



## Welcome to the TJ Bands!

Hello, and congratulations on your admission into Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology! This school offers many wonderful opportunities for you, and we are excited to introduce you to the band program, one of the most visible and successful of those programs.

One of the truly enjoyable things about TJ is that the school offers a fully comprehensive high school experience along with the additional science and tech courses. It is rare that a school with this academic reputation would also boast one of the best fine arts departments in the country. While you enjoy taking accelerated STEM classes, you also can take up to four years of band in one of the premiere programs in the US. In the TJ band program, there are many opportunities for you to perform and enjoy making music with your peers. The first step toward this process is signing up for curricular band as a freshman. Participation in the marching band is also dependent on that first step. There are certain situations later on where you may take a year off from curricular band and still participate in marching band, but as a freshman we do ask that you sign up for the class.

When you sign up for Band through course registration, you will select either 9234TL Advanced Band HN (Wind Ens.) for brass/woodwind players, or 9234TK Advanced Band HN (Percussion Ens.) for percussionists and pianists interested in a band experience. You will then be sorted into the specific ensemble that works best for you and the group. Don't worry about what level of experience you have (even if it's *none*!) these are the correct course codes to choose and we'll sort you from there!. The ensembles that meet as a class are:

***Concert Band (Winds Group)***

***Symphonic Band (Mid-level Winds Group)***

***Symphonic Wind Ensemble [SWE] (Upper-Level Winds Group)***

***Symphonic/Concert Percussion (Percussion Group – performs with Symphonic and/or Concert Bands)***

***Percussion Ensemble (Upper-Level Percussion Group – performs with SWE)***

All of the above will be listed simply as “Advanced Band HN” on your schedule, and currently, ***Advanced Band is an Honors-level class, earning a 0.5 GPA boost annually.***

*We have a Jazz Band program, which you can join starting in September - this is not a curricular class*

*We also have an elite Marching Band, which you are strongly encouraged to join. See all info here.*

We know it can be daunting to consider all the options and requirements ahead of you, but there are many ways students have to make the scheduling work while including all the other courses they need to, whether through utilizing summer classes or other options. The best way to learn what might work best for you is to talk with older students and parents who have been through it. And there's no better advice we can offer you than to seek information straight from the source! *Please* email the band director, Mr. Ballard, with any questions instead of asking others in the broader community. You're much more likely to get accurate answers from us. Even well-intentioned people outside the band program often end up being the source of misinformation.

[Here are some recent 4-year-schedules](#) you can browse that worked for members of a recent TJ Senior class.

[Here is a TJ Course Planning spreadsheet](#) you can use to help figure out your own plan.

## Preparing and submitting an evaluation or audition recording:

All incoming and current TJ band students can submit a playing sample or sign-up for an in-person performance time at TJ [using this Google Form](#).

**May 20th is the due date** for those accepted in April. For later acceptances, please submit within 2-3 weeks of your acceptance into TJ - the sooner the better, but take the time you need to prepare.

*Please make sure you include your full name in the file name so I know who you are in the video.*

Name files this way (or similar): Firstname\_Lastname\_TJBand filetype

**Submitting a playing sample is requested from all new students. A full-audition is not required but strongly recommended for those with significant playing experience.** This helps us get to know you a little bit and to get a small sample of your current playing skills, which helps us plan for next year. If you submit only the more basic sample material listed below that's fine. If you demonstrate potential readiness for placement in the Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE), you may be asked to play a little more later on but that is less common. If you want to make *sure* you are considered more seriously for the Wind Ensemble, then please play as much of the audition material as possible.

A single recording with all elements performed in succession is recommended but not required. If you prefer, you may submit each element below as an individual recording, just remember to label *every* video you send with your name at the start of the file name. Limit editing to captioning (recommended) and cuts while *not* playing. Test your audio and video recording *before* you make your final recording to ensure proper quality. When you start recording for real, very often the first take is the best take, so go for it and don't let little mistakes stop you!

All submissions must be **video with audio**, with full view of your face, playing technique, and instrument, and no other sounds audible but your own, unedited acoustic playing. Contact me asap if you are unable to make that happen for some reason. For percussion, this includes your hands, wrists, and arms, as well as the playing surfaces of your instrument. A slightly elevated camera angled downward at the instrument works well but keep your face in view as well for identification. Whatever instrument you have available to you is fine, but it is recommended that you use the best quality drum and keyboard you can use.

If you prefer to do a live, in-person performance instead, great! Use the Google Form above and we'll arrange a time.

Students who do not submit a sample/audition will be automatically placed into the Concert Band/Percussion level classes. **But please do submit something if you can.**

*If you have any issues with this form at all, especially if you can't upload your videos for some reason, you aren't alone! New FCPS/Google security updates sometimes cause issues even though the form is set to be open to anyone. You can always just email or share videos directly with me - [swballard@fcps.edu](mailto:swballard@fcps.edu). The preferred method for those outside of Fairfax Co. Public Schools network is as a private, unlisted YouTube link (rather than as a large file attachment that may or may not clear Spam filters). Please follow up with a separate email to confirm receipt, and make sure everything is labeled with your full name. For those who DO have an FCPS account, you can just save your videos in your Google account and then share the files with me: [swballard@fcps.edu](mailto:swballard@fcps.edu) (or [swballard@fcpschools.net](mailto:swballard@fcpschools.net), either is fine - goes to the same place). And you can always email me if you still have any trouble.*

Details for what to play are on the next page, and playing-evaluation FAQ's are beyond that.

