

# Basic Marching Drill for Oakleigh Brass


## Introduction

Marching is pretty hard, but it looks really cool when it is done well. Oakleigh Brass doesn't march often, so this handbook has been designed to help newcomers (and old hats!) get a handle on all the different bits. These first sections have contributions from across the band, the Appendix is from our Drum Major.

## Who's Who

When marching, the Drum Major gives all of the directions, supported by the Band Sergeant on Side Drum and the Bass Drummer.

Signals – so “**what to do next**” comes from a variety of sources:

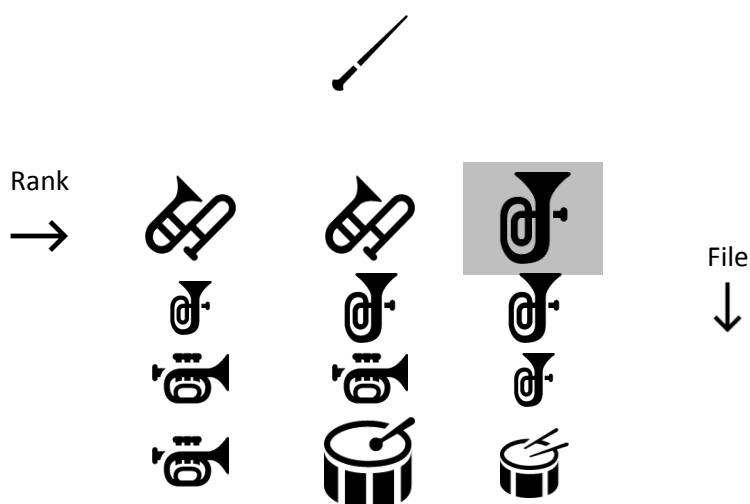
- voice commands from the Drum Major,
- signals from the mace 
- whistle blasts from the Drum Major
- Bass Drum patterns
- A helpful whisper from the person standing next to you ☺

## Firstly, where do I go?

Forming Up – Finding Your Spot

Your spot can change depending on the instrumentation of the band, so it's probably easiest to just ask someone who's experienced. Also try to remember where you are in your rank (side to side, like a row in Excel) and file (front to back, like a column in Excel), it's important because the job is slightly different in other positions, and this might get confusing.

This diagram should help:



### Tip

Try to have a quick look around (front and sides) and get in line at this point.

Everybody should be two paces away from the people around them, and it doesn't hurt to step this out first to get used to the distances.




First the Drum Major will call “**Band Marker.**” One person (always from the front rank, right file), (shaded box) will come to **Attention** (see later), and march onto the parade to a predetermined position. Drum Major then calls “**Band, On Parade.**” You come to **Attention** (even on the side of the road), then march to your spot (which you will know in advance from rehearsals!). When you get there you stay at **Attention** until the Drum Major calls “**Stand at Ease.**”

Oakleigh always uses the same layout; with Trombones always at the front, then biggest to littlest instrument. Oakleigh always has percussion at the back. Some bands put the percussion at the front, or even the Bass Drum in the middle of the band.

## Standing at Ease/Attention

The two basic stances:



When standing at ease, keep your feet shoulder width apart. When called to “**Attention,**” bring your heels together, with your feet angled about 30 degrees. This should make a ‘V’. When called to “**Stand at Ease,**” simply return to the first position. Nothing changes but your **LEFT** foot. 

### What do my hands do?

As a general rule, you will hold your instrument with your left hand when not playing. Your free hand should make a straight line down your leg, with your thumb pointing down the seam of your pants.

Hands don’t change for either “**Attention**” or “**Stand at Ease**” positions.

### Tip -How to hold your instrument?

Look around and copy other people that play your instrument. The important thing is that everyone matches.

### Tip – Don’t Faint

If you are standing still, don’t forget to wriggle your toes and flex your calves – that keeps the blood moving

### Stand Easy

This position is almost the same as **Stand at Ease**, except you are allowed to move your arms and hands freely. Also known as **Rest**.



## Dressing

Band dressing is all about how in line we are.

When everyone is dressed correctly, the band should form a perfect square/rectangle. Well dressed marching bands look amazing! Always remember, people listen with their eyes first. This means that when marching, it is more important to have good dressing than be playing all of the notes.

The Drum Major will call **“Band, by the centre, dress.”**

Turn your head to the centre person in your rank, if you are the centre person just keep looking straight ahead. From here make small movements to be in line with that centre person. You also need to glance to the person in front of you, to make sure you are in line with them.

