

NORTH STAR



INDEPENDENT

2026 Visual Audition Packet

nsindependent.org

WELCOME

Welcome to the North Star Independent Percussion (NSI) 2026 audition process. You have taken the first step in the process of becoming a member of one of Idaho's only Independent A Class Indoor Percussion groups to compete in WGI Championships in Dayton, Ohio. This manual will provide you with all of the information you should need in order to fully understand how North Star Independent conducts its visual program. This manual will consist of definitions of posture, mark time, foot on dot and center of body, forward and backward marching technique, crabbing technique, common dance positions and shapes, and spatial planes.

Our goals for the audition process are two-fold. First, we wish to provide you with an educational experience. We hope you gain valuable lessons in music and visual performance. Secondly, it is an evaluation. Auditionees will be offered a callback or contract based on their performance in their music and visual auditions. The feedback you will receive from the music and visual staff at the audition will fall into one of two categories:

1. We will offer you a callback or contract for North Star. This means we need to see you again during the next audition weekend in order to make the final decision on whether you will be offered a contract with North Star.
2. You will not be invited back to the next camp. Our hope is that you will apply lessons learned at the audition experience and come back stronger next year.

The visual staff of North Star Independent is eager to help you develop as a percussionist and as a performer. We look forward to evaluating your audition and if you have any questions regarding visual auditions, please contact Brandon Alves at alvebran@gmail.com.

North Star Independent Visual Staff

Brandon Alves (North Star Visual Caption Head) – alvebran@gmail.com
Michaela Denning (Visual/Cymbal Instructor)

The 2026 North Star Independent visual audition will consist of 3 main components:

- An overall evaluation of your ability to receive and apply information, as well as your ability to work well with your peers. This evaluation will take place continuously over the entire audition weekend.
- A marching audition consisting of forward and backward marching as well as crabbing both while not playing and while playing exercises from the battery manual. Step sizes could range from 16-5 to 6-5 and tempi will range from 80-160 bpm, all while wearing equipment. This portion of the audition will be used to evaluate your ability to march at a Independent A class level.
- The learning of a short piece of dance choreography that will be taught, to music, which will be used to evaluate your ability to learn and perform basic movement concepts.

The final portion of the audition mentioned above will consist of a short choreographed routine to music that must be learned and will be taught. Auditionees will be evaluated on this choreography either individually or in small groups by the North Star visual staff. Preparedness is key to the choreography audition. Learning and watching other choreography videos on youtube will help the auditionee to learn and understand the choreography being taught.

All of the spots in North Star Independent are available each year. NO ONE, regardless of experience, is guaranteed a spot. Returning members must demonstrate continued growth and development in order to be considered for membership.

The North Star visual staff understands that all auditionees come from different backgrounds and may have different levels of familiarity with the specific techniques that we use when marching or moving. Rest assured that you will not necessarily be evaluated on your specific adherence to our techniques, but rather your approach to movement. This underscores the importance of your movement portion of the audition. If you study this manual diligently and are prepared with the information, you have done everything that you can to have a successful audition.

FITNESS

In Drumline, being a great musician and mastering your music is important, but in addition to that you must be able to perform all of your musical demands on the move. Every ensemble will have different levels of movement in their performance, but you have to be in shape to play well. This activity is governed by movement and you will not be able to perform at a high level of quality if you cannot move your drum around the floor with ease. A common tendency of marching drumlines is to play really well standing still, but the moment you start moving around in the drill, everything changes and the quality of playing suffers. This is often due to lack of physical strength and endurance.

Every performer who joins the drumline or any marching ensemble will have a different level of physical strength and endurance. It is important that each performer takes the proper steps to develop their fitness level to match the demands of their performance. This is seen in other activities as well. Football, Soccer, Wrestling, Basketball players all train rigorously for the specific demands of their sport. In the marching arts, you are required to march around a field or floor during the show. This includes following very specific marching techniques, visual or choreography, step sizes that can range from tip-toeing to full out sprinting, all while wearing a 15 lbs - 45 lbs drum.

***THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “GOOD”
AND “GREAT” OFTEN DEPENDS ON
YOUR WILLINGNESS TO INVEST FULLY
IN THE PROCESS. DEFINE THE PATH,
RESPECT THE DETAILS, AND STAY
PERSISTENT IN YOUR PURSUIT OF
EXCELLENCE.***

