

How to Survive Park High's Band Camp

Band camp is a place to have fun while learning to play your instrument. While you are there to work and learn, it doesn't have to be torture.

Steps

1. Remember what to bring for rehearsal- i.e. lunch, water, instrument, etc. Make a checklist so you don't end up in a predicament.
2. Be on time. Timely arrivals show you want to make a commitment to the program and will save your section from having to run laps, or being otherwise reprimanded by your director/drum major.
3. Warm up before rehearsal. Chances are you haven't played or done a long rehearsal for a while.
4. Learn rehearsal and performance etiquette. Ask your section leader or band director if you're not sure about something. Good etiquette helps things flow smoothly and look professional.
5. Try your hardest. You will probably make faster friends and be respected more if you make a decent effort at marching and playing your instrument.
6. Be optimistic. Complaining or bellyaching is extremely annoying and unhelpful.
7. Make friends. Get to know your classmate, your section, whoever is sitting or standing next to you in formation, and anybody else that seems interesting. You have band and music in common already - but do not talk when you're setting up formations or going over your music.
8. Learn the show. Now is the time to practice. Practice as you would like to perform- learn your formations, work, music, rhythms, etc.
9. Take care of yourself. You'll perform better and feel better if you take care of your body. Marching band is a sport!
 - Stretch. Marching band can be demanding during the summer. You don't want to pull a muscle or injure yourself.
 - Wear sunscreen and a hat if you will be marching in the sun. That sunburn won't feel good tomorrow, and it'll spare you sock tans, glove tans, and drum harness tans (somewhat). Remember to reapply every 2 hours or so. Wear chapstick that protects against the sun. Sunburned lips are not fun to play an instrument with, especially for brass players. Also be sure to wear shoes that don't come off in the mud.
 - Drink plenty of water. This means water or Gatorade/Powerade (see Warnings). Soda and juice will dehydrate you. Avoid drinking milk or eating dairy products. The heat will cause it to curdle in your stomach and make you nauseous. Get an insulated jug for water. Don't forget to clean and dry it after each day's practice, so it doesn't gunk up inside.
 - Eat healthy foods! Don't just eat a pop-tart for breakfast on your way out the door; marching a lot is a very physical activity, especially if it's for the entire day. Also remember to eat a healthy lunch. Fried foods aren't good for you anyway, but if you eat unhealthy fast food, you will regret it after marching.
 - Wear movable clothing and comfortable, athletic shoes. Dress appropriately for the weather and don't forget a jacket and gloves if it will get cold.
10. Learn how to wear your uniform and try it on. This way you can avoid disasters before an actual show at a competition. Minutes before your first show is not the time to learn the intricacies of your uniform, discover that your pants are too short or too long, or learn that nobody ever issued you a plume.
11. Care for your instrument.
 - Insert the brass mouthpiece or woodwind part firmly enough that it doesn't fly out when snapped up and down. Tape them during the show.
 - Avoid getting a woodwind wet, especially the pads- they will fall off. If you are forced to march in the rain close all holes/keys. Use your cleaning cloth to dry the instrument after each practice. If you ever have to get pads replaced on your marching instrument ask for plastic pads.
 - Oil your valves or slide before practice. It's much harder from mid-field.

- For percussion, take the opportunity to learn from your drum instructor how to tie cymbals properly and how to replace and tune a drumhead.
 - Learn the proper way to set your instrument down: not on its keys or delicate valves. If you must set your instrument on the ground, set it with the others from your section in a formation. It's a nice flourish and shows off sectional spirit, and it might help save them from a careless foot.
 - Consider marching a second-string instrument, particularly during rehearsals. You can buy one on EBay or even at a garage sale.
12. Get some rest. Band camp can be strenuous, and it's easier if you're well rested.
 13. Be respectful and courteous towards band directors and assistants. Often they are busy or stressed, so be understanding.

Tips

- Smell good. No one likes a smelly band nerd. Deodorant helps, and should travel with you somewhere that you can get to it when getting out of a sweaty uniform, later. Remember to take showers after rehearsals!
- Keep a pencil in your instrument case to mark sheet music during practice. - stick your pencil into your ponytail to hold it.
- Remember that everyone is at band camp to learn. If you're a newcomer, don't take it personally when an instructor gives advice. Remember, they're trying to help you look better in performance. If you're a returning member, help out newcomers and be patient with them. You learned once, too.
- If your water bottle is transparent, sometimes keeping it in a bag will keep it cool on a hot day; this keeps the sun from heating it up.
- Don't complain.

Warnings

- Woodwinds and brass should not play their instrument after eating or drinking sugary stuff (like gatorade and powerade). It's fine to have a snack during breaks, just make sure to wash it down with water.
- Never handle or play somebody else's instrument without permission. You will be held accountable if it breaks.
- Many people can overheat during band camp if it's hot outside. If you start to feel fatigued, dizzy, nausea, you may be suffering from heat exhaustion. Tell a section leader, drum major, or staff member immediately. Get to some shade and get some water if you think this is happening to you.
- Don't talk when the band director, staff, drum majors, or section leaders are talking. Not only will this make them mad, but it will distract people around you from what they're saying, which could be very important. If you need help finding your drill spot, quietly raise your hand and someone will gladly help you. Respect upperclassmen- chances are they're right and you're wrong.
- If you are given a drill sheet with your formations on it or music do not lose it, because you will probably get in trouble. Your whole section might have to run laps!
- After rain, woodwinds will have their pads shot. Rain does happen during marching band and it is a magical thing, but remember to use filter paper to get all the moisture out of the pads after being in the rain. Otherwise you will have to pay hundreds of dollars just to replace the pads.
- If you have a smaller instrument consider getting another instrument at the local pawn shop as your "marching instrument" that way your good concert one will not be ruined on the field. Trust me, I have dropped my horn enough times to know this is worthwhile.
- Discipline. Marching Band is very military-esque. When the director is speaking, you do not. When you need to snap to attention, you snap. Take it seriously, many skills that you learn in this activity can be applied to every day life!