

Chapter XV: How to Use a Dot Book

In this chapter, you will learn:

- how to create your own dot book;
- how to fill out a pre-made dot book.

Dot books are the scripts of the marching performer. They are a series of reference charts that hold the most important bits of information on your show: where you are on the field, what your relationship to the dress is, what music you are playing, and so forth. A good dot book will have written down *all* the instructions necessary for you to march your show. If someone with the same height as you were to read your dot book, they should be able to march your show with the same techniques as you do: looking at the same visual cues, making the same direction changes, taking the same step offs, etc.

The dot book is useful in many different ways. The initial creation of the dot book helps you to remember the important elements on the field. It is much easier to remember something after you have written it down. After the dot book is complete, it serves as the best source of information about your show. If you have a question about where the drill designer put you, you can check your dot book. If you can't remember in which direction the next set is, check your dot book. Forgot your music; check your dot book.

The dot book also serves as a guidepost in your education. You will realize how much you know about your show based on how often you look at your dot book. When you have no questions about your show, when you know all the answers in your dot book before you look in it, then you have mastered your show.

The first thing you should do is plug in the easy stuff:

- Fill in the page and counts.

Page
2

This is the page you are on.

Counts
8

These are the counts it took to reach this page of the drill.

- Fill in your dot from the drill page in the small boxes.

Dot

8	FH
_____	B _____

ON	40
_____	O _____

How to Write a Dot

If you are working off of drill paper, you will essentially have two dots on the field. The first dot will be what is written on the drill page. This is the dot you should record first in the small boxes of the pre-printed dot book. This dot will place you on the field relatively close to where the visual director will ultimately place you. You will need to know this initial dot off the drill page during the learning process.

As always, each group will have their own method for charting dots. The method on this dot book is simple and widely used in the activity. Everything is labeled in regard to the front sideline and the 50-yard line (the strongest part of gravity on the field). For every set, you will either be on or outside of a yard line and on or behind the front sideline or hash. Some groups also say you can be inside a yard line or forward a sideline or hash; the reason this dot book does not use these terms is to avoid confusion. Outside a yard line and behind a sideline or hash mark is what you will see when your eyes are focused on the drum major.

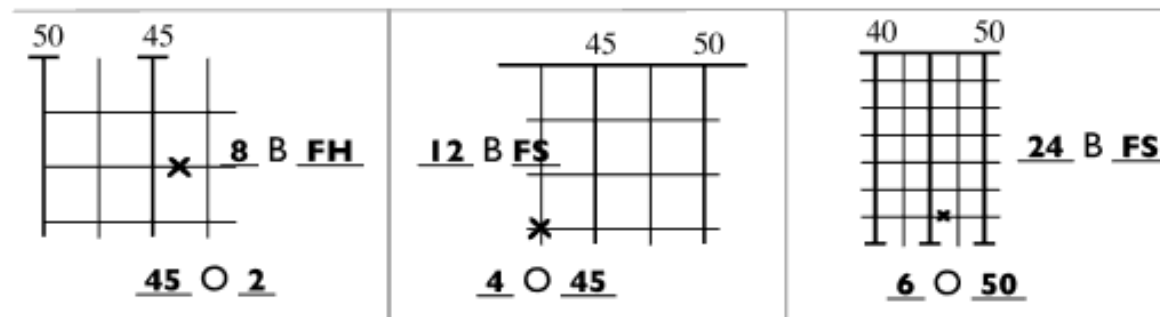
Another reason for accenting behind and outside is to re-enforce your eye focus. The more you stand in performance position, the stronger your show will be. If you can check every dot and visual cue without moving your eyes, then you are reinforcing what you see during a performance, and your show will be very strong indeed. If you have to look behind you to a hash mark to check your dot, you will not be as confident that you are accurate during the show. When it looks right in the grid of your eye, it is right.

