

# How to Get in Shape for Band Camp

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Marching band members are not just musicians, they're endurance athletes as well. According to Chris Mader of Dynamic Marching, band members are likely to march five to 10 miles daily at band camp in the sun, while carrying heavy instruments. Preparing for this level of physical activity requires strength training, cardiovascular training and proper sports nutrition. If you put in the time and effort to get into shape before band camp, you'll have a much easier time while you're there and probably enjoy the experience more.

## Step 1

Stretch for five to 10 minutes before and after exercise. This reduces your risk of injury and helps elongate your muscles so you don't become tense and sore. Stretch each muscle group three to five times for 10 to 30 seconds each time. You should feel sensation and tension in a stretch, but not pain; if a stretch is painful, relax the intensity until the pain diminishes.

## Step 2

Run at least three days each week. Increase the duration and pace of your runs as you build strength and stamina. If you aren't able to run yet, walk briskly or jog until your fitness level improves. You need to be able to walk miles in a day at band camp, and, if you play a wind instrument, you need cardiovascular strength and breath control to play and march simultaneously. Jogging or running regularly helps improve cardiovascular stamina for camp.

## **Step 3**

Increase the length of time you are able to run by adding intervals at a slower pace. Drop to a jog or a walk every few minutes to catch your breath and return to running. This technique helps you transition to a higher level of fitness.

## **Step 4**

Incorporate other cardiovascular exercise into your routine to prevent yourself from becoming bored. Cycle, swim, use an elliptical trainer, take a dance class or do aerobics. Any of these exercises will build cardiovascular fitness.

## **Step 5**

Do pushups, leg-lifts, lunges, squats and other calisthenics on the days you do not do cardio exercise. Strengthen the muscles in your arms, shoulders, back and legs. You need full control of your body to prevent injury during long days at camp and to support your weight and the weight of your instrument.

## **Step 6**

Build the muscles in your core with crunches, sit-ups, oblique exercises, back extensions and plank poses. Do Pilates or yoga to further strengthen the area. Band routines demand great core strength, so devote extra time to your abdominal muscles and your lower back to prepare for camp.

## **Step 7**

Hold your instrument in playing position to develop the muscles it requires. The muscle groups necessary for supporting instruments may not be targeted by traditional strength-training exercises, but according to Mader, you can build them simply by holding your instrument. Begin by holding it for two minutes at a time, and gradually increase the time until you can hold it in place for 10 minutes without feeling fatigued.

## **Step 8**

Eat a balanced diet of lean protein, complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, fruits and vegetables to fuel your workouts and lose excess body fat. Limit the amount of sugar, processed food, white bread, trans fat and soda you consume. These are sources of empty calories that do little to support your fitness goals and contribute to weight gain. Talk to a sports nutritionist about your caloric needs and how to meet them.