

University of Toledo Drumline - Cymbal Packet

Thank you for your interest in the University of Toledo Cymbal Line. Cymbals are used in a number of ways in the modern marching ensemble. In addition to providing the impact of crashes, cymbals provide a significant portion of the battery's visual responsibility. The cymbal activity is constantly evolving, and the cymbal line will strive in 2017 to be an innovative and consistent performance ensemble.

If you have any questions about the University of Toledo Cymbal Line, please feel free to contact Kristin Smith at kristinesmith117@gmail.com.

Equipment

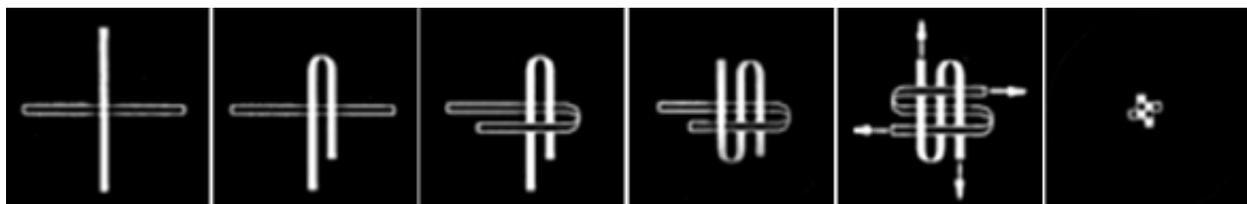
Straps

The two primary materials used for straps are leather and nylon. Both materials are sufficient in securing the cymbal to the hand.

The leather strap is the more common of the two and very versatile due to the memory inside the strap. After the initial "break in" of the leather strap, the strap maintains the correct hand positioning for a few weeks at light to medium wear and tear.

The nylon strap is more reliable initially for it doesn't need a "break in", it does have a tendency to fray after regular wear and tear.

The straps come through the cymbal after the "weave" and are laid out in stretching as far as possible, with each end given a number (1,2,3,4). To begin take 1 over 2 and then 2 over 3 and 1. Next take 3 over 2 and 4 and 4 over 3 and under 1 to complete the knot.

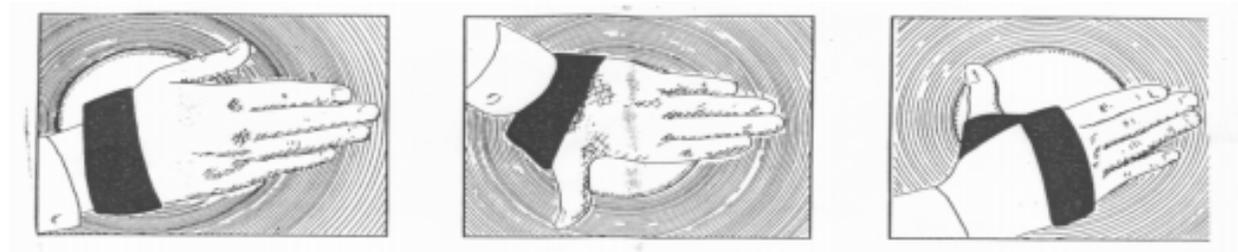


It's very important your cymbal straps are tightly tied. Keeping the straps tight on your hands is the best way to maintain control of the cymbal. After tying, you should be able to hold the cymbal in a "ride" position and have the cymbal pads still firmly touching the palm of your hand. Using this method the cymbal will now become a nature extension of your arm, giving you complete control of the cymbal.

Grip

We will utilize the Garfield Grip. Essentially, using the knot you've just created, slip your hand through the small end of the loop. Then, rotate your hand so that the back of the grip

rests on the back of your hand, towards your wrist. The strap travels between your thumb and first finger. The thumb and fingers are spaced out, allowing to utilize them as “contact surfaces.”



Visual Aspect

Posture

Cymbal players are a major contributor to the visual program as a whole. Good posture is a must for playing, executing the visuals, and performing to the crowd. Keep your pelvis in line with your abs and shoulders, to help create a straight body orientation more comparable to forward presence. Your abs are your core: if you flex your core at all times while playing or moving, you will be able to control your body much more easily.

Set Position

The set position is the default position when not playing in rehearsals. Cymbals at your sides, with the knots (center of the plate) at your hip bones. The plates are held a few inches off of your body, oriented straight up and down. Your shoulders should be relaxed with a natural arm bend, with slight pressure on the cymbals to help control them.

Flat/Gumption

This position will be called either “flat” or “gumption”; you may hear it referred to as either, but they are the same thing.

The plates are held in front of your chest, with the knots in line with your xyphoid process (the dent in the center of your chest below your rib cage.) The plates are held parallel to each other, with about 1 inch of space between them. They are held on an angle we will refer to as “seatbelt,” meaning the line between your left shoulder and your right hip. When establishing this position, it is very important to ensure that the plates are parallel to each other and at a right angle to your body; this means that when someone views you straight on, they should only see the thin edge of the plates.

