

UAB Drumline Audition Information

The Program

The following information is to serve as a guide for your reference when practicing by yourself or within an ensemble setting. Many of the concepts will be further defined verbally at the first few rehearsals and reinforced throughout the season. Following these guidelines will insure that you are preparing correctly. Please remember that it is your responsibility to see that these concepts are followed and implemented.

Audition Process

The audition process will break down into two areas:

1. Individual evaluation
2. Ensemble performance

During the individual evaluation, you will also be asked to perform exercises from this packet as well as other basic rudimental skills. Expect to receive immediate and detailed feedback from an instructor during your individual evaluation.

In the ensemble environment, we will be looking for your ability to blend, balance, and adapt. As we work through the technique program as an ensemble, specific explanations of approach will take place. Your ability to keep an open mind and incorporate the UAB way of doing things in your playing will be crucial.

Audition Suggestions

Preparation

- The success of your performance at the audition will be directly related to the level of preparation of the audition material.
- If possible, meet with a private lesson teacher on a regular basis prior to the audition.
- Record yourself with some type of electronic device. Listen critically to the recording and work to perfect your performance.
- Use a metronome!
- Be able to mark time to all the audition material.

Audition

- Keep in mind that you are auditioning at all times. Be professional!
- Be sure to ask questions if you are confused about anything you are being asked to play.
- Prepare yourself to be involved in a tedious and competitive process. Your ability to stay mentally engaged in the process throughout the audition will be crucial to your success.

Proper Practicing – Developing the Physical and Mental Tools for Success

“Amateurs practice until they get it right...Professionals practice until they can’t get it wrong.”

The Three A's

Accountability – If you hold yourself accountable both individually and in the group dynamic, you will maximize your potential for improvement and for reaching the goal of performing at the highest possible level.

Attitude – When your attitude is completely positive and you are eager to learn despite the challenges, you can and will achieve all of the goals you set for yourself.

Achievement – In the end, your achievement is the direct result of the level of your commitment to the two A's above. Your level of achievement will improve in direct proportion with your accountability and attitude.

As a member of the 2017 UAB Percussion Section, you will be measured against the three A's. They are your standards, and your success will be a result of your commitment to them.

Methods and Techniques

- In order to achieve our goal, we must simultaneously achieve exact uniformity in technique, touch, sound quality, rhythmic clarity, and dynamic clarity.
- Always strive for a BIG, STRONG, uniform sound as you play--- quality of sound is everything.
- Always strive for a relaxed physical sensation.
- Allow the stick to resonate naturally within the hand, don't suffocate it.
- Efficient Motion/Use of energy while maintaining rhythmic accuracy at all times.
- Create presence behind the instrument---"big upper body" while maintaining relaxation.
- When practicing, don't be afraid to check yourself.... Practice as often as possible on a drum, with a met, marking time, in front of a mirror to encourage absolute consistency.
- Although not hand-technique related, ALWAYS strive for perfect rhythms, sound quality, and consistency.

Musical Standards

- Rhythmic interpretation – The highest degree of integrity must be maintained when playing rhythms in relation to established tempos. Double-beats (or diddles) will be interpreted in the most strict way, exactly doubling the rhythm of the check pattern while not compromising the volume and quality of the second note. All rhythms must be maintained within the previously mentioned height structure.
- Correct tempos must be known and followed when practicing.
- Reading skills are essential and should be exercised often.
- Quality of Sound – All of the concepts under Technique and Musical Standards will come together to create our "Quality of Sound" – the very nature of what we do: presenting our musical thoughts with a mature, full sound through every rhythm, dynamic, and tempo.

Technique

1. Posture

In anticipation of demanding visual responsibilities, it is imperative that we practice with proper posture to insure proper balance and muscle development.

- Heels, hips, and shoulders are aligned – standing straight, with the feet correctly positioned.
- Head is held up with the eyes focused straight ahead.
- Facial expression should project confidence and focus.

2. General guidelines for establishing and maintaining proper grip

All of our approaches will serve to maximize the quality of sound that we produce. Proper fulcrum and finger support are the first of these concepts. From there, wrist and forearm support will reinforce the quality of sound.

- Hands are relatively relaxed, allowing for the use of smaller hand muscles for finesse.
- Proper fulcrum must be maintained at all times.
- Fingers will remain on the stick for the most part, supporting the quality of sound and placement of the implement.

