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# DK17

## Northside High School Drumline Technique Packet

*SNARE – BASS – TENORS*



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## WELCOME

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The Northside Marching Band has been a long time leader among high school music ensembles in the state of Indiana. A 3-time ISSMA state finalist in the last 5 years, the tradition of **excellence** goes deep through generations of performers. At the heart of this ensemble is the driving force, stark finesse and a (now standard) swagger from the **Drumline**, or, as referred to here, **DK**. The acronym derives from ‘drum corps,’ the highest level of performers in the marching world. This title stands for a high level of professionalism, experience and perfection not only on the competition field, but during every second of rehearsal. That being said, the attitude of this ensemble is described by students and staff as **relaxed** but **focused**. This approach not only improves the end product, but ensures that everyone in the ensemble enjoys however much time they spend in the group over the years.





## The Drumline

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For a percussionist trying drumline for the first time, the experience can be daunting at first. The gap in skill between middle school band and drumline is undoubtedly intense for every performer. So, if you're joining drumline for the first time, keep in mind, everyone who's ever taken part in the activity has experienced the same exact feelings and questions you have when jumping in. Every member of the

group is expected to play fast **rhythms** and intricate **dynamics** all with precise **timing** in order to drive the entire marching band. They are also expected to perform in a very physical fashion, each drum is attached to a harness and held to the performer's body, weighing as much as 40lbs. With the drums on, they will move, in time, at a fairly brisk pace. As you'd expect, drumline is physically demanding, but it is not out of reach for most people. **Rehearsals** usually consist of Music only, Visual only or a combination of both in a full band setting. The basis of how the band rehearses revolves around what is needed most to improve the show. **Leadership** in the ensemble will come somewhat naturally in those who are experienced. Also, at the beginning of the season, staff will designate a section leader and center snare, sometimes it's the same person. These positions will organize who will run sectional rehearsals when no staff is around. ⚡ In order to have a dominant quality of performance, it is crucial that we rehearse not only for a great amount of time, but with focus and maturity. Every repetition of show material should be performed at rehearsal with the same performance quality as when you'll be in front of a crowd. The staff can then adjust and give advice based on a performance that is undistorted by the relaxed atmosphere of rehearsal.

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# Technique ☺

What sets drumline apart from every other section of the band is how the physical appearance of the performers dictate the quality of their sound and motion. That is why the standard for our line, as well as most around the world is for each performer to have the same approach to the instrument. Here we will explain and define the expected technique to use when playing on the line.

Everything you'll play can be boiled down to just 4 main strokes. Bounce, Down, Tap and Up. They differ in the starting and ending place of the bead.



## SNARE

All who wish to play snare must be familiar with traditional grip. Here what it'll look like.

### *Right Hand*

The fulcrum is located between the thumb and index finger. This is where the stick will stay in place while either end will rotate along the fixed axis. The remaining fingers will wrap around the stick to provide support in low, fast strokes. The palm should face down and the stroke involves a motion referred to as a 'wrist break.'



When done correctly, the rest of the arm, up to the wrist, should not move. Each stroke should involve a straight line path for the bead to reach the head in order for the rebound to do the same motion in reverse to be ready for the next stroke.

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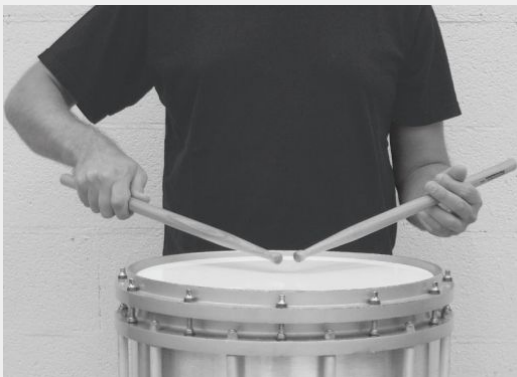
### *Left Hand*

The fulcrum is again located between the thumb and index finger, with the thumb sitting on top of the index finger between the first and second knuckle. This connection must ALWAYS be maintained. There are common tendencies to push down or flex up the tip of the thumb. Avoid these by keeping the thumb relaxed. While difficult at first for those having not tried this grip, constant practice of the four main stroke types will make your hand feel more natural. The motion involved with this grip derives more from the forearm than the motion in the right. That being said, the elbow should stay in place as the left arm does not raise, but rather rotate. Like the right, the tip of the stick should travel in a straight line at all times.



