

The World's Largest Drum™

Introductory Packet for the 2019-2020 Season

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the “World’s Largest Drum,” lovingly nicknamed “the Drum,” “the Big Bass Drum,” or “the BBD.” We are excited that you’ve shown interest in Purdue’s oldest icon! Under the direction of Dr. Pam Nave, Director of Percussion at Purdue, the Drum Crew represents Purdue University at the highest level. Joining the Drum Crew is one of the highest honors you can achieve at Purdue and is considered to be a “tradition of excellence.”

Crew Members are full members of the All-American Marching Band (AAMB), which includes participating in the band’s practices, trips, parades, and football games. Outside of scheduled AAMB performances, the Drum and her Crew regularly attend a wide variety of events and functions around the state. The benefits to becoming part of the Drum Crew are numerous, and include meeting important people, traveling abroad, and the freedom to hit the World’s Largest Drum whenever you like!

The following packet includes a variety of information related to the Drum and her Crew, primarily with the goal of preparing you for band camp so that you may earn a spot with this coveted organization! While everything will be explained in even greater detail during band camp, you will do best if you are familiar with all of the information in this packet in advance. Additionally, it is crucial that you show up physically prepared for the fitness tryout and mentally prepared to begin learning how to maneuver with the Drum—but most importantly, you must show up with a good attitude! Band camp *is* a lot of hard work, but it is also a lot of fun! And, if you do well, you just might earn yourself a spot on the Drum Crew—one of the most recognizable icons in college athletics.

We look forward to seeing you at band camp in the Fall, and please don’t hesitate to reach out to Dr. Nave and/or the Drum Crew Captain with any questions or concerns!

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*Original Work by Marcus Thompson, Drum Crew 2010-2012, Captain 2011-2012
Revised in 2017 by Will Traub, Drum Crew 2014-2018, Captain 2016-2018
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Tryouts/Band Camp

This year, band camp lasts from August 11 – August 17. The band camp schedule will be released over the summer, but anticipate spending every day of that week with the Drum Crew and the AAMB. By the Wednesday of that week, those who are not offered a spot will be released. If you *are* offered a spot on the Drum Crew, you will be expected to spend about 12 hours a day following the band camp schedule, beginning on the morning of August 11 and lasting until the evening of August 17. If you have questions about the meals, sleeping arrangements, or any of the other “technicalities” of band camp, please refer to the Q&A section at the end of this packet, or reach out to Dr. Nave/the Drum Crew Captain.

Tryouts consist of five components:

1) Having the entire history of the Drum memorized.

On game days and during events, you will be expected to be able to answer any Drum-related question that fans or members of the press ask you. This will be tested throughout the week of band camp, and then formally on the day that cuts are made. Questions can be as easy as “how old is the drum” or as open-ended as “tell me a fun fact about the drum” or as pointed as “is this really the world’s largest drum?” While you don’t necessarily have to be ready to answer all of these questions *prior* to band camp, you should come to band camp with a working knowledge of the Drum’s history, which is available to you in the “History” section.

2) Successfully 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/times you must achieve to receive a “passing” grade are available to you in the “Physical Fitness Test” section. Your comfortability with these fitness tests will be a good indicator of how well you will be able to conduct yourself around the Drum.

3) Exhibiting an ability to quickly pick up the unique skill of “Drum Handling.”

One of the coolest parts of joining the Drum Crew is that there is literally nothing like it. The downside, of course, is that there is no way to practice handling the Drum before you get to band camp. Drum handling refers to understanding the jargon and techniques we use to effectively maneuver the Drum in public, in parades, and on the football field. While the Crew’s Captains will help you practice actually handling the Drum during band camp, make sure you show up with a working knowledge of the terminology and techniques that we use, as outlined in the “Drum Handling” section.

4) Demonstrating proper handling of PR, Media, and Fan Interaction situations.

This test is similar to the history portion, with a few key differences. While it is important to have a working knowledge of the Drum’s history, it is also important to be able to confidently convey this information. You will be generally assessed throughout the week on your ability to control yourself and conduct yourself professionally when with the Drum. While this test is not really something that you can directly prepare for, make sure to emphasize your ability to behave responsibly and respectfully when with the Drum. More information on this is available to you in the “PR/Media” section.