Snares – will use traditional grip

- Thumb will rest flat/slightly curved against the index finger, meeting just below the top knuckle.
 - Middle finger will rest, slightly curled, on top of stick.
 - Stick will rest on ring finger against the cuticle, above the top knuckle.
 - Pinky finger will curl relaxed into the palm.
- *A detailed breakdown of the grip can be found in the *Snare Drum Technical Guide*.

Quads / Basses – will use matched grip

- Thumb will be positioned on side of stick/mallet
 - Fingers will curl around stick/mallet for support
- *A more detailed breakdown of the grip will be continued at rehearsals

Front Ensemble / Cymbals – techniques will be covered at rehearsals

3. General guidelines for stick/mallet placement

Instructors will further define the following concepts, but these general guidelines will apply:

- Sticks/mallets will be held just above the instrument surface
- In general, snares/basses play in the EXACT center of the drum.
- Tacet hand (the hand that is not playing) will remain in this position.
- Sticks/mallets will travel on a vertical plane, striking the head at the most true perpendicular angle.

4. Strokes

For the most part, we employ only two strokes: a *Legato* stroke and a *Staccato* stroke. The terms “Legato” and “Staccato” are borrowed terms and do not carry the same definitions as when used for phrasing and articulation. We will use these terms to determine rebound and height definition.

Legato Stroke

- The stick will rebound to previous extension point.
- It is a relaxed stroke
- It is a smooth motion; the tip of the stick never stops.
- Fingers are relaxed but remain on the stick for support and control.
- Upstroke is primarily generated by the rebound or bounce off of the drum surface.
- Grip maintenance and wrist turn will generate the velocity of the stick, producing the desired quality of sound at any height.

Staccato Stroke

- It is a legato stroke until after it has hit the drum.
- Fingers applying pressure to the stick will prevent rebound and will leave stick in a position to place inner-beat passages. Pressure should be applied only after the stick has hit the head, avoiding “choking” the tone of the stick or mallet.

These strokes can be further defined as accents, taps, and grace notes:

Accents

- Often staccato
- Used at various heights

Taps

- Usually legato
- Usually at 3”

Grace notes

- Legato
- Usually 1”
- Placed from tacet or sticks-out height; not lifted.

These stroke definitions will come into play as we define dynamics and other musical standards.

Four Levels of Listening

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| Level 1 | Listening to your own sound production and adherence to the musical standards, appropriate tone, and timing. |
| Level 2 | Listening to your own segment, again adhering to the musical standards. |
| Level 3 | Listening to the percussion ensemble with regards to timing, clarity, dynamics, balance, and blend. |
| Level 4 | Listening to the entire ensemble, incorporating the above listening responsibilities to enhance the full ensemble’s timing, balance and blend, rhythmic interpretation, expression, range of dynamics, and phrasing. |

Four Aspects of Preparation

1. Approach

- Relaxed.
- Maintain posture and technique.
- Play passages slowly for accuracy, then increase tempo.
- Memorize all rehearsal numbers / letters along with music.
- COORDINATE FEET WITH EVERY EXERCISE AND ALL MUSIC!!!

2. Tools

- Everyone should own and use a metronome
- Everyone should own and use a practice pad (one that closely simulates the rebound of a drum head)
- Practice in front of a mirror for immediate feedback.
- Video your practice sessions for additional feedback.
- Friends – practicing with friends can be extremely productive!
- YOUR OWN EARS – work toward strong recognition skills of your own playing and your sound within the ensemble.

3. Mental

The mental process may be the hardest to attain and requires the same (if not higher) level of finesse as the physical process. Drumline requires a high level of concentration for long periods of time. The level of achievement we reach is the result of many repetitions, each of which counts toward our development. We should be working to heighten our awareness and level of focus.

4. Physical

Our approach to physical training must include not only the muscles necessary for playing our instrument, but the muscles necessary for performing in a visually demanding activity. This should include all aspects of aerobics and strength training. We are athletic musicians, or musical athletes, and we must train appropriately. Full-body fitness is a must, especially core abdominal, lower-back, oblique, and leg muscles that are crucial to marching.

*The issue of physical fitness cannot be overstated! Members must begin a fitness regimen in the spring and summer months in order to insure a healthy and productive fall!

Remember, the staff is here to help you succeed and be the best that you can be. We are here to help you! Please do not hesitate to talk to us if you have any questions or concerns.

The best way to have a great time is to be great at something...

GOOD LUCK AND ENJOY!!!

* For educational purposes, some material in this packet is borrowed from The Spirit of Atlanta and Bluecoats Drum and Bugle Corps audition information packets.