### *Playing Position*

The playing position is defined, not only to make it look good, but to ensure that every player is starting from the same spot to eliminate inconsistencies in the place where they are most common, right before the prep. Using the grips listed above, place both sticks in place so that both tips meet in the very center of the head. The sticks should be angled in at a 45 degrees and not touch. The tips will rest about a



half inch off the head. Arms should never be touching your torso, it important to leave space in order for the arm to make slight natural adjustments to what your hands are doing. Right arm should be winged out so that the angle of the stick continues through the arm. The left forearm should extend straight forward as the grip will place the stick at the desired angle to be perpendicular to your right.

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# TENORS

Tenors (quads) are a set of four main drums with an additional effect drum in the middle (the spock). Those who wish to play tenors are expected to be able to play similar rhythms to snare drummers but do so with the added difficulty of moving around to the different drums. Tenors are played with matched grip. For reference, see the right hand of snare drum technique and match your left hand to do the same. Here are the most important things about tenor playing.

## *Playing Zones*

The most vital part to the sound of tenors is where the player hits the drums. Unlike every other drum on the line, the acceptable areas to strike the drum are located 1-2" from the rim of the drum. Too close to the center and the sound will be dead and nonresonant because the head relies on vibration to make a solid sound. Playing in the proper zones also maximize rebound and the ability to play from drum to drum at faster speeds.

Playing zones are defined as follows:

Drum one and drum two should be played 1-2" away from the bottom of the rim

Drum three and Drum four should be played 1-2" from the part of the rim closest to the top two drums



The spock has similar tension to a snare drum, so striking in the very center will create the correct sound

A good way to think about zones is not to imagine playing in each individual zone but rather playing along an invisible, shallow arc that stays constant, covers every playing zone and feels natural to how the upper body moves when wearing a carrier.

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## *Sweeps*

What draws eyes to tenor drummers is when they play a double stroke that jumps from one drum to another. This is known as a sweep, and as the name suggests, the stick should follow a constant, sweeping motion. The best way to think about sweeps to perform them with good quality, avoid striking a rim, and maintain equal volume in every note is to think of the motion as going more vertical than horizontal, even though you may assume the opposite. This will not only improve your chances of clearing both rims but also bring out more sound than some players tend to lose when attempting a sweep.

## *CrossOvers*

Another unique entity of playing tenors is the act of crossing one stick over the other in order to play voicings desired by the composer while maintaining a natural sticking. The only guideline to this technique is to make sure that the actual crossing over happens between the middle of the forearm and the wrist. This allows the wrist to break and play as high as possible without hitting the other stick or arm.

## *Playing Position*

The resting, pre-prep position for tenors is similar to the right arm of the snare technique. Your sticks should be facing in at roughly a 5 degree angle with the tip above the playing zone. Your forearms should be a continuation of this angle, resulting in your elbows being away from your torso. This position is subject to change based on the phrase that is about to happen. For example: if what you're about to play starts with both a left and right stroke on the 3 drum, before playing both hands will shift over to the playing zone of that drum. The same goes for any phrase starting with two notes on one drum.





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## BASS

They say every note you'll play is a solo on marching bass, and in a lot of ways, that's the truth. On the bass line, you'll split solid rhythms up between four or five different drums. Compared to the other two types of drums in the ensemble, bass is, far and away, the most different. The smaller, high-pitched drums are almost always utilized in faster playing and harder splits. The lower, larger drums not only



hold importance in providing powerful downbeats and a firm bass sound for the ensemble, but also can be vital to the visual appeal of the entire band.

### *Playing position*

The most important part of playing bass drum is making sure that you have the correct hand and arm positioning to ensure visual consistency and a solid prep. The shoulders should be relaxed and the forearm should always be parallel with the ground. Depending on your arm length and the size of drum, this may mean that your elbows will be cocked back behind you. Your forearms should angle in towards the drum just slightly in order to get a healthy wrist break.

### *Wrist Break*

What separates good looking bass lines and everyone else is the simple principle of breaking the wrist instead of rotating when hitting the drum. This means that the entirety of the stroke happens with the bottom of your forearm facing the head of the drum and, like with every other drum, the motion comes entirely from the wrist.

### *The Grip*

Holding a bass mallet is very similar to matched grip, with a few adjustments. Your fulcrum should be between your index finger and thumb with the mallet resting between the second and third knuckle. From there your other fingers wrap around the stick to the point that

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the bottom of the stick is completely covered. Unlike matched grip used by snare and quads, your fingers will rarely be utilized as means for movement. Your thumb should rest on top of the stick, towards your other fingers. When all of this is done correctly the mallet should be at about a 40-50 degree angle depending on your arm stance.

