

PURDUE DRUMLINE AUDITION PACKET

DRUM CREW

2025-2026

Read this entire packet in order!

*This packet was created to prepare auditionees with everything they need to be ready for camp.
This packet has everything necessary for the audition process and
was compiled by members of the World's Largest Drum Crew.
This is a valuable way to learn from those who have already gone through the audition!*

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Tech Weekend	4
Tryouts and Band Camp	5
History	7
Physical Fitness	13
Drum Handling	15
Public Relations and Attitude	16
Drum Storage, Maintenance, and Travel	17
Section Requirements.....	18
Closing: A Letter from the Captains	19
Frequently Asked Questions	20



Introduction

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the World's Largest Drum. As a section, the Drum Crew represents Purdue University at a prestigious level, and earning this responsibility is one of the greatest honors you can achieve during your time at Purdue.

Crew members are full participants of the "All-American" Marching Band (AAMB), including all band rehearsals, trips, parades, and football games. Outside of their AAMB responsibilities, the section regularly attends a wide variety of professional events and functions around the state and on campus.

The following packet contains information related to the Drum and the Crew, and is meant to prepare you for your audition. While everything will be explained in more detail during band camp, you will do your best if you are familiar with the contents of this packet in advance.

You are more likely to succeed in the audition if you come to band camp already prepared. Reading through this packet and becoming familiar with the history, as well as training for the physical requirements will benefit you during this process.

We look forward to seeing you at band camp this August. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the Captains or Dr. Nave.

Dr. Pamela J. Nave
Associate Professor, Drumline Instructor
pjnave@purdue.edu

Prof. Jay S. Gephart
Al G. Wright Chair, Director of Bands
jsgephart@purdue.edu

Isaak Gutierrez
Drum Crew Captain, 2025-2026
gutie206@purdue.edu

Darby Waund
Drum Crew Co-Captain, 2025-2026
dwaund@purdue.edu

Audition Requirements

With the new season approaching, Dr. Nave, Prof. Gephart and the Student Leaders would like to give you an idea of what to expect when you arrive for Tech Weekend and Band Camp, as well as recommendations to help you prepare.

Tech Weekend

Tech Weekend is an optional opportunity to get hands-on experience with the Drum and learn about the culture of the Crew before Band Camp even begins! This year it will occur on **July 12th-13th** approximately one month before the start of Band Camp. Over the course of the weekend, the Drum Crew Captains will introduce you to the basics of Drum Handling and the tryout process.

We ask that all students attending spend the weekend in the dorms with the rest of the Drum Crew and Drumline. Parking will be available in the [University Street Parking Garage](#) and around whichever dorm we stay. Both of these lots are 100% free to park in on weekends.

You can sign up for Tech Weekend on our website once sign-ups become available. You can also sign up for our email list on the Purdue Bands and Orchestras website [HERE](#) to be alerted once they go live! Contact the Drum Crew Captains or Dr. Nave with any further questions!

What You Need to Bring:

- 2 days of athletic clothes
- Tennis Shoes
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, etc.
- Water bottle
- Toiletries/shower shoes
- Hard copy of the Drum Crew packet
- FANTASTIC ATTITUDE!

Sample Schedule for Tech Weekend:

Saturday, July 12

- **8:00am** - Check in at Shreve Hall
- **9:00am** - Mingle with other Drum Crew members as the Drumline gets their instruments
- **10:00am** - Drum Handling, History, Etc.
- **12:00pm** - Lunch
- **1:00pm** - Drum Handling, History, Etc.
- **5:30pm** - Dinner
- **6:30pm** - Drum Handling, History, Etc.
- **8:00pm** - Student-guided tour of campus
- **9:30pm** - Movie/snacks/relax

Sunday, July 13

- **7:30am** - Wake up call/showers
- **8:00am** - Breakfast
- **9:00am** - Drum Handling, History, Etc.
- **12:00pm** - Lunch
- **1:00pm** - Drum Handling, History, Etc.
- **4:00pm** - Tech Weekend ends

Tryouts and Band Camp

This year, band camp is from August 17th to August 23rd. Keep in mind that if you are auditioning on another instrument, there are music auditions that take place before the 17th. The band camp schedule will be released over the summer, however, anticipate spending about 12 hours a day with the section. On Wednesday of that week those auditioning will find out if they have earned their place on the Drum Crew. Those offered a spot are expected to continue with the schedule for the remainder of band camp. If you have questions about meals, sleeping arrangements, or other technicalities, please refer to the "FAQ" section at the end of this packet, or reach out to the captains and/or Dr. Nave.

Tryouts consist of five components:

1. Memorizing the entire history of the Drum.

On game days and during events, it is expected that you are able to answer any Drum related question that fans or members of the press may ask. You will practice this skill throughout the week of band camp, and will be formally tested on it the day the final crew is decided. While you don't necessarily have to be ready to answer all of these questions prior to band camp, you should come with a working knowledge of the Drum's history, which is available in the "History" section of the packet.

2. Completing the physical tryout.

The physical test is roughly based on the Air Force Physical Test. You must complete a 1.5-mile run, a 400-meter sprint, a 100-meter sprint, two minutes of sit-ups, and two minutes of push-ups. The specific numbers and times you must achieve to pass are available in the "Physical Fitness Test" section. Your comfort level with these fitness tests will be a good indicator of how well you will be able to conduct yourself with the Drum.

3. Exhibiting Drum Handling skills.

Drum handling refers to understanding the commands and techniques used to effectively maneuver the Drum. While the Captains will help you practice handling the Drum during band camp, be sure to show up with a working knowledge of the terminology and techniques that we use, as outlined in the "Drum Handling" section.

