

# U.S. ARMY BANDS

## Field Manual 12-50

(15 October 1999, supercedes FM 12-50, 6 September 1991)

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### Appendix B

## The Marching Band

### SECTION I — FORMATIONS AND ALIGNMENTS

B-1. This section discusses the formation and alignment of Army bands and discusses the marching band formations used by Army bands. This section also suggests principles of instrumental placement which band commanders can use to increase the musical effectiveness of the marching band, followed by an explanation of guide files and the responsibilities of band members marching in the guide files. The last part of this section describes the method for accurate band alignment at normal and close intervals. Instructions and doctrine concerning the drum major can be found in Soldiers' Manuals 12-02B34-SM through 12-02U34-SM, and [TVT 20-1116](#).

#### FORMATIONS

B-2. [Figure B-1](#) shows the placement and spacing of the band commander, the band sergeant major/first sergeant, the drum major, and band members when the band is formed at normal intervals. [Figure B-2](#) shows the placement and spacing of Army bands when the band is formed at close intervals. The formations depicted in the following illustrations are for demonstration only and do not reflect either suggested or authorized strengths of Army bands.

#### ARMY BANDS FORMED AT NORMAL INTERVALS

B-3. Army bands march in column formation with 60 inches between ranks and files.



inches.

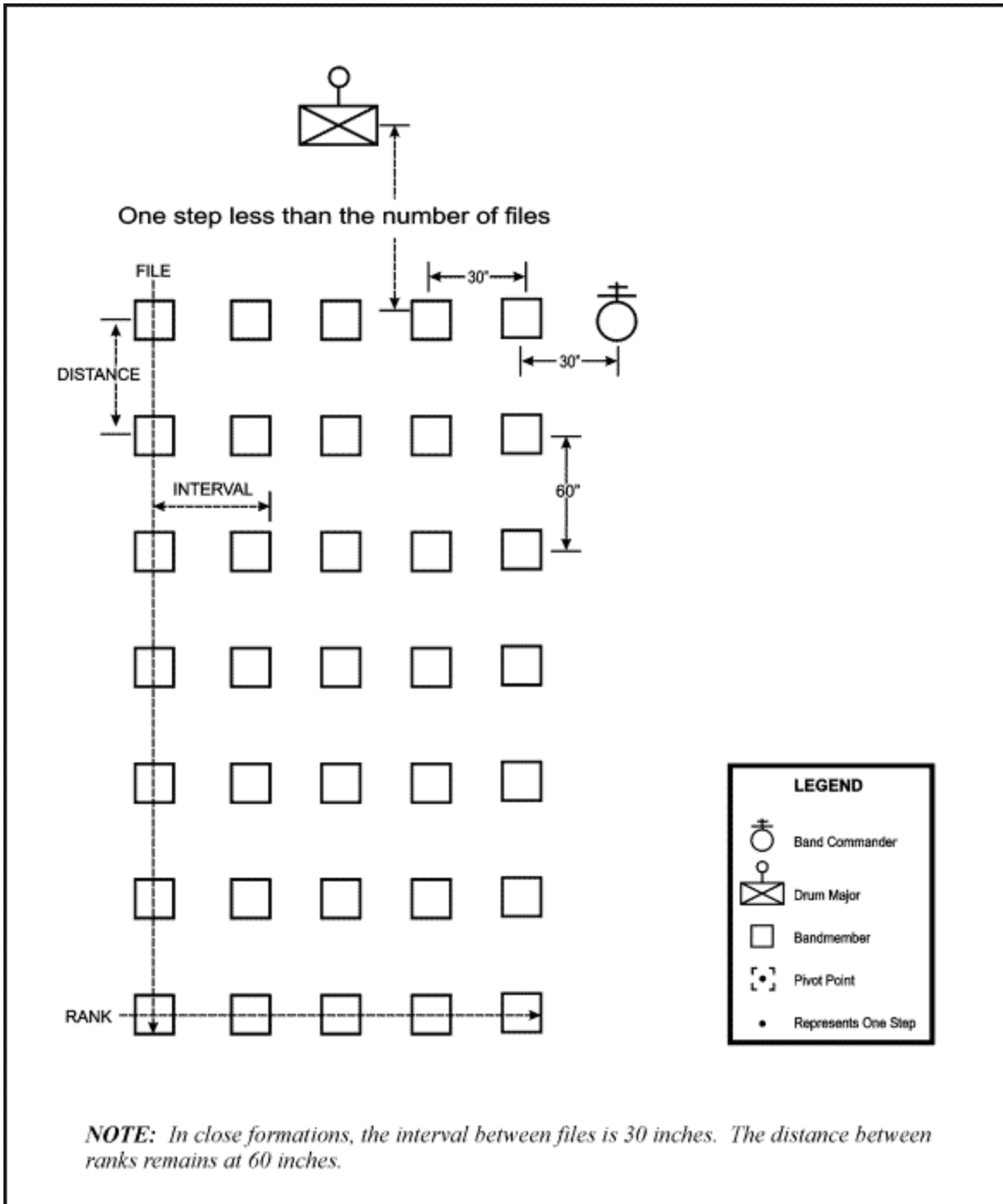


Figure B-2. Army Bands Formed at Close Intervals

## **BAND COMMANDER, DRUM MAJOR, AND SERGEANT MAJOR/FIRST SERGEANT**

### **Drum Major**

B-5. Stand centered between the flanks of the band. The distance between the drum major and the first rank is one step less than the number of files in the band. If the band has five files, for example, the drum major stands four steps in front of the first rank, or three steps for a four file front, and so on ([Figure B-1](#)). Do not include the band commander's position as a file when measuring the band's width. When the band commander is conducting the band, stand 60 inches to the right of the first rank of the band.