Vert

Occasionally, we may also play implements out of a default position called vert. Your plates are held straight up and down in front of your face, the arms bent, shoulders back, and

knots at eye level. Just as with flat/gumtion, the plates must be parallel to each other, with only the thin edge visible to the audience.

Unload/Reload

Additionally, we will explore different aspects of “loaded” and “unloaded” visual implements. Essentially, most cymbal playing is done with the hands firmly in the straps’ grip. This allows for a high level of control over the plates while creating sound.

“Unloading” involves allowing the cymbal to rotate around the wrist and the hand to slip out of the grip. This opens up an unlimited number of options for cymbal visuals. Techniques for unloading and reloading will be explained at the percussion summer camps and band camp. In the mean time, I encourage you to explore YouTube for examples of cymbal lines who use these techniques, such as Spirit of Atlanta 2013 or Rhythm X 2014.

Sound Production

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 top edges of the cymbals meet first, followed by the bottom edges. Unlike an actual flam, there should be no audible “grace note.” Using this sound quality technique, a full sound will be produced. Another major aspect of modern cymbal lines is sound constancy. Not only does the player have to match implement to implement, but also player to player. This entails using proper dynamics, velocity of movement, and hand pressure, to ensure the same approach is being taken by the cymbal line as a whole.

Implements

The UT Cymbal Line will use a number of implements, all of which will be taught in great detail over the winter. Here is a brief overview of some of the more common implements.

Flat Crash

This will be the default crash for the UT Cymbal Line in 2017. This is a powerful crash with a lot of volume, and is used at impact moments for maximum effect.

1. Begin in the flat/gumtion position.
2. One count before the crash:
 - a. Bring your right plate back to your right shoulder.
 - b. Flex your left hand to bring the inner edge of your left plate to your forearm.
3. To crash, drive your right plate into the left, contacting the left plate first roughly halfway from the bell to the edge. At the same time, let of the tension in your left hand and allow your left plate to rotate. Drive the right plate though, ending in front

of you centered on the center line of the your body. Do not cross the center line to the left.

4. Two counts following the crash, return to flat/gumtion. This completes the crash.

Crash Choke

Most crash chokes will originate out of the flat position. Instead of fully driving the right plate through and allowing the plates to ring, the crash choke gives a moment of full volume crash that is immediately muted. Follow the steps for the flat crash, with these additional steps:

1. As soon as full contact as been made by the plates, bring both plates into your body at your sides. Thinking of bringing the knots to your hip bones. The plates should form a 90° angle. Plates edges should contact your body as much as possible, and your forearms should cover the plates as much as possible.
2. Two counts after the crash choke, return to the flat position.

Orchestral Crash

The orchestral crash is used when the cymbal timbre is called for, but at a *mf* or lower volume., or for musical texture reasons. This crash creates a different sound quality than the flat crash, so the two will not sound the same.

The orchestral crash uses a similar prep and recovery structure to the flat crash, but the prep motions are not rigid, but instead flow. This means that the motion from the checkpoint to checkpoint in this technique is continuous.

Generally, the orchestral crash will be used in the flat position. However, the vertical orchestral crash may also be used, using the principles of the regular orchestral crash and the vert crash.

For the orchestral crash from the flat position, follow these steps:

1. Beginning from the flat position, the plates will move away from each other until the right plate is parallel to the ground and the left plate is at 45° relative to the ground, with the bell of the cymbal facing down and to the right. The knots, and thereby your hands, should not travel further out than the width of your chest. Excess motion will create dirt and produce too much volume or a crash that will be too crass. This motion generally begins two counts before the crash, although there may be other defined starting points depending on musical needs.
2. The plates will then rotate and be brought together to create the flam. The flam will occur with the right plate on top of the left. The right plate will be roughly perpendicular to the ground, with the edge of the right plate contacting the left plate about 1 inch in from its edge. The left plate will be lowered slightly in the course of the rotation, and will be at roughly 45° (bell up and to the right) at the contact point.

3. As the plates are brought together, all contact surfaces except for the center of the palm will release.
4. The plates will then travel the same paths as the prep during the recovery. Recovery to flat is generally completed two counts after the crash.

The point of the orchestral crash is to allow the whole plate to ring as freely as possible, and to translate as much of that vibration into the air column.

It is very important that the motion of the prep and recovery remains fluid. Stops and starts in the motion indicate that additional force is being exerted on the plate, reducing vibration. Similarly, all contact surfaces minus the center of the palm should be released.

Vertical Crash

The vertical crash is an alternative to the flat crash. It may be used when it is more convenient than returning the flat position, such as coming out of a visual or when completing a previous implement out of the vert position.

1. To begin, your arms from the shoulder to the elbow should be parallel to the ground. From the wrist to the elbow should be approximately at a 45~degree angle. The wrists are bent to allow the cymbals to be parallel. The cymbals should be 2-3 inches apart with the knots of the cymbals in line with your eyes.
2. Two counts before 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.
3. One count before the crash, 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.
4. The crash hits bottom the pushes through to the top and opens back up to the original A positions. To finish, open back up to the V and snap back to set. (11 AVAV 11 = one crash) The snap to set should happen two counts after the crash (ex - crash on one, snap back on three).