4. Demonstrating PR, Media, and Fan Interaction competencies.

While it is important to know the Drum's history, it is equally important to be able to confidently convey it. Throughout the week you will be generally assessed on your ability to conduct yourself professionally when with the drum. You must be able to behave responsibly and respectfully, as every interaction we have with fans or the media is a representation of the University. More information on this is available to you in the "Public Relations and Attitude" section.

5. Maintaining a positive and productive attitude.

One of the most important qualities that a candidate can have is a positive and productive attitude. Show you have put effort into learning the material in this packet in advance, and demonstrate respect for your fellow Crew members, band members, leadership team, and directors throughout the week. Also show a willingness to commit to the sections policies, requirements, and rules. Be trustworthy, accountable, honest, and motivated.

While Dr. Nave, Prof. Conaway, and the Crew Captains will be observing applicants throughout the week, the official crew will be decided on Wednesday morning. That morning will consist of a formal PR/history test and Drum Handling test. Physical tests will have already taken place earlier in the week. Therefore, anyone who did not pass the physical tests will have already been dismissed. Once the decisions are made, the season's Drum Crew will be set. If you are cut, you can try out for a different section of the band, as the other sections make their decisions on Thursday. That being said, anyone who does not make the Drum Crew will be strongly encouraged to try out again the following year. Besides Wednesday, Dr. Nave, Prof. Conaway, and the Drum Crew Captains reserve the right to cut anyone from the Crew at any time during band camp or the season for ceasing to uphold the five traits outlined above.

Selected members will need to register for the marching band course, Band 110. This two-hour course meets Monday through Friday from 3:30pm through 5:20pm throughout the Fall semester. Members will be expected to attend all rehearsals, football games, the Bowl Game if applicable, and the Indianapolis 500. The Drum occasionally has other engagements in the Fall and Spring that range from appearances in commercials, events on campus and around the state, and meeting famous alumni or individuals. It is expected that crew members attend ALL engagements, unless they have an appropriate excuse. If you have any questions about the time commitment, as it is a large one, please feel free to reach out to the Captains or Dr. Nave.



History

In 1921, the Director of Bands at the time, Paul Spotts Emrick, decided that the All American Marching Band needed something to set them apart from other bands. Emrick's idea called for a bass drum larger than any other. However, the idea for a big bass drum had previously been imagined, and there were already drums four feet in diameter. Emrick wanted one at least twice that size, a "drum larger than the man playing it." This sparked the idea to create the World's Largest Drum.

At the time, most people thought Emrick's plan was ridiculous and considered it to be impossible. That is, until Ulysses Leedy of the Leedy Drum Corporation, now known as Ludwig Drums, volunteered to craft the massive instrument. Leedy was the largest drum manufacturer in the world and recognized the publicity the drum would bring to the company. Before constructing the instrument, Leedy first had to find materials large enough for the drumheads.



The Purdue Big Bass Drum making its first appearance at the steps of the Indiana State Capitol building in 1921.

After much searching, they found a 2,000-3,000 pound Argentinian steer, with hides thick enough to be stretched into drumheads. On June 1, 1921, Ulysses Leedy sent a letter to Emrick, informing him that a large enough hide had been found. Production of the World's Largest Drum was set to start.

With the materials needed to create the drumheads secured, construction of the actual Drum could begin. Construction was set to cost \$911.12. Adjusted for inflation, this is about \$16,000 today. To help cover this cost, Purdue held a band concert as a fundraiser. Elks BPO Lodge 143 agreed to donate to the remaining funds needed after the band concert. The concert was a huge success, raising approximately \$500, and Elks BPO Lodge 143 pitched in the remaining \$411.12.

After months of fundraising and planning, the Drum was finally completed in the summer of 1921. Before arriving at its new home, Purdue University, the Drum was showcased at the Circle Theater in Indianapolis during the week of August 14. It then went on display at the Indiana Statehouse and spent a week at the Indiana State Fair before eventually reaching West Lafayette.

The shell of the Drum consists of three layers of maple wood pressed together in the same style as a traditional bass drum. The lugs are larger than a standard bass drum's and are designed to be tuned by hand rather than with a drum key. Before being installed, the lugs were chrome plated to add shine. Originally, the finish of the Drum was polished wood, but in 1937, the Drum Crew decided to paint the Drum to match the University's colors. From this came the Drum's first painted design: an "old gold" shell with black diamonds. At an unspecified point during the Drum's history, the black diamonds were exchanged for chrome diamond plates that were physically attached to the Drum's shell. In 2013, the diamonds were changed to be chrome with a black outline, and in 2017, following brief maintenance, the diamonds went back to the solid chrome look of the mid 1900's. Finally, in 2020, leading up to its 100th birthday, the Drum returned to the original design of an "old gold" shell with black diamonds.

The Drum is transported on a steel-frame carriage. A bar attached to the front of the carriage and two handles fixed to the back of the Drum allows for a crew of 4 to easily maneuver it. In the 1920s, the carriage was equipped with standard bicycle wheels, however these were quickly replaced with Model A Ford racing tires, due to the Drum's immense size and weight. These are the same wheels it rides on today. The Drum itself weighs 315 pounds while the carriage weighs 250 pounds, totaling 565 pounds.

The Drum was a big hit and an immediate success. When it appeared at a football game at the University of Chicago, fans were ecstatic. Chicago wanted their own big drum. Immediately following the game, the University contacted the Conn Company, a rival drum manufacturer of the Leedy Corporation, to make them a drum as big as Purdue's. The Conn Company constructed Big Bertha, a drum supposedly larger, though this remains unproven. Big Bertha, however, did not last long in Chicago. After the United States entered the Second World War, both the World's Largest Drum and Big Bertha were put into storage. Bertha was stored under the University of Chicago's football field, Stagg Field, which was also used as the testing location of the Manhattan Project which produced the atomic bomb; Big Bertha was irradiated and deemed no longer usable.

