

The Ohio State University Marching Band



Marching Fundamentals

Revised 2019

PERCUSSION

The Ohio State University Marching Band Marching Fundamentals

Written Reference Guide

A basic system of marching fundamentals is essential in providing consistency of terminology, movement, and musical execution in all field performances. The marching style of the band will only improve as each individual member improves. The performance level of the band is therefore dependent on the dedication of the individual member to mastering this system by thoroughly understanding and precisely executing every fundamental in an exemplary manner.

The following is a list of the marching fundamentals used by The Ohio State University Marching Band. This guide is designed as a reference for new candidates as they familiarize themselves with the marching system used within the band, and it is also meant to refresh the memories of veteran band members regarding the correct way to approach each fundamental.

It should be noted that fundamental movements such as the chair step, instrument position, and basic posture must be mastered before moving on to all other movements. Each performer must endeavor to execute all movements with snap, drive, and precision, avoiding anticipation (early starting) or hesitation (late starting).

I. Fundamental Positions

A. Attention Position

1. *Basic Posture.* Stand tall with the shoulders back and relaxed, chin slightly raised, and eyes looking directly ahead in a “1000-yard stare.” Knees should not be locked, and there should be no talking or movement unless instructed.
2. Place the heels together with toes 45 degrees apart and the ball of each foot centered on the yard line (or designated position).

B. At Ease Position

Use the same *Basic Posture* as in **Attention Position**. Place the feet 22.5 inches apart (roughly shoulder width), with the ball of each foot centered on the yard line (or designated position). Hold the instrument in **Carry Position**.

*Note: the **At Ease Position** may only be used when the band’s instruments are in **Carry Position**. Additionally, from this position, band members may only be called to **Attention Position** or ordered to fall out.*

C. Instrument Carry Position

Snare Drum: Position the drum at roughly a 45° angle (the head slanting downward from left to right), held by the sling, and resting on the left hip. Hold the sticks together, with the right hand holding the butt of the front stick and the tip of the back stick over the center of the drum head, and the left hand gripping the opposite ends (in a traditional grip) an inch above the rim.

Bass Drum: Hold the mallets perpendicular to the ground with fingers wrapped around the outsides, and the thumbs – on the sides of the mallets closest to you – pointed up. Rest the mallets on the sides of the drum with the elbows bent comfortably into a “V” shape.

Tenor Drums: Hold the drums parallel to the ground at all times, such that the rims rest just below the belly button (or lower as needed). Hold the sticks perpendicular to the ground with the butts of the sticks resting on the 3 and 4 drums.

Cymbals: Carry the cymbals at the sides of the body so that the bells are in line with the hips with 2 inches of separation from the body. Keep the shoulders back and relaxed, and bend the elbows to form approximately a 135° angle between the upper and lower arms.

D. Instrument Playing Position

Snare Drum: Keep the left hand slightly above the upper rim of the drum and shift the right hand downward toward the lower rim. The beads will hover over the center of the drum with the sticks held at an angle slightly wider than 90°.

Bass Drum: Hold the mallets with the heads over the center of the drum on either side. The elbows will remain comfortably bent, but at a wider angle than that of the **Carry Position**.

Tenor Drums: Hold the sticks horizontal with the beads hovering over the 1 and 2 drums. The drums should remain parallel to the ground.

Cymbals: The position of the cymbal will depend on the technique and style used.

1. Traditional: This is the most common grip. Hold the cymbals so that the tops are at the level of the eyes and the distance between them is approximately one-half inch.
2. Vertical A/V: Hold the cymbals so that the knots are on the same plane as the eyes. The cymbals should be slightly offset to prevent suctioning. The distance between the two cymbals should be approximately one-half inch.
3. Traditional hi-hat: Hold the cymbals as in the traditional position, but press the edges into the left shoulder.
4. Gumption: Hold the cymbals away from the body at a 45° angle downward from left to right. The right hand should be held over the left hand, and the body posture must remain strong and engaged.
5. Punch: Hold the cymbals down so that the tops are at the level of the armpits. The two cymbals should form an upside-down “V” with the top of the right cymbal slightly overshadowing the left, which should remain stationary.