### *Partials*

As mentioned above, a good deal of time spent playing bass drum will be splitting rhythms with your fellow bass drummers to create one solid phrase with voicing ranging across all of the drums. The most effective way to play your part correctly is to not listen to the other basses, but count out where you're not playing and knowing exactly where your part fits in the count structure. This will ensure that you will be ready to play in time and your part will be heard confidently and in time. Most partials will be on the 8th note. From there you may be assigned one, two, three or sometimes four notes to play in that time.

### *Twos, Threes and Fours*

When asked to play more than one note at a time, it is important that what you play lines up with the greater rhythm (what all parts together will sound like.) It's crucial that the notes are open and all sound the same across the drums. Identical interpretation down the line is something that is often difficult to achieve, this problem can be fixed by listening into how your peers are playing their note groupings. (Note: there is a difference between listening for timing and listening to match interpretation/dynamics, only do the second one)

### *Rim Clicks/ Shots*

Occasionally, the composer will call for a rim click, marked as an "x" where the notehead should be. This simply means that you strike the top part of the rim with the wood of the mallet, about one inch from the felt. This note does not need to be played with much force at all, as the rim does not portray dynamics like the head, so a soft note would sound identical to a loud one. Shots should only be played on the top two drums, just cause. Performing a shot consists of hitting the head and rim at the same time, when done correctly, the sound should be unique in its hollow clunkiness.

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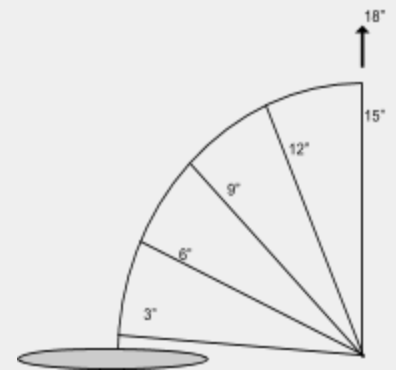
# The Sound



The melodic nature of sound is what has drawn people to music since the dawn of time. Rich, beautiful, melodic sound should not stop with instruments that produce pitched sound, a good percussion section should support the sound of the band while adding its own musicality. Here we will run over some basic definitions that every member of the battery should use as reference.

## Stick Heights

The volume of your directly correlates to the height from which each stroke begins. No matter that height, however, the velocity that the stick has should remain the same for every note. The heights are notated as follows:



p - 3" ( $\frac{1}{2}$ wrist break)	mp - 6" ( $\frac{2}{3}$ wrist break)	Mf - 9" ( $\frac{3}{4}$ wrist break)
f - 12" ( $\frac{4}{5}$ wrist turn)	ff - 15" (full stroke)	ff - 18" (full stroke using arm)

Note: Inches when referring to stick heights are not the same as the standard measurement inches. 3" stick height should actually be about 1" off the head.

## Tempo

Providing a strong, readable tempo for the rest of the band should be the number one priority for the drumline. In a full band setting on the field as well as a stationary format with just percussion, the correct tempo is **always** what the center snare is playing. As long as every individual on the line listens in towards the center, their tempo should be correct and the line will play together. It is a responsibility of the center snare to either watch the drum major in a full band setting, play exactly with the



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metronome or other tempo source in a sectional format. If things go wrong on the field, it's important to be prepared so that recovery takes less time and less effort. The only thing you need to worry about is playing in time with the center, as long as the line is playing clean, readable parts, the band is more likely to follow along and pick up at the part of the show where you are playing. (note: playing the same tempo = playing clean)

### *Velocity*

In order to maintain a uniform, dynamic sound across every drummer, the concept of **constant velocity** should be in mind no matter what you're playing. This simply means that the volume of your playing should be determined by **only** your stick heights. The speed and force behind the stick moving should be the same at 15" as with 3" and everything in between. A good reference to this speed is however fast the stick has to be moving in order to reach the starting place of the stroke just from the rebound. If done correctly, the stick should never stop and your hand will only be pushing the stick down.

### *Resonance*



The best way to get every ounce of sound quality from hitting a drum is to strike with the right technique, in the right area to get the most resonant, lingering tone. While the sound of impact is still the most important to your role in the band, the musicality of drumming comes almost entirely from controlling the length of the sound.

