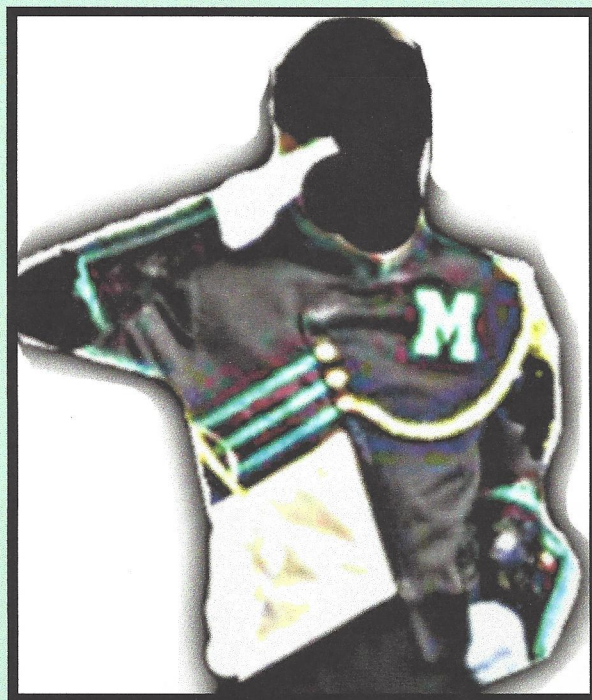


# Field Commander Audition Packet

## 2015



Audition Help Podcasts Available:  
<http://www.howlinghuskymusic.net/Media>



# Welcome.

This packet is your primary tool in learning to become a MHS Field Commander. If you become an FC, your primary role (in addition to leadership) is conducting, and expressing the music *through* your conducting. As with learning to play your instrument, you must start with basics. (In turn, learning to be a conductor will help you to become a better musician on your instrument!)

This packet is designed to be a reference guide to the basics of conducting, and it contains a great deal of information on conducting patterns, posture, techniques, styles, and even tips on reading a score for the first time.

## Conducting Technique.

To begin conducting a band, you need to focus on five elements to produce proper technique:

- Ready position
- Stance
- Shoulders
- Arms
- Head

Your **ready position** is the specific placement of your body to let your band know that you are preparing to start. It also allows the conductor to establish proper posture, stance, and conducting space.

Here is a quick breakdown of the proper pre-conducting technique:

- Stance: Feet will be either shoulder-width apart, or together.
- Shoulders: "Up, back, and down." Your sternum should be pulled up to show confidence.
- Arms: "Easy chair." Your arms should be even with each other and straight out in front of you and slightly bent. Your hands should be relaxed as well.
- Head: Your head should be up and your eyes should be scanning the band for their readiness.

**"Feet together, stomach in, chest out, shoulders back, elbows frozen, chin up, eyes with pride!" ~GNP**

# Conducting Checklist

Use this conducting checklist EVERY TIME you conduct! It is crucial to gain superior technique. The more you practice, and carefully observe your conducting, the more proficient you will be as a conductor.

- Does my ready position demand attention from the band?
- Are my palms relaxed and appropriate to my conducting style?
- Am I hitting each beat correctly and consistently?
- Are my elbows away from my body and not flopping?
- Is my rebound effective and does it match the style of the music and the dynamic level?
- Do my icti reflect the style?
- Does my stance show different dynamics and phrase changes?
- Are my preparations clear and readable?
- Am I using eye contact?
- Do my crescendos, decrescendos, cues, and cutoffs reflect the style?
- Are my shoulders relaxed?
- Am I showing musical expression in my conducting?

**"Be the best you can in everything that you do, because in life, every encounter is a performance." ~GNP**

## Basic Beat Patterns.

Common Meters: 4/4, 3/4, 2/4

4/4 Meter:

- Beat 1: Straight down from ready position.
- Beat 2: Hands should travel inward to meet each other without touching.
- Beat 3: Hands extended out almost full length of the arm.
- Beat 4: Beat placement is at chin level on the rebound to ready position.