Following the war, no one at the University of Chicago wanted to take care of the drum, and it was sold to an unknown alumni of the University of Texas at Austin for one dollar. The Texas alumni then paid for the necessary de-radiation of the drum and donated it to his alma mater, where it has remained since 1955.

When Big Bertha was restored, it sparked a rivalry between Purdue's and UT's drums. This tension culminated in a face-off in 1961. Both schools agreed to bring their drums to the annual Kappa Kappa Psi national convention in Wichita, Kansas where they would be measured by a third party to determine the official "World's Largest Drum" once and for all. While Purdue brought their Drum, UT and Big Bertha never showed up, officially giving the title of the "World's Largest Drum" to Purdue. From this, Purdue now owns the trademark on this phrase, and it can be seen displayed on its drumheads. In light of the fact the Drum was never formally measured in 1961, the exact measurements of the Drum are still a well-kept secret between the Drum Crew and Dr. Nave.



Big Bertha at UT Austin

Additionally, the Big Bertha crew does not handle their drum the same way that Purdue handles the World's Largest Drum. Big Bertha sits inside a display case near the football field and is only wheeled out for football games and special occasions. Their drum crew does not run or do any tricks with their drum, although they do walk Big Bertha in a circle during the University of Texas' pre-game show. Their crew also charges fans for pictures with Big Bertha.

Purdue's Drum Crew operates much differently, as it is involved in every practice, parade, pre-game, halftime, and post-game show of the "All-American" Marching Band. The Drum and the Crew have their own routines during each performance, which includes running up and down the football field and performing tricks. Pictures with the Drum are always free, and are encouraged from fans and the press. Members of the Crew also allow others to hit the drum occasionally, including little kids, military personnel, first responders, honored Purdue officials, various celebrities, and distinguished alumni. While any Crew member is allowed to hit the Drum, it is ultimately up to Dr. Nave and the captains who else can hit it. Each year, "All-American" Marching Band graduating seniors are honored with a chance to hit the Drum during their last halftime show in Ross-Ade.

Due to the Drum's size, traveling tends to be difficult, but not impossible. Early in the band's history, the "All-American" Marching Band members primarily traveled by train. To accommodate for the Drum's size, the New York Rail Company had to create a modified train car, as standard cars were not large enough for it. The Drum has also faced some issues traveling by air, as most commercial aircraft often don't have enough room. That being said, some planes do have a large-enough cargo bay, making transcontinental travel possible. The first time the World's Largest Drum took an international journey was in 2013, when it accompanied the "All-American" Marching Band to Ireland. It has since traveled to Ireland twice more in the Spring of 2018 and 2023, where it marched in the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade with the "All-American" Marching Band. The Drum was a wildly popular sight and people lined the streets to watch the band and see the World's Largest Drum.

In 1937, it was decided that a Chevrolet truck was the most reasonable way to transport the Drum under typical travel circumstances. In April of the same year, the Drum was sent in for a facelift and modifications so it could easily sit in the back of a pickup truck. To this day, it is still loaded into the back of a Chevrolet truck whenever it travels.

In 1976, the Drum fell out of the pick-up truck mid-transit and rolled down the shoulder of the highway. At the last second, it turned into oncoming traffic with one drumhead in the way of an oncoming semi-truck. The two collided, causing damage to the semi's engine and grill area, but the Drum was relatively unharmed. The head and rim on one side were damaged, but the shell was left intact.



The Drum in the back of the band truck doing laps around the track before the Indianapolis 500 in 2011.

From 1940 to 1954, the Drum predominantly sat in storage due to the war effort. However, when Al G. Wright became Director of Bands in 1954, he took the Drum out of storage and shipped it back to Leedy for repairs. Inside the Drum, you can see two stamps, one bearing "Indianapolis, Indiana" and the other showing "Elkhart, Indiana." Indianapolis refers to where the Drum was initially built in 1921, while Elkhart refers to the location of the 1954 repairs.

In 2013, the Drum was severely damaged by U.S. Customs on the way back from Ireland and needed many of its lugs replaced. Dr. Nave was able to get in contact with her friend and fellow musician, Galen King of Purdue's Electrical Engineering department. In response to a previous donation, King gave Dr. Nave the contact information of Mike Sherwood, the head of Purdue's Mechanical Engineering machine shop.

Sherwood created completely new hardware for the Drum, replacing all but six of the original lugs. King then polished all of the lugs before they were re-installed on to the Drum's shell. Excluding the cost of the materials, Sherwood completed the task for free. The total cost was about \$1,200, which saved the restoration effort \$9,000.



Mike Sherwood repairing the Drum after it was damaged coming back from Ireland in 2013.

While all of the lugs were off of the Drum, it was repainted by the company Sherwin Williams. Materials for the project were donated by Ben Dye, a manager for the company, and an employee named Don did the actual painting. It took three passes with a paint gun, each taking about 100 seconds.

In the Fall of 2017, while preparing for the AAMB's 2018 return to Ireland, the Drum was repainted and cleaned again. With assistance from Mike Sherwood, all the hardware was removed from the Drum, and Don from Sherwin Williams painted the Drum using the same method as in 2013. After the painting was completed and the hardware was reinstalled, new diamonds were attached. As mentioned previously, the new diamonds were all-chrome in homage to the mid-1900s' design.

