



## Maryland Marching Band Association Member Guide

Updated 3/13/2026

This document is to be used as a guide for members of MMBA. This will outline rules and procedures, ranging from membership eligibility to show registration to show day expectations. MMBA is committed to working toward meeting the needs of all bands in Maryland, and we hope this document will clarify how the organization will accomplish that.

### I. Goals of the Organization

- A. To offer a performance outlet to marching bands of all types, including a festival component (with or without ratings) as well as competition in various divisions.
- B. To provide meaningful feedback from highly qualified clinicians and adjudicators.
- C. To build an organization from the ground up using input from all Maryland band directors and hand off governance of the organization to an executive board and several committees.
- D. To provide all of this at a substantial cost savings to participating bands as well as show hosts.
- E. To run a true Maryland State Championship in a large college stadium in Maryland to close our season if possible.

### II. Membership

- A. Membership in MMBA is open to any high school marching band, public or private, Maryland or other.
- B. There is no membership fee; however some events will have a registration fee.
- C. Bands from outside Maryland are granted the same rights and responsibilities as Maryland bands, with the exception that only bands from Maryland may compete in State Championships.
- D. Bands wishing to join should contact [mdmarchingband@gmail.com](mailto:mdmarchingband@gmail.com).

### III. Show Registration

- A. Registration will occur via the Competition Suite website/app during the registration window, which will open in the spring when the schedule is finalized. The exact date will be clearly marked in Competition Suite.
- B. Registration will close one month before each competition. After that date, any bands wishing to register for a show will need to contact MMBA directly, and addition will be at the discretion of the MMBA Executive Board and the show host.
- C. Contact Brendan Maltese ([brendanmaltese@gmail.com](mailto:brendanmaltese@gmail.com)) to get an account set up and for help with this process.
- D. Certain events (states, regionals, etc.) may require a registration fee. This fee will be visible at time of registration, and an invoice will be generated and sent through Competition Suite. Payment methods will be listed on the invoice. All event fees are due by October 1. Any band who is not paid by then will be dropped from the competition lineup.

1. Regional events are \$100 per performing group.
  2. State Championships are \$500 per performing group.
- E. Directors will complete all requested surveys to allow MMBA to establish Competition Classes and collect logistical information. Directors who do not submit band information may risk having early season events canceled for their group. Any changes to this information should be sent directly to MMBA as soon as possible.
- F. At the time registration is closed, MMBA and host bands will begin planning around those registration numbers. If you do not intend to attend a competition, please cancel your registration prior to that deadline to avoid causing financial harm to hosts. If an unforeseen circumstance after the registration deadline prohibits a band from participating, directors are expected to notify MMBA and the host immediately. Late cancellations may result in a financial penalty to the band.
- G. Bands may register for as many or as few competitions as desired. There are no circuit minimum requirements.

## IV. Competition Class and Divisions

- A. MMBA has 3 Competition Classes:
1. Open Class - Intermediate to Advanced
    - a) Open Class marching bands represent the intermediate to advanced level of performance, demonstrating a broader expressive and technical range across both musical and visual domains. Performers navigate complex meters, extended tessitura, and refined articulation while maintaining clarity and control. Musical demands frequently include layered textures and intricate rhythmic structures, requiring strong ensemble awareness and precision.
    - b) Visually, Open Class ensembles perform regular two to three layer tasks that integrate musical and movement responsibilities simultaneously. Performers execute complex pathways and confident spatial awareness as forms evolve fluidly throughout the program. Design vocabulary expands to include varied stylistic influences, multi-dimensional control, and sophisticated coordination between sections.
    - c) Stamina and recovery are defining characteristics of this class. Performers sustain energy and accuracy under heightened demand, demonstrating quick, discreet recoveries that preserve ensemble integrity. The overall effect reflects competitive depth, with layered simultaneity, evolving forms, and a rich variety of musical and visual moments contributing to a cohesive, engaging performance.
    - d) Open Class ensembles exhibit confident performance quality, strong recovery skills, and a balanced command of complexity, positioning them as a bridge between foundational training and elite level marching performance.
  2. A Class - Fundamental to Intermediate
    - a) A Class ensembles demonstrate developing skills in music, visual, and general effect, with an emphasis on foundational training and clarity of presentation. Musical content is basic to moderate in difficulty, featuring primarily simple meters, limited ranges, and straightforward rhythmic and harmonic structures. Layering is minimal, with most moments focusing on a single, clearly identifiable idea to support student success and ensemble cohesion. Tone quality and intonation are developing, with attention given to balance, blend, and fundamental ensemble sound.
    - b) Visual programs prioritize fundamental body and equipment techniques, with an emphasis on basic spacing, alignment, and uniformity. Forms are readable and