Vertical Crash Choke

Similar to the vertical crash, the vertical crash choke is an alternative to the flat choke. It utilizes a similar structure to the vertical crash, with the following differences:

1. Prep the plates from vert to V one count before the choke.
2. On the choke count, bring the plates together, using proper flam technique.
3. Quickly bring the plates into the body, with the inner edge tucking into the muscles inside and around the shoulder. The insides of the biceps and forearms can also be used to dampen the sound.
4. Recovery usually occurs two counts after the choke.

Punch

A punch is a short, percussive implement that involves bring the edges of the plate together in a controlled smack-like manner. It's akin to a gock shot in snare drumming.

1. Beginning from the plate position, bring the left plate into the body at it's flat crash choke position, tucked against the ribs and the forearm.
2. Bring the right plate down so that ½ overlapped and parallel to the left plate.
3. Bring the plates together quickly, such that only the edge areas (outer last inch) contact, and then quickly bring the right plate into the right flat choke position.

Sizzle

Much as the name suggests, the sizzle gives a timbre similar to water sizzling on a grill. This implement involves allowing the plates to vibrate against each other, balancing between being too far apart (thin, incomplete sound), and too close (choked off sound).

This implement can be accomplished in both the flat and vert positions, as well as a number of unloaded/loaded combinations. Regardless of position or load, the fundamentals are the same.

The sizzle, from the flat position, is done as follows:

1. Beginning at flat, the plates are brought together, retaining the original seatbelt angle. The right plate contacts the left, with the right plate being offset by about 1 inch from the left plate; the offset will be on the player's left.
2. As the plates contact, they must be controlled using the palm control surfaces. At the same time, all finger contact surfaces should be released from the plate. The key to a successful sizzle is even palm pressure across both plates. The plates cannot be pressed together too hard, or else the sound will die; the plates also require sufficient pressure to sustain sound, or else the sizzle will be thin or rattle-like.
3. A sizzle that is allowed to die off on it's own will be called an 'open' sizzle. A sizzle that is cut-off by applying finger surface pressure will be a called a 'closed' sizzle.

Hi-Hat/Crunch

The hi-hat, or crunch, is very common implement, creating a staccato *chik*, much as a hi-hat click does for a drumset.

This implement can be accomplished from either the flat or vert positions. Each note marked H.H. or hi-hat will be defined as a hi-hat or a crunch. The default will be the hi-hat technique.

For a hi-hat, the technique is as follows:

1. From the flat position, bring both plates together so that they are parallel to the ground and perpendicular to your body. The right plate will sit on top of the left.
2. For each hi-hat, the backs of the plates will remain in contact with the body. The right plate will be lifted about 30°, while the left will dip about 15°.

3. Following the prep, which will generally be the count before the hi-hat, the plates will be brought together. Using all contact surfaces, the plates will be stopped at the hi-hat position, producing a *chik* sound. Any overhang in sound will usually be due to insufficient contact surface pressure.

For the crunch, follow this technique in either flat or vert postions:

1. Using all contact surfaces (bottom of hands and fingers), drive the plates straight into each other, contacting all plate surfaces simultaneously. The plate edges should overlap approximately ½ inch.

Use of hi-hat or crunch technique will be specified on an as needed basis. The default implement will be the crunch.

Slide Choke

Slide chokes involve a sizzle-like action, as well as the motion of one plate against the other, creating something of a *wah-shoom* sound.

For slide chokes, follow this technique:

1. Beginning from the flat position, bring the plates together as you would for a sizzle.
2. Instead of leaving the plates in a closed position (close to each other), slowing 'push' the right plate forward over top of the left, while maintaining the sizzle contact and sound.
3. After the right plate has traveled forward until its back edge is at the center of the left plate knot, quickly bring the right back into the left. Engage all contact surfaces, and align the bells of the cymbals such that they create an air pocket.

Suck/Vacuum

A suck is an implement that utilizes the air pocket created by the bells of the plates when they are brought together quickly. This implement can be accomplished from either the flat or vert position.

1. Place the right plate with the nearest edge on the bell of the left plate, such that there is ½ overlap. Press both plates together with light force using all contact surfaces.
2. Quickly bring the right plate back in over the left so that the bells overlap. You will feel resistance from the air pockets under the bells colliding. Use pressure from the fingertips to ensure there is no sizzle rattle. The sound should be short, succinct, and contained.

Visuals

In addition to the musical contribution cymbals provide in the marching context, cymbal players also provide a significant portion of the battery visual flavor. This is accomplished in several separate elements, including flips, static visuals, unloading/reloading visuals, and off-hand implements.

Flips are an essential part of how the UT cymbal line operates. Each time a rep begins, the plates will move from the set position to playing position via flip, usually four counts before the rep begins. This will be explained at camp.

The visual component of each of song is determined by both the techs and the members. More or less, if you have an idea for a visual, run it by me or one of the senior members of the section.

The line decides the level of visual contribution it will make – your creativity and buy-in make it work!