



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PLANNING YOUR DISPLAY

THE MUSIC

It is important to choose music that has a good rhythmic pattern and a strong definite beat. Music should be lively and should make you want to move to its rhythm. Precise arm and leg movements are easier to perform to music that has a snappy beat.

Music that you have to listen to several times to hear a definite beat should not be used. Be aware, also, that the speed can change within a tune and this can be very difficult for inexperienced marchers.

It is wise to choose music that your marchers like to enjoy moving to. This will help them to project their display to the public (and the Judges of course!) and will therefore gain valuable points in the presentation award.

Music has 8, 16 or 32 beats to a bracket and it is best to choose pieces that have a clear break after the final beat of a bracket. This will allow tunes to be joined so that the rhythm flow is continuous.

PUTTING YOUR MUSIC TOGETHER

Some coaches choose to have numerous tunes joined together while others choose only one or two tunes for their entire display. This is, of course, personal preference; however, having numerous tunes has its pitfalls.

If the beat changes totally, and the type of music changes totally (for example, lively music with a strong beat sung by a female band and then a change to a slow romantic ballad sung by a male performer) can sound very disjointed to the viewer and the display can appear disjointed as a result.

For inexperienced marchers – “Keep it Simple”. It is much better to have a display that you perform well at the beginning and then develop it throughout the season rather than a display that the girls cannot cope with from the start. This will be off putting for them and they will not enjoy it and therefore it will not develop, as you would like it to.

The music chosen is entirely up to you and your team. Music can be basic marching band music, popular music, and classical music (e.g. Hooked on Classics series has been used extensively and is still a good sound), Country and Western – anything that has a good lively beat.

Time the music and try to keep to tunes that are between 120 and 140 beats to the minute. Anything slower or faster is very difficult for new marchers, especially slower music.

I have observed numerous displays ruined through the inability of the marchers to perform their drills exactly to the beat of the music.

At the beginning of your music, it must have the instruction “By the Centre Quick March”. Once the command has been given the team steps off into their routine. You may have your team name prior to the command and I would definitely recommend this, as the team will immediately know if the wrong music has been played at a competition.

If this happens, the Leader should raise their arm in the air and stand firm until the Chief Marshall instructs them what to do.

It is a good idea to put your display music together yourself and give a copy to each of your marchers. Encourage them to listen to it as much as possible to become completely comfortable with all of the tunes. If they tell you they don't like something or can't find the beat – then listen to them, as they are the ones that have to perform to your expectations.

THE BEGINNING AND THE FINISH

Try to find a catchy piece for the beginning to enable you to make a spectacular start. This will get the attention of the Judges who will then wait in anticipation for the next move.

It is good to have some catchy or gimmicky actions for the marchers to perform to but remember it must be a Display of Marching. You could have catchy type tunes and gimmicky type tunes evenly spaced i.e. march, gimmick, march, gimmick. As you and your team get more experienced the more you will experiment with types of music.

You need a good final piece of music to allow you to plan an exciting conclusion to your performance.

You also need to have some music for the team to march off to. You can either finish and then salute or the salute can be part of the final bracket of music. It is your choice.

PLANNING YOUR MOVEMENTS AND DRILLS

Spend time listening to your music before you start planning your movements and drills. Some coaches prefer to teach all the formations first and then add drills once the counts are learnt. Some prefer to decide on drills and then form patterns that would best suit the drills.

For inexperienced coaches I would suggest that you teach the formations and then as the season moves on add arm and leg drills, as the girls become proficient at each stage. This way you can develop their skills throughout the season and what you finish with is a far cry from what you started with. However, it is personal preference.

When planning your formations you may do it at home on graph paper, or if you are technically minded, you can plan your formations using Microsoft Excel or you may just need to go to training and experiment.

You may choose a combination of both. I can assure you that what you put on graph paper may not work when you have the marchers in front of you, be prepared to try things out and to change if formations do not work or if the marchers struggle to do what you are trying to achieve.

PROFESSIONAL OR NOT?

Once you have completed your display you need to make a final copy ready for competitions. There is a range of free music programmes that can do this, if you are unsure, talk to your fellow coaches or Association Coaching Co-ordinator for their recommendations.

I have observed good displays that have been ruined through the quality of the display music, you often can't hear the music, or the joins are not made precisely and the marchers struggle because of the break in flow of the beat and sometimes.

