

Creating a Successful Audition

The purpose of the following information is to help you record a quality audition to submit online for National Youth Band of Canada. The information has been divided into different topics in order to facilitate specific focus in these areas of the auditioning process. All of the information, hints and tips have come from music educators, university professors, and past participants of the National Youth Band.

Helpful Hints for all Instruments

1. Read all of the instructions well ahead of time and do what you can to follow all instructions as closely as possible.
2. Write down the date that the online audition is due. Plan to be finished at least 5 days before the final deadline.
3. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Do not start the process of recording until you feel confident that you have mastered both the scales and etudes required of the audition. Scales are just as important as the etudes.
4. **Start early!** Give yourself several weeks to practice and prepare for the audition.
5. Begin the recording process well in advance of the deadline. Give yourself time to try again if you are not satisfied with the previous attempt. Keep a copy of your first attempt. Many students have recorded over that first attempt only to find that it was their best one!
6. It's a good idea to have a teacher or friend at the recording session to start/stop the recording or add track marks as you go. They could also keep a list of the tracks and make brief notes on the track (even just a checkmark beside the track you want to keep may save a lot of time when putting the final recording together).
7. Do not talk on the recording.
8. Be sure to WARM UP and TUNE CAREFULLY before recording. Make sure you tune to the piano if using one as your accompaniment.
9. Do not try to record in one sitting. Things will only become worse as you get frustrated! (You WILL become frustrated!). Stop and try again the next day.
10. Be sure to listen to the entire final product before uploading it online. Make sure there is no talking, background noise, or extra material on your audition.

What the Adjudicator is Listening For

1. **TONE-** (Beauty, Control, Characteristic Timbre, Volume, Embouchure) Remember – Your sound is the first thing that an adjudicator hears and judges. They will be listening for the clear, rich tone that is characteristic of your instrument. They will also be judging how well you control that tone in the different registers and at different dynamic levels.
2. **INTONATION-**This is your ability to play in tune. The adjudicator will be listening to your intonation in all registers, moving from one note to another, especially in large intervals, and intonation with piano (if you use one as accompaniment).
3. **RHYTHMIC ACCURACY** (Precision, Meter, Accents, Interpretation). Be exact. Hold out the long notes long enough. Pay attention to details such as holding a whole note for 4 beats, holding the 4th beat over to the 1st beat of the next bar. Make sure your eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets are precise, steady and even. There should absolutely be no question as to what your intentions are rhythmically! Double-check and practice your timing with a metronome.
4. **INTERPRETATION** (Phrasing, Expression, Tempo, Dynamics, Style). Here, the adjudicator will be interested in how musically you play. This will be determined by how much expression you use, how well you understand the style of

the etude, the range of dynamic levels you can control and how well you understand the construction of the melodic lines and phrases. Aim for contrast in dynamics and style. Even when you are playing scales, make them musical and not just technical exercises.

- 5. TECHNIQUE** (Accuracy, Facility, Articulation, Breathing). It goes without saying you should play all of the right notes and rhythms. Although the adjudicator will not be able to see specific fingering you are using, they can tell how much agility and how much control you have by listening to how smoothly and evenly you play. Check out the possibility of alternate fingerings if you are having difficulties. Make sure that you play all marked articulations and dynamics. Mark in your breathing before recording.

The Importance of Scales

Well-prepared and polished scales are imperative to the success of your audition. It is important that you do not simply play the scales with technical precision, but that you play them musically as well. Doing so will leave a great first impression of your musicality and ability to the adjudicator. Some hints for preparing and recording your scales are:

1. Practice to achieve your top speed, but remember that accuracy and evenness is more important than speed. Do not record scales faster than you are able to play them evenly and accurately.
2. Read the directions carefully – Show your ability to play different articulation patterns by playing each scale with a different articulation.
3. Play scales at a healthy dynamic. A louder (but still controlled) dynamic will sound confident and strong. It will also help remind you to use a fast, supported airstream. (If the air is not there your sound will suffer as will the consistency throughout the registers/octaves).
4. Play with a rich full tone on every single note and focus on clean and tasteful attacks and releases.
5. Practice with a tuner to ensure that every single note of the scale is in tune. Adjust with your embouchure as necessary.
6. Practice your scales with a metronome challenging yourself to play at faster speeds every single day. Playing scales evenly and accurately is like building muscles at the gym – consistency every single day is how you will reach the most success. When it comes to recording day, only play as fast as you can evenly and musically.

