

Schenectady Pipe Band

Standard for Pipers Attending Band Practices

When a prospective piper begins to attend band practices, the piper should already be a competent player. The purpose of band practice is to refine and rehearse the band repertoire and drill, rather than to instruct our members in how to play the music and manage the instrument. Thus the prospective player must possess a set of fundamental skills that will enable her or him to participate effectively in rehearsals. These skills include:

Music Theory:

- a. Understanding of time signatures.
- b. Understanding of simple and compound rhythms.
- c. Understanding of the note values and how dotted and cut notes affect the note duration.
- d. Recognition of all embellishments and ability to sight read bagpipe music.
- e. Knowledge of where the beat falls in all embellishments.
- f. Understanding of the concept subdividing beats into down beats and up beats.

Instrument:

- a. Knowledge of bagpipe maintenance, reflected in a well-maintained instrument.
- b. Ability to blow the bagpipe steadily.
- c. Ability to tune drones to the chanter.
- d. Endurance to comfortably play the bagpipe for 45 minutes with breaks.

Practical:

- a. Ability to play roughly 2/3 of the performance band repertoire from memory with accurate technique, proper expression and tempo control at band tempos.
- b. Ability to execute a pipe band attack and cut-off.
- c. Ability to play tunes while marching.

A player who demonstrates the above skills will be well-equipped to participate in band rehearsals. Having solidified the fundamentals, the player is free to focus on developing the skills of playing in a pipe band. When a piper begins to attend band practice, he or she is appointed by the Pipe Major as an Aspirant player. This is the first step toward band membership. Aspirants will receive instruction in band drill and how to wear and maintain the band uniform. Aspirant pipers will gain experience in performing with other players, focusing on the skills of playing in unison and blowing tone. Aspirants should attend rehearsals regularly, continue to improve in playing ability, and continue to master the rest of the performance repertoire. They will prepare to perform with the band on the street. Aspirant status may be withdrawn if the piper fails to reasonably progress or meet those expectations.