clearly structured, utilizing limited pathways and transitions to support clarity and comprehension. Staging favors straightforward designs with minimal contrast, ensuring that ideas are easily understood by both performers and audience.

- c) Performance demands reflect developing endurance and stamina. Ensembles may show noticeable recovery periods between more challenging segments, and overall pacing supports student growth and consistency. Design and performance choices emphasize training and skill development, with clarity and readability prioritized over complexity or variety. A Class serves as an essential developmental stage, preparing performers for increased demands in higher classifications.

### 3. Show Band

- a) Show Band (Traditional/Show-Style Band) is a style of marching band rooted in entertainment and visual-musical production rather than strictly corps style marching precision. Designed primarily for crowd engagement at football games and parades, show bands feature popular and contemporary popular music, visually dynamic field routines with clear, basic formations and patterns, and can incorporate choreography and dance elements. Performances use traditional band instrumentation and are often incorporate auxiliary units such as color guard, twirlers, or dance lines.

## B. Determination of Competition Class

1. Directors will initially select the Competition Class in which their ensemble is placed, based on their knowledge and skill level of their group.
2. The judging coordinator, in collaboration with the State Championship panel, will then provide recommendations for changes between Competition Classes based on the criteria outlined above and in comparison to other ensembles within the division. The ultimate goal is to place all groups in competitive environments with comparable skill levels and performance demands. Factors contributing to Competition Class changes include final score at the end of the season, as well as an evaluation of the demand and achievement of the assigned skill sets by the judges from the state championship panel.
3. All Competition Class will be finalized by February 15 to allow for proper planning by directors for the following season. Competition Class changes may be approved after that date at the discretion and mutual agreement of the director and judging coordinator.
4. Ensembles new to MMBA should consult with the judging coordinator to determine the best Competition Class for their group in competition before their first performance.

C. Divisions: Each class has Divisions based on group size, which includes all student performers. Division ranges are decided each season based on the sizing of all groups within MMBA in an attempt to foster competition in all divisions. Size divisions will be set two weeks prior to the first MMBA event in the fall. For the 2025 season, those divisions are:

1. 1A: 1-39
2. 2A: 40-49
3. 3A: 50-59
4. 4A: 60+
5. Open Small: 1-59
6. Open Large: 60+

## V. Adjudication and Feedback

### A. Captions

1. In Open and A Class, standard shows will be judged in six captions with the following weights: Music Effect (20%), Visual Effect (20%), Ensemble Music (20%), Ensemble Visual (20%), Color Guard (10%), and Percussion (10%).
  2. In Show Band Class, standard shows will be judged in four captions: Music (2 judges at 20% each), Visual (2 judges at 20% each), Color Guard (10%), and Percussion (10%).
- B. Subcaptions
1. Each caption is divided into Composition and Excellence.
    - a) In Open Class, these are weighted evenly.
    - b) In A Class, Composition is weighted at 30% and Excellence is weighted at 70%
    - c) In Show Band Class, these are weighted evenly.
- C. Judging sheets with judging criteria for each caption and subcaption will be made available on the MMBA website.
- D. Ties: In the event of an overall score tie, the Overall Effect score will serve as the tiebreaker, followed by Music Ensemble, if necessary.
- E. Scores for all competing classes will be announced at an award ceremony after performances conclude. Exhibition scores will not be announced at the event. All scores, including exhibitions, will be posted on the MMBA website immediately following the ceremony.
- F. Critique: At all regular shows, staff members will have the opportunity to meet with judges to discuss their performance, immediately following the competition. This will typically be done in panels of two judges, with three minutes per panel. Critique will be offered first to bands traveling the furthest.
- G. Recaps will be made available to competing organizations via Competition Suite after critique. Recaps will not be posted publicly.