### Tip -

If you looked around before when you **started** this should already be done, unless everybody else decides to move (jerks...).

When everybody stops shuffling, the Drum Major will call **“Band, Eyes, Front.”** Turn your head back to the front, but stay at **Attention** until the Drum Major calls **Stand at Ease**.

## Stepping Off

Now the band has dressed and looks great, we are ready to move! You will hear two three beat rolls from the drums (known as **“Two Three’s”**), and see the following mace signal:



After the **Two Three's** everybody steps off on the first beat of the bar.



**You ALWAYS step off with your left foot!**

This means that your left foot will always fall on the first beat of any bar, which is also where the bass drum plays normally. This is handy to know if/when you get out of step (it will happen!).

### Tip -

During the Two Three’s shift your weight onto your right foot, and start lifting your left heel a little. You then **HAVE** to move your left foot first, or fall over!

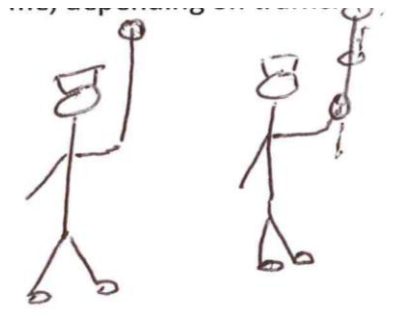


Once you start marching, you must keep going, otherwise the person behind may bump into you. If you drop your music, just keep going. The person behind might be concentrating on the music and so bump into you if you stop.

Remember, people listen with their eyes first, not their ears! If you stop playing it probably won't be noticed.

## Halting

There are two different ways of halting. Both are nearly identical, the only difference being whether the Drum Major uses a voice command or a whistle. This depends on whether the band is playing or not, as a voice command won't be heard by the band over the volume of the music. Both halts are preceded by the same mace signal: the mace goes up, then vertically down and up



### Voice Command Halt

When on the right foot, the Drum Major calls "**Band, Halt.**" You take an extra step (left foot) and then bring your right foot together with your left (halt). This means you're now at **Attention**, with your instrument still up and playing.

### Whistle Halt

The Whistle Halt is used when the band is playing music, and therefore the Drum Major's voice will not be heard. You will hear the Drum Major sound a long whistle blast, followed by three short whistle blasts. You do the same as a Voice Command Halt, take an extra step (left foot) and then bring your right foot together with your left (halt). This means you're again at **Attention**, with your instrument still up and playing.



WHISTLE



WHISTLE



WHISTLE



STOP your feet  
Just put your right front down next to your left.  
And keep playing!



## Getting Ready to Play

So now we know how to step off and halt, let's do it with our instruments! This is done on the "**Band Ready**" call.

How you move your instrument from **Attention** really depends on what instrument it is. Again the main rule is that each instrument group does the same thing, so try looking around at what others are doing, or ask someone. If you are the only person on your instrument, you can do whatever you want! Just make it look smart.

**What do my hands do?** You will need to use both of your hands to play your instrument, so this is not a problem!

**When to start playing?** You start playing on the first beat after the **Two Three's**. Left foot is first beat in the bar.

## Cease Music

Sometimes we need to stop playing but keep marching, usually at the end of a piece of music but sometimes for special events.

### Stopping playing during a piece

You will see this mace signal along with a double tap on the bass drum:



These signals will usually happen at the end of a phrase, after which you just stop playing! Bring your instrument down on your next left foot and keep marching just like we practiced. However, you are playing so it is really hard to see the mace, so always keep one ear on the drums.

### Stopping Playing because the piece has ended

You will see/hear the same mace signal and bass drum double tap, and you should know it's coming anyway because you're nearly out of music to play! Bring your instrument down on your next left foot and change your music.

**Changing Music** – There is no easy/proper way to do this, and it can be very awkward for some instruments (especially Trombones). Just do your best!

**Tip –Dropped your music?**  
Keep moving, you can't stop!

Last rank picks up dropped music etc

**Tip -**  
Tie your music onto your lyre, using the rings.

If your lyre is loose, tie this on too



## Start Music

Almost identical to Stop Music (except you start...), with the same mace signal. The difference is you will hear 2/3's from the drums. Bring your instrument up on the second of these. Start playing on the first beat after that. Don't forget to keep moving your feet.

