

# Drum Instructions

Compiled by Ron Glidden from

## A Plan of Discipline for the use of the Norfolk Militia

*Written by William Windham, 1759*

***plus miscellaneous General Orders, &c.***



*The effect of the musick in regulating the step, and making the men keep their order, is really very extraordinary; and experience seems fully to confirm Marshal Aze's opinion; who asserts, that it is the best and indeed the only method of teaching troops to march well; and of making a large body (especially of any considerable depth) move all together; and advance faster or slower as may be required, in a regular uniform manner, without opening its ranks, or falling into disorder.*

William Windham

# Drummer's Instructions

## Directions for Marching and Wheeling by Platoons or Divisions

The drummers must keep opposite the center of the platoon; taking care strictly to observe their proper distance from the officers, and from the men. The distance between the officers and the front rank of the men is four paces; between the drummers and the front rank of the men two paces.

## Of Sizing and Viewing the Company and Forming it into Ranks at the Place of Assembly.

The sergeants are to post themselves on the right of the front rank, in line with the men; the drummers on the right of them.

## Of Marching off the Company to the Places of Exercise

The captain is to march at the head of the center of the first file, the ensign on the flank of the front rank, and the lieutenant on the rear opposite the center of the last file; the drummers just behind the captain.

## Upon Forming the Company and Drawing it up on the Place of Exercise

When the company wheels in order to form, as soon as the captain comes upon the ground where he intends to halt, he faces to his division, and gives the word *Halt!* At which the drummers advance to the front ten paces, beating the *Troop*, and take a post opposite the center of the company.

When the captain has seen that the men dress well, and the files cover as they should do; he gives a signal to the other officers, and they all go to the right together; the drummers then cease beating.

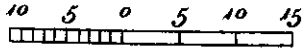
The drummers are posted to the right of captain, ten paces to the front of the company and facing the company when it is thus formed.

## Dismissal of the Men

...after which he will command them to rest, shoulder, and club their firelocks, and give the word *To the right about*, and dismiss them with a ruffle of the drum.