The shorthand for dots is very simple. You are dealing with hashes, a sideline, yard lines, and whether you are behind or outside of them. The only words you are dealing with are front sideline, front hash, back hash, behind, and outside. Simply take the first letter of each word to use as a shorthand: front sideline becomes FS, front hash becomes FH, back hash becomes BH, behind becomes B, and outside becomes O.

There is a trick to marking outside of a yard line. You will obviously notice that there are two of each yard line on the field: two 45-yard lines, two 40-yard lines, and so on. Some groups handle this by labeling the two separate sides of the field. Your group may use theater terms calling them field left and field right, viewing it from your perspective, or box left and box right, viewing it from the audience's perspective. Your group may label sides, calling field right, side one and field left, side two. In your dot book, you might want to avoid learning more shorthand and writing more letters. There is an easy way to handle this.

The first thing you will want to do is notice where your drum major is: straight behind the 50-yard line. Then notice where you are on the field. Think of yourself as the "O". Ask yourself if the drum major is on your left or your right. Whichever side your drum major is on is the side you write your yard line number. So if the drum major is on your right, you write, "O 45," and if the drum major is on your left, you write, "45 O." The next step is to count how many steps you are outside of the yard line and fill that in on the other side (e.g. 4 O 45, 45 O 2). Look at figures 15.2 for more examples.

Figs. 15.2



Filling in the Drill Page Section

On the pre-printed dot book (Fig. 15.1), there is a small drill page. It fills up a lot of space, and that is because it holds a great deal of information. If you need a quick check of where you are going next, you can check this section. If you need to be refreshed on your stepsize, you can find it here. If you ever needed to reference the interval between you and your dress, this is where you would find it.

The first thing you will notice is that there are boxes at the top of the yard lines. The boxes at the top are for you to write in the yard lines for your part of the field, particularly the ones you are between.

On the dark, vertical yard lines are dotted horizontal lines. The space between these lines represents four, 8:5 steps. If you are near the front sideline, you can draw a straight line across the top set of dotted lines. If you are near a hash mark, you can fill in each dotted segment.

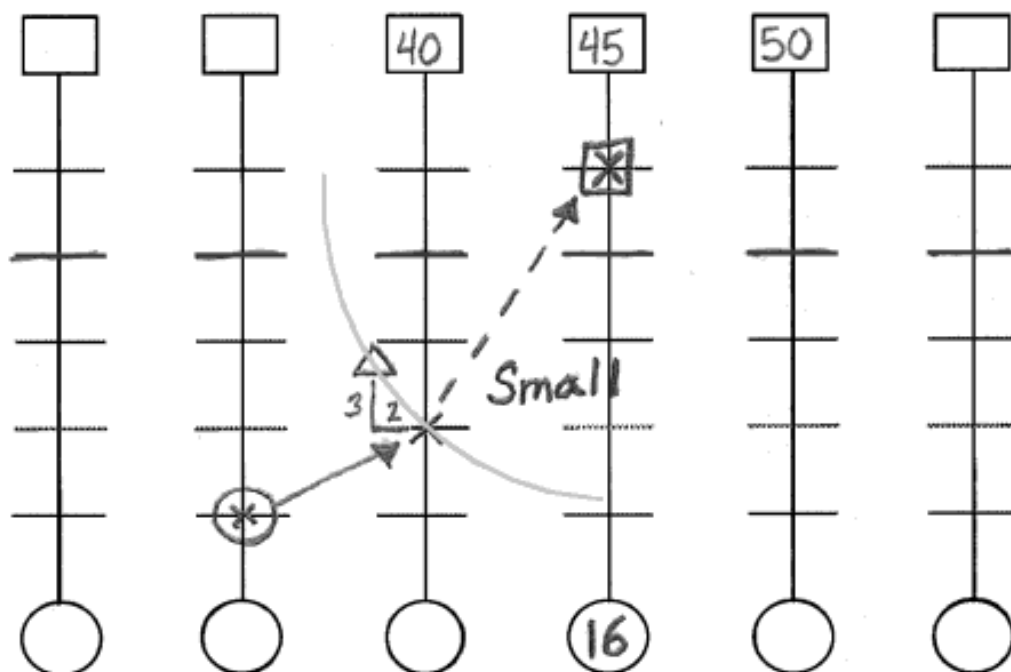
The next step is to mark yourself on the drill page. Your dot is already written down, so all you have to do transfer it to the page. Label yourself with an X. Then find out where you are dressing. If you are dressing to another person, find out where they are on the grid and label them Δ. Count the rise