3/4 Meter:

- Beat 1: Straight down from ready position.
- Beat 2: Hands extend out almost full length of the arm.
- Beat 3: Beat placement is at chin level on the rebound to ready position.

2/4 Meter:

- Beat 1: Straight down from ready position, rebound will make a check mark
- Beat 2: Same place as beat 1, in reverse.

"You are the field commander – **COMMAND** the field!" ~GNP

## Conducting With Musicality.

When conducting, it is critical to keep your focus on the entire group's performance of the music, not your performance of a "routine." It is important for you to maintain consistency in your physical motions in every performance, but always remember that your routines should reflect the musicality of the band. Creativity on your part as a conductor can help to maximize the performance of the group, but it is important to keep your conducting aligned with the band's musical needs and current stage of learning.

Just as you are learning to conduct, layers of difficulty are being added on through the stages of learning. For example, as a conductor, you wouldn't get up on the podium on the first day of band camp and conduct through the entire intricate competition show routine and expect the band to march it through cleanly and from memory. The directors will add technique, musicality, and expression as desired; you should be at the same stage with your directors, and add various aspects of your routine as they are added through rehearsals.

As we all know from experience, we as musicians learn music in stages. First we focus on the large overall picture and basics, and gradually we narrow the focus to finer details of musicianship as understanding of the piece increases. Conducting follows a similar formula, and it will allow you to progress musically with your fellow band members, and to meet their needs at each stage of the season.

"There is no such thing as a problem, only an opportunity to test your creativity." ~GNP

## Layers of Conducting:

### Layer 1: Conducting Technique

- How will you start the music? Vocal or visual command? Both?
- What is the meter? Common time, 3/4, 2/4? Are there any random meters in the piece?
- What is the marked tempo? Are there any changes in the piece?
- Style of music? Are you adjusting conducting style accordingly?
- Cutoffs? Are you addressing any fermatas or how you are going to interpret rhythms?

### Layer 2: Conducting with Musicality

- Dynamic changes in the music: how big is the dynamic, how many parts are changing?
- Solo or group entrances: where are the musicians on the field, what is the most effective way to cue?
- Where do phrases begin and end? Can you show a breath to help musicians complete phrases?

### Layer 3: Conducting with Expression

- Are there any important unison rhythms you can visually show? What pattern can be used to do so?
- How could you address cutoffs in various sections?
- Are there any specific parts that should be brought out and emphasized to show more effectiveness? How will you do so?

Important: There is no specific time in which you should incorporate each of these levels. This should be at the discretion of your directors. If you notice that the band is not playing correctly or is leaving an element out, clearly say you are giving a motion to address this, and that the musicians should follow that motion.



Conducting should be a personal expression of music. Be creative as a team, and put as much of your personalities into it as you can. Your main objective is to inspire the musicians to perform at their musical best and to convey your music expressively.

“The band is YOUR (the conductor’s) mirror.” ~GNP

## Reading a Score and Practicing Routine – some pointers:

1. Read the score straight through while listening to your recording.
2. Follow lines from beginning to end and try not to stop.
3. Break the score into sections, and read each carefully. Note all the musical aspects you must demonstrate (style, pattern, dynamics, cutoffs, cues, etc.)
4. Mark any trouble spots as you encounter them.
5. Use color-coding if desired to highlight pattern, tempo, and dynamic changes.
6. Rewrite your meter changes above the score, where your eye will catch them easily in advance.
7. Try conducting while singing the melody line.
8. Make a video of yourself conducting the routine, if possible, and evaluate all aspects of your conducting style. Self-critique is often just as helpful as outside critique.
9. Memorize your routine in sections, and practice without the score as comfortable, but keep it handy for reference.
10. Conducting is a complex skill – be patient with yourself and the process.

