



MARCHING

NEW ZEALAND

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS

WHEN and WHY?

Once you have followed the advice in the "How to Get Everything Learnt by Opening Day" handout you will need to go back and to improve on the basic requirements of our sport. Ensure that all the counts have been learnt and that the marchers are quite comfortable with performing the Technical Drills, the Review & Inspection and the Display then it is – back to basics.

So back to basics – the most important training necessary once the counts are learnt. The Technical Drills, the Review & Inspection and even the Display are made up of – basics.

You need to isolate each basic requirement e.g. handgrips, armswing, mark times etc etc and train them independently. You need to explain the details to the girls so that they understand what is required of them. Once they understand the need for correct drill they should understand the need to go over and over simple drills in order to perfect them.

Remember if they are not doing it at training then you cannot expect them to do it under competition conditions.

So now to basic training:

First action should be to have the marchers view the DVD. This is the model of the basic drill that you require them to achieve. This should then be repeated at various intervals throughout the season. A DVD for each marcher would be the ultimate tool so that they could use it for home training.

After viewing the DVD set out on your training. Mark out a pace ladder of approximately 20 paces in length and use it at most training sessions. This allows marchers to get a feel for the correct length of pace while performing drills e.g. last pace before a halt. It also allows for buddy training whereby marchers work in pairs and correct details as specified by the coach at the beginning of each segment of the training session.

For example you may want to look at the last pace before a halt, the halt position and the step out pace. Explain to the girls what is required (the exact drill) and then get them to check each other. This helps the marchers to programme their

brain to what is required of them and then to continually reinforce it while correcting their buddy. This saves an enormous amount of training time, as everyone is active, some physically and some mentally.

The coach goes around and reinforces the detail, talks about how to correct something that is wrong, praises all attempts. The marchers will chat away about what is good and what needs work while they are waiting their turn to get back on the ladder. You could even have two ladders and get everyone really working hard. I am sure you will find this will cut down on training time.

BUT not for too long for each drill. Change to another drill e.g. handgrip while swinging and hand position at the side while halted. This will be important as all technical drills now have marchers standing still and judges can clearly check their basic posture, hand position, head positions etc.

When you change the drill call the marchers in, explain what you require them to do and exactly what the drill details are, for example, show them a correct handgrip and explain all the features. Then off again in pairs to train with you as the guide and facilitator and praise of effort.

For some drills you could set up stations. You can have one for mark time position and height (a wooden template that the girls stand beside while their buddy corrects their drill), one for armswing height (two ropes strung between poles at the correct height front and rear). There are a number of drills that can be checked by a buddy at a training station.

Girls can then rotate around the stations at say five minute (or even less) intervals, the pace ladder can be another station i.e. checking for length of pace.

How you set up your training can vary depending on the drill development you want to undertake and the length of time you have to do it.

WHAT to look for:

The following is a list of things to check when doing basic training. This can be done as I have said above, with a buddy checking or with the girls going along the ladder at, say: five pace intervals with you, the coach, doing the check.

1. Straight Marching – *check the following from the side*

Leg and Foot Action:

Any incorrect length, the angle of the foot along the sole at the heel hits the ground (must be uniform with the team), stationary leg naturally straight as the moving leg passes, even speed.

Posture:

Body erect and not leaning forward or back, shoulders should be fairly flat across the back and square to the front, the head should be in a position so that the ear is in line with about the centre of the shoulder (top of the ear in line with the eye is a good check for correct head posture).

Please Note

The above, leg and foot action and posture, are the two most important aspects of marching. If a marcher is continually leaning back then their centre of balance will be incorrect and it will affect the action of halting, turning, their armswing timing may seem incorrect, their handgrip may appear incorrect etc etc. So please spend time getting posture and leg and foot action well developed before encouraging the marchers to swing their arms.

Explain to your marchers how important this is and that if everyone has correct posture then the team's uniformity of timing will be so much easier to achieve. And then when the whole team has their posture you will take them all to the movies.

Make this your first home training goal after the counts have been learnt.

