



HOW TO ... MARCHING CONTEST

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW (AND MORE)

Each fall, the band will participate in four to six marching band contests beginning the last weekend of September (or one-week later) and extending until the last week of October (or slightly later depending on advancement to the UIL State Marching Contest).

The daily schedule for each contest is dictated by the performance time which is selected at random and controlled by the contest organizers and is sometimes only available a week prior to the contest. We will always do the best we can to inform everyone of exact times as they are available, but the safe bet is to avoid scheduling anything on a Saturday from the last weekend of September through the first weekend of November.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

A marching band contest brings together different high school marching bands from around the area to perform their competitive marching band show. At each contest, there is a panel of judges to provide feedback about the quality of the performance and, in most cases, assign a numerical score to each performance.

The Liberty Band typically choose to compete in the some of the following contests based on dates and availability:

- Bands of America (BOA)
- Denton Golden Triangle Classic (GTC)
- Carrollton-Farmers Branch Tournament of Champions (CFB-TOC)
- Hurst-Euless-Bedford Marching Contest (HEB)
- The Duncanville Marching Invitational (DMI)
- The Birdville Marching Festival
- The Plano East Marching Invitational (PEMI)
- UIL Marching Contest

Some of the contests have a two-performance format (prelims and finals) while others may only have a single performance format. We try to select two-performance format contests as often as possible to get the most “bang-for-our-buck” in entry fees and judges’ commentary.

JUDGING

While each contest has different criteria, scoring methods, and adjudication rubrics by which the band is evaluated, all of the critique *generally* focuses on a few common elements:

MUSIC	How well the band plays both as a group and as individual players. At some contests, there will be a judge walking around the field to critique the quality of playing from student to student.
VISUAL	Not only do the forms (drill) we make need to look nice, each individual performer is evaluated for uniformity of approach (ie. do they all look the same when marching).
GENERAL EFFECT	Using both the music AND the visual, how “exciting” is the show? This is the overall “cool factor” for the show. Props, color guard, front panels, etc. all have a part in establishing the “mood” of the overall production value.
COLOR GUARD	Some contests will have a separate “caption” for a best color guard award, but the color guard will always be factored into visual and general effect regardless.
DRUM MAJOR	Some contests will offer a separate “caption” for a best drum major award, but the quality of the drum major isn’t a deciding factor in the overall scoring system.
PERCUSSION	Some contests will offer a separate “caption” for a best percussion section award, but the percussion section will always be factored into visual and musical scores regardless.

At the end of the performances, judges' scores are calculated and then each band is ranked based on scores. In a contest with a two-performance format (prelims and finals) only the bands with the highest scores get another opportunity to perform at finals.

SCHEDULING

There is no secret ... contest days can be LONG! That is why there aren't very many contests scheduled throughout the fall. In the most extreme cases, the band may have to meet at school early in the morning (sometimes SUPER early) and may not return until late in the evening (sometimes after midnight). Again, we are at the mercy of the contest organizers for the schedule but will always do our best to keep the kids fed, rested, and taken care of.

On a contest day, the students will be scheduled to arrive approximately 4-5 hours prior to the performance time. During this time, we will have a quick (just over an hour) rehearsal before loading the buses to travel to the contest. If the contest time is super early, instead of a rehearsal we will have a light physical stretch to get our bodies awake and ready for competition.

When the rehearsal finishes, the "city" springs into action ... equipment must be loaded, "show hair" must be prepared, the students must be fed, and everyone must prepare for the long day of travel (uniforms, change of clothes, etc.).

Students will have an "inspection" in the auditorium at a set time, then we will all load the buses and head to the contest. Sometimes, for the sake of saving time, students will eat their meal on the bus and sometimes they will be asked to bring a snack – all these instructions will be in the detailed itinerary for each contest.

ON-SITE AT THE CONTEST

When we arrive to the contest site, everyone gets into uniform and prepares to enter the warm-up area. Equipment will be unloaded from the truck and coordination efforts are massive.

The drums will warm-up in one area, the pit will warm-up in a second area, the color guard will warm-up in a third area, and the band will warm-up in a fourth area (all hopefully close enough to each other to streamline communication) ... all while the props and front panels will move independently to the field entrance gate and wait for everyone to arrive.

Eventually, all parts and pieces of the ensemble will converge at the field entrance gate just before "show time".

At each contest, we are given a set amount of time to warm-up, a set amount of time to enter the field, a set amount of time to perform, and a set amount of time to clear the field. Anyone planning on coming to a contest to cheer on the band should pay close attention to the performance time because being only a few minutes late may result in completely missing the performance.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

When we finish our performance, we typically go back to the buses to return our instruments and equipment and perhaps change out of uniform (depending on the schedule).

The procedure at each contest can be different based on the schedule. We MAY go back into the stadium to watch a few other groups and the awards ceremony. We MAY get on the buses and return to school. We MAY get on the buses to go to another close-by location to get some rest. Again, the details of each contest will be located on the detailed itinerary for the day.

If we make finals at a two-performance contest, we will start the bulk of the process again (warm-up, perform, etc.) and will return home after the finals' awards ceremony. At a single-performance contest, we will return to Liberty after the awards ceremony.

WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO TO PREPARE?

Again, there is no secret that a contest day is a LONG day. Students should be diligent in planning ahead for their school work. Even on a long bus ride, students will spend more time socializing with each other than taking care of school work, so it is best to get as many things done *before* a contest weekend as possible.

With the length of a contest day, it is crucial for students to get a much rest as possible the night before. Parents should help monitor bedtime on the night before a contest, so students get as much sleep as the schedule will allow making certain to be on time for the contest. With so many moving parts, tardiness on the day of the contest just adds a lot of unnecessary stress to everyone wondering IF and WHEN someone may or may not show up.

WHAT PARENTS AND FAMILIES CAN DO TO HELP?

Be there. Come to the contest, wear red (Liberty gear), sit together, and cheer!

Twenty-five years of teaching experience has taught me one very important lesson about kids:

Kids equate LOVE with **presence**, NOT **presents**.

Over the course of twenty-five years, I have lost count of how many students have said to me, “my parents don’t love me, they never come to anything I do.” Ask anyone to define why they love someone, and more often than not they will say, “they are always there for me when I need them.”

Be there. Over that same twenty-five years I can say that *nothing* is more disheartening or deflating than performing to empty seats.

Be there. Get involved. Chaperone, hair team, loading crew ... the kids need TONS of non-instructional help and support to make the show a reality. The directors can provide more teaching if you help provide the other stuff.

Be there. Remember that the development of the teenage brain (frontal lobes and all that other stuff you learned in psychology) means they are more likely to say what they mean at the moment (unfiltered even) and are less inclined to say what they REALLY mean. They will pretend to be embarrassed by your presence but will always remember that you were there.

Ignore their eye-rolling and ... be there.