### **Band Commander**

B-6. **Parades.** March in the position 60 inches to the right of the first rank of the band. In street parades, there may not be enough room to march with the first rank. When this happens, march in front of the second file from the right.

B-7. **Conducting.** When conducting the band, stand in the drum major's marching position. If the band has an odd number of files, stand off-center. This will permit the band members behind the first rank of the center file to see your baton movements. If all band members still cannot see your baton movements, you may modify your position by moving slightly further from the band.

### **Band Sergeant Major/First Sergeant**

B-8. When you are not the drum major or performing as an instrumentalist, march 60 inches to the left of the first rank of the band. In street parades, there may not be enough room to march with the first rank. When this happens, march in front of the second file from the left.

## **INSTRUMENTAL PLACEMENT**

B-9. There is no prescribed pattern for positioning instruments within the band. However, band commanders can increase the effectiveness of the marching band by following basic principles.

- Avoid dividing instrumental sections. As an exception, you may place piccolos on opposite flanks of the band.
- Group instrumental sections with similar tonal registers and timbres together.
- Fill the front rank. Fill the flank and guide files. When necessary, leave open spaces in the last rank. Open positions in the middle of the formation interfere with alignment, and can

- also complicate turns and other marching movements.
- Place sousaphones (tubas) so that their bells are not obstructing other band members' view of the drum major's or band commander's signals.
- Place French horns so that their sound projects into the center of the band, not away from the band.

## GUIDE FILES

B-10. The center file is the guide file if there is an odd number of files in the band. If there is an even number of files, the file to the right of center is the guide file. The right file is the guide file on right turns and the left file is the guide file on left turns. The guide file has the responsibility of maintaining the correct distance between the ranks within the band and between the first rank and the drum major. The guide file must maintain the two step (60 inch) interval between ranks. The rest of the files can then maintain the correct interval simply by dressing on the guide file.

## ALIGNMENT

B-11. Accurate alignment is fundamental to the appearance of the marching band. The drum major aligns the band. The band is aligned first by file, then by rank. To align the band at normal interval ([Figure B-1](#)) use the procedure in [Table B-1](#).

<b>Drum Major</b>	Hold the mace in left carry. Move directly to a point four steps in front of the left flank file. Perform the band alignment signal.
<b>Band Members</b>	Align yourself on the drum major's mace and the person in front of you.
<b>Drum Major</b>	Check the file's alignment. If necessary, correct it by telling the persons not aligned to move. Say: "Second (or third, etc.) person, left (or right)." After the file is aligned, return the mace to left carry. Do a left face, march two 30-inch steps forward, and halt. Do a right face. Repeat the alignment procedure for each file. After the last file is aligned, do a left face. March two steps and halt. Do a right face. Command, "Dress Right, Dress." March forward to a position on line with the first rank. Halt, and do a right face.
<b>Band Members</b>	If you are in the right flank file, continue to face forward. If you are not in the right flank file, turn your head and eyes to the right. Do this when the drum major commands Dress Right, Dress. Align yourself on the drum major and the person to your right.
<b>Drum Major</b>	Check the rank's alignment. If necessary, correct it by telling the

	persons not aligned to move. Say: "First (or second) person forward (or back)." After the rank is dressed, do a left face. March two steps and do a right face. Repeat this procedure to align each rank. After the last rank is aligned, do a right face. March to a point four steps past the first rank, halt, and do a left face. Command "Ready, Front".
<b>Band Members</b>	At the command front, turn your head and eyes forward.
<b>Drum Major</b>	Return to your position ( <a href="#">Figure B-1</a> ). Face away from the band and wait for the band commander to arrive. You may give the band Parade Rest. Call the band to Attention as the band commander approaches.
<b>Band Commander</b>	Move to a point three steps in front of the drum major. Halt and face the drum major.
<b>Drum Major</b>	Salute the band commander and report, "Sir (Or Ma'am) the band is formed". Hold your salute until the bandmaster salutes you.
<b>Band Commander</b>	Return the drum major's salute and state, "Take your post."
<b>Drum Major</b>	Execute a Right Face. March forward until you are two steps past the band's right flank. Execute a right turn and march until you are aligned with the front rank. Halt and do an about face.
<b>NOTE:</b>	Use the same procedure to align the band at close interval, but only take one 30-inch step between files.

**Table B-1. Alignment Procedure**