

Judge Tip: Field Music
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Brass: most students will play best with a slightly down-stream embouchure (the mouthpiece and instrument angle downward slightly from the face). This means that, in marching band, the head will need to tilt back slightly so that the instrument is parallel to the ground. Lift heavy instruments (like baritones) from the elbows, not the shoulders, and make sure the students don't drop their shoulders back behind the hips - avoid the "swayback". Problems I see with brass are often related to posture, with too much mouthpiece pressure (especially on the upper lip) and/or too much upper body movement. If you hear fuzz in a student's sound, it is because air is passing through the lips that is not part of the vibration of the note. This usually means one of the following: a) the lips are pulled apart from each other in the mouthpiece - ask the student to make sure the lips are touching as if saying "M"; b) the lips are too hard - remind the student the corners of the lips are firm, the middle of the lips should be softer.

Reeds: check your students reeds! All reed players should have at least 5 working reeds, numbered on the back, and kept in a reed case. Students should soak reeds in water (just a minute or so) prior to playing, and rotate reeds by playing a different reed each day. Ideally most of the reeds are in the same stage of being broken in and thus will play similarly. Use the best reed for the gig. If you see a chipped or broken reed, take it from the student and crush it. Use Vandoren, Mitchel Lurie, or Rico Reserve Classic (not regular Rico). Clarinets should avoid pushing the clarinet away from the body - take in a little more mouthpiece (it will squack when too much is taken in) and keep the clarinet closer to the body for the best sound. Flat chins, firm cheeks, and a good grip (without biting) from the top teeth and lower lip are the key elements of the embouchure.

Winds in general: *MORE AIR THAN TONGUE!* Most young players use too much tongue and not enough air. Discourage using the tongue (or lips) to stop the note. Think light "T" tongue for shorter notes (with fast air behind it), not a heavy "TUT" tongue (which is what I often hear). Use the tip of the tongue, not the whole tongue, to articulate. When in doubt, less tongue!

Front ensemble: Players must be told and trained to listen back.

Identify to whom they should listen (usually but not always the center snare). Cymbal technique is important! No "Monkey Crashes" on crash cymbal; roll suspended cymbals on the edges, at 9 and 3 o'clock. Battery stick height matters! Please don't ignore bass drummers and how they approach the drum.

Directors - get off the podium and walk around your band while they rehearse (or during a run). Is everyone playing? How do individual students sound? On the marching band field, students should be trained how (and then expected to) play in tune. It starts by them matching the person next to them. Rehearse music in drill sets (standing still) as much or more than in an arc (standing still).