

POSTURE

It is impossible to teach your students to breathe correctly without introducing a natural approach to body position and posture that is constantly monitored by the conductor. In every beginning band book there are explanations and detailed descriptions of hand position and posture. As the student progresses through a band program, correct playing posture is often ignored. The success of the ensemble is directly related to the level of details to which teachers and students are willing to be held accountable. Ask yourself: "Would I use my students as role models for instrumental music education? Could someone take a picture of my students and use it as an example of excellent posture?" Every detail of correct playing posture must be recognized and reinforced daily: not only how to sit properly in the chair, but also correct hand position, and where to place the stand in relation to the conductor for best visual success. Below is a process for developing a standard of posture that can be used daily.

Posture should be practiced standing before sitting.
The "sit-as-you-stand" concept is the basis of correct posture.

STANDING POSTURE

1. feet are shoulder width apart and parallel
2. knees should feel soft and flexible
3. body should feel naturally soft and flexible
4. body should look natural
5. body should feel balanced
6. hips are in line with feet (the body should be in a straight line)
7. rib cage should be lifted, and should always stay up
8. shoulders are relaxed, soft and sloping
9. shoulders are in line with the feet and hips
10. bottom two ribs should float
11. head should be balanced in the middle of the shoulders (thus floating)
12. lower back should feel soft
13. the slope and shape of the back are the same sitting and standing
14. students should practice these posture elements while walking from class to class, as natural breathing takes place while walking normally

SITTING POSTURE

- "sit as you stand" concept is vital
- all previous applicable material still applies
- correct posture should be addressed early in each class period, before any playing is done

1. the design of the chair must not influence correct posture
2. all chairs do NOT have to be angled the same way (especially for flutes and French horns)
3. the feet should be naturally apart, as when walking
4. a student should be able to get up and walk naturally from their “seated position”
5. the feet should look the same whether sitting or standing
6. students’ feet remain in natural position once they are seated
7. it is not as important where the student is on the chair as the balance of the body (depending on length of their legs and the size of their instrument)
8. students should keep feet soft so their toes do not curl inside their shoes while standing or sitting
9. students must not feel like they are sitting on their spines; the weight of the body should actually be supported by the backs of their thighs

When using a music stand.....

1. the music stand should be directly in front of the student
2. one spoke of your stand should be facing the student so they can tap their foot on either side of that spoke
3. the music stand should be high enough so students do not have to move their head to go from their music to you
4. when playing in the lower half of their music, students should not have to move their head down--if they do, then they need to raise their stand
5. the upper chest should not cave in when reading music off of the music stand--the rib cage is up, and the shoulders are in place

Make posture an aspect of your daily ensemble rehearsal. Periodically, start your rehearsal with a detailed assessment of posture.

Remember to evaluate posture daily and make corrections throughout the rehearsal. Be consistent. Make your ensemble a role model for correct posture.