



# Music “Survival Guide”

*presented by the MEHSband Executive Student Council*  
**written by 2008-2010 President Samantha Lee**

Rules that govern how you will play music for your  
entire musical career in this program.

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# I. Info You Need to Survive in MEHSband

If you don't feel like reading the rest of this rulebook, at least memorize these rules because they will save you some embarrassment when asked about these rules.

## Repetitive Rhythms/Stagnant Notes

If you have notes or rhythms that do not change, ALWAYS:

- Shape/Crescendo (get louder)
- Shorter
- **When your rhythm first appears in the piece play out, after you hear something else occurring, back off! <--Important.**

## How do you shape a line?

In general: If a line goes up (notes go higher on a staff), you crescendo (get louder). If a line goes down (notes get lower), you decrescendo (get softer)

## Melody V.S Harmony

**Harmony:** Usually chords and longer-valued notes & supports the melody. **ALWAYS be sensitive** to the melody by not playing over them. Good rule of thumb: if you cannot hear the melody, you are playing too loud! **ALWAYS shape** your line like melody.

**Counter-Melody:** Similar to melody, but not as important. You still support the main moving line! (You're like back-up singers in a song!)

**Melody:** Make it easier for the harmony by playing out! Always the moving line. Play with shape, expression, and make sure you complete phrases!!

**Example:** In your favorite song (hip-hop/rock//indie...etc) you always want to hear the vocals/lyrics (melody) NOT the back-up singers or random drum playing in the background, right? Exactly!

## Temperature & Pitch

Cold temperatures at band reviews: Your instrument will be FLAT. (*blow air in horn!*)  
Hot temperatures on concert stage: Your instrument will be SHARP.

## Volume & Pitch

Brass: When you play louder, you go flat. When you play w/ no support: sharp.  
Woodwind: When you play louder, you go sharp. When you play w/ no support: flat.

## Out of Tune?

Play softer and adjust or cut out completely for the better of this band.

## You hear someone out of tune?

Tell them, but **ALWAYS assume you are the one out of tune.** "Heroes" want to save the band =stubborn/selfish. Leaders help the band = selfless.

### **No eye-contact**

Nothing gets you in trouble faster than not looking up at the conductor. You will witness this rule being broken MANY times during the year. I promise. You will know when Mr. Cato asks “Is “so-and-so” conducting you, [your name]?”

### **ALL ARTICULATIONS!**

Mr. Cato will explain this at least once a season. So check out **page #6**.  
Sound smart and impress by memorizing all the articulations!

**When you have fast moving parts(especially monotonous ones), ALWAYS emphasize the downbeat.**

## **II. The Building Blocks of “MUSICALITY”**

If you can't play anything else right, at least play the right: (goes in order of importance)

1. **Rhythm/In Time**
2. **Right Pitch**
3. Play with good **Tone**
4. Play correct **Articulation**
5. Play correct **Dynamics**

## **III. Basics/Posture**

- Feet Flat
- Back Straight
- Sit at the *EDGE* of the chair!
- Stand position
  - Facing conductor at all times!
  - High enough to see conductor through peripheral vision
- Fingers curved

**Brass:** Do **NOT** deposit your spit onto the carpet. **ALWAYS** use a towel.

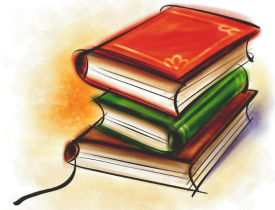
**Woodwinds:** Never, ever, leave your **reeds** on the ground.

**All musicians:** Respect your instruments (especially the professional instruments purchased by the school) by not **DROPPING** them! You will be responsible for getting it fixed!

Also, respect the music library by **NOT losing your music** or leaving your **music folders** on the ground.

## IV. Basic Music Vocabulary

(Terms used often during class.) MUSICIANS HAVE TO STUDY TOO!