5) Maintaining a positive attitude.

Perhaps the most important quality that a candidate can have is a good attitude. Showing up with excitement and energy, showing that you have put effort into learning the material enclosed in this packet in advance, and demonstrating respect to your fellow Crew Members, Band Members, and leadership team throughout the week will all be closely assessed. In the past, Crew Members who joined at the last minute (but had a good attitude) have been offered a spot over those who memorized the packet months in advance (but had a bad attitude).

While Dr. Nave and the Crew Captains will be observing applicants throughout the week, cuts will officially be made on Wednesday morning. That morning will consist of a formal PR/history test and the Drum Handling test. Physical tests will have already taken place earlier in the week, so anyone who did not satisfactorily pass the physical tests will have already been dismissed. Once cuts are made on Wednesday morning, the season's Drum Crew will be officially set. If you are cut, you can still try out for a different section of the band, as the band's cuts are made on the following Friday. That being said, anyone who does not make the Drum Crew will be strongly encouraged to try out for again the following year! Additionally, Dr. Nave and the Drum Crew Captains reserve the right to "cut" (dismiss) anyone from the Crew at any time for ceasing to uphold the five traits outlined above.

Selected members will be required to register for the marching band course, Band 110. This two-hour course meets Monday through Friday from 3:30pm-5:20pm throughout the Fall semester. Crew Members will also be expected to attend all home football games, the one away football game performance for the season, the Bowl Game (if applicable), and the Indy 500. The Drum also occasionally has other "gigs" in the Fall and Spring that range from appearances in commercials, events being held on campus and around the state, and meeting famous alumni/drummers. While Crew Members are not expected to be available for every single gig, it *is* expected that they attend as many as possible (in other words, you should be prepared to attend most of them). If you have any questions about the time commitment component, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Nave or one of the Drum Crew captains.

History

In 1921, then-Director of Bands Paul Spotts Emrick decided that Purdue's band needed something to set them apart from other bands. Emrick's idea called for a bass drum bigger than any others at the time. However, the idea for a big bass drum had already been imagined, and there were already bass drums four feet in diameter. Emrick wanted one at least twice that size, a “drum larger than the man playing it,” and thus the idea for the World's Largest Drum was born.

At the time, most people thought of Emrick's plan as ludicrous, and considered it to be impossible. That is, until Ulysses Leedy of the Leedy Drum Corporation (now Ludwig Drums) volunteered to craft the monster instrument. At the time, Leedy was the largest manufacturer of drums in the world and recognized the publicity that such a drum would bring to their company. Leedy intended to go big, but he first had to find materials large enough for the humongous drumheads. After much searching, they found a massive 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 Paul Spotts Emrick, informing him that a large enough hide had been found. Production of the World's Largest Drum was set to begin.

With the materials needed to create the drumheads secured, construction of the actual Drum could begin. Construction of the Drum was set to cost \$911.12. Adjusted for inflation, this is about \$13,000 in the present day. To help cover this massive cost, Purdue held a band concert as a fundraiser. Elks BPO Lodge 143 generously agreed to donate to the remaining funds needed after the band concert. The concert was a huge success, raising approximately \$500 dollars. As promised, 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 at Purdue University, the Drum was showcased at the Circle Theater in Indianapolis during the week of August 14, 1921. The Drum then went on display at the Indiana Statehouse and spent a week at the Indiana State Fair before eventually reaching its new home in 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 (as opposed to using a standard 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 school's colors. From this idea 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 swapped out 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, paying homage to both of the previous designs. In 2017, following brief maintenance, the Drum's diamonds returned to the solid chrome look of the mid-1900s.

