

WORDS OF COMMAND FOR PIPES AND DRUMS

Regimental Drum Major Association 2003-2004

WORDS OF COMMAND FOR PIPES & DRUMS

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I. Overview

Vocal commands along with mace and hand signals are the means by which the Drum Major has of communicating with the band. Clear, correct, and concise vocal commands will assist your band to perform confidently.

- **CONCISE.** Direct and to-the-point. Keep the voice command simple.
- **CORRECT.** Make sure the command being issued is correct! This will keep the band aware of their environment and keep confusion at a minimum.
- **CLEAR.** The voice command must be given clearly and slowly. Enunciation and elocution are essential.

Further, all commands should be loud and without any hesitation. Commands must be loud enough to be heard by the rear rank of the band in either quiet or noisy settings. Vocal commands with long pauses are poor form and imply that the Drum Major lacks confidence in the drill desired from the band.

Drum Majors must learn to develop their command voice. When giving voice commands the Drum Major must use their diaphragm and not their vocal cords. Otherwise, the vocal cords will become strained and cause the voice to become distorted.

II. Parts of the Command

Cautionary Command.

All commands should start out with the full name of the band or group to which the command is directed. This is the CAUTIONARY COMMAND. This performs two functions. First, it announces the name of the band or group to the audience. Second, it alerts the band or group that movement is imminent. Examples include: "Paris Pipes and Drums", "Pipes & Drums", "Massed Band", "Band", etc.

Preparatory Command.

Several commands include additional instructions for the band or group to follow. These are called "The Instructions" or the PREPARATORY COMMANDS. There are a variety of preparatory commands. "By the Right" indicates that dress will be to the right, "Mark Time through the Rolls" indicates that the band will Mark Time during the rolls and step off on the first note of the tune, etc.

Executive Command.

All commands are given with the expectation that they will be performed. The triggering portion of the command is the EXECUTIVE COMMAND. Aside from setting in motion the desired movement, the EXECUTIVE COMMAND also will set the tempo as described in the following section.

III. Other Considerations

Most Commands are given on the LEFT Foot. Commands to step off, start a tune, or Mark Time are given on SUCCESSIVE beats. For example: the Executive Command “Quick March:” “Quick” will be given on the LEFT foot and “March” will be given on the RIGHT foot. For the Executive Command “One Two:” “One “ will be given on the LEFT foot and “Two” will be given on the RIGHT foot. The same holds for “Slow March” and “Mark Time.” As is described in the next section, these shall be given in tempo.

Tempo. All commands have an element of tempo associated with them. This permits the band to execute a command simultaneously. For commands at static positions, the tempo is set with the Preparatory and Executive Commands. For commands initiating movement or the playing of music, the tempo is set with the Executive Command. However, using a set tempo through the entire command (Cautionary, Preparatory, and Executive) will reinforce tempo. At a minimum the Executive Command, given on successive beats as described in the above section, must be in tempo so the bass drummer can set the tempo in the first two beats of the tune.

While the Drum Major should know their band’s strengths, s/he should practice this procedure with the band’s Pipe Major. The Pipe Major will know the strengths and weaknesses within the pipe section and will indicate at what tempo the band is capable of performing. The tempo can effect the sound, tone, and ultimately, the image of the band. The average tempo for a street band is suggested at 80-90 beats per minute, and military bands 110-120 beats per minute.

Further Explanations. In the following descriptions, any directions given in brackets are what occur after that particular command is delivered. For example under MARK TIME the following directions indicate:

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Mark, Time (successive beats) [LEFT FOOT CHECK STEP, SLIDE RIGHT FOOT NEXT TO LEFT, LIFT LEFT FOOT, COMMENCING THE MARK TIME]

Therefore, the command “Mark” is given on the LEFT foot. The command “Time” is given on the RIGHT foot (or successive beat) and the very next left foot is a check step, the next right foot slides up to the left foot, the next left foot raises to start the MARK TIME.

Mistakes. Drum Majors never make mistakes. This is the mantra we believe. However, nerves, excitement, indecision, or over-thinking the procedures may cause vocal command errors. The Drum Major must be alert to realize the mistake, and must calmly and confidently correct the error as soon as possible. The most common command to correct the mistake is “AS YOU WERE”. This command will allow the band to process the mistake. The Drum Major, after giving this command, can now commence the proper sequence of commands.

Disclaimer. As with mace signals, if your vocal commands work for your band, they are not necessarily wrong.

IV. The Commands

FORMATION

Fall In.

This command communicates to the band members to set the band block.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., N/A, Fall In

Dress. This command instructs the band to set dress or alignment of the ranks. This procedure incorporates several commands as outlined below.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Executive:
Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Centre (Left or Right), Dress [BAND TAKES ONE STEP FORWARD, HEADS ARE SNAPPED TOWARDS CENTRE (LEFT OR RIGHT), ARMS ARE UP ON THE FRONT RANK AND THE DRUM RANKS (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE OUTSIDE RANKS, ONLY THE DRUMMERS INSIDEARM IS UP). CORRECTIVE MOVEMENTS START WITH THE LEFT FOOT.]
Fix [WHILE THE DRUM MAJOR STEPS OFF THE RANKS AND FILES, THIS COMMANDS PERMITS THE DRUMMERS TO REST THEIR ARMS.]
Eyes Front [HEADS ARE SNAPPED FORWARD AND DRUMMERS, IF ARMS ARE UP, SNAP ARMS TO THE ATTENTION POSITION.]

Break Off. Fall Out.