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# The Style



Nowadays, the separation between a good drumline and a great drumline is the ability to display confidence and uniformity to the audience. This section is in place to define the different positions and standard techniques you will use throughout the season, in rehearsal and performance

## *RELAX*

Drop the shoulders, loosen the grip just a little bit, take a breath. The best way to appear confident when in uniform is to rehearse and perform all the time with a sense of calmness while still being alert and aware of your surroundings. Relaxed grip when playing will allow the stick to bounce freely and the stick path to be consistent. Relaxed stance while set or when you're marching will lead to less movement in the drum and, overtime, stronger back muscles to carry the drum.

## *Set Position*

Simplicity is the first step towards a relaxed and consistent attack on the first note. The set position consists of starting with your arms at your side with your grip as relaxed as possible. This will lead to having a relaxed, adjustable grip when your sticks go up to the drum to play.

## *Marking time*

When standing still and playing a piece of music from the show, your feet should be moving in place as if you were marching in that part of the show. The proper technique for this is to lift your whole foot off the ground and land on the downbeat. Your feet should be parallel as if you were marching. Your upper body should stay in place for the most part, while a little bit of movement will come naturally and is a-okay.

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## Rehearsal Formations

**The Arc** is the most standard formation to practice in, its purpose is to spread out the players and gradually become more comfortable with listening in and creating a strong ensemble sound.



-snares 1-1.5 stick-lengths apart

-basses have right hands in and form a curved arc

-metronome may be behind the center or in the focal of the arc

**The Block** is a formation designed to rehearse while moving, also known as tracking. The focus when in the block is to be spatially aware and keep the correct spacing to the sides as well as front and back.



-basses should be in line with their bodies, not their drums

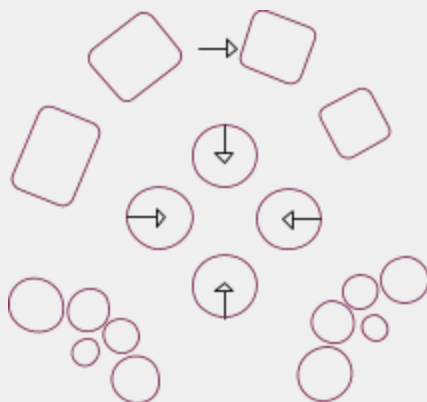


-snares should have the same spacing as an arc setting



-if the block were to be moving backwards, all body spacing should remain the same.

**The Diamond** is designed to incorporate a different listening environment for each player the quads are now next to basses, the snares are out of order and all are facing in towards the focal of this formation.



-basses are in a curved arc, right hand towards the middle

-the inner ring of snares should not be too close together (at least 1 stick between drums)

-used most often in the on-field warmup formation

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# Exercises

## 8.8.16 Legato Strokes

Musical notation for Legato Strokes exercise in 4/4 time. The exercise consists of three staves. The first staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, showing a sequence of eighth notes grouped in pairs. The second staff is a bass clef with a 3/4 time signature, showing a sequence of eighth notes grouped in pairs, with 'R' above the first group and 'L' above the second group. The third staff is a bass clef with a 5/4 time signature, showing a sequence of eighth notes grouped in pairs, with 'R' above the first group. Below the third staff, the letters 'L', 'R', 'L', 'R', 'L', 'R' are written under the corresponding groups of notes.

This is a standard exercise made to warm up the hands and to get you used to playing full, open, relaxed strokes, this is necessary for every drum.

## Double Beat

Musical notation for Double Beat exercise in 12/8 time. The exercise consists of two staves. The first staff is a treble clef with a 12/8 time signature, showing a sequence of eighth notes grouped in pairs, with a '7' above each group. The second staff is a bass clef with a 3/4 time signature, showing a sequence of eighth notes grouped in pairs, with 'R' above the first group and 'L' above the second group. Below the second staff, the letters 'R' and 'L' are written under the corresponding groups of notes.

Double Beat is designed to exercise your hands ability to play fast, double bounce strokes. This will build strength in your rolls, isolated diddles and other rudiments you'll encounter in show music.

## Stikönröl

Patrick O'Rourke

The musical score is arranged in a system of six staves, each representing a different drum part. The time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three measures. Each measure contains rhythmic notation (notes and rests) and stick control markings (R for right hand, L for left hand) placed below the notes. The parts are:

- Snare:** Features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with stick control markings: R L R L . . .
- Tenor:** Features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with stick control markings: R L R L . . .
- Bass Drum:** Features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with stick control markings: R L R L . . .
- S.Dr. (Snare Drum):** Features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with stick control markings: R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
- Ten. Dr. (Tenor Drum):** Features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with stick control markings: R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
- B.D. (Bass Drum):** Features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with stick control markings: R L

The score concludes with a final measure containing various rhythmic patterns and stick control markings across all parts.