Your Display Music is as important as having your uniform up to a good standard.

Now... we recommend that you wait until you have completed your display before you make the final copy as may wish to change pieces of music around. Once you get to training a piece that you thought would move you backwards may lend itself to a forward movement with special drills facing the public (and the Judges of course!). You may not find out about this until your marchers come up with some ideas for you. If this happens, rather than not utilising the piece to its full potential or having to change a previous formation to allow the new idea to take place, then change the music around.

ONCE LEARNT NOW DEVELOP IT

Now you have completed your display then spend time throughout the season to develop it. As the marchers become more experienced you could start to put in a little more variety. Slow marching to fast music, double time to ordinary speed music, quick arm movements with 2 moves to the beat rather than every movement on a beat.

Ask the marchers what they think the music is telling them to do.

As they gain confidence performing to the music, they will hear things in the tunes that initially they didn't hear because they had other things to worry about - like counts. As the season moves on add those things in.

Give the marchers some ownership of their routine, that way they will give you (and the Judges of course!) a better performance.

Use counts that tell the marchers what to do and that they can chant to the music. Your marchers will be very clever at this – so once you feed them the ideas leave it to them to come up with the rap or chant they want to use.

DISPLAY - Section 9 Policies & Operations Manual (Technical) [*Policies & Operations Manual \(Technical\)- Section 9*](#)

Please read carefully the **Display Section** (Section 9) of your Policies & Operations Manual (Technical), this will tell you all about the time for your display, the number of girls you can march with, about accessories and uniform changes, as well as the Display Performance Criteria which outlines the requirements of a display.

The section on '**Display Performance Criteria**' is most important and if you do not understand any of the requirements then please, for the sake of your marchers, seek assistance. This can be from your Association Coaching Co-ordinator, an experienced coach, a Display Workshop within your Association where Judges may be present to help clarify details or the Marching New Zealand Director of Coaching who you can write to via your Coaching Co-ordinator.

This section tells you what is expected in your display. The headings on the Judges sheets are in direct relation to the headings in this section.

On the final page is a summary and this is a great reference for you. It details things that are permissible, not permissible but more importantly things that are **Desirable** and **Undesirable**. You should refer to these sections as you develop your routine. It would be a sad waste of yours and your marchers time if you did not comply with any of the, for example, desirables once your work is completed.

You must also read carefully the **Preparatory Drills** (Section 3) of your Policies & Operations Manual (Technical), for the Display Phase and the End of Display requirements [*Policies & Operations Manual \(Technical\)- Section 3*](#)

VIEW THE VIDEO – PLEASE!

Please, please view the video and have your marchers view the video. The display section gives a discussion on VIPEC. Those things that are vital to make your display a masterpiece. If you have your marcher's view the video they will gain a better understanding of why some things are desirable and some things are undesirable. They will gain an understanding of what a really effective display is made up of.

JUDGING

First Step ... Read carefully the **Display Judge** Resource (Section 12), this will help you gain a better understanding of what the Judges are judging. It is important to thoroughly understand the headings on your judges' sheets and how they all relate to each other.

[*Policies & Operations Manual \(Technical\)- Display Judge Section 12*](#)

It may be best to just keep developing the display along with the capability of the marchers.

Constant change is very demoralising. Development is not.

Remember you have all season to perfect what you teach them so don't panic if it all seems too difficult in the beginning. Be methodical about what you have to teach, give clear simple instructions, make training fun and ensure success is gained through your careful planning and positive feedback.

CONCLUSION

Making up a display is not as daunting as it may first seem. If you constantly cry, "I hate doing display" or "I am no good at display" then you will hate and you won't be any good at it. You have been programming your brain to think like that every time you say those words.

So, for the sake of your marchers, change your tune. *I love doing display and I am good at it.* If you follow all the advice above, and in the book, and on the video then you will be well able to put together an effective display.

If you then allow development you will become better and better. So go to it Coach and make sure your marchers know you love doing display. They will respond appropriately.

My very best wishes for a successful outcome

Trish Flanagan

Focus on and commit to the task at hand and reap the rewards that will follow

The difficulties we face are here to teach us and to help us grow,

Relax, enjoy yourself and have fun!

Publication Written by Trish Flanagan July 2000

Updated 2006, 2010, 2022