E. Chair Step

The chair step is the fundamental marching step of the band. Lift the leg with the thigh parallel to the ground (as much as possible depending on the drum) and the lower leg at a right angle (perpendicular) to the ground. The toe should be pointed straight down. When a chair step begins any drill sequence, it should be prepared with a vocalized “up” on the count before the sequence begins. In the course of normal marching, the leg should reach its maximum height on the “&” of the beat.

F. Stride Step

The stride step is a military-style “walking” step, and it should be executed without raising the knees and without any exaggerated toe point. Each step begins with a push from the ball of the back foot, followed by the placement of the heel of the forward foot on the ground. Roll slightly through each step, allowing the knees to bend naturally. The stride step is used in **6-to-5 Marching**, **6-to-5 Obliques**, and in specified **Adjusted Step** marching.

G. Cymbal Flips

Hold the cymbals in the traditional position. A flip should be initiated by extending the arm out and up. As the arm is about halfway to its full extension, begin the flip by pushing the cymbal outward and up with the thumb and the “thenar” part of the hand (the lower part of the thumb/hand). The apex of the flip occurs when the arm is fully extended. Do not pull the cymbal down as the arm retracts, but instead catch the cymbal as it completes its flashing movement. The fingers should come out of contact with the cymbal as the thumb and thenar portion of the hand push the cymbal away and up.

II. In Place Movements

A. Moving to Attention Position – Command: “band, atten-hut” / Response: “rest, 1, 2”

On “rest,” raise the left leg into a **Chair Step**. On “1,” place the left foot next to the right as in the **Attention Position**, and kick the right leg out slightly at a 45° angle from the body. On “2,” return the right leg to **Attention Position**.

*Note: band members may be called to **Attention Position** from **At Ease Position** or **Attention Position**, with instruments in **Carry Position** or **Playing Position**.*

B. Moving to At Ease Position – Command: “band, at ease” / Response: “rest, 1”

On “rest,” raise the left leg into a **Chair Step**. On “1,” place the left foot 22.5 inches to the left, as in the **At Ease Position**.

C. Instruments Up – Command: “band, instruments up” / Response: “rest, 1, 2, 3”

Snare Drum: Vocalize the required response, but do not move.

Bass Drum: Rest on “rest.” On “1,” snap the mallets down with arms straight against the body and mallet heads pointed to the ground. On “2,” raise the arms and mallets 90° so that they are parallel to the ground (they remain straight with no bend at the elbow or wrist), and on “3,” return to **Carry Position**.

Tenor Drums: Rest on “rest” and “1.” On “2,” rotate the wrists 90° so that the sticks are pointed straight forward over the 3 and 4 drums. The sticks should hit the rims on “2.” On “3,” return the sticks to **Carry Position**.

Cymbals: Rest on “rest.” On “1,” snap the cymbals up into traditional **Playing Position**.

On “2,” perform a cymbal flip with both cymbals, ending in traditional **Playing Position** on “3.”

- D. Instruments Down** – Command: “band, instruments down” / Response: “rest, down”
Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Vocalize the required response, but do not move.
Cymbals: Rest on “rest.” On “down,” snap the cymbals to **Carry Position** in one smooth motion.
- E. Left Face** – Command: “band, left face” / Response: “1, 2”
On “1,” pivot sharply on the heel of the left foot and the ball of the right foot 90° to the left. On “2,” snap the right foot next to the left, back to **Attention Position**.
- F. Right Face** – Command: “band, right face” / Response: “1, 2”
On “1,” pivot sharply on the heel of the right foot and the ball of the left foot 90° to the right. On “2,” snap the left foot next the right, back to **Attention Position**.
- G. About Face** – Command: “band, about face” / Response: “1, 2”
On “1,” place the ball of the right foot behind and slightly to the left of the left heel. On “2,” pivot on the ball of the right foot and the heel of the left foot 180° to the right, ending with both heels together in **Attention Position**.