## VI. Show Information

- A. MMBA will provide a preliminary schedule approximately three weeks prior to the show date (with the exception of States, which are seeded based on prior performance).
- B. Final show schedule and logistical information (director's packet) will be provided to bands the Tuesday prior to each event.

## VII. Performance Rules

- A. All bands will be given a 15 minute time slot at all local events. There are no timing rules or penalties within that 15 minute time period, but bands are asked to honor their time slot. Time slots for Regional and State competitions may be adjusted as needed for logistical purposes.
- B. All performances should be limited to the football field and sideline area. Bands are welcome to use the sideline area, but should not be utilizing the track for performance.
- C. All performing groups should leave the performance area in the exact manner that they found it – no pit or props should damage the surface in any way and no materials should remain on the field after performance is completed. Groups found to be harming the performance surface may be penalized or charged for damages.
- D. Host schools manage all events, and rules and requirements set forth by those schools regarding the use of the facilities must be followed by all groups. This includes path of travel and field entry and exit requirements.
- E. Bands who experience an unexpected absence of a performing member and would like the judging panel to be aware must contact the Show Coordinator before the start of the show or as soon as the absence is known.

- F. Bands who experience an unexpected absence of a drum major may request approval from the Chief Judge to utilize a staff member as a replacement for that drum major. This request should be submitted to the Show Coordinator.
- G. Amplified metronomes may not be used in the warm up area.

## VIII. Regular Competitions

- A. Regular competitions will be held weekly on Saturdays throughout the fall season.
- B. MMBA and the host director will work together to establish a competition schedule. A preliminary schedule will be released approximately two weeks in advance. A final schedule will be released Tuesday before the competition. No changes to performance times will happen once the schedule is finalized, unless all affected parties agree.
- C. A highly qualified panel of judges will adjudicate competitions.
- D. Performing groups will be seeded randomly within their Division. If a band requires an earlier performance time to work around a conflict, that request should be communicated to MMBA as soon as the conflict is known. Requests to perform earlier will be granted. Requests to perform later will be granted at the discretion of the Executive Board.

## IX. Regional Competitions

- A. A regional competition will function as a normal competition, with three differences:
  - 1. Scores will not be announced during the regular award ceremony. Only placements will be announced.
  - 2. After the regular award ceremony, additional awards will be given to the top three overall scoring bands, regardless of competing class. Scores will be announced for these bands.
  - 3. The host band may choose to compete in the regional competition, randomized in their Division. They may also perform at the end of the competition in exhibition. Only the competition performance will be scored if they choose to do both.

## X. State Championships

- A. State Championships will be held as late in the season as is practical, with the preference being the first Saturday in November.
- B. Only Maryland bands may compete for a State Championship. Bands from other states must perform in exhibition, if space in the schedule allows. Priority is given to Maryland bands first.
- C. To qualify, bands must compete in at least two (2) prior MMBA events. If participation numbers allow, additional ensembles may be added to the event based on available performance time slots within the show schedule. Invitations for these additional groups will be extended in order of the number of MMBA events in which each ensemble participated.
- D. Performance order will be rotated each year:
  - 1. 2023/2027: 1A, 2A, 3A, Break, 4A, OS, OL
  - 2. 2024/2028: 3A, 4A, 1A, Break, 2A, OS, OL
  - 3. 2025/2029: 4A, 1A, 2A, Break, 3A, OS, OL
  - 4. 2026/2030: 2A, 3A, 4A, Break, 1A, OS, OL