**Note** – This is exactly the same as in the **Stepping Off** section earlier, except it doesn't necessarily have to happen while you are stationary.

Sometimes we start playing from the start of the march – make sure that you know beforehand if this is planned.

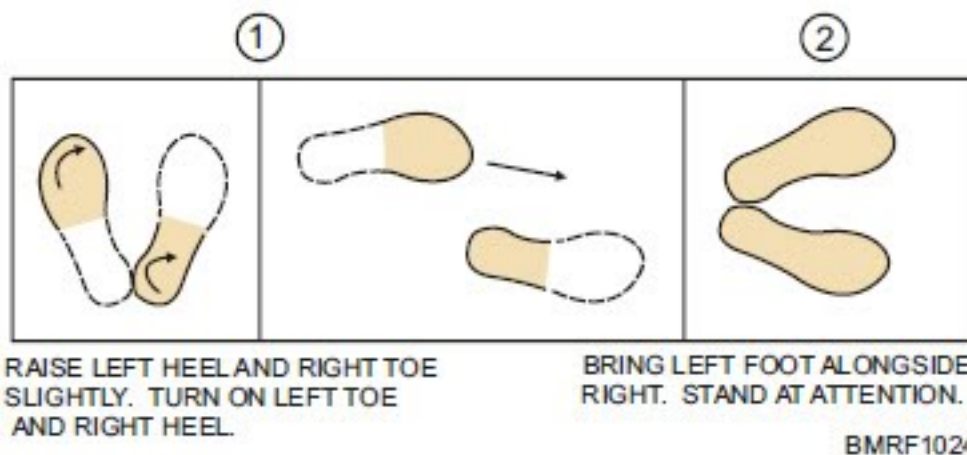
## Finally – it's over - Fall Out

So you've marched to the end. The band has halted and stopped playing. Time to leave!

You will hear the command "**Band, side of the parade ground, fall out**" from the Drum Major. You pivot to the right, wait five beats (the drums usually do a funny rhythm) and then walk off.

### Pivot

You pivot on alternating heel/toes, with the heel leading the direction you are turning:



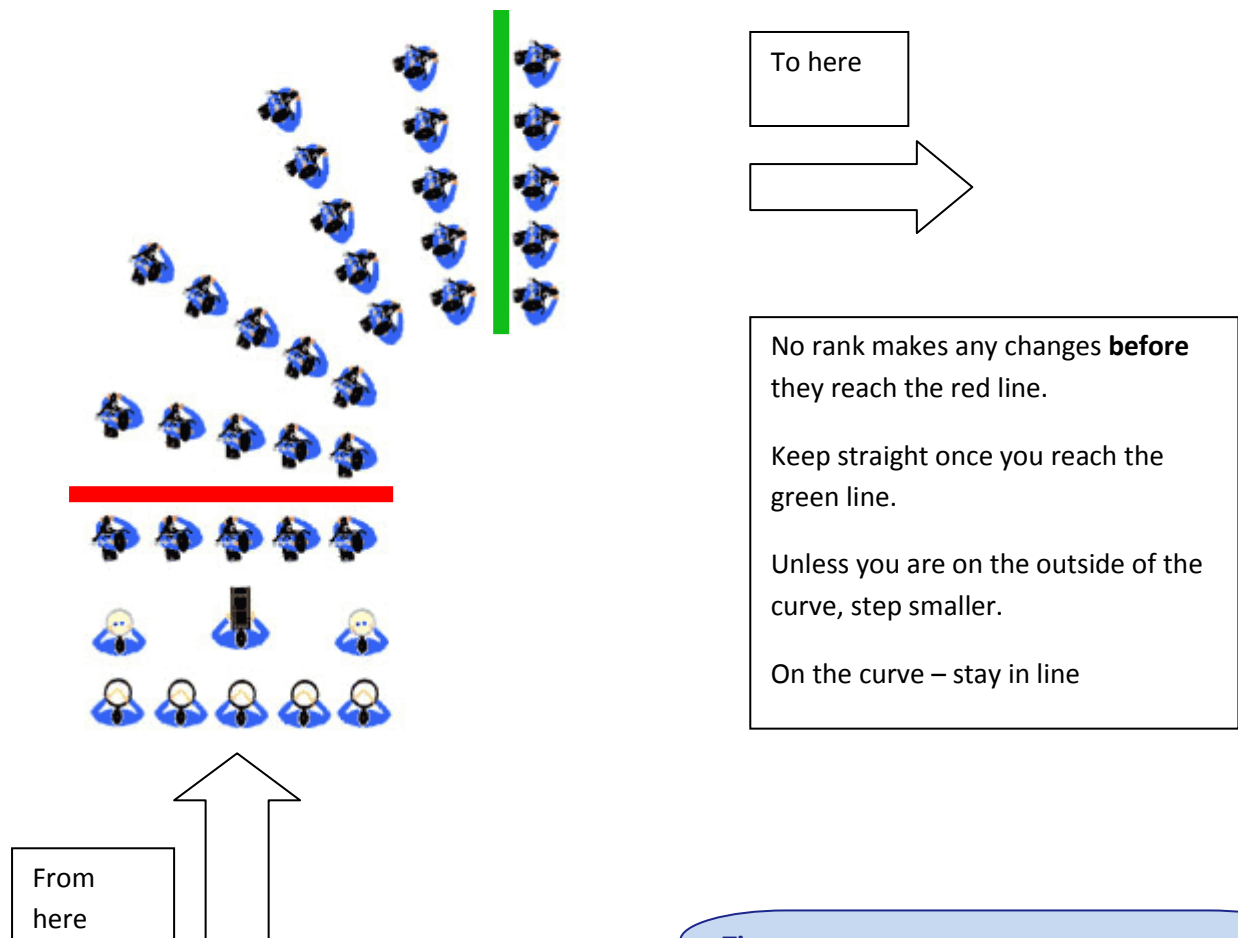


## How to turn a Corner - Wheeling

Wheeling seems very complicated, but is actually quite easy once you know how it all works. Every band does this differently, perhaps because it is not easy to explain.

We rarely wheel and play, so if not playing, keep your spare arm still.

The diagram shows how the ranks move around a corner, a right wheel



Why it all goes wrong:

- Starting too soon
- You forget to turn into the curve
- It's hard to march in a curve
- The inside people forget to reduce their step size
- There is a tuba in the way
- Someone forgot to paint the red and green lines on the road.....

When it all goes right

- You start to turn at the SAME point on the road as the rank in front, so 2 steps later than them
- People clap – really !



## Other Random Stuff

### Hands

Hands can be tricky. If you are not moving, your free hand will always rest in a straight line down your leg, with the thumb pointing down the seam of your trousers. If you are playing, both of your hands will be in use to play your instrument.

If you are marching but not playing, you **swing your free arm with the opposite leg**. (unless you are wheeling).

**Fun Fact** - If you end up swinging it the wrong way around, it looks funny and is colloquially known as "Square Gating." Or "Teddy bear".

### Hats

If you think your hat might fall off, use the hat strap.

### Weather

Sometimes in Melbourne, it rains. We apply the traditional wet weather plan – if it rains, get wet. If you have one, a navy or black waterproof is a good idea.

Alternatively (or in the Melbourne, later that day), sunshine means sunblock and sunglasses.

### Tram tracks

Perhaps the hardest part about marching in Melbourne.  
Just avoid walking on them whenever possible. They are dangerously slippery if wet.

### Horses

Lovely animals, interesting to march behind!  
There is often someone to clean up after them, but they do tend to mark the path, so be careful.

### Why do we do this?

Because the audience is very appreciative!

## Too Much to Remember?

The priorities are

- Be in the right place – rank and file
- Stay in line and keep going
- Left on the first beat in the bar
- Finally, when everything else is OK, play the right rhythm, and pitches.

If you play 1 note on your first march, you can improve 100% on your second march.

Like scales, everything is easier with practice.





## Appendix – Summary of All Positions and Signals

Thanks to Alan Timcke for the content of this Appendix.

### Parades and Marches

- (a) On all parades and marches the band is under the direction of the Drum Major.
- (b) The Drum Major is supported by the Band Sergeant and the Bass drummer.
- (c) The Drum Major carries a mace, a mace has a head and a foot.
- (d) Signals to the band are given by the Drum Major by voice and by mace positions.
- (e) A schedule of mace signals is given below.
- (f) The Band Sergeant will from time to time verbally check dressing and pacing.
- (g) The Bass Drummer through a sequence of the drum informs the band of forthcoming drills or movements.
- (h) Nearly all marches are multiple groups of 16 beats (paces) or 8 bars. Sometimes there are shorter introductions of 8 beats together with 4 beats before the trio. Such a march is Invercargill.
- (i) The Bass Drum is silent for the 15<sup>th</sup> beat and has a double tap on the 16<sup>th</sup> beat during marching and playing.
- (j) On the signal from the Drum Major the Bass Drummer will give a double tap on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> beat, plus 'missing' the 15<sup>th</sup> beat followed by a double tap on the 16<sup>th</sup> beat. This is fore warning of the imminent commencement of playing.
- (k) All commands have a preliminary and executive element separated by a pause"

