natural bodies.
5. In your daily warm-up, use scales (played slowly) to develop tone and to extend range. Wind players should play Remingtons and lip slurs and include practice on mouthpiece alone to develop embouchure and tone. Have your students work to make the same **quality** of sound in all registers, at all dynamic levels.
6. Introduce vibrato for appropriate instruments.
7. Provide examples of great players: symphony performers, commercial recordings (video and audio), and class role models. Encourage student attendance at live recitals and concerts by professional players.

TECHNIQUE AND KEY AWARENESS

1. Scales and scale exercises are tried and true technique builders.
2. Include major and chromatic scales (minor for high school.)
3. Additional scale things to try:
 - Students recite the order of sharps and flats and play scales individually as others listen and determine accuracy.
 - Students write the sharps and flats in their proper locations on the staff and name scale notes in the various keys or write scale notes on the music staff, placing proper sharps or flats where needed.

ARTICULATION

1. Work for consistency throughout the band: "matched articulation."
 2. Remember that the ends of notes are just as important as the starts of them: "matched note length."
- The Taffanel-Gaubert Mechanism Studies for flute gives twelve different articulations to use on scale studies. Use these on exercises you devise, or use the ones in Foundations for Superior Performance band book by Jeff King and Richard Williams.

RHYTHM

1. Young, inexperienced students have the most rhythm trouble on **long notes, ties, and rests**. They must actively count through these.
2. Teach your band to look at stems, not just the note heads.
3. Have a counting system and use it. Make sure that individual students actually understand it and are not parroting what others around them are counting. Use foot tap, and clap rhythms while counting aloud. Individual counting aloud is mandatory.
4. Sight read rhythm sheets for chair tests.
5. Write notes and rest patterns on the board, and have students identify note values as well as count the rhythm.
6. Written tests give you a good picture of whether or not students understand subdivision. Also have students draw notes, compose their own rhythm patterns and write rhythms you dictate.
7. On new music or new lines in the book, have students count out loud, tap, clap, air band, buzz, or sing exercises prior to playing. Or, divide the class in half: one group claps while the other half plays.
8. Supplemental materials: pages of rhythm drills, commercially prepared slides or flash cards, and Master Theory workbook/ worksheets.

SKILL BUILDING BOOKS

Here are some good books to use for rhythm, technique, learning music reading, and war-up: (They are in alphabetical order, not a particular order of preference.)

14 Weeks to a Better Band
25 Lazarus-Concone Studies
101 Rhythmic Rest Patterns

Roger Maxwell/Barnhouse
Harold Rusch/Belwin Mills
Grover Yaus/Belwin/Warner Bros.

<i>204 Progressive Sight reading Tunes</i>	Roger Winslow/Gore
<i>Division of Beat</i>	McEntyre, Haines/Southern
<i>Division of Measure</i>	Grover Yaus/Belwin
<i>Exercises for Ensemble Drill</i>	Fussell/Warner Bros.
<i>Foundations for Superior Performance</i>	Williams, King/Kjos
<i>Hal Leonard Intermediate and Advanced Methods</i>	Hal Leonard
<i>Harmonized Rhythms</i>	Forque, Thornton/Kjos
<i>The Logical Approach to Rhythmic Notation</i>	Phil Perkins/Logical
<i>Rhythm and Rests</i>	Frank Erickson/Alfred
<i>Rhythm Master</i>	Southern
<i>Rubank Advanced Methods</i>	Rubank
<i>Sight reading for Band Series (1-4)</i>	Evans, Nelson/Southern
<i>Symphonic Band Technique</i>	Rhodes/Bierschenk Southern
<i>Teaching Rhythm</i>	Joel Rothman/JR Pub.
<i>TRI (Technique, Rhythm, Intonation)</i>	Garner, Haines, McEntyre/Southern
<i>Winning Rhythms</i>	Ed Ayola/Kjos

LISTENING SKILLS

1. Focusing on listening skills in the band classroom will continue to develop sound awareness, sound discrimination and sound sensitivity. Developing listening skills will assist students with these things:

- The ability to concentrate
- * The ability to understand what one is listening to
- * The ability to remember sounds and sound sequences.

The ability to concentrate is essential to the listening process. Students must be able to remember what they have heard because of the abstract nature of the music, which is sound passing in time.