*Note regarding facings (E, F, and G): the upper body moves as one unit, whether the instrument is in **Carry Position** or **Playing Position**. Snare drummers perform a “pinch” to keep the drum from swinging excessively during these movements. On “1,” pinch the drum with the right hand on the drum head and the left forearm at the side of the drum. On “2,” release the pinch. In addition, facings may be given as cardinal directions (north, south, east, or west), and marchers must execute the proper facing for the direction given. For example, the command “band, north face,” with the band facing south, would require marchers to execute an **About Face**.*

- H. Step Forward About Face** – Command: “band, step forward about face” / Response: “rest, 1, 2, 3”
On “rest,” raise the right leg into a **Chair Step**. On “1,” place the ball of the right foot 22.5 inches directly in front of the left. On “2,” pivot on the balls of both feet 180° to the left (snare drums “pinch”). On “3,” snap the right foot next to the left, as in **Attention Position**.
- I. Mark Time** – Response: “(up) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”
Bring the left leg into a **Chair Step** and then place it back in its starting position (**Attention Position**) so that the left foot hits the ground on “1.” As the left foot hits, raise the right leg into a **Chair Step** (arriving on the “&” of 1), and bring it back down so that the right foot hits the ground on “2.” Repeat for the designated number of steps.
- J. Mark Time (training drill)** – Response: “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”
When the **Mark Time** movement is first learned, it may be broken down as follows:
Count 1: raise the left heel off the ground, pointing the toe but keeping it on the ground
Count 2: raise the left leg into a **Chair Step**

Count 3: drop the left leg, returning the pointed toe to the ground with the heel still raised

Count 4: drop the left heel to the ground

Counts 5-8: repeat the first four counts with the right leg

*Note: breaking the **Mark Time** down in this manner can be beneficial in perfecting the **Chair Step**; it allows band members to focus on leg lift, toe point, and the proper motion of the step, which may be useful in eliminating a “bicycling” motion when marching forward.*

K. Halt Kick (Down) – Response: “halt, kick (down)”

This fundamental is used to end a sequence of drill. On the last count of the drill, place the right foot on the ground while raising the left leg into a **Chair Step**. On the “halt” (count 1), place the left foot on the ground next to the right, as in a **Mark Time**. On the “kick” (count 2), kick the right leg out slightly at a 45° angle from the body and return it to **Attention Position**. If the instrument is in **Playing Position**, the following movements may be used:

Snare Drum: Bring the sticks in to **Carry Position** on “kick.”

Bass Drum: On “kick,” snap the mallets down with arms straight against the body and mallet heads pointed to the ground, then snap to **Carry Position** on “down.”

Tenor Drums: Bring the sticks to vertical (**Carry Position**) on “down.”

Cymbals: Snap the cymbals to **Carry Position** on “down.”

L. Hats Off

A hats off is a complex ending to a sequence of drill and may only be given after a **Halt Kick Down**. The count sequence (and response) is as follows: *halt kick down, 2, hats, 2, off, 2, 3, 4, down, 2, 3, 4, up, 2, 3, 4, on, 2, down, 2, followed by 1, 2, 3 or O-HI-O.*

1. On “down” (after the **Halt Kick**):

Snare Drum: Firmly place the ends of the sticks held in the right hand inside the bottom rim of the drum so that they can be held in place securely by the left hand. Hold on “2.”

Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Place the right stick/mallet in the left hand, perpendicular to the left stick/mallet, with the head pointed left, creating a “t” shape. Hold on “2.”

Cymbals: Hold the cymbals in place for both “down” and “2.”

2. On “hats:”

Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Grasp the hat with the right hand at the plume holder, keeping the plume between the first two fingers, and holding the sticks/mallets/instrument in position with the left hand. Hold for count 2.

Cymbals: Raise the right arm to bring the top of the cymbal to the brim of the hat (pointing toward the right eyebrow). Hold for count 2.

3. On “off:”

Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Remove the hat and extend the right arm 45° up and 45° to the right. Hold for counts 2, 3, and 4.

Cymbals: Extend the lower arm 45° up and 45° to the right so that the right arm is straight and the cymbal is flat and in line with the arm. Hold for counts 2, 3, and 4.

