

2023



NORTH STAR INDEPENDENT



Marching Cymbal Positions

Grabbing the Cymbals

When holding your cymbals, your index and middle fingers should be pushed together, which we will refer to as a finger gun. Your other two fingers and thumb should be spread apart as wide as they can comfortably be. This grip creates a reference line from your elbow to the tips of the finger gun.

Set

Both arms are extended at your side, with your elbows slightly bent. The knots of the cymbals should be positioned along the seam of your pants. Your presence is tall and elongated with balance and grace. Raise your chin up and pull your shoulders back for a broad chest.

Gumption

Both arms are extended in front of your chest, with your elbows slightly bent, think the shape of a house rather than a triangle. The cymbals are at an angle similar to a seat belt, with the tops of your cymbals aligning with your left shoulder and the bottoms with your right hip. The cymbals are separated about 1-inch.

Vertical

Both arms are extended in front of your face, with your elbows slightly bent. The knots of the cymbal are about eye level and your biceps should be parallel to the ground. The cymbals should be perfectly vertical and straight with your body, you should be able to see a sliver of the back edge of the cymbals through the 1-inch separation.

Playing the Cymbals

Crash

Your right hand makes contact two inches from the edge of the left cymbal and will flam slightly while following through the crash.

At Horizontal, the crash has a quarter note prep. The prep brings the right hand into position by pulling back slightly towards the right shoulder, repositioning the cymbal to make contact two inches from the top of the left cymbal. The left arm will not move; however, the wrist will break, pushing the bottom of the left cymbal into the forearm. Contact will be made with the tips of your fingers, while the follow through will come from the palm of your hand.

At Vertical, the crash has a quarter note prep. The prep brings the cymbals to a “V” position, with the bottoms of the cymbals two inches apart. Contact is made with the bottom of the right cymbal, two inches from the bottom of the left cymbal with the palm of your hand. The follow through comes from the tips of the fingers, pushing the cymbals back into an “A” position.

Crash Choke

This sound is played exactly like a crash, except immediately after the crash is played, you mute the cymbals completely. The object of a crash choke is to be short. Maximize contact on the cymbals to stop them from vibrating.

At Horizontal, the cymbals are dampened on your torso, with the knots near the bottom of your rib cage, covering as much of the cymbal with your body and arms. The cymbals are about two inches apart from each other, making an arrowhead shape on your torso.

At Vertical, the cymbals are dampened on your biceps and chest between your pectoral muscles and biceps. The cymbals will make an “A” with the tops two inches apart from each other. The bottoms will be slightly wider than shoulder width apart following the natural angle to your arms set.

Open Tap

Depending on where contact is made and how much force is applied, you can create different timbres and volumes. A tap is typically played at vertical from the A-prep position. Your right wrist pulls back, bringing the right cymbal away from the left. The right cymbal then strikes the left cymbal, making contact two inches inside the right cymbal.

Punch

Start in tap position. This is the same as the choke position for the horizontal crash choke. To prep, allow the left hand to come off the body and rotate the right hand to be parallel with it. Strike the edge of the left cymbal with the right cymbal, making contact about two inches inside the edge. Immediately return to tap position to mute the cymbals.

Suc

This sound is created when the right cymbal pulls into the left cymbal, creating an air pocket and locking both cymbals together. This causes a low, bass-like “thump” sound.

Sizz

This sound is created when both cymbals vibrate on each other. When equal pressure is applied by both cymbals, the cymbals will create a hissing sound. Make sure not to press them together with excess force. There is no prep for this implement.

Sizz-Suc

This sound combines the last two implements together. From a size (in either position), you will move towards the suc prep position while maintaining the sizz sound.

At Horizontal, the prep for this implement is directly forward with the right hand. You will pull straight back, applying pressure with the palm of your right hand in order to trap air in between both cymbals.

At Vertical, the prep will follow a 45-degree angle away from your face instead of straight forward.

Crunch

Simply press both cymbals together, squeezing your pectoral muscles to create a very short sound. There is no prep for this implement.

Zing

This sound is caused by pulling the edge of one cymbal across the grooves of the other cymbal. Typically played at the horizontal position, the right cymbal opens up like a book to a 90-degree angle. Contact is made near the bell of the left cymbal with the bottom of the right cymbal. The right cymbal then pulls to the edge of the left cymbal towards your right hip and then resets back to horizontal.

Miscellaneous

Helpful Tips

- Put a penny in the middle of your square knot to reduce friction.
- Tape your knots with stick tape so they form a tight ball. This keeps the cymbal from falling off your hand even if the strap breaks. It also keeps it from loosening too fast.
- If your straps are too loose and you don't have the time to take the tape off, untie the knot, tighten it, tie it, and tape it again, just take a few hair ties or rubber bands and wrap them around the base of the knot. You can add more or less depending on how tight you need your strap to be.
- Pay attention to which strap is tied for which hand. Take the time to learn how to do it correctly. Wearing your left cymbal on the right hand and vice versa will cause a lot of difficulty flipping.
- Always keep a highlighter, pencil, and earplugs in your bag
- ALWAYS STRETCH. Please stretch and get your body warmed up before playing cymbals. This will help prevent you from getting injured
- How to clean cymbals: apply liquid Barkeepers Friend (find it at Walmart or Home Depot) all over both sides, **gently** rub in with a soft cloth. Let sit for 5 mins and rinse completely off with warm water--not hot. Wipe dry with another clean soft cloth. Please place a towel or t shirt under your cymbals in the tub so you don't scratch the tub.
- Take slow-mo videos of yourself practicing so you see your tendencies
- Use a mirror for practice
- Don't be afraid to HIT THE CYMBALS. Confidence is the most important part of playing this instrument

References

<https://seavine.co/pages/education>

This page has progressive videos that teach basic technique for cymbal playing. Getting comfortable with chapters 1 and 2 is *ESSENTIAL* and should be done by mid December. Chapter 3 is also helpful and if 1&2 are up to par we can play with the fun stuff from 3 and beyond.

8-8-16

The image shows a musical score for three cymbal lines, labeled Cymbal Line 1, Cymbal Line 2, and Cymbal Line 3. Each line is written in 4/4 time and consists of nine measures. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, along with performance instructions written below the notes.

Cymbal Line 1

- Measure 1: Gumpton to Vertical
- Measure 2: Vertical to Set
- Measure 3: Set to Gumpton
- Measure 4: Gumpton to Vertical
- Measure 5: Vertical to Gumpton
- Measure 6: Gumpton to Set
- Measure 7: Set to Vertical
- Measure 8: Vertical to Gumpton
- Measure 9: Gumpton snap to Set on count 3

Cymbal Line 2

- Measure 1: Crash
- Measure 2: Crash Choke
- Measure 3: Crash
- Measure 4: Crash Choke
- Measure 5: Open Tap
- Measure 6: Tap Choke
- Measure 7: Open Tap
- Measure 8: Tap Choke
- Measure 9: Tap Choke

Cymbal Line 3

- Measure 1: Sizz
- Measure 2: Punch
- Measure 3: Sizz
- Measure 4: Punch
- Measure 5: Sizz
- Measure 6: Crunch
- Measure 7: Sizz
- Measure 8: Crunch
- Measure 9: Tap Choke

Cymbal Line

NSI 2023 Show Excerpt

I
♩ = 168
4

J

f *mp* *f* **2**

13

fff