2. Choose music that will capture the attention and interest of students. Music that has strong rhythms, appealing melodic flow, obvious contrasts or unusual tone colors will usually spark the students' interest. Students will need time to develop their listening skills to be able to listen objectively to music that is unfamiliar to them.
3. Students will bring their own varied perspectives and associations, including their unique cultural and personal perspectives to the listening process. If students feel comfortable bringing in and discussing their own music, they will be more receptive to approaching other less familiar music in a similar fashion.
4. Remember, people respond to music in various ways and at different levels.

PREPARATION FOR SIGHTREADING

1. Students should be able to make a beautiful sound, play scales, read rhythms, read articulations, and know common terms and signs, terms such as *andante*, *moderato*, *allegro*, *allegretto*, *maestoso*, *grandioso*, *cantabile*, *sostenuto*. Common signs would include repeats, 1st and 2nd endings, railroad tracks, fermatas, D. S. (al Fine, al Coda), D.C (remember that you do not take repeats when you have a D. S. or D. C. unless the music calls for repeats.)
2. Students need to know where they are in the measure, which beat they are on, and which beat YOU are on.
3. Since we use Texas UIL sight reading music written especially for this activity, it helps to know that you can find out the criteria, (keys, time signatures, and rhythms) that composers use to write the music for your school's classification. This information is available on the UIL website.
4. Start preparing for sight reading contest at the beginning of the year. Read EASY tunes, and many of them so that your band will feel confident. When they are successful, they will enjoy reading at sight.
5. Closer to the actual event, practice sight reading the way you will do it on contest day (timed, etc.) You can purchase sight reading music that was used in previous years from RBC Music Publishers in San Antonio. I suggest that you buy your classification as well as at least one class lower (easier) than yours.

PREPARATION FOR THE ACTUAL CONTEST

1. Know the rules for the contest. (Realize that they are changing soon.) Read the sheet to see what criteria the judges use in evaluating your band's performance. Share that information with your students.
2. Teach your band how to study their parts. I use KTTDC (key, time, tempo, dynamics, changes). Some beginning books use STARS (Signatures, tempo, accidentals, repeats, signs). Students should look for repetition of rhythms and melodies. My band touches the key signature in the upper left hand corner, then slides down to the bottom, touching the key signature at the start of each line to discover if and where the key changes.
3. Coach your students in the art of asking questions (1) LOUDLY (2) Have the question in mind before they ask it to avoid stutters (3) Ask all questions at the end UNLESS you miss some pertinent piece of information, like "Mrs. Lambrecht, is there a key change at 36?"
4. First chairs should ask questions they think members of their section might miss, such as, "Is C flat the same as B natural?"
5. Pre-assign parts, perhaps putting your second best player as first chair second part.

6. Since many students get lost on rests when they sight read, train your band to count rests on their fingers and aloud (but softly. Closer to contest eliminate the “aloud” part.). First chairs can check the section counting. I used to teach beginners to bring their instruments to the knee two bars before the end of extended rests, and to the face on the downbeat of the last measure of rest. If anyone was lost, they quickly got with the rest of the section, and we had fewer missed entrances.
7. Vary your warm-up tempo, or volume, or style, to train your students to watch closely and to follow you.
8. Touch your music. Use this sense to enhance sight and hearing. We have five senses. Students use two of them – sight (looking at the music), and hearing (listening to your instruction.) Add touch, as in touching the music at important spots such as repeats, accidentals, key signatures, and changes of key and time and tempo and touching the instruments (fingering the notes). Please, touch with fingers, not instruments or sticks. As Jim Sudduth used to say, “Absorb through the skin to the bloodstream, to the brain.”
9. Teach your band to “Air Band” with instruments in play position. Put the brass mouthpieces on chins. Place flute lip plates to the right or left of the lips. Then use fingers, valves, slides, sticks and AIR. You can practice articulation in this way.

