

Sight Reading Tips

At first glance, sight reading exercises can look scary and be intimidating. However, with lots of practice, sight reading is a skill that can be learned (it's not just luck, I promise!). Once you learn to master the sight reading process, your chances of making District Honor Band and All State Band will improve significantly! Here are some tips that have helped me in the past:

Most sight reading exercises only give you 30 seconds to study, so you must be efficient in order to be successful.

- Practice the order that you plan to attack the exercise with.
- First, quickly look at the Key Signature, Time Signature, and Tempo (which will be given to you by the proctor). Commit these 3 important items to memory quickly so you don't have to reference them again
- Quickly scan the passage and find the measure or section that looks the most challenging and "practice" this spot. This could be a tricky rhythm, a spot with weird fingerings, or a difficult/technical passage. If you simply start at the beginning, you may not have enough time to work on this tricky spot before time is out - starting with the hardest section may help you gain confidence with the exercise.
- After singling out the challenging spots, return to the beginning and "run" the whole exercise, this time taking note of stylistic markings (articulations, slurs, accents, etc.) and dynamics. Adding these elements will help you stand out in an audition - many people will be able to play correct notes and rhythms, but very few will make a sight reading exercise musical!
- When the proctor signals time is up, quickly scan the exercise one more time for the key signature and dynamics and then begin!

Once you begin to play the exercise, remember these few things:

- **DON'T STOP!!** If you miss a note or rhythm, you must keep going and recover. A missed note is not a big deal, especially if you are able to recover and keep a steady beat. Practice not stopping and keeping your rhythm very steady so that a judge knows you are rhythmically sound.
- **Be Musical:** Remember, I can teach a monkey to play right notes and rhythms, but it takes a true artist to play a sight reading exercise with musicality. Show the judge you are a musician, and not just a monkey, by adding dynamics, phrasing, and playing correct articulations and style.
- Make sure you sustain all long tones for the correct length, especially the last note. This is a very common mistake that can cost you easy points during an audition!