The Drum is transported around on a steel-frame carriage. A bar attached to the front of the carriage and two handles fixed to the back of the Drum allow a crew of 4 to easily maneuver it around. In the '20s, the carriage was equipped with standard bicycle wheels, but these were quickly replaced with Model A Ford racing tires, due to the Drum's immense size and weight. These are the very 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 among Purdue fans and an immediate success. When it appeared at a football game at the University of Chicago, Chicago fans became ecstatic. Chicago wanted their own big drum. Immediately following the game, the University of Chicago contacted the Conn Company (a rival drum manufacturer of the Leedy Corporation) to make them a drum as big as ours. The Conn Company responded with Big Bertha, a drum supposedly larger, though this remains unproven. Big Bertha did not last long in Chicago, however. After the United States entered the Second World War, both the World's Largest Drum and Big Bertha were put into storage (having superfluous materials such as large drums was not considered important in light of the war effort). Bertha was stored on the University of Chicago's football field. As any history buff could tell you, this was where the Manhattan Project (the atomic bomb) was tested during WWII. Thusly, Big Bertha became irradiated during its short stint in storage under Chicago's Stagg Field.

Understandably, no one at the University of Chicago wanted to deal with the irradiated Big Bertha, and she was sold to an unknown alumnus of the University of Texas at Austin for one dollar. The Texas alumnus then paid for the necessary de-radiation of the drum and donated it to his alma mater, where it has remained since 1955.

The re-emergence of Big Bertha sparked a rivalry between Purdue's Drum and UT's Big Bertha. These tensions culminated in a face-off in the year 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 crown one the official “World's Largest Drum” once and for all. While Purdue brought their Drum all the way to Kansas, UT and Big Bertha never showed up, officially awarding the title of the “World's Largest Drum” to Purdue. From this, Purdue now proudly owns the trademark on this phrase, and it can be seen prominently displayed on the side of the Drum's drumheads. In light of the fact that the Drum was never formally measured in 1961, the exact measurements of the Drum are still a well-kept secret—and are only known to the Drum Crew and Dr. Nave.

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. Big Bertha's 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. The crew also charges fans for pictures with Big Bertha.

Things are a lot different here at Purdue. Purdue's Drum is involved in every practice, parade, pre-game, halftime, and post-game show of the AAMB. On top of actually being involved in everything, the Drum and her Crew have their own routines during each performance. The Crew run up and down the football field with the Drum, and constantly perfect new and old tricks to keep shows visually appealing. Pictures with the Drum are always 100% free, and we encourage all types of photography from fans and the press. The Crew aren't the only ones allowed to hit the Drum, either! The Crew regularly allows little kids to hit the Drum—as well as military personnel, first responders, honored Purdue officials, and various celebrities and alumni. While any Drum Crew member is allowed to hit the Drum, it is ultimately up to the individual discretion of Dr. Nave and the Drum Crew Captain to decide who else can take a swing at the Drum. Each year, AAMB seniors are honored with a chance to hit the Drum during their last halftime show in Ross-Ade.

Due to the Drum's immense size, traveling tends to be a bit of hassle, but not impossible. In the early days of the band, AAMB members primarily traveled by train. To accommodate for the Drum's size, the New York Rail Company had to send a modified train car, as standard cars were not big enough. The Drum has also faced some issues traveling by air, as commercial aircraft often don't have enough room for the Drum. 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 AAMB to Ireland. The Drum again traveled to Ireland in the Spring of 2018, where it marched in the St. Patrick's Day Parade with the AAMB for the second time. The Drum was a wildly popular sight and people lined the streets to watch the band and the Drum.

In 1937, it was decided that a truck was the most reasonable way to transport the Drum under typical travel circumstances. Specifically, the band opted to use a Chevrolet truck to transport the Drum. In April 1937, the Drum was sent in for a facelift and for modifications to allow it to 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 with the AAMB or goes to its own off-campus events.

In 1976, the Drum actually fell out of the pick-up truck mid-transit and went rolling down the shoulder of the highway. At the last second, it turned, rolling into oncoming traffic with one drumhead directly in the path of an oncoming semi-truck. The semi's engine and grille area suffered damage, but the Drum was relatively unharmed. The head and rim on one side were damaged, but the shell of the Drum was left more or less intact.

