

Front Ensemble

Techniques & Materials



Pacific Crest Drum & Bugle Corps Front Ensemble

2026 Audition Packet and Information

Mallet Players

- Technique and approach when playing on the keyboards will be defined in detail at auditions. Everything we teach in terms of the technique is designed to be ergonomic; the main focus being how little tension we can use while still achieving the desired sound quality. Some books worth looking into that we reference for the basis of our technique are “Fundamental Method for Mallets” by Mitchell Peters, and “Method of Movement” by Leigh Howard Stevens.
- The exercises listed in the packet serve as a general starting point for the technique program. Any auditioning mallet player should become comfortable with playing their major and minor scales/chords in various ways as a sizable portion of the audition will be coming up with exercise variations and new exercises on the spot in order to see who can adapt quickly.
- Mallet auditionees are expected to prepare a 4 mallet solo piece (can be marimba or vibraphone) between 1-2 minutes of length. The staff are looking for a display of musicianship above all else; the solo doesn’t need to be the most difficult or “choppiest” piece, the music just needs to be played well. Some good examples to refer to are “Virginia Tate” by Paul Smadbeck, and “Lotus” by Adam Tan.
- The vibraphones at PC use Burton grip for both exercises and show music, knowledge of this grip is an added plus but not at all required to know when auditioning.
- Above all else, the staff prioritize many different things before “chops”. Consistent timing, good sound quality, and a relaxed grip on the mallets are all vastly more important to us than the ability to play fast, especially if you find yourself compromising the earlier skills in order to play faster.
- Materials to bring include a copy of the exercise packet, pencil and paper, sticks, a drum pad and sticks (if you already own these materials).

Rhythm Section (Synthesizer, Drum Set, Timpani)

- All synthesizer and timpani auditionees are expected to be able to transpose all major scale based exercises across all 12 major keys.
- The rhythm section written exercises are intentionally written to be sparse, with the understanding that the parts will be added to and changed frequently, in warmups and show music. Be flexible, open to new information and willing to improvise on the spot
- For all drum set auditionees, all the exercises listed are used as a general starting point for the skillsets we'd like to see, but anyone auditioning for the position should also have a general proficiency in multiple instruments and genres of music. Elements of classical percussion (concert snare drum, tambourine, crash cymbals) ethnic/world percussion (hand drums such as djembe, doumbek) and modern rock/funk(hand independence, understanding of polyrhythms)
- Materials to bring include a copy of the exercise packet, pencil and paper, sticks, and a drum pad (if you already own these materials).

If you have any further questions on any part of the audition process or what to expect, you can reach our staff, vets and other future members on our discord linked below, we hope to see you at auditions!

[2026 Pacific Crest Interest Group on Discord](#)

Pacific Crest 2026

Front Ensemble Exercise Packet

Scales & Arpeggios (100-200bpm)

1 To be played with 2 & 4 mallets
To be played in all 12 major and minor keys

2 3 4

Marimba

Vibes

f *f*

Slurs denote pedaling

5 6 7

Mar.

Vib.

Jetson Scales (90-180bpm)

To be played in all 12 major keys
To be played with 2 & 4 mallets

C-Eb: Play all up at forte
E-G: Play written dynamics
Ab-B: Play inverted dynamics
Final C scale: All down at piano

8 9 10

Mar.

Vib.

mp *f* *mf*

mp *f* *mf*

11 12 13

Mar.

Vib.

mp *p* *f*

mp *p* *f*

14 15 16

Mar.

Vib.

p *mp*

p *mp*

Shift to next key on beat 3

Shift to next key on beat 3

D \flat D \flat

Mallets

7/8 Block Chords (100-180bpm)

Be prepared to play this exercise with alternating and lateral strokes variations

Repeat every 2 bars before changing chords

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Mar. *f*

Vib. *f*

Vibes learn marimba part as well,
play vibe part only when tempos get fast

25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

Mar.

Vib.

33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

Mar.

Vib.

41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49

Mar.

Vib.

Pacific Crest 2026

Front Ensemble Exercise Packet

Scales & Arpeggios (100-200bpm)

1 **Electric Piano**

1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 ...

2 3 4

5

6

7

Scales (90-160bpm)

Piano + Synth Bells

To be played in all 12 major keys

C-Eb: Play all up at forte
E-G: Play written dynamics
Ab-B: Play inverted dynamics
Final C scale: All down at piano

8 C G/C Bdim7 Amin7 G/B F#sus2 Amin7

9 10

mp f mf

11 G7b9 E7/G C B-/C Emin/C F/C

mp f

14 G C E7min7 Ab9 D7 G7sus2/D7

Standard ii-V-I turnaround to get into the next key

p mp

7/8 Block Chords (100-180bpm)

17 **Electric Piano** 18 19 Repeat every 2 bars before changing chords 20

f 2

Synth 1

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44

45 46 47 48 49

The musical score for 'Synth 1' consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains measures 21 through 28, the second staff contains measures 29 through 36, the third staff contains measures 37 through 44, and the fourth staff contains measures 45 through 49. The music is written in treble clef. Measures 24, 32, 40, and 48 are marked with a '2' and a double bar line, indicating a two-measure rest. The key signature changes from one flat (B-flat) in measure 29 to two flats (B-flat and E-flat) in measure 41. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 49.