JUST BEFORE THE BIG DAY

1. Make a set of time cards (10, 9, 8, 7, 6, etc.) large enough that you can see them from the podium when your assistant or spouse holds them up behind the back row of your band. I use time cards to eliminate the spoken interruptions from the timekeeper, which tend to distract my students.
2. Arrange for water (cold) for your band between the stage and SR room (not just a bottle for you). And you will probably want additional water for yourself after talking nonstop for ten minutes. If you forget the bottled water, walk the students by a water fountain after the stage performance.
3. Put paper clips into your coat pocket for any D. C. al Coda, etc. (These are rare, maybe even non-existent these days.)
4. Tell the band what warm-up note they will play after the explanation at contest. I prefer not to play a new scale or note (Concert Eb instead of our usual Concert F or our Remington exercise) just because of the key of the sight reading piece. If, in your at-home practice you vary the scale before you sight read, then, by all means do that in the room.

ON THE DAY, IN THE ROOM

1. Are you wearing uniforms? If so, be “uniform.” Wear the same socks, shoes.
2. Make the setup be like at home. Adjust chairs until they are just like things are in your home band room. Don’t forget to adjust stand height.
3. Train the band to place their music under their chairs so you don’t mix it up with the sight reading music.
4. Enter the room quietly, in a businesslike manner. Remind your students to look at the judge who gives the instructions and to look at you or at their music during the study time. Perhaps let them look around the new and different sight reading room before you start. Then remind them not to look around.
5. If you teach a young band, perhaps a middle school second or third band where the large percentage of students are at this kind of contest for the first time, be sure you keep them engaged. The first row will finger along, but realize that the back row will hide behind their stands. Those lazy Insert the correct instrument for your group, AKA) trombones will do anything to keep from unlocking that slide. Monitor them.
7. Tell the timpanist to tune quietly before the explanation time. If you have an assistant or a percussion teacher along with you, have them tune the timpani. These days, the pitches are usually written on the white board.
8. Speak the language of the listeners. Don’t use this time to impress the judges that you know what an anacrusis is. Don’t call a pickup that, unless you use that word regularly in your rehearsals.

THINGS YOU MUST DO IN YOUR EXPLANATION

1. Identify the pitfalls.
2. Establish all tempos and changes of tempo. Don't just assume the band will follow you. **Show** them the speeds you intend to take during the general explanation.
3. Look for and call to the band's attention repetition of rhythm and melodies.
4. Warn the band of thin scoring, and soft, especially if thinly scored, passages.
5. Identify minor keys. Accidentals are the telltale sign.
6. If dynamic contrasts are few, exaggerate them. Thinly scored spots, especially if they are marked piano, I tend to have the band overplay. But don't say, "Pianissimo - play out." Students might really be confused, unless you have told them prior to the contest that if only one or two instruments are playing and the marking is soft, you'll ask them to overplay the volumes for the sake of confidence.
7. On key changes, don't just say "add an A flat." Identify the measure(s) and if you teach a young band, check their fingers.

USING YOUR TIME (Realize that the rules about how you can use the time are changing in the next few years.)

GENERAL EXPLANATION (As stated, general info – no counting, etc.)

1. First, look at the flute part when you are explaining the road map: keys, repeats, time changes. The flute part is no more than two pages, so you can find those things much easier than thumbing through 12 - 20 pages of score.
2. Try to get to the end of the piece during the general explanation so that during your 3-4 minutes of being able to sing or count, you are actually doing that, explaining tricky rhythms or singing important passages.
3. Discuss style, perhaps relating it to music you played onstage. Remind the band about phrasing, not chopping off every two bars.
4. Let the band know who has the melody, and who has accompaniment so that they can balance to the melody.

SUMMATIVE EXPLANATION (At this time, counting and singing on the part of the conductor are allowed.)

1. DO sing. **Practice your sight singing.** When the line goes up, sing up. Join your church choir. You are a musician, you should be able to sing. I finger my instrument when I sing. It helps me find pitches.
2. Learn to sing one line and clap another to demonstrate how parts fit together.
3. Vary your singing, perhaps counting on pitch, change to calling out pitch note names if the section is a soli, or say on pitch "clarinets have this" or "low brass enter here" especially if you are jumping around from part to part.
4. Don't stop early when explaining a tricky spot by saying "and so on" because many times the pitfalls are toward the end, perhaps the addition of a different or difficult rhythm.
5. Last ten seconds, return to the opening to reestablish the key and tempo.
6. After your warm-up note, empty the water from the brass spit valves.

