

CONDUCTING BASICS

The conductor's responsibilities include setting and maintaining the tempo, executing clear preparations and beats (meter), and listening critically and shaping the sound of the ensemble. However, the conductor's primary responsibility (especially in a beginning class) is to unify performers.

Almost any movement you make that helps keep your students together might be classified as conducting. Clapping, or tapping a stick, or holding up your hand and repeatedly displaying one, two, three, four fingers will help keep your students together more or less. So why do all the arm wagging?

The thing conducting patterns have that tapping does not, is a bounce. Conducting patterns are easy to follow because the bounces happen at a visually perceptible specific spot in time, which is much clearer than trying to decipher exactly when the second, third, or fourth finger 'appeared'. Even more importantly, the bounces give the overall motion a flowing quality that allows the performers to sense when *the next* bounce (beat) will happen; that's what keeps the performers together.

Begin practicing by making a downbeat. In order to have a downbeat, there must be an upbeat, or preparatory beat. The upbeat happens at the same speed as the downbeat – this is how the players or singers know when the downbeat will happen. Just dropping your hand from a stationary position does not give the group members enough information for them to come in together.

For a right-handed conductor:

- Hold your open hand in front of your shoulder.
- Move your hand to the left a bit, and bounce it off the make-believe tiny trampoline, causing your hand to ascend straight up.
- Drop your hand at the same speed with which you raised it, and bounce.
- Open your hands palms up & open, signifying that you want the playing to continue.
- When you are ready for the playing to stop, make a sweeping motion with your hands that results with your palms open but facing away from your body; what you can see is just the back of your hands.

Do it in front of the mirror. Practice until the bounce happens without you having to think about it. Then conduct a two pattern. When the upbeat and downbeat are equally long, and both are bouncing happily, learn the three and four patterns. Remember that a downbeat isn't a downbeat without an upbeat.

One way to practice is by air-conducting your favorite recorded music.

Conduct with your hand or a baton. Avoid using a finger, as it isn't as easy to see and sometimes people don't like being pointed at.

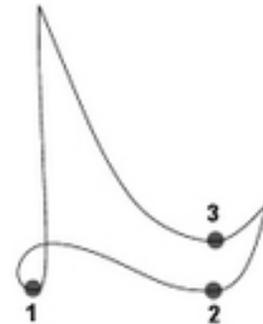
Two pattern

- Conduct the down beat, veering to the (right) side after the bounce.
- Return your hand to the focal point for beat two, and then bring it straight up again.



Three pattern

- Conduct the down beat, bringing your hand straight up after the bounce.
- Return your hand to the focal point for beat two, veering to the (right) side after the bounce.
- Return your hand to the focal point for beat three, and then bring it straight up again.



Four pattern

- Conduct the down beat, bringing your hand straight up after the bounce.
- Return your hand to the focal point for beat two, veering to the (left) side after the bounce.
- Return your hand to the focal point for beat three, veering to the (right) side after the bounce.
- Return your hand to the focal point for beat four, and then bring it straight up again.