and run to them and mark it down on the grid. If you are the foundation point, draw the Δ over your X. After you have marked yourself and the dress, draw a line in the shape of the form you are in.

Then go back a page in your dot book and look at where you just were. It is important to know on every dot where you just came from and where you are going next so that your feet are always accurately placed. Mark on the grid your previous dot as an X with an O circling it. Draw a vector arrow from your previous dot to your current dot.

Once you have established where you are and where you have been, find out where next you are going. Go to the next page of drill and find your dot coordinate. On your grid, label that next dot as an X with a \square around it. Draw a dotted line vector between the dot you are on and the next dot. This will give you a pretty accurate idea of the direction you will next march.

There are two other pieces of information to put on this grid. Both can be calculated through mathematical formulas, but it is probably easier to wait until you get to the field and are able to experiment. The first bit of information is to label the line of your next move with a stepsize. After you have successfully marched the set on the field, you can simply label it with a word that will help you remember: comfortable, baby steps, or hauling. At the bottom of the grid lines there are little circles. These circles are for you to write in the count you are on as you cross these yard lines. Say you are marching from one 45-yard line to the next in sixteen counts. You would cross the 50-yard line on count eight, and you would write "8" in the circle at the bottom under that yard line. You will be able to see on the grid if you are crossing a yard line during that set. Once you know you are marching the set consistently, you can fill this information in. Flip through your dot book at least once a week to see if you are missing any of your yard line crosses.



On the drill page section:

- Fill in the yard line numbers;
- Mark where the sideline is or hashes are;
- Mark yourself as an X;
- Mark the marcher you dress to as a Δ (place an Δ around yourself if you are the foundation point);
- Write in your rise and run to the dress;
- Mark where you were the previous page as an X with a O around it;
- Draw a line with arrow from your previous set to your current set
- Mark where you are on the next page as an X with \square around it;
- Draw a dotted line with an arrow from your current set to the next set;
- If you can calculate your stepsize, fill that in. If you cannot calculate your stepsize, wait until you can perform the set on the field.
- If you can calculate on what count you will cross a yard line, fill in that number in the circle below that yard line. If you can't calculate it, fill in that information during drill rehearsal.

Feet and Direction

Since you already know your direction vectors from your grid, you can transfer them to the direction box on the upper page. Draw your arrows into and away from the center of the cross hairs. If you have a good idea of how big or small your stepsize will be, you can go ahead and draw in your foot placements – bigger stepsizes can be represented by drawing smaller feet. The middle of the cross hairs is the center of your body over top of the dot you are on – draw your feet just as you would place your actual feet in relation to the dot. These drawings represent your feet as they would be during a performance. The sooner you start training your feet to stand on the dot in the *performance position*, the sooner you will master your show. What better way to start learning the drill than to already know how your feet are placed?



- Transpose your arrows from the drill page section marking from where you came and to where you are going;
- Draw your foot positions as they will be in the show.

Music

On the staff lines, copy the music you played from the last dot to the dot you are currently on. You may even want to include the first note or measure of the next phrase as a quick reference. The small box at the beginning is for letters that may appear on the score. It is a good idea to also mark down the measure numbers under each individual measure. Add all accents, dynamic markings, and anything else that will help you play the music as the composer or arranger intended it to be.