- **Accent:** Emphasis on a note by use of tongue and/or air.
- **Accompaniment:** A part that supports the melody or main soloists.
- **Articulation:** The technique in which a note is executed. How a note is started and ended.
- **Attack:** Beginning of a note. How you start a note.
- **Cadence:** Repetitive rhythmic series or closing of a piece/phrase
- **Chord:** Two or more pitches sounded together.
- **Chromatic:** Transition of notes by half-steps.
- **D.C al coda:** Go back to beginning, play to the D.S sign, and then play the coda.
- **Diction:** Clear articulation/pronunciation.
- **Dissonance:** Two or more notes played together that create tension. Not a pretty sound.
- **“Dry”:** A performance venue that is “dry” does not resonate sound = longer note values! Therefore, a “live” hall that resonates sound = shorter notes with more separation.
- **Dynamics:** Volume/Intensity/Relative Loudness or Softness
- **Embouchure:** Mouth Position on Mouthpieces
- **Flat:** Lower than real pitch.
- **Harmony:** Musical elements or lines that enhance the melody. Usually a movement of longer valued notes and are chords.
- **Intonation:** Being in tune with accompaniment/other musicians.
- **Key: MAJOR:** (remember!) Based on a scale of **w/w/h/w/w/w/h** steps. (w = whole. h = half)
- **Key: MINOR:** (sad sounding) Based on a scale of **w/h/w/w/h/w/w** steps
- **Melody:** The main line that is focused on within a musical composition.
- **Meter:** The way beats are organized. (i.e. Duple: beats are arranged in pairs, Triple...etc.)
- **Phrase:** Notes/Melody played in one breath. (IMPORTANT!)
- **Pitch:** Relative highness or lowness of a note in Hz. (Hertz-measurement of frequency)
- **Posture:** Sitting/Standing correctly while playing as to perform efficiently and prevent injuries. (Carpal tunnel, arm and back pain, etc)
- **Sharp:** Higher than the real pitch
- **Tempo:** Speed at which a passage is to be played.
- **Tone color:** Brightness or Darkness of the sound. **Bright** = thin, stark, sharp sound. (More high instruments) **Dark** = warm, full, deep sound. (More low instruments)
- **Unison:** To play a passage together on the same pitch and rhythm.

### Additional Terms:

- **Poco a poco** – little by little
- **con brio** – with vigor or spirit
- **molto** – very much (i.e. molto allegro means very fast)
- **più** - more
- **meno** – less
- **fermata** – hold out note and watch conductor!

## V. Tempo Markings

Usually, there are words at the top left hand side of your music that dictates how fast you will play a piece. This is crucial when sight reading and even more so in auditions! Here are some terms you just have to know!

**A tempo**

return to previous tempo marking.

**Accelerado**

a gradual quickening of tempo

**Adagio**

“at ease”, slow, stately (66-76 bpm)

**Allargando**

a gradual slowing of tempo. (usually near end of piece)

**Allegretto**

moderately fast (a few clicks less than allegro)

**Allegretto Grazioso**

moderately fast, but gracefully

**Allegro**

fast, bright, “march” tempo (120 – 168 bpm)

**Agitato**

“agitated”, quicker, aggressive tempo

**Andante**

“walking pace” (76-108 bpm)

**Cantabile**

“singing/lyrical” style

**Dolce**

sweetly, like a lullaby

**Lento/Largo**

very slow (40-60 bpm)

**Maestoso**

majestic, stately, solemn, slow

**Moderato**

moderately (108-120 bpm)

**Presto**

Very quick (168 – 200 bpm)

**Ritardando**

Immediate slow down of tempo

**Rubato**

free adjustment of tempo for expressive reasons

**Sostenuto**

sustained, slackening of tempo

**Vivace**

lively and fast (over 140 bpm)

## VI. Articulation

**Tenuto** – Brass: “da”, Woodwind: “Ta” tongue



**Staccato** – light, detached, separated  
Woodwind: “tit” Brass: “dit”



**Accent** – Strong attack, don't let pitch drop, fade the sound, push diaphragm (like laughing!)  
Brass: “du” Woodwind: “tu”



**Marcato** – cut off with tongue, marked, “bell tone”, Brass: “dut” Woodwind: “tut”



**Slur** – connection of notes. NO separation.



**Portato** - Staccato + Legato = Portato!  
You lightly separate each note with air, but barely.  
Like tenuto, but no tongue – just air!



**Double-Tongue** – Brass: “du-gu”  
Woodwind: “tu-ku”

**Triple-Tongue** – Brass: “du-gu-du”  
Woodwind: “ti-ki-ti” “ta-ka-ta”