This command dismisses the band with the understanding that the day's engagement will continue and a subsequent Fall In command will be forthcoming.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Break, Off
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Fall, Out
[BAND EXECUTES A RIGHT TURN AND HOLDS THE POSITION FOR FOUR COUNTS BEFORE LEAVING THE FORMATION.]

Dismissal.

This command dismisses the band for a particular engagement

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Dis, Missed [BAND EXECUTES A RIGHT TURN AND HOLDS THE POSITION FOR FOUR COUNTS BEFORE LEAVING THE FORMATION.]

AT THE HALT

Attention.

Bringing a band to the attention will set the tone for the band. A command performed in a sloppy fashion will tend to make the band's drill look sloppy. Use smart and crisp commands and the band will follow the lead.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Atten, Shun

At Ease.

This is a position of rest for the drum major and the band. It is executed while halted at ATTENTION.

NOTE: Drum Major to resume the position of ATTENTION prior to attempting any subsequent commands.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Stand At, Ease

Stand Easy.

This is a position of rest for the drum major and the band. It is executed while the band is in the AT EASE position only. The drum major must be at ATTENTION to call this command.

NOTE: Drum Major to resume the position of ATTENTION prior to attempting any subsequent commands.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Stand, Easy

Turns.

Close order drill to change the facing of the band.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Left, Right, or About Turn

Salute.

The Drum Major shall be the only member of the band to take or give the salute.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:
Drum Majors [massed band setting], Hand, Salute [COUNT ONE: BRING HAND UP FOR SALUTE; COUNT TWO: SNAP ARM DOWN TO ATTENTION POSITION.]

Quick March from Block Formation.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. By the Right (Left, or Centre) Quick March (successive beats)

Slow March from Block Formation.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. By the Right (Left, or Centre) Sloooowww March (successive beats)

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Reform Band, By the Right (Left, or Centre) Quick March (successive beats)

ON THE MARCH

Reform Proper Formation from Circle or Special Formation.

This command will have the band step off directly and reform the proper band formation.

Reform Proper Formation from Circle or Special Formation (Alternative).

This command will allow the band to get comfortable with the tempo before stepping off by Marking Time through the rolls. This method increases the likelihood of a crisp step off by the band.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Reform Band, Mark Time for the Rolls, By the Right (Left, or Centre) Quick March (successive beats)

Wheels.

The WHEELS are, like all commands, given on the left foot. As the band come to a point that they have to wheel around a corner, the Drum Major should pick a point to call the command. This point must result in the band wheeling in the middle of the street and not just getting around the curb. On the word, WHEEL, the band will commence the maneuver directly and not another two paces hence.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Right or Left [RIGHT FOOT CHECK PACE] Wheel [COMMENCE WHEEL]

Mark Time.

The commands for MARK TIME off the march are on the left foot.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Mark Time (successive beats) [LEF FOOT CHECK STEP, SLIDE RIGHT FOOT NEXT TO LEFT, LIFT LEFT FOOT, COMMENCING THE MARK TIME]

Halt.

The HALT is one command that bands have the most difficulty with. The halt shall always be given on the left foot. A common mistake is for the Drum Major to call the command on the right foot. The count for this command is “Halt” (left Foot), check, one, and two.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., N/A, Halt [RIGHT FOOT CHECK STEP, BRING LEFT FOOT NEXT TO RIGHT, LIFT RIGHT FOOT AND SLAM TO GROUND FOR A PROPER CLEAN AND CRISP HALT]

PLAYING AT THE HALT

Take Instruments from the Carry to Playing Position.

The carry position for the pipes is under the left arm with the left hand grasping this chanter, blowpipe, and bass drone. The bass drone is parallel to the ground and pointing forward.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Ready [COUNT ONE: GRASP CHANTER WITH RIGHT HAND WHILE LEFT HAND CONTINUES TO HOLD THE BLOWPIPE AND BASS DRONE; COUNT TWO: RELEASE THE CHANTER WHILE LEFT HAND TAKES THE BASS DRONE AND BLOWPIPE TO THE LEFT SHOULDER. RIGHT HAND THEN GRASPS THE BASS DRONE AND BLOWPIPE WHILE THE LEFT HAND HOLDS CHANTER IN "E" POSITION; COUNT THREE: SNAP RIGHT ARM TO ATTENTION POSITION.]

Take Instruments from the Playing to Carry Position.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., Down [COUNT ONE: GRASP CHANTER, BASS DRONE, BLOWPIPE WITH RIGHT HAND; COUNT TWO: PIPES ARE TAKEN OFF THE SHOULDER AND INTO THE CARRY POSITION WITH THE RIGHT HAND GRASPING THE BASS DRONE; COUNT THREE: SNAP RIGHT ARM TO ATTENTION POSITION.]

Playing While in Formation (Eventual March Off).

This command will be given if the band will march off at some point during the performance of the tune.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., At the Halt, Quick March (successive beats)

Playing While in Circle or Special Formation (Standing Fast).

This command will be given if the band will be playing while standing fast through the entire tune (i.e. The band will not march off.)

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc., At The Halt, Rolls One Two (successive beats)

Reform Proper Formation from Circle or Special Formation.

This command will have the band step off directly and reform the proper band formation.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc. Reform Band, By the Right (Left, or Centre) Quick March (successive beats)

Reform Proper Formation from Circle or Special Formation (Alternative).

This command will allow the band to get comfortable with the tempo before stepping off by Marking Time through the rolls. This method increases the likelihood of a crisp step off by the band.

Cautionary: Preparatory: Executive:

Name of Band, Pipes & Drums, etc.

Reform Band, Mark Time for the Rolls, By the Right (Left, or Centre) Quick March (successive beats)