

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR BAND CAMP?

Get in Shape for Marching Band!?

While we utilize many different styles within our shows, the SAHS Marching Band is considered a "corps-style" marching band. Some features of this style include the use of a roll-step or glide-step, keeping the performers' upper bodies pointed at the audience most of the time, and the use of backward marching and "slides" in addition to forward marching. Whatever your background, you have nothing to worry about. We start with basic marching technique on day one for everyone. This allows our veterans to brush up on their technique and for new members to learn our style, terminology, and commands. It may seem overwhelming right now, but we will guide you through every step of the way. If you have trouble with anything we're doing, our veteran band members won't hesitate to help you out. We understand that our new members come from a variety of marching backgrounds, from those who have never marched a step to people who have marched in highly-competitive marching bands and drum corps.

Whatever your background, there are some things you can do before the season starts to help make things easier. Marching band is an aerobic activity, and we start off right away with the most physically-demanding part of the season: band camp! During band camp, we'll spend all day each day marching and playing/spinning. It shouldn't be more than you can handle, but you'll probably get tired during the day. The nice thing is, once you make it through band camp, the rest of the season is much less physically demanding! To help ease the transition into the season, here are some training suggestions. You don't need to belong to a gym or have any fitness equipment to do any of these exercises (sometimes hand weights are suggested to increase difficulty, but they aren't necessary).

Everyone

- Stretching
 - Whatever exercises you do, make sure you stretch out before and after. This will help avoid soreness and increase flexibility. Don't skip this step, and make sure to stretch all the muscles you worked.
 - Muscles stretch better when warm, so you might want to start with a brisk walk or light jog for 5-10 minutes before you stretch. Again, remember to stretch when you're done, too.
 - If you need stretching tips, there are plenty online.
- Jogging
 - Being able to jog a mile without stopping should get you to the point where you can make it through an entire show performance without much difficulty.

- If you don't currently run, work up to it using intervals. Start by alternating jogging and walking for a minute or two at a time a few times a week. Each week, increase the amount of time you jog and decrease the amount of time you walk until you're running a full mile without stopping.
- If you'd like to work on running a longer distance, check out the [Couch to 5K](#) program or the [5K101](#) program. Even if you don't make it all the way through either program, it will get you moving and build up your aerobic endurance, and that's the whole point!
- Calf raises
 - Backward marching can make those calf muscles burn, especially during band camp. The most simple way to build those muscles is to stand with your feet together and repeatedly lift up onto your toes and back down slowly.
 - For an added challenge, stand with the balls of your feet on a step or curb with your heels hanging off the edge. Make sure you have something to hold onto to stabilize yourself. Do the same lifts as above, but let your heels drop lower than the balls of your feet so you're raising your body a larger distance.
 - Hand weights can also be added for more resistance.
- Core/Lower back exercises
 - This will help with posture for everyone and will also help with holding up your equipment with less effort.
 - Planks
 - Start by lying on the floor. Lift your body into a standard push-up position, but with your forearms flat on the floor. Make sure your entire body is straight. Hold this position for 30 seconds or as long as you can and then relax. Repeat 3-5 times. Gradually increase the time spent holding the position each week.
 - Lower back
 - Lie face-down on the floor with your arms extended above your head ("Superman"). Slowly raise any combination of your legs and arms up toward the ceiling and lower back to the floor. Start with lifting each limb alone one at a time, then try different combinations (both legs, both arms, left leg/right arm, both legs AND both arms). Do 12-15 reps each, rest, and then repeat two more times.
 - Get into a crawling position (kneeling with hands on the floor in front of you). Slowly raise one arm or leg until it is extended straight (parallel to the floor). Try doing one leg and the opposite arm at the same time as well. Do 12-15 reps each, rest, and then repeat.
 - Sit-ups/crunches
 - Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place your hands loosely behind your head or touch your fingers to your temples (do NOT lift your head with your arms).
 - For sit-ups, use your abdominal muscles to lift your upper body all the way up so you almost touch your face to your knees.
 - For crunches, lift your torso directly upward toward the ceiling. Feel like you're pressing your back into the floor and pulling your abs downward. Or, feel like you're compressing your ribcage down toward your hips. The important part is to let your

abs do the work AND make sure you continue to feel that resistance as you lower your body down. If you're able to do dozens of crunches at a time, you're probably not using correct technique. You will still "feel the burn," but you'll have to do far more of them than you would if you use correct technique. Move slowly and focus on your abdominal muscles.