4. On “down,” bow at the waist, keeping the back straight and parallel to the ground.
Snare Drum: Hold the right arm across the body to the outside of the left knee. The instrument moves with the bow, ending with the top drumhead pointed down. Hold for counts, 2, 3, and 4.
Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Bring the right arm down and behind the body, keeping the arm straight and parallel to the ground. Hold for counts 2, 3, and 4.
Cymbals: The left arm and cymbal should move downward as one unit with the body. Bring the right arm down and across the body, turning the cymbal so that the inside is facing the outside of the left knee. The right cymbal should end directly underneath the left, creating a figure 8.
5. On “up,” return to the upright position with the right arm extended (as in instruction 3.) Hold for 2, 3, and 4.
6. On “on:”
Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Replace the hat securely on the head with the right hand still grasping it. Hold for count 2.
Cymbals: Return the right cymbal to its instruction 2 position (pointed at the eyebrow). Hold for count 2.
7. On “down:”
Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Tenor Drums: Grab the stick/mallet with the right hand, and return them to **Carry Position** on count 2.
Cymbals: Return the cymbals to traditional **Playing Position**. Hold for count 2.
8. The sequence ends by executing an **Instruments Up** and saying “1, 2, 3” or “O-HI-O.”

III. Marching Steps

A. 8-to-5 Marching – *Response: “(up) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”*

Using the **Chair Step** (unless a **Stride Step** is specified), take eight 22.5-inch steps for every five yards – the first step with the left leg and the eighth with the right. The fourth step should fall halfway between the yard lines, and the ball of the right foot should hit the yard line on the final step.

B. 6-to-5 Marching – *Response: “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6”*

Utilizing the **Stride Step**, take six 30-inch steps for every five yards – the first step with the left leg and the last step with the right. The third step should fall halfway between the yard lines, and the ball of the right foot should hit the yard line on the final step.

*Note: no special transition is needed when changing from a **Chair Step** to a **Stride Step**. However, when transitioning out of a **Stride Step**, the left leg returns to a **Chair Step** on the “&” of the last beat, and the marcher may verbalize the “up” to emphasize the transition.*

C. Adjusted Step – *Response: varied, depending on the number of counts*

An adjusted step is a non-standard step size, given as any even number of steps for every five yards (4 to 5, 10 to 5, 12 to 5, etc.). As with **8-to-5** and **6-to-5 Marching**, all step sizes are equal, and the first step is taken by the left leg and the last by the right.

Adjusted step marching is assumed to be executed using a **Chair Step**, unless a **Stride Step** is specified.

D. Obliques – *Response: varied, depending on the number of counts*

This fundamental is performed as a forward march at a 45° angle to the original path, either to the right or to the left. The change of direction occurs on the last count before the first step of the oblique. Snare drummers should use a “pinch” technique on turns into and out of obliques.

1. **8-to-5 Obliques.** Using a **Chair Step**, take 12 (approximately 22.5-inch) steps between yard lines, with the sixth step exactly halfway between yard lines and the twelfth step with the ball of the right foot on the yard line.
2. **6-to-5 Obliques.** Using a **Stride Step**, take 8 (approximately 30-inch) steps between yard lines, with the fourth step exactly halfway between yard lines and the eighth step ending with the ball of the right foot on the yard line.

E. Backward Marching – *Response: “(up) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”*

Backward marching is always done with a **Chair Step**. To start, raise the left leg, and place the ball of the left foot directly behind the body (22.5 inches when using an 8 to 5 step). Repeat with the right leg. The heels of each foot should only lightly contact the ground (or not at all at faster tempos) during a backward march.

F. Lateral Slide – *Response: “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”*

For all lateral slides, a left or right movement called a “crab step” is used.

1. *Right Lateral Slide* – On “1,” cross the left in front of the right (keeping it just in front of the yard line if the right foot is on it), and place it 22.5 inches past the right foot. On “2,” move the right foot directly to the right, placing it 22.5 inches past the left foot (on the yard line). Continue for the designated number of counts.
2. *Left Lateral Slide* – On “1,” move the left foot 22.5 inches to the left (placing it behind the yard line if the right foot is on it). On “2,” cross the right foot in front of the left and place it 22.5 inches past the left foot (keeping it on the yard line). Continue for the designated number of counts.

