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**How to Change the Drill Learning
Process for You and Your Students
Forever, No Matter What your
Band Size Is**

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HOW TO CHANGE THE DRILL LEARNING PROCESS FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS FOREVER NO MATTER YOUR BAND SIZE

DRILL SETTING APPROACH

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.

PRIOR TO REHEARSAL

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, use your band's notification system to notify all students to download the drill. We find that the students are eager to see the drill and, via the app, can manipulate it down to a count-by-count basis. Students are 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 have to the drill, its not uncommon to walk to rehearsal on a drill setting day and find students working on their own to learn the drill with the confidence that they were doing so correctly through the app. This is especially valuable during specialized instructions, such as follow-the-leaders, that you would not get from a coordinate sheet.

MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH CONCERT BAND

Similar to the podium procedures in a concert setting, consider implementing a "Front Sideline Rule" in your rehearsal meaning when students are on the field, they are silent unless their hand is raised and called upon. When they are off of the front sideline, they can relax, converse, etc. If there is talking on the field, simply call out "walk it off." Students all move to the front sideline and it gives you an opportunity to refocus them. As always, how you sell this to students will ultimately be the determining factor towards its effectiveness. If "excellence is fun" is at the center of your rehearsals, students will rise to the occasion because band students are awesome!

AC/DC PROCESS

Regardless of the drill learning system you use, students can apply the AC/DC System:

- **A**nimation - upon setting their dot, students watch the animation to check pathway
- **C**ross Count - students point to their cross count to help being dialing in the correct muscle memory
- **D**irection **C**hange: Students practice taking their previous step (-1) into their first step in the next direction (+1)

By applying this simple process to your drill setting routine, your students can start engaging with the most critical information for successful drill marching.

DRILL SETTING PROCESSES

There are two primary models for drill setting:

- **Set-by-Set:** This model has students learn one set at a time. If using coordinate sheets, the staff checks that each student is placed correctly before moving on. All students are learning the same information all of the time.
- **Batch Drill Learning:** Students are given time on their own to learn 4-6 sets of drill. During this time, staff can focus on students who need help while older students can start working through more advanced information such as pathways, cross counts, step sizes, etc. Once completed, directors can then scaffold the process so students are focusing on the fundamental marching that will help them achieve excellence rather than having to worry about where they need to go.

Regardless of the drill setting approach, the goal is for active student engagement for as much of the process as possible.

BATCH DRILL LEARNING: A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

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 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 midsets 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 each set 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 the 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 the 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 midsets and cross counts (counts where they cross a hardline). This is made exceedingly easy through the Ultimate Drill Book App.

REHEARSAL TIPS AND STRATEGIES

UDB Rehearsal Mode

The UDBapp now has a “rehearsal” mode that shifts the audio into a metronome. The user can adjust both tempo and the number of beats prior to the drill starting. This is an invaluable rehearsal resource as well as a great individual practice tool for students.

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