Another challenge was in the 1950s, as it became increasingly difficult to find Argentinian steers big enough to create the massive drumheads. To solve this, Director of Bands at the time, Al G. Wright, sought out DuPont Research Laboratories in Wilmington, Delaware. DuPont had just invented a new plastic known as Mylar, and Wright hoped they might be able to use it to make drumheads. A Purdue alumni working at DuPont took interest, and found a way to help out. He stretched sheets of Mylar into long, thin layers, creating the first plastic drumheads. From this ingenuity, the World's Largest Drum led the way for most drumheads to eventually be made from plastics like Mylar.

As the plastic drumhead industry increased in popularity, DuPont stopped making the Drum's heads directly. Instead, Purdue turned to Remo, one of the biggest drumhead manufacturers in the world, to produce them. To this day, Remo is the only company with equipment large enough to make such a big drumhead. In the past, Remo charged Purdue \$338 per drumhead. Coupled with the cost to have each head painted at \$262 per drumhead, the total for each head was \$600. Dr. Nave typically buys four new heads per year, bringing the total yearly cost to roughly \$2400. In the summer of 2017, Remo began charging more for drumheads, raising the price up to \$1500 per head. The cost of painting is still the same at \$262, bringing the new total for four drumheads per year to \$7048.

During the 2020-2021 season, the Drum faced the COVID-19 global pandemic, which called for many precautions to be taken. To keep the crew and University safe, members wore face masks and kept a six foot distance from one another, as well as disinfected the front bar and drum heads after every use. It was the first year in the Drum's history no one outside the Drum Crew was allowed to hit the drum with the exception of two planned events, allowing the seniors in the marching band to hit the drum. The biggest change the Drum faced was the addition of a detachable metal bar placed on the back of the drum. The crew worked with Mike Sherwood, to create a metal bar that would clip onto the handles and keep those pushing the back of the Drum six feet away from each other. These precautions kept the World's Largest Drum alive during the Pandemic, and kept Purdue University safe.

The moniker "World's Largest Drum" and the stylized writing of "Purdue", officially called the "Drum Script Purdue," across the face of the drumhead are hand painted by local Lafayette painter, Dave Nelson, who charges \$262 to paint each drumhead. In the past, he has painted special heads for events like the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the "All-American" Marching Band's trips to Ireland, Purdue's 150th Anniversary, and the Drum's 100th birthday. His signature can be seen written at the bottom of every drumhead he paints. Jill Rubacha, a photographer of the Purdue Drumline, has helped us in recent years by applying Purdue decals to put on the drumheads. Namely, the drumhead for the 90th Annual Purdue Christmas Show in December of 2023, the 150th Anniversary of Purdue Engineering, and the "Gephart" drumhead to commemorate Professor Gephart's retirement from the position of Director of the "All-American" Marching Band during the fall semester of 2024.



The Drum Crew during the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Ireland in 2023.

In addition to custom drumheads, the Drum requires special mallets, called beaters, due to its immense size. These beaters are handmade by Drum Crew members each season. They are made of a sledge handle, a roll of masking tape, a spool of yarn, and a strip of felt. More details about making beaters are covered after the Drum Crew is selected.

Since the 1970s, Crew Members have signed the inside of the Drum's shell, securing their place in history with the University icon. It is tradition for new crew members to sign their name inside of the drum the first time the heads are taken off each season. Inside, there are names from decades ago, and every once in a while, an alumni will point out their signature.

Another tradition is doing push-ups in the south endzone when Purdue scores a touchdown. They do one push-up per point that Purdue has scored in the game so far. This is something the Crew is most recognized for, and they frequently end up on the big screen or national TV while doing them. This tradition is carried on at away games or bowl games if the stadium will allow it.

The Drum has been an integral part of Purdue University since 1921. As a result, interesting things have happened for the drum over the last century. There have been a few attempts to steal the Drum, mostly by rival universities IU and Northwestern. Some were nearly successful, but the Drum was always recovered. Additionally, in the early 80s, Purdue students would throw crab apples at the Drum and the Crew as the band marched past Cary Quad, one of the dorms on campus. This began the tradition of the Crew wearing the iconic game day helmets, now referred to as "domes." Before the Indianapolis 500 in 2016, chrome "block Ps", similar to the "P" that is visible on any standard band uniform, were fixed to the front of the domes. These "block Ps" remain on the front of Crew Members' domes to this day.

The Drum has also met many famous people over its lifetime. Dr. Nave frequently offers notable people a chance to sign a special drumhead reserved for alumni and celebrities. On it you can find the signatures of Snoop Dogg, Steve Harvey, the Blue Man Group, and Neil Armstrong among others.



The United States' 33rd President Harry Truman signing one of our drumheads.

During the 2021 marching season, the Drum celebrated its 100th birthday with many different appearances and recognitions. The marching band paid tribute to its legacy with a halftime show themed "Happy Birthday BBD" during homecoming week. Instead of having the alumni band perform as usual, only previous drum crew alumni were invited. Members from as far back as 1951 joined on the football field and hit the Drum as the band played.

During its 100th season, the Drum traveled to Nashville, Tennessee to perform at the Music City Bowl where the team brought home a victory. It also attended the American Band Masters's Association convention in Indianapolis where it met famous conductors such as David Holsinger and Robert Sheldon. In September, the band traveled to Notre Dame Stadium for the season's away game. Officials at the stadium did not allow the band to use the Home Team tunnel, the only entrance the Drum would fit through, to get to the field. Overnight, it became a large controversy throughout the news and social media that Notre Dame would not allow the Drum into their stadium, bringing much attention to the section. It was decided the crew would perform pregame as usual, however, without the Drum. This was the first time since the 1970's that the band performed without the Drum. Instead, the marching band created a World's Largest Drum formation on the field while the Drum stood guarded by police outside. Even without being in the stadium, the presence of the Drum was there. To continue its legacy after an incredible year, the Drum has been moved into a glass case in front of the new band building, Hagle Hall, where it can be seen by anyone walking by.