e.g. Band (pause) Halt

Position	Meaning
Attention	Heels together, feet at 30 degrees and hands down the seam of trousers/skirt.
Stand at Ease	Feet 38 cm (15") apart and at 30 degrees.
Stand Easy / Rest	Feet do not move, arms and hands can move.
Left Turn at Halt	Swivel on the heel of the left foot and the ball of the right foot. Pause for 1 beat, bring the right foot to the position of Attention.
Right Turn at Halt	Reverse of the left turn. Note that left and right turns at Halt are always given from the "Attention" position

### Signals and Commands

- Cease play
- Fall in
- Fall out
- Halt
- Mark time
- Start music
- Stepping off
- Wheeling



## Cease Play



The Drum Major indicates to cease play and the Bass Drum will complete a sequence with the double tap on the 9<sup>th</sup> beat and the 11<sup>th</sup> beat and a final double tap on the 16<sup>th</sup> beat.

If this is the end of the piece, then it ends with a double tap.

If this is the middle of a piece, the last double tap usually coincides with a double bar line.

## Fall In

The Drum Major marches out into the parade area, 2 paces in front of the intended position of the marker.

Command **“Marker two paces from and facing me”**.

The Marker – usually a Tuba – comes to attention, marches out, stopping 2 paces from the Drum Major, halts, then stands at ease. The Drum Major about turns, marches to the centre, halts, then

Command **“Band on Parade”**

Band members come to attention, then march out to form the ranks and files, 1.5metres (2 paces) apart.

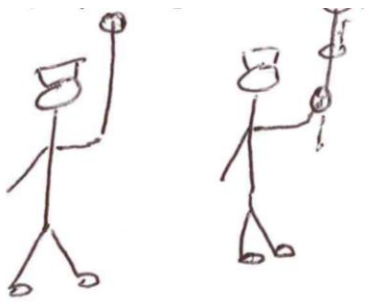
Stand at ease, waiting for the next command.

## Fall Out

The Drum Major says **“Band, Side of the Parade ground, Fall out”**

Band always turns to the right, wait for 5 drum beats, then march off the parade ground.

## Halt



Usually after a bass drum sequence, but can be given at any time, depending on traffic.

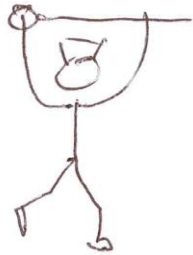
Mace up in right hand of Drum Major  
Long blow of whistle (left, right, left)

3 short whistle blows on next left, right, left while mace moves up and down.

Bring the right foot to stand at attention on the next beat.



## Mark Time



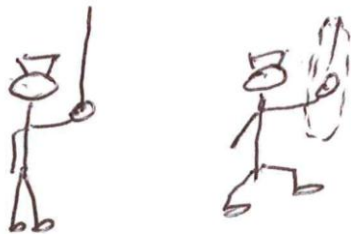
Three pace warning, (left, right, left)

Keep marching, on the spot.

## Start Music

The signal to commence playing is given by “two Threes” on the bass drum.  
Instruments up after 3 beats. Commence playing on the left foot following the second two threes.

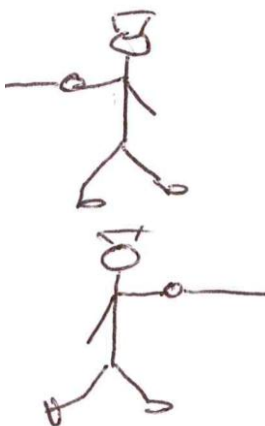
## Stepping Off



Drum Major command is  
**“Band will advance in column of route,  
By the centre, Quick March”**

Step off (left foot) after Two Threes from the bass drum.

## Wheeling



Left Wheel

Drum Major extends the foot of the mace horizontally to the left for 3 beats

Band then commences the wheel.

Right Wheel

Same drill as for left wheel.