

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](#)

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If you have any further questions on any part of the audition process or what to expect, please do not hesitate to reach out. The staff here wants to see you succeed, so be confident and enjoy the experience!

Pacific Crest 2026 Front Ensemble Exercise Packet

Full Score

Scales & Arpeggios (100-200bpm)
To be played with 2 & 4 mallets
To be played in all 12 major and minor keys

Marimbas

Vibes

Electric Piano

Synth 1

Synth 2

Grand Piano

Timpani

Drum Set

Slurs denote pedaling

parantheses are ghost notes

mule

Jetson Scales (90-180bpm)
To be played in all 12 major keys
To be played with 2 & 4 mallets

Mar.

Vibes

Piano + Synth Bells

Synth 1

Synth 2

Strings

Bass

Timp.

Dr. Set

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

Chord progression symbols provided for reference

Displace octaves as needed for each key

This is a base pattern to start with, add variations where appropriate

12

Mar. *p* *f* *p* *mp* *D_b*

Vibes *p* *f* *p* *mp* *D_b*

Synth. 1 C B \flat /C Emin/C F/C G C Emin7 A9 D \flat Gsus2/D \flat *p* *mp*

Synth. 2 C B \flat /C Emin/C F/C G C Emin7 A9 D \flat Gsus2/D \flat *p* *mp*

Timp. C B \flat /C Emin/C F/C G C Emin7 A9 D \flat *f* *p* *mp*

Dr. Set *f* *p* *mp* *D_b* R l l r R

Shift to next key on beat 3

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

17

Mar. *f* *2* *2* *2* *2*

Vibes *f* *2* *2* *2* *2*

Synth. 1 *Electric Piano* *f* *2* *2* *2* *2*

Synth. 2 *Fender Bass* *f* *2* *2* *2* *2*

Timp. *f* *2* *2* *2* *2*

Dr. Set *f* *2* *2* *2* *2*

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

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

Repeat every 2 bars before changing chords

29

Mar.

Vibes

Synth. 1

Synth. 2

Timp.

Dr. Set

41

Mar.

Vibes

Synth. 1

Synth. 2

Timp.

Dr. Set