Captains' Note:

One of the coolest parts about being on the Drum Crew is the rich history that you can be a part of. The downside is that a lot of history comes with that honor. That being said, we recommend coming to band camp with a decent amount of the history already committed to memory. Making flashcards and practicing with friends and family over the summer is a good way to prepare yourself.

The reason this is a part of the audition process is that you should be prepared to answer any questions that fans or members of the press ask you. This will be conducted through a mock interview with a fan or member of the press. Below are some questions you should become comfortable answering after studying and reviewing the history of the Drum. Keep in mind that fans always continue to surprise us and come up with new questions. There are an infinite number of questions that could be asked regarding the drum and its history so be prepared!

- How old is the Drum?
- Is this the original Drum?
- Has the Drum ever been damaged? When/How?
- How much do drum heads cost? What are they made of?
- I heard that the University of Texas has a bigger drum, do they???
- How big is the drum?

Remember that while it is important to know all the information, it is equally important to answer the question with confidence, respect, and enthusiasm!

Physical Fitness Test

(Adapted from the AFI 36-2905 Fitness Program)

Listed below are the physical requirements to be a member of the Drum Crew. You must pass all of them to be considered for a spot. The tests are conducted during the first three days of band camp. You will be allowed to reattempt one portion of the physical test one time. Due to the fast pace of the audition, you must show up to band camp ready to perform these physical tests.

Test	Marker to Beat (males)	Marker to Beat (females)
1.5-mile run	13:36	16:22
400-meter Sprint	01:15	01:24
100-meter Sprint	00:17	00:20
2 Minutes Sit-Ups	59	48
2 Minutes Push-Ups	36	22

The 1.5-mile run displays how well you will be able to run with the Drum during a halftime show. Halftime shows can last up to seven minutes, and in that time the crew may run one hundred yards across the football field five or six times.

The 400-meter and 100-meter sprints will provide an estimate of your strength and speed. During performances and occasionally parades, the crew sprints for varying periods of time.

The sit-ups test is an assessment of core muscular fitness. You will have two minutes to perform as many sit-ups as you can. You will be assigned a partner to hold your feet and count your number of correct sit-ups out loud. Incorrect or improper sit-ups will not be counted. The total number of correct sit-ups you complete in the time will be your recorded score.

Your elbows must touch your knees or thighs at the top of the sit-up, and your shoulder blades must contact the ground at the bottom of the sit-up, keeping your hands in contact with your shoulders or upper chest at all times.

The repetition will not count if your hands come completely away from yourself or if your buttocks or heels leave the ground. Any resting must be done while vertical. While resting, you may not use your knees or any other object to support yourself. If there is any resting other than in the designated position, the sit-up portion of the test will be terminated, and your score will consist of the sit-ups completed up to that point.

The push-ups test is another assessment of muscular fitness. You will have two minutes to perform as many push-ups as you can. You will be assigned a partner to count your number of correct push-ups out loud. Incorrect or improper push-ups will not be counted. The total number of correct push-ups you complete in the time will be your recorded score. This test is especially important due to the tradition of performing push-ups in the south end zone after every Purdue touchdown. Your hands should be slightly wider than shoulder-width apart with your elbows fully extended. Your feet may be no more than 12 inches apart and should not be supported, braced, or crossed. Your body should maintain a rigid head to heel form.

Your chest may touch, but not rest or bounce on the ground. If you do not come down parallel to the ground, the push-up will not count.

Resting can only be done at the top of the push up when your elbows are fully extended. When resting, You may remove your hands or feet from the ground or bridge/bow your back. Resting any other body part on the floor is not allowed. If there is any resting other than in the designated position, the push-up portion of the test will be terminated, and your score will be based on the correct number of push-ups completed up to that point.

Captains' Note:

These physical requirements are meant to establish a good baseline of your physical standing that will help you be a successful Drum Crew member throughout the season. If you would like more guidance on how to properly complete any of these exercises or how to train for these requirements, please feel free to reach out to us as we will be happy to explain what we are looking for in more detail. The best tip for this part of the audition process is to be prepared. Simply showing up to band camp and expecting to run the 400m sprint within the time limit is not realistic. Set yourself up for success and try to have fun while doing so!



Drum Handling

All Crew Members must demonstrate the balance, strength, speed, agility, and endurance required to handle the Drum safely and effectively. The Drum weighs 565 pounds with the carriage and if handled improperly, can become a danger to us and those around us. This is why safety is the Crew's number one priority and why members must be able to control the Drum. Typically, when operating the Drum, there are two Crew Members in the front and two in the back.

The left-front position of the Drum is referred to as the driver. The driver controls the speed of the Drum and how it maneuvers, as well as ensures that all actions are executed with precision. They call commands to initiate movements or tricks. It is important that all calls made by the driver are repeated by the crew members so that no errors are made during the maneuver.

The right-front position of the Drum is called the brake. The brake is responsible for stopping the Drum during spins, as well as veering on sharp turns.

The Crew Members on the back of the Drum act as its engine, and are referred to as the back. These two people are responsible for acceleration and deceleration, as well as hard stops. They maintain the speed of the Drum and "plant" it during aerial tricks.

At any given time there are six Crew Members with the Drum. In addition to the driver, the brake, and the two people in back, there are two beaters. The beaters strike opposite sides of the Drum, and occasionally the same side when it is not in motion. Beaters hit the Drum to school songs, cadences, and other songs that the band plays the left beater always hits first, then alternates with the right side. In order to beat, members must finish making their own beater and have it approved by the Captains and Dr. Nave.