Stikönröl (stick control) should be played with a full stroke on every note to warm up the hands to playing controlled connected passages where every note sounds the same.



# Diddle

Patrick O'Rourke

The musical score for 'Diddle' is written for three drum parts: Snare, Tom, and Bass Drum. The piece is in 4/4 time and consists of 16 measures. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including triplet rolls and open eighth note rolls. The score is divided into four systems, each containing three staves. The first system (measures 1-4) features a snare drum roll, a tom drum roll, and a bass drum roll. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the patterns with snare, tom, and bass drum parts. The third system (measures 9-12) shows the snare and tom drums playing a steady eighth-note pattern, while the bass drum plays a triplet roll. The fourth system (measures 13-16) concludes the piece with a final snare and tom drum roll, and a bass drum roll.

Diddle is a unique take on the standard diddle exercise, focusing not only on every variation of triplet roll passages and ending with an **open eighth note roll**. After the first measure diminuendo, the entire exercise is to be played from 9"-3" depending on the speed, the end should be brought up to **at least 12"**.

# Kendrick

Patrick O'Rourke

*♩ = 110*

The score is divided into three systems, each with three staves: Snare, Tenor, and Bass. The first system (measures 1-3) features a steady eighth-note pattern on the snare and tenor, and a consistent eighth-note bass line. The second system (measures 4-6) introduces more complex drum patterns with various rests and accents, and includes dynamic markings like *p* and *f*. The third system (measures 7-9) continues with intricate drum work and includes a *mp* marking. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *p*, *f*, and *mp*.

4

7

10

13

*mp*

16

Snare

Ten

B

*mf*

*p*

19

Snare

Ten

B

R R R R L L L L R R R L L L R L

SC

*f*

22

Snare

Ten

B

R L r r L r l l R R

R L r r L l l R R

24

Snare

Ten

B

ChopShot

R Sk

R L r r L l l R R L l l R

Detailed description: This is a drum score for three parts: Snare, Tenor, and Bass. The score is divided into four systems of three staves each. The first system (measures 16-18) features a Snare part with sixteenth-note patterns and a dynamic marking of *mf*, a Tenor part with a sixteenth-note pattern and a dynamic marking of *p*, and a Bass part with a sixteenth-note pattern. The second system (measures 19-21) includes a Snare part with a pattern of R R R R L L L L R R R L L L R L and a dynamic marking of *f*, a Tenor part with a sixteenth-note pattern and a dynamic marking of *f*, and a Bass part with a sixteenth-note pattern. The third system (measures 22-23) features a Snare part with a pattern of R L r r L r l l R R and a dynamic marking of *f*, a Tenor part with a sixteenth-note pattern and a dynamic marking of *f*, and a Bass part with a sixteenth-note pattern. The fourth system (measures 24) includes a Snare part with a sixteenth-note pattern and a dynamic marking of *f*, a Tenor part with a sixteenth-note pattern and a dynamic marking of *f*, and a Bass part with a sixteenth-note pattern. The score concludes with a double bar line.

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Kendrick is the last and most advanced etude in this packet, at the same time, it will also be the most fun to perform. Heres some pointers:

- The piece is based around a triple beat rudiment, any time these triple beats occur, they will be on the same hand for all three notes (RRR or LLL)
- There are three distinct “solo” sections for each drum, Bass m.9-12 Tenors m.13-16 Snare m.17-20. Following that is an ensemble passage covering accents, isolated diddles, paradiddles and metric shifts.
- Every sextuplet (marked with a 6 above it) is to be played as a paradiddle-diddle or RLRRLL. At the end, there are two beats of 4:3 (marked with a 4) and will be played as two paradiddles.
- The very end of the piece has a challenging but rewarding element that will pay off if performed correctly, the three lines end at different times, each a 16th note off. The key here is rely on your individual timing and not on any other subsection.

## Final Thoughts

The Purpose of this packet is to put standard teachings and expected technique into accessible definition. Printing out this packet and having it on hand for rehearsals as well as individual practice will not only improve you as a performer, but also take leaps towards one of the greatest goals of a drumline: to look and sound the same.

This packet was written by Patrick O'Rourke, Northside staff member, student at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and performer in the world-class Rhythm X indoor percussion ensemble. If you have any questions about the content provided to you or if you would like feedback on a video of you playing any of these exercises, contact [patrickorourke16@gmail.com](mailto:patrickorourke16@gmail.com). Above all, have fun, give this activity everything you've got, you'll always remember the final performance of the season, it's up to you now to make it something worth reminiscing.