From 1940-1954, the Drum predominantly sat in storage due to the war effort. When Al G. Wright became Director of Bands in 1954, the first thing he did was to haul the Drum out of storage and ship it back to Leedy for repairs. On the inside of 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 EE department. King, in response to a previous donation made by Dr. Nave, gave her the contact information of Mike Sherwood, the head of Purdue's ME machine shop. Sherwood was able to create completely new hardware for the Drum, replacing all but six of the original lugs, which were deemed in good enough shape to remain on the Drum. King then graciously 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 completely free of charge. The total cost was about \$1,200, which saved the restoration effort a whopping \$9,000. While all of the lugs were off of the Drum for refurbishment, Dr. Nave took the opportunity to have the Drum repainted by paint company Sherwin Williams. Materials for the project were donated by Ben Dye, a manager for the company, while an employee named Don did the actual painting. It took three passes with a paint gun, with each pass requiring about 100 seconds to complete.

In the Fall of 2017, in preparation for the AAMB's 2018 return to Ireland, the Drum was repainted and cleaned again. With assistance from Mike Sherwood, all of the hardware was removed from the Drum. Again, 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.

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

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

The moniker “World’s Largest Drum™” and the stylized writing of “Purdue” (officially dubbed the “Drum Script Purdue”) across the face of the drumhead are hand painted by local Lafayette painter Dave Nelson. He is the one who charges \$262 per drumhead. In the past, he has painted special heads for events like the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, the AAMB’s trips to Ireland, and Purdue’s 150th Anniversary.

In addition to custom drumheads, the Drum requires special beaters due to its immense size. These beaters are hand-made by Drum Crew members each season. They are made of an axe handle, a roll of masking tape, a spool of yarn, and a strip of felt (as the cover). More details about how to make beaters will be covered after the Drum Crew is selected.

As far back as the 1970s, Crew Members have signed the inside of the Drum’s shell, securing their place in history alongside this star of the University. The tradition says that the first time the drumheads are taken off each season, all of the rookies get to look inside and sign their name on the shell’s interior. You can find names from decades ago, and every once in a while, an alumnus will come up to the Drum and point out their signature on the inside.

For years, the Drum Crew has had a tradition of doing push-ups in the south endzone whenever Purdue scores a touchdown. They do one push-up per point that Purdue has scored in the game so far. That means that high-scoring games often cause the Drum Crew to do sets of 40-50 push-ups on the field back-to-back! This is one of the things that we are most recognized for, and we frequently end up on the jumbotron or national TV while doing them. We do our best to carry on this tradition when at away games or bowl games, if the local stadium will allow us to.

The Drum has been an integral part of Purdue University since 1921 and has been an icon of the University for nearly as long. As a result of being in the spotlight, some interesting things have happened to the Drum and her crew over the past century. For instance, there have been a few attempts to steal the Drum, mostly by rival universities IU and Northwestern. A few attempts were nearly successful, but the Drum was always recovered. Additionally, in the early 80s, Purdue students would throw crab apples at the Drum and her Crew as the band marched past Cary Quad. This is where the Crew’s iconic game day helmets came from. Nowadays, these helmets are commonly 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. To show off all the cool places that the Drum has been, Dr. Nave frequently offers notable people a chance to sign a special drumhead reserved for alumni and celebrities. On this particular drumhead you can find the signatures of Snoop Dogg, Steve Harvey, the Blue Man Group, and Neil Armstrong—among others.

Captain’s Note: The Drum has a rich and storied history—that’s one of the coolest parts about being on the Drum Crew! The downside of this truth is that there is a lot of information to memorize. I recommend taking the time to re-read the entire section a few times throughout the course of the summer in order to fully grasp all of the details. That being said, Drum Crew applicants have memorized the entire history in less than 24 hours before—but that’s if you’re really motivated.

The reason we memorize the entire history is that you should be prepared to answer *any* question that fans or members of the press ask you. This will be tested during band camp through a simulated interaction with a reporter. Below are some sample questions you should be comfortable answering now. Keep in mind that fans never cease to surprise us with new questions, and there are literally hundreds or thousands more questions that *could* be asked regarding the Drum’s history.