POSTURE

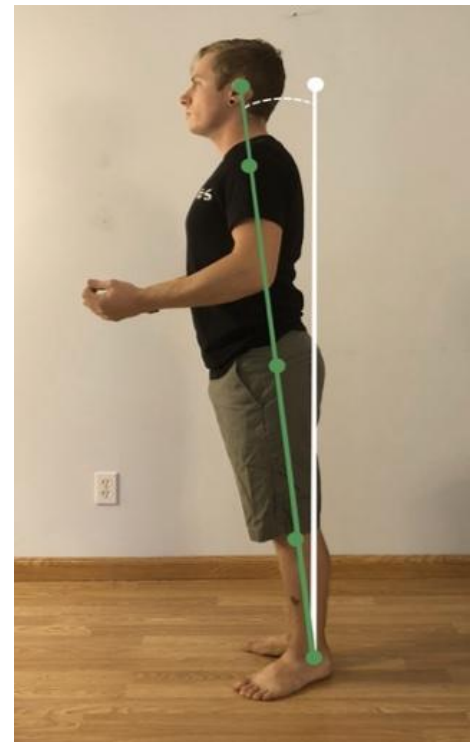
Your posture is defined by 5 points of alignment of your body. These points from top to bottom are: ears, shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles. We also stand with our weight 60% in our toes and 40% in our heels, creating the sensation of our weight being over our shoelaces. The ideal posture is that which aligns all 5 of these points with weight properly distributed 60/40 over the shoelaces. When our bodies are aligned and our weight is properly distributed, we have the most strong, confident presence. To accentuate this presence, think about trying to extend every vertebrae in your spine upwards. A good way to practice this is to go up onto the platforms and slowly lower yourself while trying to keep your head in the same position.



Starting from the bottom we stand still, whether at set or standby or halted, we stand with our feet in first position. This means our heels are together and our toes are apart, creating an angle of roughly 45 degrees between our feet. When standing still we define our dot between our inner ankle bones. We engage our muscles in our legs with relaxed knees, which helps align our knees. In order to align our hip point, we must rotate our hips underneath us. With our hands on our hips try to rotate the front of your pelvis forward and up and the other side of your pelvis back and down. We want to think of our hips as a cereal or soup bowl, if our hips are not aligned properly front or

back we lose our cereal or soup. You should feel a tightening of your abdominal muscles. Think about bringing your belly button to your spine, which will help with the tightening of the Ab muscles. Roll your shoulders back, and don't allow them to be pulled forward by the harness. Finally with the ears moving your head back and forth, this movement should feel uncomfortable, find the place that should feel comfortable to you and your ears should be in line with the rest of your body.

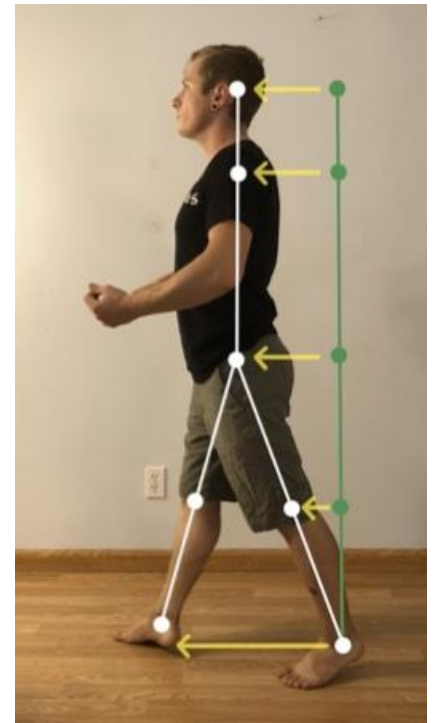
Standing with proper posture and presence will feel uncomfortable initially, since most people stand with poor posture. However proper posture puts the work of holding up your body on your skeletal structure rather than your muscles. Tension is the enemy of efficient movement and playing. The more unnecessary tension there is in the body, the less precision our bodies can play and move. Not every person's perfect posture will feel the same, but it should evoke the same emotion and confidence from the viewer point of view. This is our goal of our definition of posture; to give the performer the permission and ability to fill up space in the way they need to in order to create a strong and confident presence that is the most attention grabbing for the audience.



FORWARD MARCHING

When moving forward, backward, or in any other direction, the most important part of every step comes from the trailing foot. In the case of the forward march, it comes from the back foot. The most important part of this step is the push. Pushing from the back foot's platform will propel your body forward while maintaining the 5 points of alignment. These pushes should happen on the "AND" count or in music terms the eighth note before the step off at or below 132 beats per minute (bpm). Anything above 132 bpm will be a full beat before the step off to initiate the step.