- Do about 15 reps (if you don't "feel it" after 15, refocus on your technique), rest, and repeat two more times.
- Push-ups
 - Everyone in the band will be using their arms in some way in addition to marching. Arm strength will make this easier and make you a better performer. It's probably easiest to get into a push-ups routine. Try to do them right before you go to bed or shortly after you get up in the morning. They don't take long.
 - When you first start, do as many as you can, keeping your entire body straight. Avoid the tendency to stick your butt up in the air or to sag in the middle.
 - "Real" push-ups are best, but you can start with your knees if you struggle with doing any. Try to move to push-ups on your toes as soon as possible, though.
 - Work up to 10 push-ups with good technique. Rest for 30 seconds to one minute and then repeat.
 - Each week, try to do 5 more reps each time (or as many as you can).

Winds (especially baritones, mellophones, and trumpets)

- Our marching style requires brass players to hold their bells 10 degrees above parallel. This very well may be the biggest challenge for you if you haven't had to do this before.
- All winds will probably get tired arms after a while, so any arm exercises will be helpful.
- The best way to build up the muscles you'll need is to actually hold your instrument in playing position for as long as you can, rest, and then do it again. Gradually, you'll be able to do this for longer periods of time.
- If you don't have an instrument handy (especially if you play baritone or mellophone, as people usually own only the concert versions of these instruments), you can replicate it using household items.
 - If you have hand weights, hold one up in front of your face, a few inches away from it. You can do this with one hand at a time or both.
 - If you don't have hand weights, use anything else that you can hold in your hand: water bottles, books, paperweights, anything!
- These instruments don't weigh a lot, the issue is more with holding it out in front of you. We don't usually use our arms that way, so they get tired quickly.
- Resist the urge to bring your elbows in or to "cheat" in other ways. The point of this is to make doing it correctly easier, so make sure you're practicing correctly. Brass: if you interlock your fingers in front of you, your forearms should make a 90 degree angle and your hands should be at eye level. Keep this in mind when you're holding up any sort of weight.
- Whatever you play, practice holding your instrument, hand weight, or substitute in the position it will be in while marching and gradually increase the time. Your arms might start

to shake, but keep breathing and push through as long as you can. That's the only way it will get easier!

Percussion and Tubas

- Simply due to the weight of your instruments, core- and back-strengthening exercises will be even more important for you.
- Squats
 - Stand with your feet wider than shoulder-width apart.
 - Hold any sort of weight with your hands at shoulder level (touching your shoulders is okay)
 - Keeping your back straight and your head up, bend at the knees and hips to lower your upper body straight down (you should keep your weight centered over your feet, but take a sort of "sitting" position), and then slowly bring yourself straight up again.
 - Do 12-15 reps, rest, and then repeat two more times.
- Tubas: you will carry a lot of weight on your left shoulder, so start getting used to this. Try carrying a backpack on your left shoulder and lifting up at the shoulder. During the season, make sure you occasionally move your tuba to your right shoulder during rest or break times, so that you even out the demands.

Color Guard

- Our color guard has a workout routine used during the season to help build strength and flexibility. Color guard is very athletic, using dance, flags, rifles, sabres, and the occasional other auxiliary pieces of equipment. The color guard also tends to run often in the show, whether a jazz run as part of the drill, or a quick sprint to take care of an equipment change.
- Running, arm exercises, and core exercises are extremely important. Work to do as many push-ups and crunches as you can, and try to work your way through one of the 5K programs listed above as far as you can. If you make it all the way through the program, work to increase your distance and/or speed.
- In addition to the distance running, practice doing some short sprints as well. Try alternating between jogging for one minute and sprinting for 30 seconds for a total of 10-15 minutes or longer.

None of this is necessary to be a member of the band. Even if you don't do any of it, you'll be fine, so don't let this scare you off. This is only meant to make band camp easier and to make you a better performer, helping the band reach its highest potential. Besides, it's good to get exercise like this anyway, so why not get in shape AND get ready to march.

Tips for prevention of common injuries and issues

Marching band is a great musical, social, and athletic activity. While our physical demands are not at the level of some drum corps and highly-competitive high school marching bands, there are risks involved. The following suggestions will help you stay healthy and uninjured from band camp through the end of the season. This article addresses heat and sun protection, repetitive-use injuries, and nutrition.