Armswing:

Straight as the natural bend will allow, arms swinging to the correct height (must be uniform within the team), arms swinging in a smooth speed.

Handgrip:

Check for imaginary line to pass through the knuckle of the longest finger, and through the centre of the wrist and the centre of the forearm so that the wrists are not turned up or down nor hooked around, that the hands are closed not clenched so that there is a flat area at the base between the knuckles.

- **Straight Marching – *check the following from the front***

Leg and foot action:

No more than a 5 degree angle on the foot (either in or out), foot carried in a straight line with the heel on the line of march

Posture:

Shoulders should be square, head should be straight not leaning to one side

Armswing:

Arms swinging in line of march and not crossing the body either front or rear.

Handgrip:

Thumb lying over the crook of the first finger and pointing straight ahead, hands are pointing straight ahead and not turned over.

- **Straight Marching with Armswing Cuts – *check the following from the side***

Armdrop and Armswing out:

Check that the marchers are dropping their arms from the correct height (not raising or lowering armdrop or armswing out), in an even speed (not speeding or slowing armdrop or armswing out), and that the hands stop in the correct hand position and stay still when at the side. Also ensure that the posture and the leg and foot action do not change in any way.

You may do all of the above individually, say 3 or 4 times, then move into ranks and files to check for uniformity of the drills – speed, height, action etc.

2. Foot into halts/turns (All Grades)

Have each marcher individually practice their foot into Halts/Turns with you going around checking. They take one pace at a time and get a feel for where the foot should rest after a halt or a turn (flat drill). They check that the feet are together with the toes in line. Then when they are comfortable they have a buddy check them on the pace ladder.

They could take five paces and halt and then step out. The buddy should check length of pace going in and out, feet together with toes in line and that the posture does not change. Also check for the hesitation prior to the step out.

Do this without armswing at first so all the concentration is on the footwork and correct posture. Once that has been developed introduce armswing and check for armdrop and hand positions.

It may be a few trainings before you introduce armswing in conjunction with footwork as a skill development. Obviously your marchers are going to have to swing their arms while doing the Technical Drills at a competition but it may be that

the actual skill development for correct technique in conjunction with footwork comes after the correct technique for footwork is well developed.

You will still develop armswing and handgrip in isolation but when it comes to using these skills when halting or marking time then ensure the footwork and posture skills are the ones you focus on until they are correct. Then add armswing.

Remember of course the marcher's ability to only remember up to three instructions at once and therefore they cannot think of everything that is required at the same time. Once it becomes natural, after many training sessions, and they don't have to think about it they can take on more learning, for example, armswing technique in conjunction with turns.

NOW, back to Foot into Halts/Turns:

Once the halting and stepping out has been developed move to turns and pivoting out. You could start first by having the marcher stand in the halt position and then practice their pivot and step out and march a few paces. When they are comfortable a buddy could check them and then they can move into marching into the turn, pivoting and stepping out.

The buddy would check for:

Length of last pace and step out pace, feet together and toes in line, that the posture does not change and that the foot and the body turn to 90 degrees (or whatever angle the turn is). If the body turns more than 90 degrees then it is usually caused by the rear foot over pivoting. Have the marchers concentrate on turning their hips to the correct angle of the turn, as the hips are easier to feel than the feet. Again start without armswing and then introduce it later.

You could set up a separate station for turns with 3 lines of five paces in the 'U' shape (five paces, turn, five paces, turn, five paces, and halt. This will allow the marcher to execute two turns and then rest while feedback is given to them by their buddy or yourself.

Spend a short time on each drill and move on. Marchers will then be expected to improve on their technique at home training and at the next, and the next, and the next etc trainings.

3. Foot into Mark Times (U16, Senior and Masters)

Have each marcher individually practice their foot into the Mark Time with you going around checking. They take one pace at a time to gain a feel for the correct foot action (straight from the rear to the mark time position and then down to the stationery position – feet together and toes in line – in one smooth action).