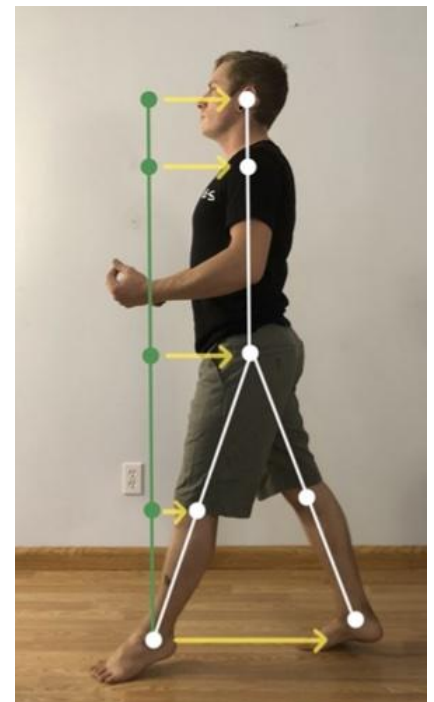
When we take our first forward step, we push from the right platform and our left platform strikes the ground first. This technique is what we call toe down technique because the toes are down when they first strike the ground. When the left leg moves forward, it stays straight and the vertical space needed to accommodate that movement comes from the lifting of the weight out of the hips. As tempi increase, a slight bend will and must naturally occur to accommodate the faster motion. When marching in any direction, our heels do not touch the ground.



BACKWARD MARCHING

As defined in forward marching, the most important part of step is the push from the trailing foot. Again, the same rules apply in the push going backwards; this should be done on the "AND" count or in music terms the eighth note before the step off at or below 132 bpm. Above 132 bpm, the full beat before the step off is used to initiate the step.

In backwards marching, your points of alignment and balance are maintained by a firm push from the trailing front foot during each step. When taking the first step, the right foot pushes the body backwards, allowing the left foot to move backwards and place onto the ground without reaching. While moving backwards we want to keep our feet flexed until the platform touches the ground in time. We want to achieve having straight legs defined in forwards technique. This push from the front foot is how we achieve and maintain the most important facet of backwards march; low heels. Having low heels allows us to keep our center of mass directly between our feet and points of alignment vertically aligned.



CRABBING TECHNIQUE

Crabbing is the technique that we use to move across the floor. Crabbing includes any direction that is not straight forwards or straight backwards. This means all obliques (diagonal moves) and horizontal moves will be done with crabbing technique.

When Crabbing, whichever lateral direction you are moving on the floor is the foot that leads your motion, and will be defined as your leading leg. The trailing leg will always cross either in front or behind your leading leg depending on your direction of travel. Both the open and the crossover steps should be the same size and cover the same distance; as opposed to the open step being larger and the crossover step being smaller. The hips must be square to the front, regardless of direction of the movement unless told by an instructor, and must be maintained on every step. Shoulders should be in alignment with the hips as well, showing a large presence to the audience. This will ensure that drums stay flat and uniform throughout the ensemble. Height should also always be maintained while crabbing, staying out of the hips, staying tall and with long legs.

FEET






All marching movements (Forwards, Backwards, and Crabbing) our feet are in parallel. That means our heels and toes are in contact if we were not moving. When we talk about our feet when we are marching, you will hear someone say “SKI TRACKS”. What we mean by this is when you march in any direction there is a specific way your feet will move. This keeps your legs and body going in a straight line towards your destination. This imaginary track is called a “SKI TRACKS”. When you wear skis, your body will only go in the direction your skis are facing. So you want your legs to always move in the direction of your next destination. The rule with Ski Lines is that your feet will always face forward on the move. That way you are always facing the audience even if you are moving at an angle.



As talked about in forwards marching, our technique is Toe down. In the first forward step, we push from our back platform and our front platform strikes the ground. We stay on our platforms for all marching movements, this helps minimize not being flat footed in the movements, helps maintain posture, but most importantly it helps with the push of propelling the body forward altogether in a straight line.

Foot Positions

When you are in Set Position, there are different foot positions you can use in choreography or depending on different marching styles. These foot positions are inspired by ballet and help you perform visual choreography during your show.

1st Position - Heels together and toes at a 45 degree angle.	 A photograph showing a person's feet in the 1st position. The heels are pressed together, and the toes are turned out at a 45-degree angle. A blue 'X' is marked on the floor between the heels.
2nd Position - Feet spread apart at shoulder width. Feet still in the 45 degree angle.	 A photograph showing a person's feet in the 2nd position. The feet are spread apart to shoulder width, with the toes turned out at a 45-degree angle. A blue 'X' is marked on the floor between the feet.
3rd Position - One foot placed in front of the other so the heel meets the arch.	 A photograph showing a person's feet in the 3rd position. One foot is placed in front of the other, with the heel of the front foot meeting the arch of the back foot.
4th Position - Heel and arch are aligned, one foot is out in front of the other away from the body.	 A photograph showing a person's feet in the 4th position. The feet are spread apart, with one foot in front of the other. The heel and arch of the front foot are aligned with the heel and arch of the back foot. A blue 'X' is marked on the floor between the feet.
5th Position - Heel comes back in meeting the toe of the opposite foot.	 A photograph showing a person's feet in the 5th position. The heel of the front foot is brought back to meet the toe of the back foot. A blue 'X' is marked on the floor between the feet.