

## **MAASIN Resources for Parents and Guardians of Prospective Drum Corps Members**

### **What is a drum corps, and when will my performer be on the road? At camps?**

Drum and bugle corps is a summer activity similar to marching band. Depending on the corps, they will tour within the state or nationally during their season. Drum corps sections include brass, percussion, and color guard. A drum corps can have up to 154 members.

Drum Corps International ([DCI](#)) is the nonprofit governing organization for all drum and bugle corps. The competitive summer performances (“shows”) are divided into three divisions: World Class, Open Class, and Soundsport.

Most drum corps start holding auditions from November to January. Auditions are 1-3 day camps depending on the corps and location. After the audition period, there will be rehearsal camps from the late winter to early spring. These rehearsal camps are usually 2-3 days one weekend per month. Depending on the corps, members are sometimes housed and fed during camp weekends. Move-ins (all day rehearsals) typically start in May for World class corps and in June for Open class corps. Competitions for DCI member organizations take place from late June to early August.

### **Who is eligible for drum corps?**

In DCI, there is no minimum age for performers, but the youngest members are typically around 14 years old, and performers are not allowed to perform after turning 21. It is possible for 22 year olds to march if they have a summer birthday that falls after June 1st. Most organizations track and are cognizant of the average age of their performers, and some are geared toward specific demographics of members (e.g., corps that are geared toward high school students aged 14-18). There are also a very small handful of youth drum corps that are geared towards members that are age 10-15. DCA and Soundsport do not have a maximum age for their performers.

### **What are the differences between World Class/Open Class/Soundsport and DCA?**

You may find the division of a corps through searching its status on [the DCI website](#). World class corps usually begin their summer season in late May and end in early August. Open class corps often have a shorter season (June to August), and their start date varies by their location. Soundsport is an all-age category for ensembles of all kinds that perform in conjunction with DCI competitive events. Soundsport teams do not have instrument restrictions. For more information on Soundsport, see [their website](#).

Drum Corps Associates ([DCA](#)) is an all-age activity that is primarily weekend-based. For more information on DCA, see [the FAQ of the Columbus Saints](#), a DCA corps based in Ohio.

The cost of performing with a world class, open class, soundsport, or DCA ensemble varies by organization.

### **How does the audition process work?**

Most corps will start their audition process sometime between November and December, offering 1-3 day camps depending on the location and corps. Most corps will require an audition fee to attend the camp. For the 2-3 day camps the corps will sometimes house and feed the members, which is included in the audition fee. Some corps will also take video auditions, so if there are no audition locations that are local, you can contact the corps to ask.

Your performer will undergo an audition process with several possible results that vary by corps. In general, a “contract” offer means the performer has secured a spot in their section and will begin paying fees. A “callback” may indicate that the performer is going to be evaluated an additional time before they are moved to “contract” or “cut” status. A “cut” means the performer will no longer be considered in the audition process for a given organization. Some corps are “no cut” corps and will offer contracts to prospective members if they continue to improve and are seen to have good character. If your student gets cut from an audition, there are often other corps that they can still audition for. Sometimes the staff from the corps that they got cut from may know of other options that they can direct your student to.

If your student is flying to another state to attend an audition, most corps have a system for picking up members at the airport. Some corps charge a shuttle fee to transport members to and from the airport, and some do not. Members will have to arrive at the airport by a certain time to be able to ride the corps’ shuttle, so check in with what those times are.

### **What should I be able to find on the website or through an email to the administration of my student’s organization?**

Organizations should have their policies about member safety, health, wellness, and beyond listed on their website. If policies are not listed, an organization’s administrative team should be able to provide them upon request. Most corps have a staff directory as well, so you will know who is teaching your student. Tour schedules and mail drop

addresses are not usually released during auditions, but should be available by the spring.

### **What supports are available to maintain members' physical and mental health?**

Members can expect to have a full-time medical staff with them throughout the summer. Several drum corps have begun to appoint a "member experience coordinator" or similar position to assist with meeting members' physical and mental wellness needs.