If there are more than six people on the Crew at a given time, the additional Members function as security and help clear a path for the Drum to follow. When on the field, they are responsible for protecting any equipment or joining on the field for skits or tricks involving everyone.

For the Drum to move safely, all Crew Members must work together. This is evaluated through team and individual ability, which will be assessed throughout band camp. The goal is to see how well different people work together, and how well Crew Members communicate with each other while in motion.

Captains' Note: Drum handling is a component you will be tested on that you cannot practice before auditions. For this reason, we will focus on this component the most during band camp. If you want exposure or practice with drum handling before band camp, I highly recommend that you join us for tech weekend. For the audition, the Captains will select groups and you will perform basic maneuvers in one of the four different positions on the drum. Depending on how many auditionees are present, you may not be tested in every position for the final audition. The Captains are looking for correctness and confidence whilst handling the drum and calling out commands.



The Drum Crew performing "spins" and "kick-hits" inside the block-P during the pre-game show.

Public Relations and Attitude

As a member of the Drum Crew, you are also an ambassador of Purdue University. Social skills are a large part of the tryout process, as we are asked many questions by people during events or performances. When off the field during games, we are stationed in the south end zone of Ross-Ade Stadium with Purdue and visiting-team fans. Crew Members must be able to confidently speak with fans, as well as respond to difficult people who could pose a threat to the safety of those around them. During the tryout process, you will be tested with various scenarios to measure your ability to handle stressful and challenging situations.

Crew Members can expect to be photographed and videotaped many times throughout the course of the marching season and whenever with the Drum. We allow people to be photographed with the Drum, but under no circumstances are people allowed to be photographed in front of the Drum with alcohol or tobacco products. These products must be set to the side and outside of the photo. Patrons cannot hide them behind themselves or the Drum, it must be out of the picture entirely. Since the Drum is an icon of Purdue, a photo of the Drum with alcohol or tobacco products could be construed as the University supporting their use. The Crew reserves the right to deny a picture to any person who does not comply with these rules. We often allow people to pose with the beaters, however we ask them not to hit the Drum. If you do notice them hitting the drum and are in a position to stop it, do so by grabbing the beater and responding politely.



The crew letting a young fan hit the "Lil Big Bass Drum," which is used for alumni events and other gigs.

The Captains and Dr. Nave will observe the attitude of each candidate throughout the week. An upbeat attitude will go a long way when conversing with people about the Drum and the University. Making it onto the Drum Crew is an accomplishment, therefore when discussing the Drum, you should have a sense of honor and pride. We strive to maintain the strong reputation of the Drum, the Bands and Orchestras Department, and Purdue University as a whole. An elite athlete with a disrespectful attitude will never be selected for the Drum Crew. Dr. Nave and the Captains firmly believe that attitude is the most important part of the tryout process, and will be closely observing each candidate throughout band camp to gauge this.

Captains' Note: Communication is a vital skill within our section. When answering questions and speaking, you need to be confident and personable. Sometimes speaking can be difficult, uncomfortable, or nerve-wracking, but like all skills, practice can help you refine your speech as band camp approaches. During the audition, you will be asked a series of questions referencing the history section of the packet. We may also prompt you with a scenario to which you will respond. The Captains will be looking for concise and accurate responses. You may not get any information wrong during your history portion of the audition. Even if you mention a partially incorrect fact, you will not pass. The best way to prepare is to read the history section, study the BBD quizlet, and practice talking about drum history with other people.

Having a good attitude is the most important part of the audition. It defines how you interact with other people, other crew members, and your Captains. A bad attitude will not be tolerated, and those who are not respectful or do not follow instructions will be dismissed. Additionally, during the season, having a bad attitude about a performance or questioning a decision from your Captains reflects badly on you, and could lead to your dismissal. The best candidate will have a great work ethic, come prepared, enjoy themselves, and be respectful.

Drum Storage, Maintenance, and Travel

This section of the packet is not part of the audition, however is important to know if you are selected for a position. In past years, the Drum has been stored in the Purdue Armory. It was kept in a locked cage which only Dr. Nave and the Captains had keys to. Because of this, it is important to be respectful of ROTC and military groups on campus, as they let us use their facility for free. Hats and sunglasses must be removed whenever in the armory. Additionally, if these groups are conducting an event or ceremony inside, the crew must be quiet and respectful. Events where these groups request to use the Drum are always free of charge and the Crew always attends.

Since then, the Drum has been moved to the new band & orchestras building, Marc & Sharon Hagle Hall. It stands in a secure glass case in front of the building for anyone passing by to see. Similar to previous years, only the department directors and the Captains have keys to the case.

Due to the rigorous nature of performing, the Drum suffers general wear and tear. To combat this, the entire Drum must be cleaned before every home football game. Wet rags are used to wipe down the drum shell and Windex is used to clean the drum heads. The heads are typically changed once or twice a year as they get close to breaking.

