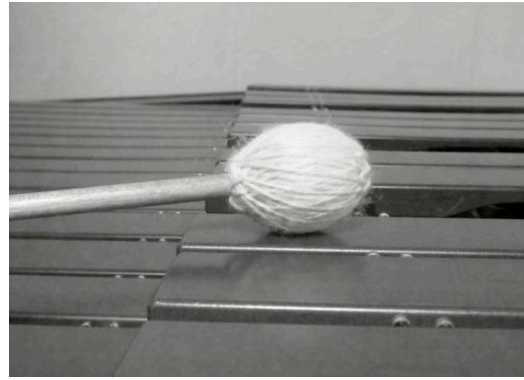
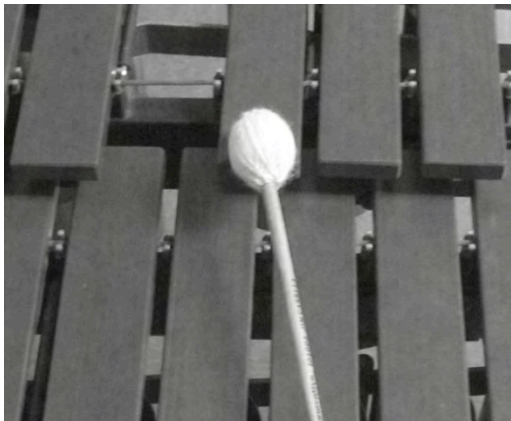


Correct: VERY edge of the bar



Incorrect: too close to the string



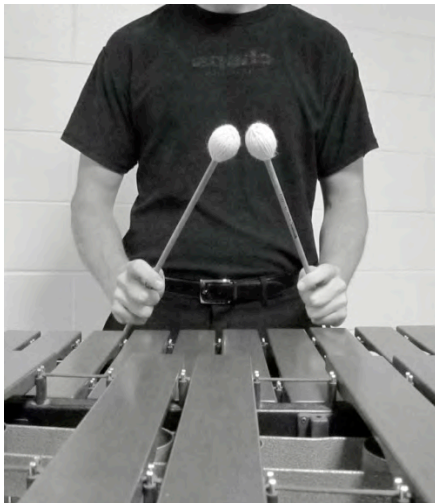
Use your ears and match the sound of the edge of the bar to the sound of the white notes. You may find yourself needing to adjust how much off the exact center you play the white notes. We have found that sound produced by playing slightly off center matches the edges of the bars better than the sound produced by playing dead center.

Two Mallet Technique

An emphasis on two mallet playing is a large portion of our technique program at the Phantom Regiment. While we will do a good deal of 4 mallet playing we always begin our warm-up sequence with two mallet exercises and use this as the foundation of our technique and sound development. It is here that we establish solid fundamentals and focus on the following concepts and values:

Our two mallet grip adheres to the following guidelines:

- The mallet is supported throughout the fingers. Do not “squeeze” in the front or back of the hand.
- The back of the mallet must be able to move slightly between the back fingers and the palm of the hand. That is not to say that we should be “loose” in our back fingers, but it is important to not choke off the mallet motion in the back fingers/ center of the hand. At slower tempos, the back of the hand will become slightly “firmer” to facilitate good articulation of every note. At faster tempos, the mallet should be allowed to move a bit more between the back fingers and palm of the hand.
- Every stroke is generated from the WRIST...not the FINGERS.
- About two inches of mallet shaft should stick out behind the hand. Find the best fulcrum spot for the mallet and avoid choking up too much or too far back.
- This firmness in the back of the hand should enable you to feel like you are “transferring weight” into the bar. Think of a heaviness in the hands that enables you to produce a big, full, dark sound.



- Wrists are positioned very low to the instrument and the mallet heads are high.
- Hands should angle in slightly. Make sure your hands are neither completely flat with your palms facing down (as in German grip), nor turned completely in with your thumbs facing up (as in French grip). You will find that the first knuckle (the largest knuckle) on your index finger will be “on top” in this position.
- For the purposes of our technical exercises, it may help to think of the stroke as being generated exclusively by the wrist. In actuality, our ideal stroke does include the *addition* of a minimal amount of arm. This additional 10% or so of arm is added to help produce the volume levels needed for projection in this type of performing arena. For now, we suggest focusing on using 100% wrist while practicing the exercises

before adding the additional 10% of arm. Throughout all of our “wrist based strokes” it is important to remember to never restrain the forearm, but to allow it to respond naturally to the motion of the wrist.

