

Marching Band Terminology

Auxiliary - see Guard.

Battery - Marching Band percussion section that carries drums and marches; is comprised of snare drums, bass drums, and quads (see Quads).

BOA - [Bands of America](#) - organization that manages and oversees marching band competitions.

Cadence - The beat played by percussion during a parade to indicate the marching pace. Also played as the band marches off the field after a field show or rehearsal.

Caption awards - various awards a marching band can win at competitions, can include: Drum Major, Drumline, Auxiliary, Music, Marching, General Effect, Percussion Class Grand Champion, Pit Crew and Audience Spirit Awards, Overall Class Champion (based on highest points across all classes.)

Points can total up to 100 for each adjudicated category.

Clinicians - personnel hired to help out with various sections of the band, as in brass instructor or drumline instructor.

Color guard - see Guard.

Drill - the steps and positions that make up the Marching Band show. (see Sets)

Drill book - the notebook that holds each individual student's drill for the Marching Band show.

Drill down - A marching skills contest conducted along the lines of "Simon Says." Contest is one of the highlights of the parent show at the end of band camp.

Drum major(s) - Student conductor(s) who direct the marching band as it plays.

Drumline - the entire percussion section of the Marching Band; includes both the PIT and the Battery.

Flags - flags/silks used by the Guard during a Marching Band show.

Front Ensemble - Formerly known as PIT. See PIT.

Gauntlets - wrist and lower-arm covering; part of Marching Band/Guard uniform.

Guard - a group of students who add color and style to marching-band performances with flags and other props. Also known as Auxiliary, the term originally used for the flag/rifle carriers who stood at the front of marching show. Evolved into modern color guard when dance and decorative flags were added.

PIT - Marching Band percussion section (percussion instrument team) that does not march (plays on the sidelines), comprised of instruments such as tympani, xylophones, gongs, etc.

PIT crew - parents and volunteers who help assemble the pit instruments, push them onto the field and set them up for competition, A.K.A. "Pit Parents."

Plumes - the feathered portion of the Marching Band hats (very fragile); provided by band.

Podium - see Tower.

Quads - set of 4 connected drums carried by member of the battery.

Rifles - imitation rifles the Guard use in a Marching Band show. (They're heavy!)

Run-through - practicing the Marching Band show.

Sabers - fake swords the Guard use in a Marching Band show.

Scoring - See section in [BOA Adjudicators Handbook](#), starting on page 24 for a description of scoring for BOA. Scoring rules are not universal across judging organizations, but this is a nice insight into the whole process from a judge's point of view.

Section -Students who play the same instruments, i.e. the trumpet section.

Section leader - band student who is in charge of a Marching Band instrument section; such as "alto sax section leader."

Sectional -A practice or rehearsal by a section of instruments.

Sets - sub-set of the shows.

Step Off -The precise moment when a Marching Band parade performance starts.

Tower - raised platform upon which conductors stand.

Winds - the non-percussion part of the band; any instrument that is played by blowing air.

Winter Guard - a competitive auxiliary group that performs after Marching Band season is completed.