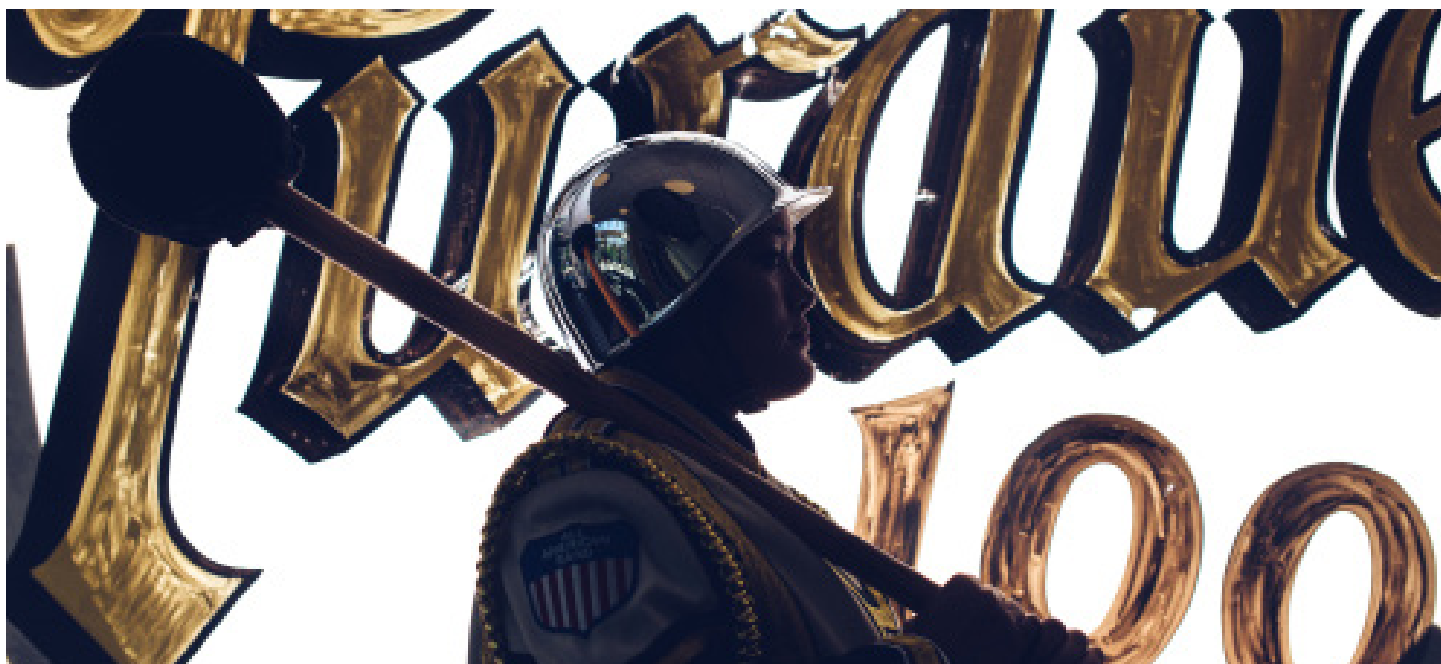
To emulate the sound of a regular bass drum, the Crew glues foam strips to the top and bottom of each drumhead and reinforces them with contact paper. When the heads are off, Crew Members are permitted to sign the inside of the Drum, once for every year on the Crew. Once the drumheads are on the Drum, the lugs are hand-tightened for tuning purposes.

When transporting the Drum long distances, it is loaded into the band pick-up truck on its cradle. The cradle is a Crew-designed base that holds the Drum in the bed of the truck throughout transit. It is important that the Drum does not rest on the lugs, as they bend easily. After placed on the cradle, it is protected by a specially designed cover that was donated by a former Crew Member's father. Then it is lifted into the bed of the truck and secured with ratchet straps. The procedure takes about 20 minutes with the whole Crew helping out. The Captains are responsible for driving the truck.

Section Requirements

As mentioned throughout this packet, the crew is a large commitment. Below are a list of requirements and rules you will be responsible for following if selected for the section. These requirements and rules are in addition to those given in the band handbook, such as band performances, rehearsals, and etiquette policies. You can access these requirements on the [Purdue Bands and Orchestras website](#). Failure to cooperate with these requirements and rules will result in dismissal from the section and the band.

- Members are required to purchase all extra equipment for the crew uniform (black tennis shoes, black cleats, black baseball gloves).
- Members of the crew must attend all games, rehearsals, and performances with the AAMB.
- Members are required to attend the Indy 500 practice, parade, and race day.
- Members must attend the annual Purdue Agriculture Fish Fry, which will occur on 02/07/2026.
- Members are required to attend the Purdue Senior Swim Meet which typically occurs at the end of January.
- Members are required to attend any performance for the President's Office.
- Members must participate in the Purdue Bands and Orchestras Department in the Spring Semester.
- Members must adhere to and sign the performance schedule, band handbook, and contract from Professor Conaway.



Captains' Note: Being on the crew requires two types of commitment: time and following rules. The list above discusses everything you will be responsible for if selected for the section. We included these in the audition packet for you to get a sense of the obligations of crew members. We strongly encourage you to think about whether or not you are willing and able to meet these requirements before auditioning for the section. If you have any questions about the items listed above, please contact the Captains or Dr. Nave. The band handbook is posted on the [Purdue Bands and Orchestras Website](#), and the performance schedule and contract will be detailed by Prof. Gephart during band camp.

Closing: A Letter from the Captains

Dear Candidates,

Being a member of the World's Largest Drum Crew and the All-American Marching Band has been one of the most fun experiences we have had at Purdue. Having the opportunity to represent the University as well as being a part of the drum's history has been extremely rewarding and we are excited to be able to share this experience with you.

The audition process is challenging, but it allows us and the directors to be able to adequately determine who is ready to be a part of our section. Practice and preparation are the two key components to be successful in this audition. Remember that the work you have put into auditions will be evident. We also want to remind you that everyone is on an even playing field in terms of who is selected to be on the drum crew. Returning members are re-evaluated every marching season and the process is the same for every auditionee.