Then when they are comfortable they have a buddy check them on the pace ladder taking one pace at a time. When comfortable they could take five paces and execute five mark times and then step out.

The buddy should check length of pace going in and out, correct foot into action (as above), that the feet land on the ground in the same position each time (not moving forward or backwards), that after the final mark time the marchers feet are together with the toes in line, that there is a hesitation prior to the step and that the posture does not change at any time.

Do this without armswing at first so all the concentration is on the footwork and posture. Once that has been achieved introduce armswing, armdrop, hand position, and armswing out.

Again remember to spend a short time on each drill and move on.

4. Mark Time – *check the following from the side*

March 5 paces and execute 5 mark times.

Check for -

Footwork:

Length pace into and out, foot into (action from rear), height of foot (decide on a height and ensure it is uniform within the team), position in the air (uniform within the team), toes in line during and after last mark time, hesitation prior to step out.

Posture:

Body as per detail and not changing position on the last pace, during the mark times or in the step out. For example, not leaning forward or back during last pace and on the step out or that the hips or trunk do not move forward or back during the mark time. The latter usually results in the shoulders moving forward and back with the trunk of the body and penalties for shoulders moving. Concentration should be placed on keeping the hips and the trunk steady. This in turn will ensure that the shoulder remain in the correct position.

Do the above individually and then in ranks and files for uniformity of action of foot into, uniformity of foot position and height and the timing of the hesitation and the step out.

When footwork and posture is developing appropriately check for –

Armdrop and armswing out:

✓check that there is no change in height, action or speed.

Hand positions:

✓that the arms drop so that the hands are in the correct position and remain still

You could have a chant for any of your basic training that incorporates some of the skills you are developing. For example:

During five mark times:

<i>Even</i>	<i>speed</i>	<i>hands</i>	<i>still</i>	<i>great</i>	<i>and</i>
<i>out out out</i>					
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>hesitation Step out</i>

Change the chant depending on the skills you are focusing on.

5. Regulated Paces

Read CAREFULLY the detail from the book then demonstrate in slow motion what is required. If you cannot do it then get a marcher to demonstrate with you correcting it if necessary.

Line up shoulder to shoulder with arms around each other. Have the marchers move forward at approximately a half pace length (this is the easiest to learn initially). You need to look for uniformity of action, foot placement, height and speed and you can easily observe those that are incorrect.

If the marchers need feedback then tap them on the shoulder and name them so they know you are talking to them and the other marchers know who you are talking to. Tell the marcher what it is they need to do (for example, "Suzy you are lifting too high from the rear" or "Mary you are kicking your foot out and so you need to lift it more from the rear").

For length you will need to mark down the movements and have the marchers train the length at that time. At this time you also look at the posture and hand position and that the hands do not move, if the arms are not swung and check for uniformity of height if they are swung.

6. Slow March

As for regulated paces read the details from the book and then demonstrate in slow motion what is required. If you cannot do it then get a marcher to demonstrate with you correcting it if is necessary or watch the DVD again.

Line up shoulder to shoulder with arms around each other. Have the marchers move forward as though they were strolling along the road. Count out loud – left, pass, right, pass, left, pass, etc. On pass all toes should be in line. Once the slow speed is there and all the marchers are in time then call out – toes down. The action must not change. The correct action is exactly what the foot does when you walk only it is in slow time with toes first.

You need to look for uniformity of action, foot placement, and speed and you can easily observe those that are incorrect.

If the marchers need feedback then tap them on the shoulder and name them so they know you are talking to them and the other marchers know who you are talking to. Tell the marcher what it is they need to do (for example, “Suzy you are carrying your foot too high from the rear” and “Mary you are dropping your heel too soon” or “Trisha you are going too fast (or too slow) and your toes are not in line on pass”).

You can mark out a slow march pace ladder for length of pace. At this time you check posture and hand position and that the hands do not move.

7. Side Pacing

Line up on the pace ladder with feet either side of a line. Feet should be close together with toes in line. The length of a side pace is the same as the marching pace. Marchers should push off using the full length of the foot (this ensures the posture does not change) and take their side pace ending with their feet either side of the next line, feet together and toes in line.

