

# **All-State Audition Tips**

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These tips are gleaned from my own experience taking auditions and from 30+ years of guiding my private flute students through their preparation for All-State auditions. During those 30 years, many of my students have successfully auditioned and were selected for the Florida All-State band and orchestra.

***FIRST***, get the requirements EARLY (they are posted in early May) and practice them all summer. They are on the FBA website under All-State auditions.

<http://fba.flmusiced.org/all-state/audition-requirements/>

***After you have the requirements---READ THEM thoroughly!*** Get a copy of the method book(s) in which they're found. Mark the page, the start and stop places and metronome speeds for each one. If you play the wrong piece or the wrong section of the right piece, you will NOT be chosen. Memorize the order and speed required for the major scales and chromatic.

***Major Scales:*** This portion of the audition is the most heavily weighted point wise, so it's important to know your scales absolutely thoroughly! Check the All-State judging rubric below for the specific point values assigned to scales. Playing your scales well proves to the judges that you can play equally well in all keys—a valuable asset to any group!

Memorize the order in which you must play the scales. You're required to perform them 2 octaves with arpeggios (3 octaves where possible) in under 2 minutes, 30 seconds. The standard today is to play 3 octaves on B major (if you have a B foot joint), C, Db, and D major. However, ***only attempt a scale 3 octave in an audition until you are fully confident in your ability to play it well.***

Practice your scales for accuracy FIRST. Gradually increase the speed over time. ALWAYS practice your scales with a metronome and record the speed at which you can play each one perfectly tongued up and slurred down. Time and record yourself regularly to find out where you stand within the overall time limit.

***Arpeggios:*** improve these by practicing the arpeggio first, then the scale, then the arpeggio again! You should also practice the arpeggios separately away from the scale. I recommend you practice from technique books like the Taffanel and Gaubert 17 Daily exercises, Moyses Daily Exercises and Trevor Wye Practice book, Vol. 2. Any one of these will help you improve both your scales and arpeggios.

***Chromatic Scale:*** The 3 octave chromatic scale is one of the most challenging parts of the audition. I recommend practicing it in note groups of 5 first (C-E, E-G#, G#-C) both forwards and backwards, tonguing up and slurring down. Do this slowly with a metronome beginning at quarter note=60. Once you can play the small chunks, then go up to 10 note chunks (C-G#, G#-E, etc.) The lowest and highest groups are usually the most difficult so focus your attention on practicing those. Plan where you are going to breathe as well. Having a planned breath improves your tone, note accuracy and consistency. Gradually increase the tempo until you've reached the required speed for the audition.

### **Lyrical and Technical Pieces:**

Double check the requirements to make sure that you've got the correct piece and measure numbers.

Note the tempo goal. DO NOT start your practice at this speed. It is the goal for the audition day. Start well below this goal tempo when learning the piece.

Note the key and learn the scale associated with that key! Use it as a warm-up!

Learn the rhythms, notes, articulations, and dynamics slowly.

Use your metronome—slowly at first, then gradually faster when comfortable.

Get guidance from an experienced teacher. A teacher can show you the quickest ways to improve and give you excellent feedback. A good teacher is worth the investment!

Record yourself often and listen back to learn where you need improvement.

Musical phrasing, a beautiful tone and expression is what sets you apart from the crowd, not just getting the notes at the right speed. If the piece is part of a duet, learn the other part and practice with a friend or record the other part and play a duet with yourself. Try memorizing the pieces too. Memorization of the pieces will help build your confidence.

**Sight-reading:** The only way to get better at sight-reading is to DO IT everyday. Practice sight-reading music you own or visit [www.sightreadingfactory.com](http://www.sightreadingfactory.com).

Learn how to quickly scan a piece to determine the time and key signatures and any difficult spots. Finger through the scale/key while scanning the piece.

Know your musical terms. Then establish a tempo that is steady (i.e. use your metronome) and a bit slower than what you think you can play.

Start playing and train yourself to keep going regardless! If you stumble, recover quickly and move on. Don't go back! It's not about getting all the right notes, but about showing accurate, steady rhythm and musicality under pressure. Don't sweat the small stuff. Try to show the bigger picture. You can alleviate the stress of sight-reading by starting and keeping a slow, reasonable tempo through the whole piece.

### **Final thoughts on auditioning:**

Record yourself often and time yourself on the scales, then listen back

Seek advice from an experienced teacher.

Play for others: first for friends and family, then for someone who makes you nervous (like your band director or private teacher)

Practice visualizing the perfect audition from start to finish.

Eat well and get a good night's sleep the night before the audition. Getting good nutrition and rest will help you play your best. Bring some water to the audition.

To build your confidence and calm nerves: think of other successful auditions or concerts you've played and any positive encouragement you've received in the past.

***In the warm up room:*** focus on breathing and tone. Avoid any last-minute runs through the pieces. Believe that you've done the preparation and that you're ready. Don't listen to others warming up—comparison will make you nervous and when all is said and done, it doesn't matter what people sound like there anyways. Listen to a calm recording on your phone. Avoid socializing with others before you play. Take the time to focus your thoughts and energies before auditioning.

**Most important:** remember that the audition is just a snapshot of your playing on one day. Keep things in perspective. If you did your best, then that's all you can do for that day. If you feel you could've played better, learn from that and focus on those things for next year's audition! Whether you get in or not, you've grown from the preparation and from taking the audition. Be proud of yourself, learn from the experience and keep practicing!