Recording Tips

1. As you listen to the tracks, keep a list of each one and make comments about the performance. This will save time when selecting the track you want to use (and if there are many takes it will help you choose the best one).
2. If possible, recruit help from another person to help out on recording days. They will not only be able to press the start and stop button for you, but will help with organizing tracks, and supporting you with opinions and support!
3. Use fresh batteries; you do not want to find out that your batteries died mid-session!
4. In terms of choosing equipment to use, a high-quality recording device is preferable.
5. Use a room with some resonance (not all carpet and curtains). Usually the kitchen is a good place at home to make your recording.
6. Place your recording device about 5 to 10 feet in front of you so that the sound is clear, (not distant) and also bring in a bit of the room's acoustic reverb so that it doesn't sound too 'dry'.

How to Stand Out On Your Recording

When auditioning for a band, we know that there are other musicians auditioning for the same spot in the band. Therefore, it is important to stand out in your recording! The following is a list of ideas and suggestions from successful participants of the National Youth Band of Canada on how to accomplish that:

1. The best auditions to listen to are the ones that show the player has plenty of confidence and commitment, and can also make the most of the music they are playing. Keep in mind that the NYB adjudicators are looking for the best musicians, not just the best flute, tuba, clarinet player.
2. You must be confident and organized!
3. **Know** your music. This goes beyond notes, rhythms, markings, tempo, performance practise, etc... It is not a live audition and you have the opportunity to redo anything you wish, and so your adjudicators will be less forgiving of mistakes than in a live audition. Just as with any performance, music is all about communication and is a means of self-expression. Showing who you are as an instrumentalist, a musician and a person is more important than what is on the page (the page is just the first step). Take ownership of your music. Think about what you want to “say” and how to say it (dynamics, phrasing, colours, accents) musically. Be sure this comes across as you listen to your recording. This is what will set your playing apart from the crowd.
4. When playing portions of a piece or excerpts, omit long rests (and possibly long accompaniment sections—choose sections that feature your instrument, if uncertain, ask a teacher to help you choose what you should include/omit).
5. Record with an accompanist. It helps you play with more expression, dynamics and in tune.
6. Play like you're right
7. Play the music as if you were telling a story to someone. Each note leads to the next and is part of the whole just like each letter of a word is part of a sentence that makes up paragraphs that make up the whole story.
8. If you're struggling through a piece, take a break, get a drink of water, calm your thoughts and then try it again. Be positive!

How to Record your Audition

Option 1: Record on an IPAD or IPOD using the voice memo app

- Record a few test tracks to find the optimal room placement for the device to achieve the best recording quality.
- Once you have recorded all the tracks that you want, download the tracks to your computer, or email them from your device to your computer using the share function.

Option 2: Record on a computer or laptop using a recording program such as Audacity. Download the latest free version at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>

- Use an external microphone for optimal recording quality, or use the built-in mic on a laptop
- Instructions for Audacity are available on the program’s help menu.

Option 3: Record using a zoom recorder or other recording equipment. Your school or private music teacher may have recording equipment available for use.

- Most handheld audio recorders allow you the option of saving your files as .mp3

How to Convert a File to mp3

1. If your files were not recorded in a mp3 format create a folder on your computer that contains only the tracks you want to submit.
2. Go to <http://online-audio-converter.com>
3. Upload the files you wish to convert and click on the button to download the conversion.
4. Follow the instructions to convert all your files to mp3 format (the only acceptable format for submitting your honour band audition)

How to Join Files into a Single File (required for online submission)

1. Go to <http://audio-joiner.com/> or <http://audiojoiner.com> , or any online audio-joiner of your choice. Some additional examples include <http://convertaudiofree.com> and <http://en.softonic.com>
2. Upload all your files to join them together (your audition files must be all in ONE .mp3 file in order to submit your audition online).
Please ensure that Fade In/Fade Out and Crossfade are disabled.
3. Download your joined file and save it to the same folder on your computer that all of your other files are saved to, and label your audition FirstnameLastname_instrument.
4. Please keep your audition recording folder until the NYB has been selected.
5. Go to <https://www.canadianband.org/nybhome> to submit your audition.

Submitting Your Audition

Read the directions on audition form!!! Don't hesitate to ask questions, (email jyochim@flbsd.mb.ca).

Make sure you have uploaded a complete audition package: recording, music, (with recorded sections marked), application and audition fee. Music submitted will not be returned!

Be sure that all the information requested is filled out and complete.

Be sure to have your audition uploaded by the specified time and date on the application. Don't leave it to the last minute in case you have technical problems with a computer or recording device.