DON'T FORGET

1. If you say, "Practice the fingerings to the scale in X key" give the band time to do so.
2. You know the band's strengths and weaknesses. If your flutes never miss anything, there's no need to count things for them. Or, there might be no profit in talking to the percussion if they'll miss it anyway.
3. Thank your band for their hard work.
4. Compliment their performance

YOU HAVE CHOICES

1. You can speak in a loud voice, talking at a fast speed to get everything done in the time allotted. Or you can speak softer, in a calm voice with slower talking to instill confidence.
2. Tempos are yours to set. How slow or fast is your decision. Allegro - fast enough to be convincing in style, but not so fast that the band cannot look ahead or control technique. Avoid "tempo di Tear-Ass."
3. Should you start talking immediately to be sure you cover everything, or should you let the students study their parts a minute to find the problem areas for them? That's your decision, (but don't wait too long if you choose that option.)

DID YOU KNOW?

1. There are not supposed to be solos in Texas UIL sight reading music. But remember that all percussion parts are, in reality, solo parts.
2. It will help your students if you can identify courtesy accidentals as such. Even though composers may not use courtesy accidentals in their scores, the persons extracting the parts for Texas UIL are adding them. Courtesy accidentals are confusing, especially to young students. After a key change when courtesy accidents are present for a few measures and then removed the students wonder, "Was that Ab an accidental, and now I have A natural, or were they reminders that now I have Ab?" You can certainly help your students if you can identify courtesy accidentals as such.
3. The measures are numbered on your score and on the students' parts.

REMEMBER

1. Judges do watch the band during the explanation period. **(This will change in the future.)**
2. Good tone is always going to be the most important factor.
3. Phrasing counts.
4. Intonation is important in the sight reading room too.
5. Balance to the melody.
6. Judges are looking for bands that read confidently, with good style, balance, and convincing changes.
7. Good bands are flexible and respond to their conductors. They listen to themselves play and correct errors quickly.

Good readers do two things

(1) They read ahead; (2) they memorize the patterns of sound they have just read. These are the things performers must be able to do in order to sight-read:

1. Recognize and understand key signatures. Be able to identify the "critical" note(s) in the key.
2. Recognize and understand time signatures, including cut time and 6/8 and other triple meters.
3. Recognize the sound of notes by their position on the staff. Be able to hear intervals correctly (especially important for brass players.)
4. Recognize and understand note values and be able to relate those to note groupings and rhythmic patterns. (Instant comprehension of note groupings spells success in sightreading.) Realize that although the actual values of notes change when the bottom number of the signature changes, the relationship of notes never change. e.g. quarter notes are always twice as long as eighth notes.
5. Recognize and be able to execute articulation patterns. Foundations for Superior Performance lists eight articulation patterns that can be used in its warmup exercises.
6. Recognize and understand the words and symbols by which tempo, dynamics, expression and style are indicated. (Be bilingual; speak "music.")
7. Have an understanding of basic music theory.
8. Have the ability to play in tune with good tone quality, throughout the entire range of the instrument.
9. Be able to count time accurately and incisively. Knowing where the beat is is imperative. Many believe that foot tap is important.
10. Be able to control breathing to make intelligent, musical phrases and play with expression.
11. Have the ability to tongue correctly.
12. Have a thorough knowledge of the correct fingerings, including alternate fingerings, for all notes in the playing range.
13. Be able to play at a steady tempo, even in technically challenging passages.

"When musicians are trained carefully and given a sound practical routine in basic fundamentals, they require no special coaching to become good sightreaders and players. Those who are not routine in basic fundamentals will be so weak in important phases of sight-playing that no last minute coaching will be of value." E. C. Moore

Bglambrecht@utep.edu
915-433-6451

8 Note Rhythms

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26.

This musical score is written for a single melodic line on a grand staff (two staves). The time signature is 2/4. The piece consists of 19 measures, numbered 25 through 44. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, along with rests and dynamic markings like accents. The score is organized into two columns of measures: measures 25-30 on the left and measures 31-44 on the right. The first measure (25) begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is clear and legible, with a consistent layout throughout the page.

45.

46.

45. 46.

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47. 48.

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49. 50.

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51. 52.

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53. 54.

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55. 56.

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57. 58.

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60.

59. 60.