### **How can I get involved (volunteer)?**

Drum corps are always in need of volunteers! Each corps has a different volunteer onboarding process. Several use background checks that may take several weeks to process, it's best to check with the admin team earlier in the season. There are a variety of ways to get involved depending on your availability and expertise, from driving equipment trucks, helping sew & measure uniforms, working on the food crew, and more. You can volunteer for camp weekends or while the corps is on the road. MAASIN also advises that you first speak with your student about volunteering and what that may look like at their specific organization.

Drum corps also offer mail drops during the summer months, and it is possible to send your performer mail and care packages at appointed times usually provided by the corps administration in the months leading up to spring training.

### **How much does it cost and how do people pay for dues?**

Based on the past few seasons, we anticipate that member fees will range from \$3,000 to over \$5,000 for the 2022 season. For some corps the member fee does not include the audition camp, monthly camp fees, uniform fees, or other associated costs (e.g., travel and rehearsal equipment), so it will be helpful to check with the corps as to what they do and don't cover.

Many drum corps offer payment plans for members to offset the burden of the full fee upon signing a financial contract. Some corps also have programs where you can trade volunteer hours for specific tour fee amounts. It is best to ask your specific corps if there are alternative methods of payment or volunteer/work trade that are available.

### **Are there scholarship opportunities?**

Yes. MAASIN keeps a comprehensive list of scholarship opportunities that are open to members of all drum corps at <https://www.maasin.net/resources>. MAASIN recommends that performers ask the corps administration if they have internal scholarship opportunities for students as well.

## **What does a typical day look like for a drum corps member?**

The typical day for a drum corps member can depend on a lot of factors.

**Move-ins:** During the first part of tour, usually referred to as spring training or move-ins, the schedule is fairly routine. There are generally 3 blocks a day (morning, afternoon, and evening) with time built in to shower and have meals. On tour, there are also blocks of time to go to a laundromat as well as make store runs (Meijer, Walmart, etc.).

**Tour jobs:** Every member is typically given an assigned job on tour to complete outside of their other responsibilities. This could include but is not limited to: cleaning housing sites, lining certain fields to prepare for rehearsal, meal-prep, equipment loading, and bus cleaning. There is usually time allotted in the member's schedule to complete these activities.

**Show days:** Once the competitive season starts, a member's schedule becomes less regular. There are usually less blocks on show days, and there is time spent getting ready for a show, occasionally moving housing sites, and traveling to/from the competition site. Once members are at the show, they have time to warm-up and, of course, perform! There may be time allotted to watch other shows or interact with friends and family, but occasionally corps will leave right after a show. Check with your child to see what their show schedule is!

**Free days:** Oftentimes, corps will provide free days for members so they can see local sights, connect with friends and family, and generally unwind. Free day locations and dates are often listed in a corp's tour schedule. There are sometimes check-out policies if you want to take your child away from housing sites. Check-out policies can be obtained via your child, your child's contract, the corps website, or a tour manager.

**Corps with days away from tour:** Depending on the corps, there might be built in time off from tour. Check the corps's schedule for more details.

**Travel days:** Many corps travel across the country, so there is time built in to travel. Bus ride times have a wide range, depending on where the corps is slated to perform. There are stops built in for various reasons, such as bathroom breaks and gas tank refills. Some corps tend to travel at night so that members can sleep on the bus, especially for long drives.

**Floor time:** Floor time refers to how long members get to sleep on the floor (typically on air mattresses/sleeping bags/cots in a gymnasium). During move-ins, floor time stays consistent, typically 7-8 hours a night. During show and travel days, floor time might be split with time on the bus, or be longer one day to make up for shorter times another day. If you have concerns about your child getting enough floor time, see resources below to advocate for corps members.

## **How can I see my student's performances?**

Tour schedules will be published by the performer's corps and on the [DCI official website](#). Tickets vary by event but typically range from \$35-\$75. Warmup zones may or

may not be accessible to the public, and contacting corps administration is the fastest way to find out where performers will warm up. Many corps also have a “Friends and Family” day where they will debut the show in uniform to friends and family members locally.