- How old is the Drum?
- Is this the original Drum?
- Has it ever been refurbished? When/how?
- How much do those drumheads cost?!
- I heard that the University of Texas has a bigger drum! Do they?

Remember that it is not only important to be able to answer the question correctly, but you must also be able to do so confidently, respectfully, and in an engaging way!

Physical Fitness Test (adapted from the AFI 36-2905 Fitness Program)

Listed below are the physical requirements to be on the Drum Crew. You must pass all of them to be considered for a spot on the Crew. The size of the Drum and the physicality required to move the Drum throughout an entire game day necessitate that the Crew be in peak physical condition. The tests listed below will be conducted during the first three days of band camp (Sunday – Tuesday). You will be allowed to reattempt one portion of the physical test one time. Keep in mind that this means you must *show up* to band camp ready to perform these physical tests. In the past, we have started them as early as Monday morning.

*Please note that in years prior, a 4x20 yard shuttle run was listed as part of the physical assessment portion of tryouts. We no longer require the shuttle run test. Additionally, the 1.5-mile run used to be a road course, but now takes place on a track.

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 provides us with a good idea of how well you will be able to run the Drum during a halftime show. Halftime shows can be as long as seven minutes, and in that time we may run the Drum 100 yards across the football field as many as five or six times.

The 400-meter and 100-meter sprints will provide an estimate of your anaerobic and respiration capacity, muscular strength, and foot speed. If you wish to reattempt the sprints as your one “retry,” you will be given two attempts to do so.

The sit-ups test is one assessment of muscular fitness. You will have two minutes to perform as many sit-ups as you possibly can. You will be assigned a partner on the Crew 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 two minutes 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 floor or mat at the bottom of the sit-up (keeping any part of your hands/fingers in contact with your shoulder/upper chest at all times).

The repetition will not count if your hands/fingers come completely away from the chest/shoulder or if your buttocks or heels leave the ground. Additionally, you may not grab onto your shirt as this makes it difficult to determine if you are maintaining proper form. Any resting must be done in the UP position. While resting, you may not use your knees or any other object to support yourself. If there is any resting other than in the “up” 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 yet another assessment of muscular fitness. You will have two minutes to perform as many push-ups as you possibly can. You will be assigned a partner on the Crew 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 two minutes will be your recorded score. This test is especially important due to our tradition of performing push-ups in the south endzone 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 floor. If you do not come down parallel to the floor, the push-up will not count.

Resting can only be done in the UP position. You may remove your hands or feet from the floor or bridge or bow your back, but only in the up/rest position. Resting any other body part on the floor is not allowed. If there is any resting other than in the up 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.

Captain's Note: For most people, there is no issue with the way that they perform the runs, sit-ups or push-ups. Some of the technical requirements that we believe are most important have been isolated above. If you would like more guidance as to how to properly complete any of these exercises, please feel free to reach out to me (the Drum Crew Captain), as I'd be happy to explain what we're looking for in more detail. That being said, we don't do anything special or different, and the form I will explain to you will be the exact same form that any fitness website or expert would tell you to do. Keep in mind that these tests were all specifically selected to be representative of the physical prowess required to be successful on the Drum Crew—set yourself up for success!

Drum Handling

All crew members must demonstrate that they possess the balance, strength, speed, agility, and endurance required to handle the Drum safely and effectively. Typically, there are two Crew Members in the front and two in the back while operating the Drum.

The left-front position of the Drum is referred to as the “driver”. The driver controls the speed of the Drum, how the Drum enters or exits maneuvers, and ensures that all maneuvers are executed with precision. The driver is the one who calls the commands to initiate any movements or tricks, including spins. All spins move in a counter-clockwise direction unless called otherwise by the driver. 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 “brakeman”. The brakeman is responsible for stopping the Drum during spins. The brakeman must halt the Drum in the correct position so that the next maneuver can take place. A movement known as “veering” is used to quickly change directions when moving at high-speeds. The veer is used predominantly on the football field during pre-game and half-time shows. This movement is dependent on both the driver and the brakeman. You will learn how to actually do both of these things during band camp.

