

# Integration of Color Guard

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Maximize your band's overall visual impact through your color guard? Yes, it can be done! Here are five basic steps to success... realize your color guard's potential and create an amazing overall effect.

## 1 Field Placement

Field placement for auxiliaries is often the most overlooked item in a marching band's field show. Your auxiliaries can be a great asset to your program! First, always keep your color guard in mind when writing your show... they should never be an afterthought. For example, write drill movement so they start, finish, or are part of the form, or use them in a negative space - the blank space within your set. If you want to see more movement or color, try placing the flags on the left front corner of your band; you will see more of them, and they will add to the general effect. Working with lower numbers? A general rule is to keep them together so they can be seen. A small group split on either side of the band will not help the visual effect you are trying to create.

If working with a rifle, sabre and flag line, definition is beneficial. Many drill writers will be tempted to set the rifles on the front sideline close to the 50... remember, a weapon line set close to the front sideline is often visually lost because of the percussion pit equipment. Make them part of the picture by setting them at least 8 steps off the front.

Placement during high-impact points of the music is especially important. Distributing the auxiliaries throughout the band (in all the nooks and crannies) will enhance color and motion.

Finally, a big hint: Straight lines and color guards do not mix. If the appearance of straight lines is needed, try staggering your students. A straight line will show all imperfections, including bad timing and technique.

## 2 Transitions

Auxiliary transitions are an important part of the fluidity of the show. Equipment changes between songs can be time-consuming and very distracting for the audience. If a mood or color change is needed, consider trading equipment after the band has begun a new drill move. For example, after the first song ends, have a small ensemble close to the center of the form start the next routine, while the rest of the color guard changes equipment. To maintain a positive general effect, color or motion (dance) should occur on the field at all time. Need an equipment change in the middle of a song? Have half of the color guard change, then the other half. Also, place the equipment so the changes happen within a couple of counts of music.

When setting equipment, make sure it appears uncluttered on the field. This can be accomplished by scattering equipment changes to the different sides of the field, front and back sidelines included. Also, be sure none of the equipment is set where the band marches.

## 3 Musicality

Musicality is what color guard is all about - they are the visual interpretation of the music. Color guard routines should reflect the emotion of the music. If the music is soft and flowing, the flag movements should be fluid and smooth, without angles or sharp hits. If the music is too slow to make an impact, try taking the music in double time while using fluid motions to give the appearance of softness. When a big "push" is happening in a song, make the equipment an extension of the body by using big movements. Show confidence and power with your body or equipment. Accent loud, sharp or quick notes with your color guard... they can enhance the style of the music by hitting the notes with the band. Also remember, visual impacts do not always have to be with the equipment - impressive effects can be accomplished with dance or even a powerful look.

## 4 Uniforms

Uniforms are what separates the color guard from the band. A color guard will usually have uniforms that compliment the theme of the show concept rather than the school color. Choose color that contrasts the band uniforms. Also, basic fashion applies here as in the real world. Try to find a uniform style and color flattering to every body type. This will be your biggest challenge. Choosing a uniform flattering to all students will give them the confidence to concentrate on the performance, not worry about the way they look.

## 5 Use of Color and Fabric

Color. Color, Color... remember Color. Color helps with the overall appearance of your show and can add a lot to your performance. First, listen to the music and try to hear the style or emotion it is trying to portray. Is it loud and exciting? Use bright color that "pop out" at you. Dark or sad? Dark colors (not black) with accents of other dark colors work well. Happy emotions? Use a lot of yellows or pastels to portray a carefree feeling. Soft, emotional songs such as ballads are represented well with different tints of the same see-through, light color or fabric.

When designing your flags, limit your color choices to 3 or 4 per flag. The more colors you use, the greater chance your flag will look cluttered. This will actually be a detriment to the cleanliness of your color guard. Solid color, sickle-shaped flags actually help your color guard look more together even if they are having trouble with a routine.

Fabric choices are abundant when it comes to flag design. Lame is one of the most common types. Although lame tears easily, it is colorful and reflects light very well. If planning to use lame flags, it is beneficial to practice with flags made of a more durable material. Another fabric, poly silk, is a big trend today. It comes in a great variety of colors, is inexpensive, durable, and easy to sew. Twinkle or chiffon is also a good material choice. It is see-through and appears to give the impression of softness and elegance.