Note: transitions from right to left slides are executed by taking the final step with the right foot as normal, then stepping directly backward with the left foot on the first count of the left slide, and crossing the right foot in front of the left to continue with the left slide as normal. Transitions from left to right are executed by taking the final step with the right foot as normal, then “re-planting” the left foot (raising the foot and placing it in exactly the same position) on the first count of the new direction. The next steps are taken by moving the right foot directly to the right (on the yard line if it starts there), followed by the left foot crossing in front of the right to continue the right slide as normal.

G. Horn Slide – *Response: “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”*

A horn slide is used to redirect the sound of the band toward the stands. All percussionists continue forward marching in the same direction during a horn slide.

H. Side Steps and Step Sides – *Response: “side step, side step” or “step side, step side” (when done in pairs)*

1. **Side Steps.** Side steps are 2-count left shift movements. Lift the left leg into a **Chair Step**, then place it 22.5 inches to the left on count 1 (“side”). As the left foot touches the ground, raise the right leg into a **Chair Step**, and place it next to the left on count 2 (“step”). Side-steps are usually, but not always, done in pairs.
2. **Step Sides.** Step sides are 2-count right shift movements. **Mark Time** one step with the left leg on count 1 (“step”). As the left foot touches the ground, raise the right leg into a **Chair Step** and place it 22.5 inches to the right on count 2 (“side”). Step-sides are usually, but not always, done in pairs.

I. **Step Kicks – Response:** “step, kick, step, kick...”

Step kicks are 8-to-5 movements performed in half time. Raise the left leg into a **Chair Step**, then place it 22.5 inches forward on count 1 (“step”). As the left foot touches the ground, raise the right leg into a **Chair Step**, and on count 2 (“kick”), thrust the knee down and extend the foot four inches above the ground with the leg straight. Do not use a swinging motion with the lower leg on the “kick.” On count 3 (“step”), place the right foot on the ground (22.5 inches forward), and raise the left leg into a **Chair Step**. On count 4 (“kick”), thrust the knee down and extend the foot as before. Repeat for the required number of counts (usually 16 counts / 8 step-kicks). After completing the last step kick with the left leg, it should immediately return to a **Chair Step** position (on the “&” of the beat and with a verbalization of “up”) in preparation for the next move.

IV. Turns

A. **Left and Right Flanks**

A flank is a 90° turn of the entire body to the left or right with a sharp pivot on the ball of the right foot. A **Horn Flash** should accompany the change of direction as long as the pivot leads into a **Chair Step** fundamental.

Note: in some drills, a “box of lefts” or a “box of rights” may be given. In these cases, band members should march forward 8 steps at an 8-to-5 step, flank in the designated direction, march 8 steps forward, flank again, march 8 steps forward, flank a third and final time, and end by marching 8 more steps forward – thus outlining a square or box.

B. **To the Rear (TTR or Regular TTR)**

A TTR is a 180° turn to the left with a sharp pivot on the ball of the right foot. A **Horn Flash** should accompany the change of direction as long as the pivot leads into a **Chair Step** fundamental.

C. **Box TTR – Response:** “box, T, T, R”

The Box TTR is a TTR that takes place over four counts, with a **Chair Step** used on each count. On count 1 (“Box”), move the left leg 22.5 inches to the left (as in a **Side Step**). On count 2 (“T”), the marcher places the ball of the right foot 22.5 inches in front of the left and pivots sharply (as in a **Regular TTR**) 180° to the left, using a **Horn Flash**. On count 3 (“T”), the left leg again steps to the left 22.5 inches, and on count 4 (“R”), the right leg

steps forward (with the ball of the foot on the yard line) 22.5 inches, completing the movement.

D. Slide TTR

The slide to the rear can be performed on count 2, 4, or 6. It is accomplished by executing a **Regular TTR** on the designated count and marching backward after the turn (using a **Backward March** step) for the remaining counts up to count 8.

E. Step Turn – Response: “up, step, turn”

Step turns are used to turn in a new direction from a stationary position. On “up,” raise the left leg into a **Chair Step**. On “step,” **Mark Time** one step with the left foot, bringing the right leg into a **Chair Step**. On “turn,” bring the right leg down and pivot the required direction on the ball of the right foot, using a **Horn Flash** if the next step is a **Chair Step**.

Note: snare drummers should use a “pinch” technique on all turns (A, B, C, D, and E), and it should be executed when the turn takes place (for example, on the first “T” in Box TTR).