The Crew Members on the back of the Drum act as its “engine” (although nowadays these positions are more frequently referred to as the “back”). These two people are responsible for the Drum’s acceleration and deceleration, including hard stops. They maintain the speed of the Drum during each movement and are paramount in “planting” the Drum during any aerial tricks that might be performed. Communication amongst all four Crew Members is imperative, as the Drum can block sound between the front and back positions if you are not loud enough.

At any given time, there are six Crew Members with the Drum. On top of the driver, the brakeman, and the two people in back, there are two “beaters”—one on each side of the Drum. The beaters hit on the same side when the Drum is not in motion (as typically only one side is facing the audience). Beaters hit the Drum to school songs, cadences, and other tunes that the band plays during performances, pre-games, and half-time shows.

If there are more than six people on the Crew at a given time (we often have seven- or eight-person Crews), the additional Crew Members function as security and/or help clear a path for the Drum to follow. In the past few seasons, we have had seven-person Crews, which typically meant that the seventh person would walk behind or in front of the Drum while on parade routes.

You can expect to learn the basics of maneuvering with the Drum during Band Camp. This is just the tip of the iceberg, as we have dozens of other tricks that you will learn if/when you make the Crew, including up-downs, flipping up-downs, road kill, motorcycle, riding, and many others. You can find many of these tricks on YouTube or Instagram (@worldslargestdrum).

For the Drum to move smoothly and safely around, all of the Crew Members must act as team. This is evaluated through team and individual ability, which will be assessed throughout band camp. The goal is to see how well different pairs work together, as well as how well Crew Members communicate with each other while the Drum is in motion. One of the key terms we use is “ready,” which is our command for stopping quickly. We use this term in many important scenarios, from when a Crew Member is hurt to when a small child runs in front of the Drum. It is absolutely crucial that the entire Crew functions well together as a unit. When you’re on the Drum, your head should always be on a swivel. Situational awareness and good communication are paramount!

Captain’s Note: There’s a lot of new knowledge involved in Drum handling, but if you’re familiar with all of the terminology/concepts in this section, you’ll already have a solid understanding prior to band camp. During band camp, you will be tested on spins, veers, and stopping (the “ready” command). You will have to demonstrate these maneuvers as the driver, brakeman, and back. Do not worry, as you will have ample time prior to Wednesday’s test to practice these things with the Crew Captains and veterans. If/when you make the Drum Crew, you will then begin to learn more complex tricks (like launches, roadkill, motorcycle, etc.).

Public Relations and Attitude

As a member of the Drum Crew, you are also an ambassador of Purdue University. Social skills are a huge part of the tryout process, as we are asked countless questions by countless people during any given event or performance. When we are not on the field during pregame and halftime, we are stationed in the south endzone of Ross-Ade Stadium. In the south endzone, we converse with both Purdue and visiting-team fans. Crew Members must be able to speak with, relate to, and pose with complete strangers as if they have known them their whole lives. Crew Members must be able to deal with “difficult” people, ranging from overly-enthusiastic fans to severely-intoxicated patrons. Intoxicated fans can sometimes even be a danger to Drum, so your head must be on a swivel at all times. For your own personal safety, the safety of others, and the safety of the Drum, Crew Members must know how to respond to all types of situations. During the tryout process, you will be tested with various “what if...” scenarios to measure your ability to handle stressful and challenging situations.

Crew Members can expect to be photographed and/or videotaped thousands of times throughout the course of the marching season, and just generally 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. All alcohol/tobacco products must be set to the side and outside of the photo. Patrons cannot hide the alcohol or tobacco product behind themselves or the Drum—it must be out of the picture entirely. Since the Drum is an icon of Purdue University, a photo of the Drum with alcohol or tobacco products could be construed as Purdue supporting their use. The Crew reserves the right to deny a picture to any person who does not comply with these rules. Since we allow fans to pose with the Drum, we often allow them to pose with the beaters. We ask fans not to hit the Drum, but sometimes they can be a little over-excited and proceed anyway. If you notice this happening and are in a position to stop it, do so by grabbing **ONLY** the beater and responding in a polite manner.