# Position of the Drummers

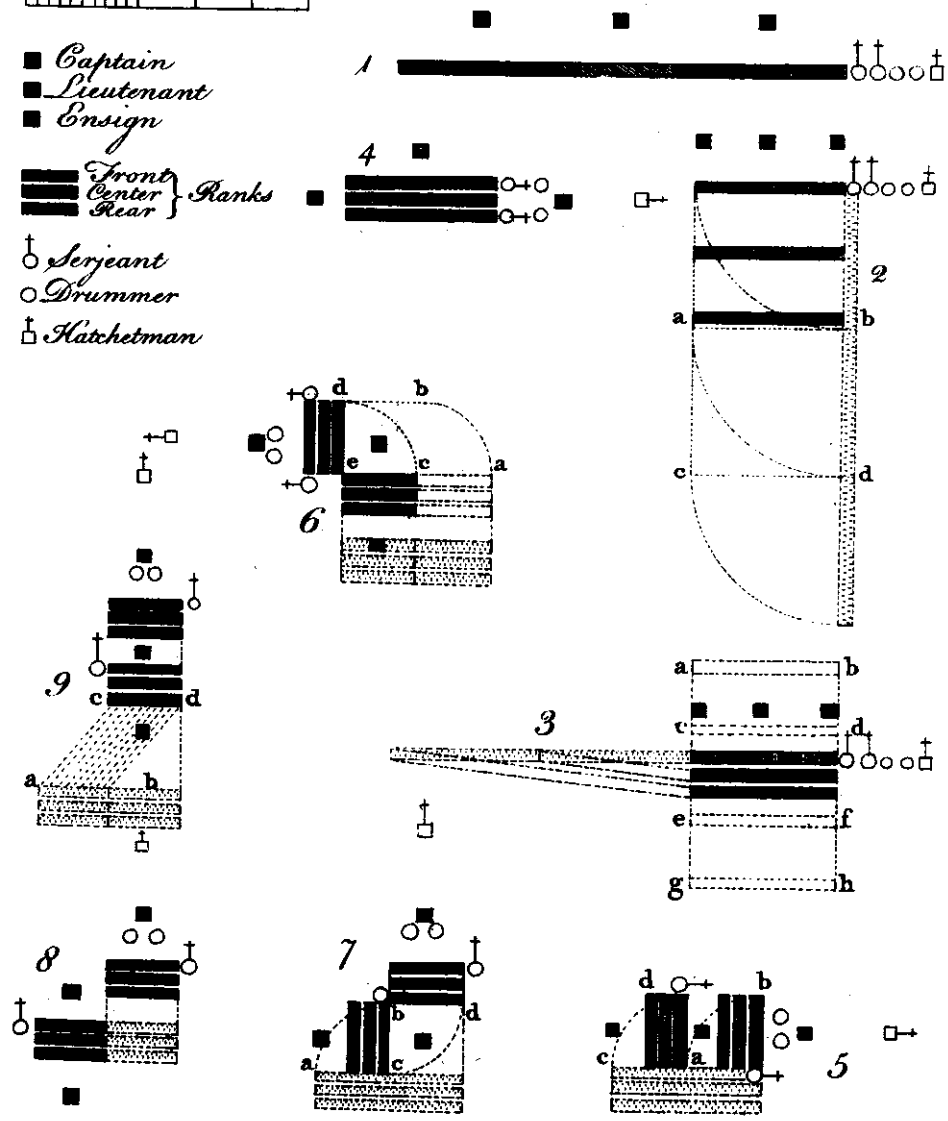
Scale of Paces of 2 feet each

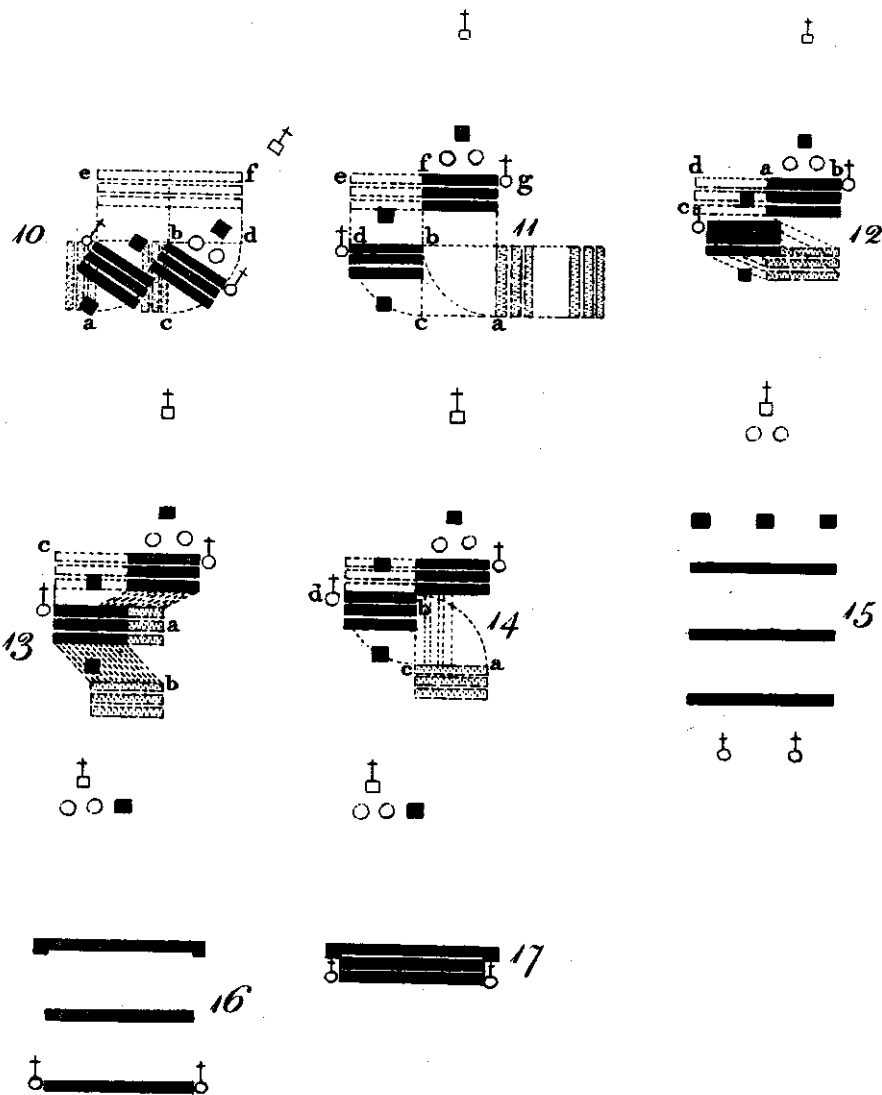


- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Ensign

- ▬ Front
  - ▬ Center
  - ▬ Rear
- Ranks

- † Serjeant
- Drummer
- Hatchetman





Length of Step: 24 inch step  
 Tempo of Cadence: 60 common step - 120 quick step

## ART. V.

### *The different Beats on the Drum, and when they are to be used.*

#### I. The REVEILLE

The *Reveille* is to be beat in a morning, as soon as it is light enough to see to read writing; this is to be done by drummers of the guard in the front of the guard-room, or place where the guard draws up.

#### II. The GENERAL

If all the troops are to march that day, the reveille is to be omitted and the *General* is to be beat, by all drummers round the quarters, at the time appointed by the commanding officer; that is to say, if *all* the troops that are present in quarters are to march; but not otherwise, it being a signal for the whole to turn out, and prepare for marching.

#### III. The ASSEMBLY

Some time after the *General* has been beat, the drummers are to beat the *Assembly*; at which, the men are to repair to, and draw up at the appointed posts of their respective companies; or where else they should be ordered. If only part of the troops are to march, the *Assembly* is to be beat instead of the *General*; and some time after that, to be beat a second time, for the men to assemble.