F. Slow Turn – Response: varied, depending on the number of counts

Using a **Chair Step**, gradually turn the feet and body right or left while **Marking Time**. (A slow turn to the right will necessitate a single **Mark Time** step with the left foot prior to turning the feet.) A slow turn can be done over any even number of counts and any number of degrees (usually multiples of 90°).

V. Traditional OSUMB Movements

A. Hang On Sloopy: Step and Swing

The step and swing accompanies the playing of *Hang On Sloopy*.

1. Sloopy Step

Snare Drum, Tenor Drums, Cymbals: Hold for the first 8 counts (drum intro), bringing the left leg up into a **Chair Step** on count 8. On count 1 (after the intro), place the left foot in its original position. On count 2, raise the right leg into a **Chair Step** with the left knee slightly bent and the right knee positioned slightly to the left across the body. On count 3, place the right foot in its original position, and on count 4, raise the left leg into a **Chair Step** with the right knee slightly bent and the left knee positioned slightly to the right across the body. On the last beat of the music, return to **Attention Position**.

Bass Drum: Execute the step as described above, but angle the knee away from the drum on 2 and 4, not across the body. In this way, the highest leg lift possible may be achieved (the thigh should just touch the bottom of the drum) with excellent toe point.

2. Sloopy Swing

Snare Drum: Instead of a true “swing,” snare drummers perform “stick-ups.” After the 8 count introduction, play “1 & 2” (R, L, R), snapping the left stick to point straight up with the left hand pressed against the chest on beat 2. Hold the left stick steady on beats 2 and 3. On beat 4, snap the right stick up in the same way. Continue this

pattern throughout the song. After the last note, snap the sticks to **Carry Position**. On the vocalization “Yeah!” extend the right arm and sticks in a straight line, 45° above parallel and 45° to the front with the thumb on top of the sticks.

Bass Drum: As each leg comes up into a chair step, swing the bass drum away from it so that the drum moves left on beat 2 and right on beat 4. On the vocalization “Yeah!” extend the right arm and mallet in a straight line, 45° above parallel and 45° to the front with the thumb on top of the mallet.

Tenor Drums: Allow the instrument have a slight natural swing, following each knee as it crosses the body. At the end of the song, after the last note, snap the sticks together in the center of the instrument, grabbing them both with the right hand. On the vocalization “Yeah!” extend the right arm and sticks in a straight line, 45° above parallel and 45° to the front with the thumb on top of the sticks.

Cymbals: On count 1 (after the intro), raise the cymbals up along an upside-down “U” path, with the top of the “U” being about where the bells of the cymbals reach eye level. On count 2, return the cymbals to their traditional level, angled toward the left shoulder and in line with the right knee. On count 3, move the cymbals back up and to the right in an upside-down “U” shape, and bring it back to rest – angled toward the right shoulder, and in line with the left knee – on count 4. Repeat the upside-down “U” shape, landing at the ends of the “U” on counts 2 and 4 throughout. At the end of the song, slide the cymbals back to center on the final note, rest for one count, and then on the vocalization “Yeah!” extend the right arm in a straight line, 45° above parallel and 45° to the front, so that the cymbal is flat and in line with the arm.

B. Ramp Entrance (Conversion Step and Slow Step)

1. *Conversion Step.* At the conclusion of the ramp cadences, during which the percussionists **Mark Time** playing cadences, an 8-count conversion step is performed to turn the entire band to the south.
 - a. Counts 1-4: **Mark Time** 4 steps at the start of the roll-off.
 - b. Count 5: place with the left foot.
 - c. Counts 6 and 7: hold.
 - d. Count 8: Lift the left leg into a full **Chair Step**, and prepare to **Mark Time** for the entire introduction to *Buckeye Battle Cry*.
2. *Slow Step.* During the verse of *Buckeye Battle Cry*, a half-time **Mark Time** is used, with the feet hitting the ground on count 1 (left foot) and count 3 (right foot). Each step is a full **Chair Step** where the thigh reaches parallel more quickly than normal (typically arriving on the “&” of 1 and the “&” of 3), but in a smooth motion. It may help to think “up, up, up..” throughout the Slow Step.