The attitude of each candidate will be observed by the Captain and Dr. Nave throughout the week. A good and upbeat attitude will go a long way when conversing with people about the Drum. We strive to maintain the strong reputation of the Drum, the Band and Orchestra Department, and Purdue University as a whole. There are no formal tests to determine attitude, so be sure to show off your positive attitude throughout the entire week. 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 over the course of band camp to gauge attitude. An elite athlete with a poor attitude will never be selected for the Drum Crew. A good attitude is crucial for a strong Crew. This cannot be overemphasized.

Drum Storage, Maintenance, and Travel

Captain’s Note: You may have noticed that this portion of the packet was not listed as part of the audition process. While you will not be tested on this information during band camp, it is crucial for any Crew Member to know. You will quickly learn this information if you make the Drum Crew (and possibly even before that), so it would not be a bad idea to get familiar with it prior to band camp.

When not in use, the Drum is stored in the Purdue Armory. It is kept locked in its “cage” at all times to prevent vandalism or theft, which there were instances of prior to building this enclosure. Only Dr. Nave and the Captains will have a key to the cage for security reasons. It is important to be respectful of the ROTC and military groups inside the Armory, as they let us use their facility free of charge. Hats must be removed whenever you enter the armory. Additionally, if ROTC is conducting any events inside the Armory, we **must** be silent and conduct our business as quickly and respectfully as possible. If an ROTC or Military member speaks to you, be polite. These are our future soldiers (and some of them have already served), so be sure to treat them with respect. Remember that even if you are not in the Armory for Drum-related reasons, your actions will reflect on the Drum as you will be recognized as a member of the Crew.

Due to the rigorous nature of our work, the Drum suffers some general wear and tear. To combat this, the entire Drum must be cleaned before every home football game. Wet rags and detergents are used to wipe down the drumheads, and Windex is used to shine the vinyl diamonds on the shell. Tire polish is used on the wheels to keep them glistening. The heads are typically changed once or twice a year as they get close to breaking or actually do break. When the heads are off, Crew Members are permitted to sign the inside the Drum, once for every year on the Crew.

To emulate the sound of a regular bass drum, the Crew glues foam strips to the top and bottom of each drumhead and reinforces the drumhead’s striking zone with contact paper. 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 contraption 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 the Drum is 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 loading/unloading procedure takes about 20 minutes with the whole Crew helping out. The Captains are responsible for driving the truck.

Closing: A Letter from the Captain

Dear rookie applicants,

Joining the Drum Crew has been one of the most rewarding parts of my Purdue career. Personally, I actually began my journey with the AAMB on Purdue’s Drumline. After my freshman year on the bassline, I tried out for the Drum Crew and have never looked back.

There is a lot to learn, but it will all come easier than you think. Rookies typically pick up how things work before the second home game, and by that point you can no longer tell who is a “rookie” and who is a “veteran.” If you show up to band camp with a working knowledge of everything in this packet, you will be in a great position. Brandon (the Assistant Captain) and I will gladly teach you the rest of what you need to know.

Please also realize that there are only two guaranteed spots on the Crew next year—one for me, and one for Brandon. Everyone else must try out during band camp, whether this would be their first season on the Crew or their fourth! While veterans may have a slight advantage from previous years of experience, there are no “bonus points” for being a veteran. In fact, veterans have been booted off in favor of a rookie before—particularly when it comes to attitude.

In short, there is not enough paper in the world for me to write down all of the incredible things I could tell you about this amazing organization, but I think that this packet serves as a strong introduction. If you are looking for more information, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Nave or I, or check out some of the following sources:

- 1) 2015 Fundraising Video (there’s some awesome footage here that actually helped the Drum establish its own trust fund!): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOdhyIY44HI>
- 2) The Purdue Drumline website: <http://www.puruedrumline.com/drum-crew.html>
- 3) Our Instagram (@worldslargestdrum) is a great source to get a feel of what the Drum and the Crew have done more recently. (I personally run this account!)
- 4) *The Complete History of the Leedy Drum Company* (ISBN-10: 0931759749) contains about 8 pages of information about the Drum.
- 5) *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.
- 6) 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.
 - a. Slow Mo Guys: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYQZadW6iu0>
 - b. Steve Harvey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6LfmCIHLIY>
 - c. 2014 “Boiler Bytes” Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spAhzdj80Ew>
 - d. CBS Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jul21Ui-gWE&t=34s>
 - e. 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>

I wish you all the best of luck! Being a part of this Crew is the experience of a lifetime!