Heat and Sun Protection

During band camp and competitions, you will be out in the sun for several hours at a time. Hydration and sun protection are VERY important during these times.

Hydration tips

- Even if the forecast differs, prepare for each day as though it's going to be 95 degrees out.
- Make sure you prepare by getting fluids in BEFORE heading outside. Have a glass of water or two at each meal.
- Bring a 1/2 to 1 gallon water cooler to band camp. Drink every time you're given a break, even if you don't think you need it.
- On game days, we will have water jugs to refill your water cooler. Bring your own water cooler and use it.
- Don't wait for your body to tell you you're thirsty. If you're thirsty, it means you're already dehydrated.
- Make sure your urine stays a light yellow color. If it gets darker, you're not getting enough fluids.
- Water is the best thing to drink. Consider sports drinks to replace minerals lost from sweating, but drink water most of the time.
- Avoid high-sugar and carbonated drinks, especially during band camp.
- Eating right is just as important as getting enough fluids. Protein and carbohydrates are your friends on rehearsal and performance days! Don't forget your veggies, either.
- EAT BREAKFAST. See "[Nutrition](#)" below.

Sun protection

- Wear sunscreen. Wear sunscreen. Wear sunscreen.
- Sunscreen should protect from both UVA and UVB rays. Check the label!
- Reapply multiple times throughout the day.
- During band camp, wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Make sure your sunglasses also provide UV protection.
- Wear light-colored clothing, but put sunscreen on underneath your clothes as well.
- Don't forget the backs of your hands, your ears, or your lips when applying sunblock (many lip protectants also contain sunscreen).

Repetitive-use Injuries

Occasionally, students suffer from tendinitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, or other repetitive-use injuries. We try to stress an ergonomic approach to everything we do, so if something is painful or uncomfortable, let us know. You might be doing something incorrectly. Listen to your body. Pain is its way of communicating to you that something is wrong.

Woodwind players: make sure you aren't craning your wrists in an unnatural way. Adjust things to keep your forearms and hands in line. We'd rather your instrument be a little out of alignment with others but your body stay healthy than the other way around.

Flute and piccolo players: keeping your instrument parallel to the ground will also keep your wrists in line. When you start to droop, your wrists start to bend and your body has to do odd things to support the instrument. It adds up over time.

Clarinet players: neckstraps are encouraged! They take the bulk of the weight off of your thumbs and allow more freedom of movement.

Saxophone players: Bari players should use harness straps to bear the brunt of the weight. Tenor players may consider using these as well. Pay attention to your instrument position to ensure your wrists can stay in line. Adjust your neckstrap so it's at the proper length to support the weight of the instrument while in playing position.

Everyone: stretch your hands, fingers, wrists, forearms, and shoulders before every rehearsal and performance. Use ibuprofen, ice, and rest to combat inflammation.

Nutrition

Marching band is a physical activity, and there are some long days during band camp and on game days. Eating well is just as important as all of the above considerations, and that starts with a good breakfast. While you may not be running a marathon, you should still eat like an athlete! Keep the following in mind when you make your breakfast plans.

Good options for breakfast:

Carbohydrates: Oatmeal, waffles, pancakes, bagels, low-sugar cereal, whole grain bread, fruits

Protein: Eggs, peanut butter, yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, lean meat (such as Canadian bacon or turkey bacon)

BAD options for breakfast:

Carbohydrates: Pop Tarts, doughnuts, sugary cereal, candy bars

Protein: Fast food breakfast sandwiches, high fat meat (such as real bacon or sausage), gravy

AVOID DAIRY ITEMS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

DO NOT SKIP BREAKFAST! Without breakfast, your blood glucose levels will drop, causing fatigue, lack of focus, and a general "blah" feeling. Combined with the increased activity level and time in the sun, this can even lead to fainting or worse problems. Have some protein bars and fruit on hand as a backup in case you miss breakfast for some reason.

These same tips can go throughout the day. Avoid high-fat and high-sugar items, and make sure you get a good mix of carbohydrates and protein. Don't avoid fat altogether, though, as your body does use it for fuel.

Beverages

Water is the best thing to drink at every meal. Avoid caffeine and soft drinks, especially during band camp and on game days. Sports drinks contain artificial colors and sweeteners. Use these in moderation if you sweat a lot (it will replace some salts). Juices (free of artificial sweeteners) and skim milk are other options as well, but water is really the best option for every meal (and in between...).