- In the case of fast two mallet passages, the fulcrum switches to a traditional “front of the hand” fulcrum. This allows for the back of the mallet to breathe a little within the hand and provides space for the fingers to aid the stroke. At fast tempos, lower your mallet heights and eliminate the arm from the stroke.
- Each stroke begins and ends from a high set position. The first motion is down. The motion of each stroke should be *down-up*. Do not begin with a lift or “prep” stroke, as in *up-down-up*. The mallets should begin in the high set position, fire straight down, and return to the high set position.



When the first two notes of a phrase are on different manuals (a white note in one hand and a black note in the other), set up appropriately.

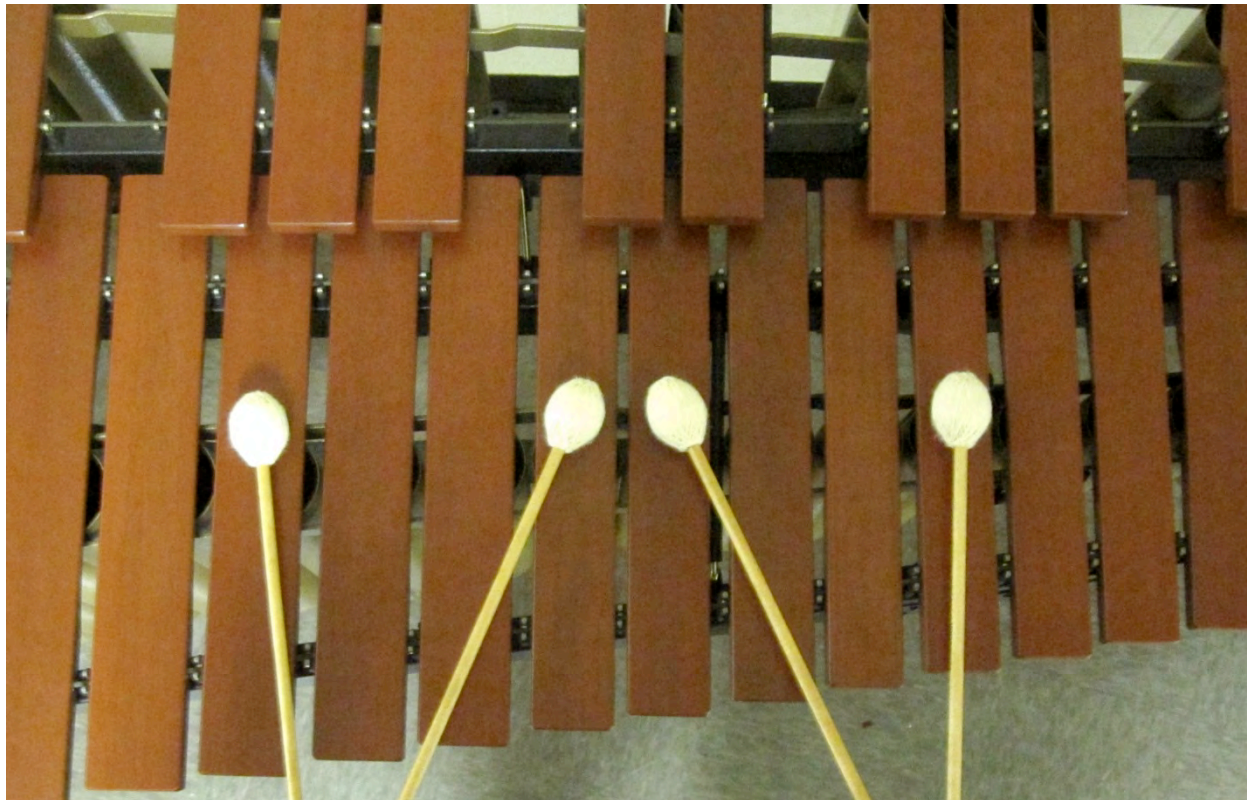
Setting up the mallets and “looking in”

While our ears will always be our most valuable tool as musicians, in this environment it will often be necessary to use sight for timing. This is usually due to the distance between players at times, and the amount of volume often present within the drum corps environment. With that in mind we must train ourselves to “look in” toward the center of the ensemble to solidify tempo and attack points.

Even when practicing alone by yourself, practice “looking in.” Turn your head right or left and get comfortable with what this feels like. Successful execution of this technique involves frequently looking in for timing and mallet height, while also checking back at your own keyboard periodically to insure note accuracy.