Sincerely,
Josh Siegel, Drum Crew Captain, 2019-2020

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 <physical fitness test>. And I did no better on my retry, should I be worried?

No. We take into consideration all portions of the tryout process from the moment you arrive. We have a pretty good idea if you will be a strong crew member or not.

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

Yes! Hitting the drum is not reserved for senior members or Captains. Instead, it runs on a rotation between Crew Members. It should be noted that for special occasions or events (such as being filmed in a commercial), hitting may default to Captains/seniors.

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 and THEN decide to participate in marching band, you may request a refund for BGR 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?

You will not be missing anything as far as orientation. You will still hear from many Purdue icons, such as the football coach and basketball coach. The Crew Captains and veterans will give you a tour on campus during band camp (even if you don't make the Crew), and show you where your classes are. You will also still attend the BGR pep rally, but instead of watching it—you will be performing in it! In short, we still provide a solid foundation for the beginning of your academic career. The sense of community you get from the AAMB and the Drum Crew is just as good (if not stronger) than you would get from BGR.

What should I bring with me to the tryouts?

- 1) Good running shoes/tennis shoes.
- 2) Clothes to work/get dirty in.
- 3) Sunblock (lots of it, we are outside a lot).
- 4) Sunglasses or a hat. Or both.
- 5) Water bottle or jug. (Make sure you're properly hydrated, as we're outside working hard all day!)
- 6) **This packet, printed and in hand.** We SOMETIMES have extra copies available, but don't count on that.
- 7) Small bag to carry these items.
- 8) A good attitude (in case you haven't picked up on that by now).

How much does band cost?

There is a semester fee of \$90. The following items will only be needed IF you make the Drum Crew: a pair of black running shoes, black cleats, and a pair of black batting gloves. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$30 to \$90 for the running shoes as well as the cleats. \$30 will more than cover a decent pair of gloves. Please do not purchase these items in advance, as you will only need them if you make the Crew. We will help those that make the Crew pick out acceptable items and get to/from the store.

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

Yes and no. Band is a huge time commitment, with the Drum specifically requiring a significant amount of time during the Fall semester. That being said, we have engineering, computer science, and pre-dental students on the Crew right now! While you may have to manage your time wisely to do it all, it is not impossible, or even very difficult to do so! In fact, the average band student GPA is in the 3.0-3.2 range while the University's average is in the 2.6-2.9 range.

Do returning members automatically have a spot on the crew?

No! Spots are only guaranteed for the Captain and Assistant Captain. Veteran members are required to complete all aspects of the tryout each year. However, as returners, they have experience from previous year(s) and *that* may give them an edge in their tryout.

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

Just as good as anyone else. We've had many freshmen, women, grad students, and non-musicians make the Drum Crew. In fact, most Crew Members enter as freshman.

What do you do for food during band camp?

90 minutes for lunch and dinner are provided each day. We recommend that you eat a light breakfast before coming to band camp, as we are incredibly active from Monday morning onward. You are free to eat whatever, but we recommend that you eat wisely. The Drum Crew will be doing a lot of physical work throughout the week, and a greasy bacon cheeseburger is not an ideal meal to fuel yourself. We also advise that you eat with other members of the drumline and the AAMB to get to know each other. The Drum Crew will also hold a few group lunches during band camp, but if you decide to eat alone, your time away will be respected.

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 (prior to band camp). For more information about how to do this, reach out to Dr. Nave. 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 *now* (many people choose to stay with a friend for a few days until their apartment is available). If you are having trouble finding housing, reach out to Dr. Nave or the Drum Crew Captain and we will make sure you have a safe place to stay!