The level of commitment required throughout the school year is considerable. Our section requires a large amount of time and our responsibilities include participation in ALL rehearsals, performances, and gigs. While the commitment can be challenging at times, we are more than willing to offer our counsel and aid with any issues you may be facing. When committing to this section, you are also committing to the rules of the Marching Band and the University. These rules will be presented later in band camp; however, if you are not willing to follow the rules being outlined, please do not try out for the section. You are expected to maintain the requirements outlined in this packet throughout your time on the crew. An inability to do so will result in your placement on Game Day Staff.

These examples are mentioned to demonstrate the level of commitment you will be making if selected to be a part of the drum crew. Please keep all of this in mind before auditioning.

This packet will help you prepare for your audition and the season ahead. It is long, but everything mentioned is important for you to know. If you have further questions, you are welcome to contact us and/or Dr. Nave.

We hope to see you at band camp and good luck!

Sincerely,



Isaak Gutierrez
World's Largest Drum Crew Captain, 2025-2026



Darby Waund
World's Largest Drum Crew Co-Captain, 2025-2026

Frequently Asked Questions

How many people are selected for the crew?

A minimum of six people are needed to operate the Drum. Typically, seven or eight will be selected to compensate for injury, illness, etc.

I did poorly on my [insert physical fitness test]. And I did no better on my retry, should I be worried?

If you passed the physical requirements, we will take into consideration all portions of your audition. However, if you did not after retrying, you will be dismissed from the audition process.

Will I be able beat the drum for a football game?

Yes. Everyone on the crew gets to hit the drum. All members are expected to be proficient on all positions and will perform on each.

I am a freshman and I signed up for Boiler Gold Rush (BGR). I just realized it is at the same time as band camp. What should I do?

If you signed up BGR, then later decide to participate in a marching band, you may request a refund up until a certain point in time. If you would like a refund, contact Dr. Nave and she will point you in the right direction.

Will I miss out on anything by attending tryouts instead of BGR?

No, you will not be missing anything. You will still hear from many Purdue icons, and the Crew Captains will give you a tour of campus prior to decision day. You will also still attend the BGR pep rally, however instead of watching you will be performing.

What should I bring with me to the tryouts?

- Good running shoes
- Athletic clothing
- Sunblock
- Sunglasses
- A hat
- Lots of water
- This packet (printed or digital)
- Small bag to carry these items.

How much does band cost?

There is a semester fee of \$90 for every member of the marching band. There are a couple additional items you will need to purchase if you are selected for the section. These include a pair of black running shoes, black cleats, a pair of black batting gloves, and Purdue Band specific white shirt. Please do not purchase these items in advance, as you will only need them if you make the Crew. We will help those that are selected pick out acceptable items.

I am in [insert major], and I am taking 18 or more credit hours. Will band take much of my time?

Being in the marching band is a big time commitment. That being said, there are many students with varying difficult degrees within the program. While you may have to manage your time wisely to do it all, it is not impossible. The average band student has a GPA ranging from 3.0 to 3.2 while the University's average is between 2.6 and 2.9. Many students within the program and the section are there to study and help you with time management and course work. If you ever need academic assistance do not hesitate to reach out to the Captains, as they are there to help you. Problems can be easily solved and avoided the sooner you take action.

Do returning members automatically have a spot on the crew?

No. Everyone completes the audition every year and is judged equally. Even the Captains have gone through the try out, they just did so early.

I am a freshman. What are my chances of making it?

Just as good as anyone else. Everyone is judged equally based on the audition regardless of year or any other factors.

What do you do for food during band camp?

90 minutes for lunch and dinner are provided each day of band camp. Sections within the marching band and the drumline eat together throughout the week at locations around campus. You may decide to buy food, or may choose to bring your own. If you decide to leave the group and eat by yourself, that is fine as long as you are back by the time the break has ended.

Where can I stay during band camp?

If you will be living in the dorms during the school year, you are able to move in early for band camp. You will receive an email from Purdue Housing to choose a move-in day and will be able to request it early as part of an approved group. You must have already filled out the band camp registration in order to be approved. If you are living in an apartment and band camp begins before your move-in date, we would recommend starting to look for other living arrangements. If you are having trouble finding housing, reach out to the captains and/or Dr. Nave and we will make sure you have a safe place to stay.

Links

- Step Inside 2022: <https://youtu.be/YsDkONTvWdE>
- Hoosier State Chronicles: <https://youtu.be/hLjWdCYRHoo>
- This is Purdue: <https://youtu.be/j7UmKEtLVUw>
- 2015 Fundraising Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOdhyLY44HI>
- Our Instagram (@worldslargestdrum) is a great source to get a feel of what the Drum and the Crew have done more recently.
- The Complete History of the Leedy Drum Company (ISBN-10: 0931759749) contains information about the Drum.
- Heartbeat of the University: 125 Years of Purdue Bands (ISBN-10: 1557535965), as well as the related book from 25 years earlier, has a chapter on the Drum.
- BBD Quizlet: <https://quizlet.com/813464836/worlds-largest-drum-history-flash-cards/?i=1gb-wao&x=1jqt>
- Crew Member dancing with Purdue's Golduster Dance Team: https://www.instagram.com/reel/CybOhVOOqq/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

There are all sorts of other articles, videos, etc. about the Drum. Here are some that I think give you a particularly good image of our Drum and its' prestige.

- <https://youtu.be/j7UmKEtLVUw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rs2pwEYv5pU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYQZadW6iu0>
- Steve Harvey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6LfmCIHLIY>
- 2014 "Boiler Bytes" Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spAhzdj80Ew>
- CBS Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jul21Ui-gWE&t=34s>
- 2015 Purdue Day of Giving: You can find clips of a "launch" and a "flipping up-down" in here! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzfeKFMxTr4>