Pacific Crest 2026

Front Ensemble Exercise Packet

Scales & Arpeggios (100-200bpm)

1 **Grand Piano** 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 ... 4

5 1 2 3 5 3 2 6 1 ... 7

Scales (90-160bpm)

To be played in all 12 major keys

C-Eb: Play all up at forte
E-G: Play written dynamics
Ab-B: Play inverted dynamics
Final C scale: All down at piano

8 **Strings** C F#sus2/C G/C Bdim7 9 Amin7 G/B 10 F#sus2 Amin7

Bass mp mf

11 G7b9 E7/G 12 C B-/C 13 Emin/C F/C

mp f

14 G 15 C Ebm7 Ab9 16 Db G#sus2/D#

Standard ii-V-I turnaround to get into the next key

p mp

7/8 Block Chords (100-180bpm)

17 18 19 Repeat every 2 bars before changing chords 20

Fender Bass f 2

Synth 2

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44

45 46 47 48 49

The musical score for 'Synth 2' consists of four staves of music in bass clef. Measures 21-28 are on the first staff, 29-36 on the second, 37-44 on the third, and 45-49 on the fourth. The music features a sequence of eighth and quarter notes, with double bar lines and repeat signs at measures 24, 28, 32, 36, 40, and 44. A large number '2' is placed above the repeat signs at measures 24, 28, 32, 36, 40, and 44. The piece concludes with a double bar line at measure 49.

Pacific Crest 2026

Front Ensemble Exercise Packet

Scales & Arpeggios (100-200bpm)

1 2 3 4

5 6 7

Scales (90-160bpm)

C To be played in all 12 major keys
F#sus2/C

C-Eb: Play all up at forte
E-G: Play written dynamics
Ab-B: Play inverted dynamics
Final C scale: All down at piano

Displace octaves as needed for each key

8 9 10

Chord progression symbols provided for reference

11 12 13

14 15 16

7/8 Block Chords (100-180bpm)

Repeat every 2 bars
before changing chords

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

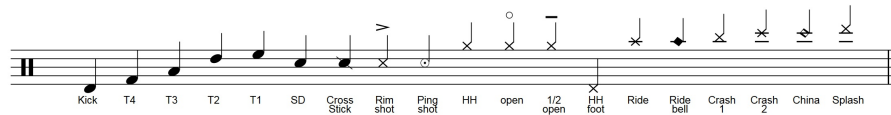
25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

Timpani



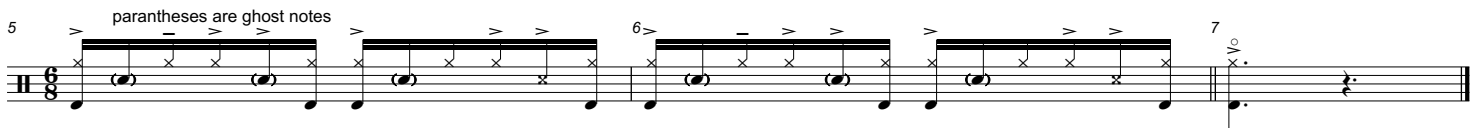
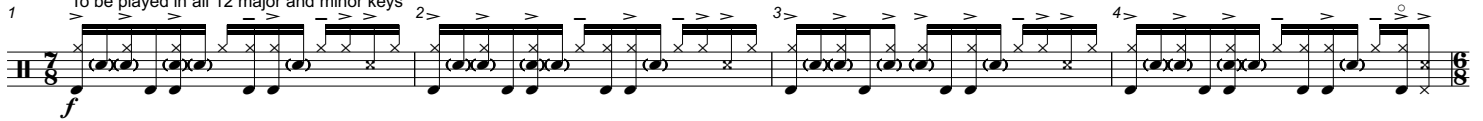
Pacific Crest 2026

Front Ensemble Exercise Packet



Scales & Arpeggios (100-200bpm)

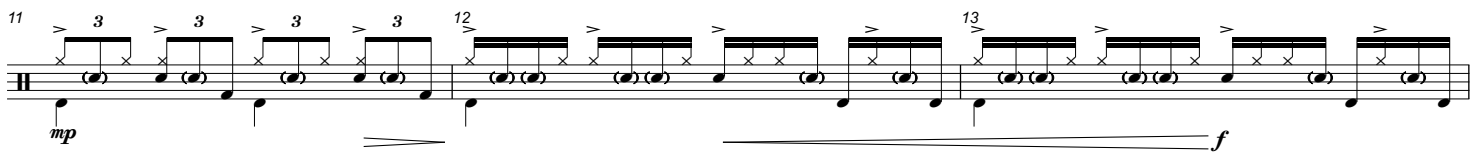
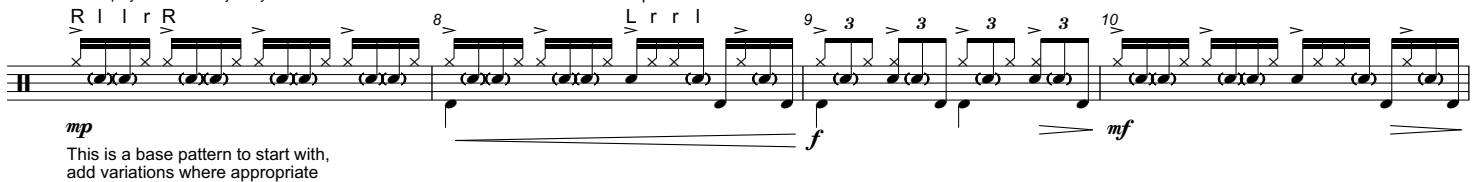
To be played in all 12 major and minor keys



Scales (90-160bpm)

To be played in all 12 major keys

C-Eb: Play all up at forte
E-G: Play written dynamics
Ab-B: Play inverted dynamics
Final C scale: All down at piano



7/8 Block Chords (100-180bpm)



Drum Set

