

Balancing School Work And Band

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Band is a fun class that allows you to make friends, build life skills, and express yourself. Band is also a great way to stand out on your college application, and it shows commitment if you participate all four years of highschool. Finding the balance between band and school work is difficult, especially when you have other extra curricular activities.

Practice

The most important thing to do when in band is practice, practice, practice. You should try to practice everyday even if it is just for 20 minutes. Remember that you do not have to practice for three hours each day. Small intervals of practice is better, because it allows you to take a break from a difficult section. Also, it allows for a break from sitting down at a desk and doing homework.

Here are some things that you can practice:

1. Scales- It is important to practice all 12 major scales, and it is even better if you have them memorized. This helps a lot when you are playing different pieces as the key may change multiple times.
2. Long Tones- These are a good exercise to do every single time you pick up your instrument. They help with your tone and open up your throat and lungs.
3. Technique exercises- There are many different technique exercises that you can do on your instrument as a warm-up. The school uses a Blue Method book that works with scales and scale patterns, but there are many exercises that you can look up.
4. A difficult section of a piece- It is a good idea to isolate a certain part of your music if you continuously get the notes or rhythm wrong. If you continue to play it wrong and just play the whole piece through, you will learn the song incorrectly, or it will take you a longer time to actually get through the whole piece. By isolating a certain section , slowing it down, and repeating it over and over, you are training your brain and fingers what the section sounds like and is supposed to be.
5. Play with recordings or listen to a recording before you play- Listening to a recording of a professional playing the same piece helps you internalize the piece and hear how that person interpreted the music. Each person will play the piece a little bit differently, but it is good to understand what the piece is supposed to sound like when you are learning it. I

find it helpful to play along with a recording of the song that I am playing when I am just learning the piece. It helps me learn the rhythm, and phrasing better than just looking at the music.

Balance

Life after school can get really busy and overwhelming if you do not have a plan. With homework, extracurriculars, and wanting to socialize, it can be hard to find time to practice. You do not need to practice for hours each day, but fifteen to twenty minutes each day can really improve your playing. You want to find a good balance between practicing, school work, and your other activities. Of course it depends on where you want to go in life and if you want to continue to play an instrument in college. Many people in band do no other outside practice, but some people do take private lessons. This can add more stress to your schedule and can easily become overwhelming if you do not communicate with your private teacher, coaches, or teachers at school.

Finding a balance is very important. For most people, band is not their whole life, but a fun activity that they can participate in and learn new skills. Between the homework from my AP classes and practices for soccer I am very busy during the week. It is nice being able to take a break from school work and stress to play music. With a lot of homework and extracurriculars, I have to prioritize and communicate with my teachers and coaches.

Sometimes you need to skip a practice if you have a big test or a band concert that night. The important thing there is communication. Your teachers and coaches can only help you if you ask for the help, and they are more inclined to give you a break if you communicate to them what is going on.