Four Mallet Technique

At the Phantom Regiment, we approach four mallet technique with the same values as two mallet technique. When working through four mallet exercises and music, remember to focus on the following solid fundamentals and producing the same sound we created using two mallets:

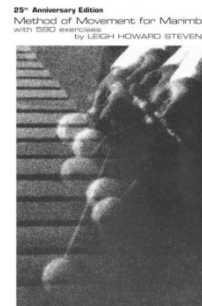


- Wrists are low with all 4 mallet heads are aligned
- Strong, full, individual sound quality
- Side-to-side balance across the entire front ensemble
- A commitment to accurate individual rhythm
- WORLD CLASS posture, presence, poise, and confidence

Grip

In the Phantom Regiment Front Ensemble, we use the grip portion of Stevens Technique on both marimba and vibes. For specific detailed reading on Stevens Technique, refer to:

Leigh Howard Stevens' "Method of Movement," published by Keyboard Percussion Publications. It is THE most in-depth examination and explanation of Stevens' technique. Prepare yourself for heavy intellectual reading with bits of dry humor. Includes 590 exercises. A "must own" book for any serious college percussion major.



Gifford Howarth's "Simply Four," published by TapSpace. This book provides much of the essential information in Stevens' book, with simple explanations that are accessible students of all ages. This book is great for new four mallet students, as well as teachers of new four mallet students. Also included in this book is an explanation of the Burton grip.

A word on Burton grip and the vibraphone

Typically, we use Stevens grip on both marimba and vibes. However, there are instances where we could use Burton grip on vibraphone or xylophone/pedal glock phrases where mallets of different hardnesses are used and a fast switch is needed. Vibraphone players with a glock mounted over top of their vibe sometimes find that phrases requiring a glock mallet / vibe mallet combination are easier performed with Burton grip. The same is true for keyboard players or rack percussionists that have found themselves needing to hold a keyboard mallet and a stick in the same hand. In cases where an individual performer would like to use Burton grip for something that is specific to their part, they certainly have the freedom to do so.

In this particular application, much of the vibraphone orchestration will take on a more "marimba style" at times and double marimba material from time to time as well. With that in mind the Stevens grip is currently our primary grip on the vibraphone, and everyone will be evaluated with the Stevens grip. Feel free, however, to perform your individual audition solo piece with the grip you feel most comfortable using.

Setting Up the Stevens Grip - *The Phantom Regiment Approach*

Inside Mallet:

- The hand is in a “handshaking” position, with the thumb pointed up
- The base of the inside mallet rests on the “lifeline” under the meaty base of the thumb
- The index finger creates a “table top,” where the inside mallet rests on the first knuckle
- The inside mallet is balanced between the base of the thumb (towards the center of the palm) and the curled-in index finger. This cantilever effect holds the mallet in place without tension.
- With minimal tension, the middle finger secures the base of the inside mallet in the palm. The middle finger should not dig the mallet forcefully into the palm. The middle finger will generally connect with the mallet slightly above the tip of the mallet shaft...this will minimize tension. Much of this depends on hand size and finger length of the performer. Remember that the inside mallet “hangs” in the hand and is steered by the middle finger but not held in place by the middle finger.
- The thumb rests lightly on top, keeping the mallet from rolling side to side

Outside Mallet:

- The outside mallet is gripped with the ring finger and pinky – these fingers curl back into the palm of the hand
- The back two fingers are kept firm enough so that the outside mallet does not droop down
- No more than a half-inch of the outside mallet extends beyond the back of the pinky



*Back fingers are held firm enough so that the outside mallet does not droop.
Apply no more tension than is necessary*



Mallets “hang” in the hand,
with minimal tension



The pad of the thumb lays flat on the mallet
The tip of the index finger stays relaxed
Middle finger rests on the base of the inside mallet
Ring and pinky fingers curve back into the hand

The outside mallet rests next to the knuckle of
the middle finger, rather than back in the
webbing

Mallet heads are held level in the hand



- The index finger has a relaxed, natural curve to it.
- Tips of the index fingers always point across the body, rather than back at the body.
- The thumb is relaxed and “lying” on top of the inside mallet.
- Only in certain situations (the hands are spread far apart or B-flat major chords) do the hands turn inward. In almost all other cases, the hand stays straight up and down. The thumb stays pointed up at the sky/ceiling.
- The ring finger and pinky finger rest under the other fingers, as in a relaxed fist. From a birdseye view, you should not see the ring and pinky fingers stretched to the outside.
- The hand remains below the mallet heads.

Capital T vs. lowercase t

- The inside mallet rests on top of the first knuckle of the index finger.
- The connection between the thumb and index finger should form a capital letter “T” where the thumbnail is right over the first knuckle of the index finger. If you are forming a lowercase letter “t”, this is typically because you are pulling your index finger back in towards the body. Relax your index finger.
- The exact relationship of the thumb and index finger will vary slightly from player to player depending on hand size, but it is important to make sure the index finger is never curled back into the palm of the hand.