# Evaluation and Audition Music

## Major Scales

**Play as many of them as you are familiar with.**

Use whatever ranges, rhythm patterns, and tempos you are comfortable with and used to. Faster is only better to the extent that you can play with quality, consistency, and accuracy. Choose your tempos accordingly.

## Chromatic Scale

**Play your chromatic scale, at least one octave if you can.** Whatever range, tempo, rhythm, and articulation pattern you have currently learned is fine.

For Wind/Percussion Ensemble consideration, it is best if you play at least 6+ major scales in the maximum typical range on your instrument, and at least a 2-octave chromatic scale, slurring-up and tonguing-down.

## Prepared Pieces/Excerpts

**You can play anything you currently have prepared** (solo music, band music, **whatever you think showcases you best**) 1-2 minutes *maximum*.

For percussion, snare and/or mallets are fine. You may include other percussion instruments if you choose, but they're not required.

For Wind/Percussion Ensemble consideration

Brass/Woodwinds perform [2025 TJHSST Band Placement Audition Excerpts](#)

Play the excerpts listed for your instrument.

Percussionists perform [2025 TJHSST Percussion Placement Audition Pieces](#)

Ignore where it says 2021, we're using this for 2025 as well.

## Percussion Rudiments (Percussion only of course)

If you are familiar with snare drum rudiments, **play 2 you are most comfortable with** such as:

**Multiple Bounce Roll** (soft to loud and back to soft over about 15-20 seconds), or

**Paradiddles, Flams, or Drags** (slow to fast and back to slow over about 15-20 seconds).

It's ok if you aren't familiar with rudiments! If so, just skip this part.

For Wind/Percussion Ensemble Consideration,

**Play each of the following rudiments**

(20 seconds or less on each):

**Multiple Bounce Roll** (soft-loud-soft)

**Long (Double Stroke Open) Roll** (slow-fast-slow)

**17-stroke roll** (slow-fast-slow)

**Flam Accent** (slow-fast-slow) OR **Double Ratamacue** (slow-fast-slow)

**Keep scrolling for evaluation/audition/placement FAQ's**

## **FAQs about evaluations, auditions, and placements:**

### **What are my chances of making one of the higher ensembles?**

It depends on far too many factors to list. The short answer is that we typically only accept a few freshmen in the higher level groups a year, but varies each year. We fill the groups up with the most qualified candidates for those positions. In the end, all students end up being enrolled in “*Advanced Band HN*”, so your transcript will look the same either way and YOU WILL GET HONORS CREDIT in any ensemble. Have confidence that we do what is best for the program and for you as a player (but we don’t put the needs or wishes of an individual ahead of the group). We are very fortunate to get many talented players to join. Remember that you are auditioning for spots against upperclassmen who were just as talented as you when they first came into the program! But it’s also worth noting, of our many All-District and All-Virginia Band honorees, most began their journey at TJ in the Symphonic Band; in fact, some of our Symphonic Band members are included among those honorees this year! You will get a high level, quality experience no matter which ensemble you step into.

### **I don’t think I have as much experience on my instrument as others. Should I still join band even if I think I may be a little behind? Or if I have no experience at all?**

Absolutely! There is a place for all ability levels in our program, including beginners. Band is a class where you can enjoy playing your instrument and improving, regardless of your ability level when you enter the program. Our focus is simply on having you continue to get better each year, in competition with *no one* but yourself and your own personal annual goals. We have many beginners each year! We also have students who played in the past but had taken a year or two off before joining us. Come as you are and we’ll take it from there. All that is required is a good attitude and intent to put in the work.

### **When will I know which ensemble I am placed into?**

Please allow some time for audition results. Sometimes, we can give specific info sooner, but with rolling freshman admissions through the summer, sometimes delays linger before we know the best alignment for our instrumentation. The best bet is to just know we will post them as soon as we can. There are a lot of auditions to get through for both incoming students and returning students, and there are many considerations when placing students into the appropriate ensembles. Worst case, you will know exactly which group you are in when you receive your full course schedule but every effort will be made to communicate sooner than that.

### **How else can I learn about the program?**

See our website: [www.tjbands.org](http://www.tjbands.org)

See more [Facts and FAQs about the TJ Bands](#) program.

If your parents would like to talk to parents of current band students, please contact our Band Booster Co-Presidents: John Ritter and Jonathan Kerr at [President@tjbands.org](mailto:President@tjbands.org)

See what our alumni have to say about marching band: [Why TJMC? Alumni Perspective!](#)

Again, congratulations and welcome to the TJ Band! Please reach out to me any time with any questions you may have about this process, or the program in general.

### **Steve Ballard**

Director of Bands, TJHSST

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