Side paces are executed smartly with each action taking **about** half a beat. Certainly no less than half a beat but could be more. As long as there is a hesitation (a perceptible stop) prior to moving and one after completing the step over then the exact timing can be according to your team’s expertise.

Ensure that the knee only bends sufficiently to allow the foot to clear the ground.

For side paces from on the march then the rear foot comes into a toes in line position prior to moving across. The move to the toes in line position takes half a beat with the step over taking the other half of the beat. The other foot then moves across at the same speed as the first foot went across (half a beat). There is then a hesitation prior to commencing the next drill.

Check for -

Length of last pace, toe in line position, length of side pace, that the foot is carried straight across and does not move forward or back or go in a half circle, that the feet are together with toes in line after the side pace, that the hesitations are visible, that the posture does not change and the hands are in the correct position and do not move.

P.S. Don't forget to show the marchers the DVD showing side paces.

8. Head Turns

You should have a head exercise to help lengthen the neck muscles to enable marchers to turn their heads to the correct position (eye in line with front of shoulder).

You should start with a half turn to the left, to the front, half turn to the right and back to the front. Do this a few times then do a full turn to the left, to the front, a full turn to the right and back to the front.

The head turns in time with the heel toe action at the end of the pace (toe heel in regulated paces). The timing should be uniform throughout the team.

9. Salute

The hand should come up by the longest route in a circular motion, it should return to the side by the shortest route down from the raised position.

Check that there is a line down through the longest finger, the centre of the wrist and the forearm and that the shoulder is not lifted unnaturally.

If viewing a salute to the front from the side, the arm will appear to have a slight angle forward from the shoulder to the elbow and from the elbow to the hand in front of the head. The shoulder should remain square to the front.

When turning and saluting to the right then the whole arm should be in line with the shoulder. The shoulders should remain square to the front.

Timing should be uniform within the team.

YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE TEACHING OF SKILLS IN ISOLATION – NOW WHAT?

Well you need to put those basic skills into your Technical Drills and the Review & Inspection. You should not focus on the basics but certainly ascertain what you need to work on as a priority. It could be the last pace into a movement or it could be timing of armswing when having to think about counting.

Well, please remember that you have the next basic session and the next to further develop the skills. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was the perfect marcher.

In team formation you should check the following:

- Dressing, covering and spacing when straight marching
- Uniformity of leg action. You need to ensure all marchers are walking at the same speed and with the same leg timing (you can check this by bending over and checking that the legs move in unison and pass the stationery foot at the same time)
- Uniformity of posture (an incorrect one should show up in the team formation)
- Uniformity of armswing action, speed and height

Break down the movements by doing them a rank at a time or a file at a time

- Check uniformity of mark time action, position, height and speed
- Check uniformity of regulated paces action, length, height and speed.
- Check graduated height of regulated paces if wheeling
- Check that when wheeling that each regulated pace is the same length (or dressing faults will occur) and that the foot is arcing the wheel correctly (you need to mark down the wheel to do this accurately and to allow the marchers to check each other)
- Check uniformity of timing of armdrops and armswing out
- Dressing, covering, spacing and formation of movements

Some errors that are observed should be noted for a future session in relation to the particular skill. If armdrops are not uniform then you need to check first that the feet are walking exactly together. If they are then perhaps it is a change in height or speed of one or more marcher that causes the problem. Note it down for work at a future armdrop skill session Don't waste the rest of the team's time by trying to correct a skill instantly when it hasn't been corrected already at the relevant skill session.

Ensure that during the training of the movement you focus on drills that cannot be trained in isolation, for example, the formation (dressing, covering, spacing, length of pace in wheels etc), or graduated height of regulated paces in wheels or that posture is maintained when performing drills, that the head turns are uniform.

Please always ensure the marchers know what you want and what you are looking for.

