

Drum Corps Audition FAQ & Guide for Prospective Members

What to ask about:

Fees

Are payment plans available?

Are there scholarship opportunities? (internal and external)

Are there fundraising opportunities?

Do these go towards your fees or straight to the corps?

Hidden fees: Will you have to fly? Pay for spring training housing? Food?

Are all fees laid out up front?

How to get to camps

Need a ride? Ask people, vets, and some corps provide shuttles from train stations/airports

Corpsdata used to have a feature that you could look up which members lived in your city - may be a way to find people to ask if you aren't sure where to start

You can also post on social media groups/pages for members to see who is available for rides

For those flying in, is there an airport shuttle?

Do you have to bring your own instrument?

Post-Camp Reflection Questions:

How does the staff talk to you?

Before you make the line and after?

New members vs. vets?

Members vs. staff? (professional/unprofessional with members?)

How do members talk to you?

Before you make the line and after?

New members vs. vets?

How do members talk about people at other organizations?

How are things communicated through the organization?

What is the language on the official corps website and in their policies?

How are absences handled (during camps/auditions)?

What kinds of absences are excused/accepted and not?

Is there flexibility if you live far away/internationally?

Is there flexibility for late joiners?

How were tour jobs/crew assignments made?

Does the corps prioritize competition over members? Or vice versa?

Do staff talk about previous seasons in terms of scores and placements?

Do members talk about previous seasons in terms of scores and placements?

Are established goals for the corps placement/score-based or member experience-based?

How does the corps, its members, and its staff treat alternates?

What are the corps' covid policies?

How did the corps evaluate your eligibility to march regarding ability if you have medical or mental health access needs? If you have a disability?
Have staff made your contract conditional on weight loss?
Did the corps meet your dietary needs?
Did you receive sufficient water breaks?
How is medication handled? Is there admin/medical staff that manages medications?
Do staff take medical issues seriously (or do they advocate for “pushing through pain?”)
What is the member's attitude about health?
Are we pro-sleep?
Do volunteers and staff need to complete background checks?
Do people who are handling food have food handlers/safety cards?
How are sleeping arrangements done? By gender, minors/non-minors, etc.
Does the corps have policies surrounding sexual misconduct with a clearly understood plan of action for handling misconduct/abuse?
Is the membership diverse?
Is the staff diverse?
Does the corps have anti-discrimination or inclusive language in their corps safety policies?
Are their corps safety policies accessible online and easily understandable?
Does the corps have a disability accommodations policy?
Do staff respect pronouns when they are disclosed?
Do members respect pronouns when they are disclosed?
What is the average/median age of members in the corps (different contexts for DCI/DCA)?

Avenues for Reporting:

Ask how to report to your organization.

Administrative staff should show you how to navigate your corps' website/policy and help you sort through what information is available on the website.

Here's how to report to DCI:

<https://www.dci.org/static/ethics-and-compliance-reporting>

Here's how to report to MAASIN: <https://www.maasin.net/contact>

Considerations Unique to DCA:

DCA is uniquely different from the DCI circuit in that DCA is an all-age circuit, meaning that there are no age limits. The corps director for each corps should be able to give you information on the average age and age makeup of the membership.

As you audition, consider whether age appropriate boundaries are being followed by members and staff alike. Some spaces (showers, sleeping arrangements, buses) will be

shared between members of all ages, so prospective members (especially those under 18) should be mindful of these arrangements.

If contracted with a DCA corps, you will be on your own Monday through Friday throughout the season, not just during the Spring. If you have a field you can practice drill on between camps, that's great, but if not you can always focus on marching fundamentals, choreography, and music during the week. You can work on heat acclimation closer to the summer and general strength and endurance training to ensure that you get the most out of rehearsal or audition camps.

For hornline and percussion members, if you do not have a place where you can practice full out due to noise restrictions during the week, you can always practice on a pad or focus on buzzing, mouthpiece, or breathing exercises. Even mental practice is better than no practice.

For front ensemble members on mallet equipment or timpani that do not have a board or drums at home or one they can otherwise access, you can sometimes try to work something out with local schools to utilize their equipment for practice. If that isn't possible, you can make pseudo "practice pads" using blankets and duct tape for mallets and pillows for timpani. If nothing else you can work basic strokes and four mallet patterns on the ground. Again, any practice is better than no practice.

You will be expected to put in time between camps in addition to the time you spend at camps. One of the biggest things staff look for during audition season is how well you take direction and how much you improve over time. Because you aren't with the corps 24/7 in the summer, your attitude and dedication between camps will really determine your success.

Even if you can manage a high workload during audition season, if you work during the week, you may or may not be able to maintain that pace reasonably. It can become extremely draining as the season goes on if you do not have enough time dedicated to rest. Mental rest is just as important as physical rest for ensuring you are performing your best. Due to the physicality of marching a DCA corps happening exclusively during the weekend, be sure to take extra caution to tend to your body, taking appropriate amounts of rest, hydrating ahead of the weekend, etc.

Consider your long term season schedule and whether you have enough time and mental energy to balance your weekends at the corps with your work/life schedule and commitments past audition season before you sign a contract. Always prioritize your physical and mental health. You know your body and brain best.

While the cost of a DCA season might be lighter than DCI, you will likely have more hidden costs. You will need to travel to camps each weekend. Some DCA corps do not provide meals at camps and you will need to provide food. Other hidden costs like black

socks, hair products, make-up, etc. that apply to DCI also apply here. Make sure you consider all of these factors when deciding if a DCA season fits in your budget.

An example of another hidden cost is travel to shows/finals for corps from outside of the Northeastern “hotspot”, like The Southern Knights or Atlanta CV. The corps will likely provide you with transportation to those events via charter bus, but that takes longer than flights. While some DCA corps may include the costs of DCA weekend in the season’s tuition, some do not, and there may be hotel and/or bus fees. Sometimes members marching college bands have to attend their games and then fly up separately from the corps to balance those two commitments.