

**Creative Repetition for
Beginning Band Classes
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One challenge faced by directors of beginning bands is to find ways to repeat technical exercises in beginning method books in such a way that students learn them thoroughly, yet do not become increasingly bored upon each repetition. Besides the traditional methods of clapping, singing, or counting the rhythms verbally, there are other techniques of repeating exercises which will aid in maintaining a beginning student's interest.

Daily Review. Begin each rehearsal by playing exercises which the group has already mastered. This serves as a good warm-up and gets the class started out positively. This also gives students who may be a little behind the others a chance to improve their performance on the exercises reviewed.

Isolation. Isolate troublesome measures and repeat them. Rehearse an exercise beginning with the last measure, gradually working back towards the beginning. Stress to the students the importance of isolating troublesome measures when they are practicing privately.

Bonus points. While advanced players are generally more self-conscious about playing alone in front of the class, beginners are usually very eager to "show their stuff." Use this to your advantage by asking for volunteers to play new exercises for bonus points.

Mouthpiece Buzzing. Instead of having the brass players inactive (or getting into trouble) while the woodwinds are playing, ask them to buzz the selected exercise while the woodwinds play.

Airing. When working with one section, have the other members of the class "air" the exercise. (Airing is the process of blowing air into the instrument without producing a tone while practicing the fingerings or positions.)

Subtraction. Begin an exercise with the complete class and subtract one section upon each repetition.

Addition. Add a section upon each repetition.

Student Conductors. Teach students the basic conducting patterns and let them conduct some of the exercises while other members of the class play. This adds just enough change to make playing an exercise several times interesting each time.

Watch the Director. See how well the students watch by cutting-off at unpredictable places in the exercise. With young players it will probably require several attempts before the release is together. The students enjoy the “suspense” involved in this.

Tempo Variation. Have all the members of the class stand up and raise their music stand where they can still see the music. Then select an exercise, preferably one testing technical skills, and play it several times, slowly the first time and faster with each repetition. Students should sit down on their first mistake. The last remaining players standing should receive bonus points.

Say the Note Names. Ask different sections to say or sing an exercise using the note names in rhythm. This will help students develop the ability to think note names while playing.

Solo Playing. Designate certain measures of a selected exercise to be for a soloist (or a duet) with other members entering at the measure you dictate.

Musical Expression. Vary dynamic levels and tempos in an expressive way upon each repetition. Ask students for their ideas on how an exercise might be performed differently, yet tastefully.

Duets and Rounds. Many beginning method books contain duets and rounds. Repetition of these kinds of exercises greatly improves the ensemble skills of young players. Divide students into groups of two to six. Select a team name for each group and then let all the groups perform the selected exercise. After the performance, identify the group that performed the piece the best and give suggestions for improvement to all the groups. The first group to perform a selection the best twice (only have the groups play it once on any one day) are “The Champs.” This process sometimes takes several days to complete.

Outplay the Director. Challenge students to play an exercise better than you. If they do, give them bonus points. This serves as a strong motivator for the band directors to brush up on their secondary instruments!

Test Previews. The day before a playing test, ask for volunteers to perform the test alone. After the student plays the test, tell them what was good, what they need to improve upon, and what their test score would be if they played it like that the next day. This gives all the students an idea of what standards they must reach.

Add Auxiliary Percussion. This works particularly well on exercises with a Latin, jazz, or rock feel. All class members enjoy playing with the new sounds added. Let some of the non-percussionists play the added instruments also.

CD and Cassette accompaniment. Some of the newer class methods provide background accompaniments for exercises in their respective band books. Students really enjoy these.

Special Request Review. Periodically select a day (Fridays and days before holidays work well) when students can select the exercise they would like to play. Any exercise which the band has played previously is acceptable. Students often enjoy playing the first few exercises they ever learned-they can hardly believe that those exercises used to be so hard.

Previews of the Next Day. At the end of rehearsals introduce a new exercise to stimulate interest in the next day's rehearsal. Tell the students that they can play the exercise for bonus points the next day.

Use these techniques with beginning band students and not only will there be an improvement in fundamentals, but an increased enjoyment of band as well.

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