Now to the Review & Inspection

The drills in the Review & Inspection will need to be developed and they should be done as has been described above. Break the drill down into its parts and have the marchers work with a buddy to develop the skills

Moving to Attention

Check that the heels are at least 25cm apart and that the feet are at the same angle (at least 5 degrees and uniform throughout the team), that the leg is bent sufficiently to allow the foot to just clear the ground, that the angle of the feet on completion is uniform throughout the team and that the arms move to the correct position at the uniform speed. Check that correct posture is maintained.

Standing at Ease

Check that the leg action is the same as for moving to attention and that the feet are at least 5 degrees and uniform throughout the team, that on completion the heels are at least 25cm apart, that the feet are at least at a 5 degree angle (both must be uniform throughout the team). The hands must move in unison and correct posture must be maintained.

Turns at the Halt

Check feet angle are correct as above, that both legs remain straight during the turn, the pivot is made on the ball of the foot with the body weight moving to the front foot during the turn, both feet should be at least 5 degrees during the pause (and uniform throughout the team), rear leg should bend sufficiently to allow the foot to just clear the ground, and on completion both feet should be at least 5 degrees and uniform throughout the team. The body should remain in the position of attention throughout and the hands should be still.

Remember to check the hips if the body turns too far or under turns and also if the shoulders appear to move forward and back during the turn action. Focus on the hips turning to the correct angle and the leg and shoulder should then be correct.

Halts

As per technical drills training.

GENERAL POINTS

When the team is in team formation the rear corner girls should always be in a diagonal line to the centre team members and the girl on the opposite corner of the front rank. A check to see if the team is square is to look through the diagonals.

The rear corner girls should always be checking that they are in line on the diagonal and if not should bring it to your attention. They could call out 'diagonals' which is a signal for every member to check their dressing, covering and spacing.

The Leader should attempt to land on all discs on the ball of the foot.

Whenever any team member passes over or passes by a disc they should also attempt to do so on the ball of their foot.

If for example, No 2 passes over a disc on her toe and No 5, two paces later, passes over it on her heel, then they could be up to 20cm out in their spacing. The diagonals would definitely be a problem.

SOME FURTHER POINTS TO GUIDE YOU

You should give the marchers warm up before any training session. No point in spending hours exercising but a walk around the training area and then when the body is warm a few stretches are a good idea.

When correcting faults, attempt to show the marcher what they are doing wrong and then show what it should be like. Always leave the correct impression as the final one that you give. This programmes the brain to act accordingly.

For example: *Toe kicking out in mark time*

Have the marcher raise their leg to what they think is correct and then place the marchers leg in the correct position so that they can feel the difference in the action.

Or *Armswing direction*

Have the marcher swing the way they normally do and grab hold of the arm in the raised position (explain that you are going to do this) and then move it to the correct position. Again the marcher should feel the difference in the action.

When talking to the team – don't yell out "GET YOUR ARMS UP". Who? How much? Think carefully and note down who and what and remind them at the next skill session.

When training a movement – don't just say, "Go back and do that again, it was no good". What was no good? Which marcher? What was the worst aspect – dressing? Turns? Length of pace? Mark time height? Explain exactly what was wrong so that they can do something about it. Or break it down and analyse what is wrong with the help of the marchers. They can often pinpoint something that is not obvious to you when you are watching a complex movement.

When a marcher attempts something and finally after many attempts – gets it right – don't say, "Phew about time". Praise the attempts by saying something like "Great, that's exactly what I want". Next time the marcher will try harder to get it right much quicker because you have given a positive response and built the marcher's self-esteem. Praise your marchers please.

Your training session (if you follow this guide) will be very intense and I do not think you should need to train for longer than 2 hours. You will have covered so much and the marchers can only take in so much in one session before they switch off, lose concentration, and therefore stop developing their skills. Develop their desire to improve their skills through home training as well.

Be sure of yourself, know your book thoroughly and you will pass this confidence on to your team. For a team to succeed they must have confidence in you and in themselves.

Good luck

Trish Flanagan

Nothing can ever be undone but it can be redone in a different way