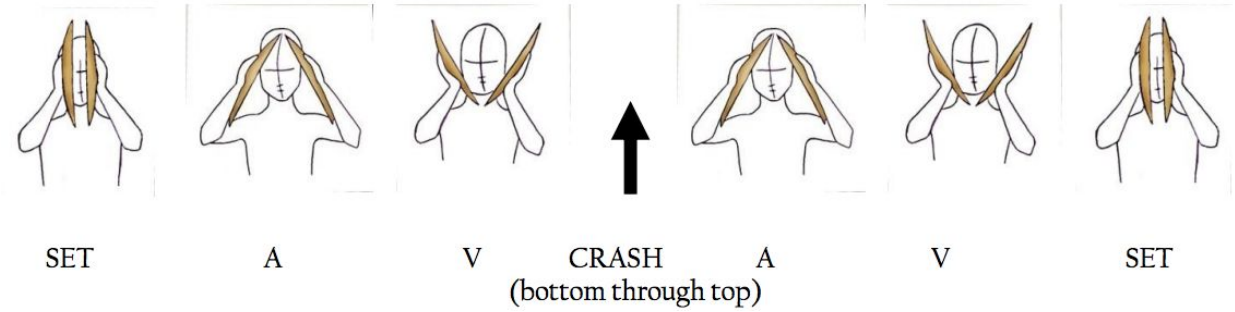
Hawkeye Drumline Cymbals

Sound Production

The single most important aspect of cymbal playing is sound production. The visual effect the cymbal creates, while extremely important, is secondary. At the point of attack using a standard crash, the cymbals should NOT meet exactly together "edge to edge." This will result in what is called an "air pocket" which is a momentary vacuum that locks the cymbals together and kills most of the sound. To create a full crash sound, apply a flam technique. At the instant of attack, the bottom edges of the cymbals meet first, followed by the top edges. Unlike an actual flam, there should be no audible "grace note." Using this sound quality technique, a full sound should be produced. To begin, your arms from the shoulder to the elbow should be level to the ground. From the wrist to the elbow should be approximately at a 45-degree angle towards each other. Wrists are bent to allow for the cymbals to be parallel. The cymbals should be 2-3 inches apart with the knots of the cymbals in line with your eyes. *See "visual applications" for more information. To prepare for the crash, open the cymbals up to an "A." To do this, straighten the wrist to create a flat line from the tip of the fingers all the way to the elbow. Then, break the wrist back so the cymbals form a "V." This is where the first crash or "grace note" happens at the bottom of the cymbals. The crash hits bottom then pushes through to the top and opens back up to the original "A" position. To finish, open back up to the "V" and snap back to set. (set, AVAV, set = one crash) The snap to set should happen two counts after the crash (ex- crash on one, snap back on three).



This same "flam" technique should be applied to the orchestral position. In this instance, switch the "bottom to top" impacts to "heel of the palm to fingertips." Otherwise, the AVAV visual technique is the same with the left arm using slightly less motion. For the orchestral, cymbals should be parallel to each other but at a 45 degree angle from the ground. The knots of the cymbal should line up with the center of your body both horizontally and vertically (your belly-button). This information for crash technique is applied, with slight modification, to crash chokes. You will only use the first three positions – AVA. From the "A" position after the crash, bring the cymbals into your Latissimus dorsi (muscle that connects your shoulder and chest/underarm). Your cymbals should return from this dampened "A" position to the set position two counts after the crash (ex-choke on count one, out on count three). Experience with any other cymbal sounds is not necessary but strongly encouraged. These may include, but are not limited to: slide chokes, scrapes/zings, sizzles, taps, bell-taps, high-hats/hinge chokes, and cymbal rolls.

Visual Applications

The cymbal player is a big contributor to the overall visual program. Good posture is a necessity for playing and executing visuals well. When holding your cymbal at your sides in the "attention" position your shoulders should be relaxed and down. Keep your pelvis in line with your center (abs) and shoulders. Your arms should have a natural bend held firmly enough to control the cymbals. Your elbows should stay turned slightly outwards, not in towards your body. Keep the cymbals parallel to each other and approximately 2 inches from your sides. For cymbal players, the most basic visual element is the cymbal flip. To complete a "flip-up" you must start with your cymbals parallel to each other at your side. Keep your back straight, shoulders back and relaxed, and head up with your focus and weight slightly forward. A cymbal "flip" involves one simple rotation of the wrist: the thumb pushes back behind you and rotates the cymbal around to the front. Your arm should come forward and up simultaneously. Do not allow your arms to take a pathway to the side. To complete the flip you stop your cymbals parallel in front of your face, 2-3 inches apart, with the knots of the cymbals in line with your eyes. Be sure to account for "tunnel vision" when the cymbals are that close to your face. What may look like parallel is actually flared out to the front. To force the cymbals to be parallel you must be able to see the inside far edge of the cymbal. A "flip down" is the exact reverse of the flip up. Pay careful attention to locking

the cymbals in the attention position when flipping down. Practice these two elements slowly and work your way faster. An accurately done cymbal flip should happen instantaneously.

Physical Conditioning

Playing cymbals is one of the most physically demanding assignments in the marching percussion ensemble. In order to perform comfortably it is important to develop strength and flexibility in those muscles that are most frequently used. Help prevent muscle cramps, wrist sprains, tendonitis and other injuries by stretching and applying strength training to your preparations for auditions. Remember, while push-ups are an excellent way to develop cymbal strength, no exercise compares to actually holding and playing the cymbals for extended periods of time. If you are not currently a part of a music program, see if your school or band director will allow you to borrow cymbals and practice on campus.

The Garfield Grip

1. Hold the cymbal in a vertical position and put your hand through the strap up to the wrist.
2. Turn the hand so the palm is facing away from the pad of the cymbal.
3. Rotate the entire hand downward and turn the palm toward the cymbal until it touches the pad. The strap should rest at the base of the thumb and forefinger.