## Some Final Notes on Auditioning:

- Conducting takes practice. Practice in front of the mirror, while sitting in the car, anywhere! It is recommended you show others what you are conducting. This will help you overcome nerves, prepare you to have people watching you, and enable you to get some feedback on what is effective and what is not.
- The audition routine is a test of your ability, and how much you can handle. It will dictate how intricate the competition routines will be. You will be pushed to achieve your best in the audition piece, and it will be your first time conducting in front of the band (if you are a first-time auditionee). You will learn to adapt to what the band is doing. For the most part, you will be

learning and practicing with a recording, but a live performance is much different, and your conducting will show that.

- You **MUST** try to perfect your basics. Just like with field marching, without the proper establishment of the beginning layers, every other element will not be effective. It is important to focus on basics first to achieve a level of comfort so that more complicated elements can be added with ease. Think of practicing your conducting basics the same way you practice marching basics – it sets you apart from the crowd, just as having a rigorous basics program in marching sets the band apart from others!
- This process will test your character as a musician and a leader. Don't overlook the interview element of the process!
- Most importantly, have fun! Relax, and recognize that **EVERYONE** makes mistakes sometimes. Nerves and tension show in your conducting, so prepare yourself to be at ease in front of your peers, and focus on doing the best you can on the podium!

Some Wisdom from George N. Parks, legendary drum major instructor and band director:

Not only do these quotes apply to the audition process, field commanding, and marching, they also are helpful in life outside of band. (Oh wait, there is no "life" outside of band!) ☺

- *A band is not proud because it performs well; it performs well because it is proud.*
- *I am the field commander...I command the field- FIELD, GROW!*
- *Raise your hand as high as you can. Now raise it two inches higher. THAT'S WHAT'S WRONG with your lives!*
- *The line is only long when you're the last one in it!*
- *A leader does what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, whether you want to or not.*
- *If you act the part long enough, it becomes reality.*
- *The more difficult the conditions; the more you have to seem to like what you're doing.*
- *The key in life is participation!*
- *Positive thinking yields positive results (and vice-versa).*
- *A leader should have a reason to say no, not yes.*

- *The only good disciplined group is disciplined from within.*
- *Being a leader is being inconvenienced.*
- *You get back what you give out.*
- *You will move in the direction you are thinking.*
- *Doing WHAT needs to be done, WHEN it needs to be done, whether it NEEDS to be done or not.*
- *Being a leader is doing the uncomfortable thing.*
- *There are three stages of band (life): 1) You believe in Santa Claus, 2) You don't believe in Santa Claus, 3) You BECOME Santa Claus!*
- *The real leader is the one who congratulates everyone.*
- *Band is a place for everyone.*
- *A good leader is a good actor.*
- *If you're not doing what you love, love what you're doing.*
- *If you're the only one right, you're wrong.*
- *If you're not having fun, fake it.*
- *Make sure your traditions are sound.*
- *The only power you have is given to you by the band.*
- *The Secret: You have absolutely no power over anyone. The key is not to let them know that.*
- *Avoid the confrontation on the field.*
- *Know when the spotlight is on you and when it's not.*
- *Treat your people well and put your heart into it, and it's amazing where you'll go.*
- *Anyone can make a mistake.*
- *Teaching is the art of presenting material and making sure it is understood.*
- *Adopt, adapt, and improve.*
- *The essential condition of everything you do must be choice, love, and passion.*
- *Be a leader, not a screamer*
- *In order to be responsible, you have to respond. You have to respond with enthusiasm, excitement, energy, excellence, and intensity.*
- *Being in the band is the greatest thing you could ever do and don't let anyone tell you differently.*
- *There is no room for sarcasm and cynicism in leadership.*
- *Do not complain to someone who can't help you; don't sit and listen to someone complain if you can't help.*
- *It's never too late to make the right decision.*
- *Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.*
- *If you cannot love your band, you cannot lead it.*