#### IV. To ARMS

*To Arms* is the signal for the whole to take arms; or for the battalion to stand to their arms, if they have grounded them; or at first forming; in that case it is not to be beat above two minutes at a time, but not to be beat at all, if the whole be already formed.

## V. The TROOP

The *Troop* which is the same as the *Assembly*; and is to be beat at the head of the battalion, or a guard, before it marches off, to call the officers, &c. to their posts. It is likewise used, when the grenadiers go for the colours, and when they return with them; and also when the guards are relieved, (if it be a guard without colours,) the officer is to order the guard to club, and the drummers beat the troop in marching back to the parade.

## VI. The GRENADIERS MARCH

The *Grenadiers March* should never be beat but with the Grenadiers; or when the whole advances to charge an enemy.

## VII. The BATTALION or FOOT MARCH

The *Battalion* or *Foot March* is to be beat when the battalion or any part of it marches, but never but with shouldered arms.

## VIII. The RETREAT

The *Retreat* is to be beat when the battalion is to retreat, and then very slowly: and also at sunset, at some fixed post, by the drummers of the guard; in order for the men to assemble, for the rolls of the companies to be called, and for the officers to read and deliver, what orders they have received for the men of their respective companies.

## IX. The TATTOO

The *Tattoo* is to be beat at an hour appointed by the commanding officer; (which is generally eight in winter, and ten in summer by all drummers round the quarters: this signal is for all the men to be in their quarters; and the sergeants are to go round and see that they are so.)

## X. XI. XII.

### The SERGEANTS and DRUMMERS CALLS

The *Sergeants* and *Drummers Call* are almost needless to mention, as well as the *Dead March*, and some other trifling beats.

## XIII.

Notwithstanding what we have said against the method of going through the exercise by beat of the drum, and that we think it much better to accustom the men to be attentive to, and obey the words of command: yet, as on certain occasions, especially in action, the voice cannot be heard; the method recommended by Monf. De Bombelles, (and which we are informed is introduced into the French Discipline,) of having certain signals on the drum appointed; which denote the nature of the motions to be performed, as well as the time when they are to be commenced; is, certainly a very good one: we shall therefore give a sketch of such as we have thought of, rather as a hint, than any thing more; being very sensible, that great improvements may be made in this scheme, which we ourselves have scarce practiced, or attempted to perfect. It seems however very strange, that nothing of this sort has already been done; which it has not, with us at least, that ever we heard of.

## XIV. SIGNALS *for the* DRUM

Turn or face to the right!	1 single stroke, and flam
Turn or face to the left!	2 single strokes, and flam
To the right about face!	3 single strokes, and flam
To the left about face!	4 single strokes, and flam
Halt!	Flam
Wheel to the right!	Roll, 1 single stroke, and flam
Wheel to the left!	Roll, 2 single strokes, and flam
Wheel to the right about!	Roll, 3 single strokes, and flam
Wheel to the left about!	Roll, 4 single strokes, and flam
Make Ready!	Preparative
Cease Firing!	The General (first four bars)
March!	March, and flam
Retreat!	Retreat, and a flam
Advance by the double step	Grenadiers March
Charge bayonets!	Point of War (Reveille first part)
Divisions to close up!	Troop
Form Battalion!	To Arms
Club, marching	Drummers Call, and flam
Shoulder, marching	March, and flam
Fix Bayonets, marching	Roll, and flam
Return Bayonets, marching	2 ruffs, and flam

If the wheelings are to be performed by subdivisions, which is our most common way of doing them, the plain signal will serve; if by platoons, or grand divisions, the voice must be used which; as we apprehend the signals would become too complicated, and even confused; the distinctions on the drum being so few, as to admit of scarce any variations.

We have endeavored to avoid any ambiguity, which might perplex the men; by the flams being almost always the signal to determine the time, when the first motion is to be begun: otherwise in the facings and wheelings, they would be apt to begin the motion, at the first strokes; without waiting for the signals being finished.

# Misc. Drummers Orders, &c.

## **Head Quarters, Verplanks Point, September 24, 1782.**

When Guards march by Platoons it is to be observed as a General rule, that the Drummers and fifers if there be any, dress with the front rank of the first Platoon, the Drumr. on the right of the Serjeant, and the filer on the right of the Drummer.

## **Head Quarterf, Verplanks Point, Monday, September 16, 1782.**

Until further orders the Drummer and Filers of the different regiments will every day practice between the hours of ten and twelve.

## **In Congress December 24, 1781.**

Resolved, That in future no recruit shall be enlisted to serve as a drummer or fifer. When such are wanted, they shall be taken from the soldiers of the corps in such numbers and of such description as the Commander in Chief or commanding officer of a separate army shall direct, and be returned back and others drawn out as often as the good of the service shall make necessary. That all drummers and filers, after being supplied each with a good drum and fife, shall keep the same in repair by stoppages from his pay, in such manner as the commanding officer of the corps shall direct.

## **Head quarters Peaks Kill August 25th 1781**

Troop beating----- "The Singling of the Troop" being the assembly, "The Doubling of the Troop" being the opening of ranks for colors/inspection.

## **Head Quarters Tarry Town July 7. 1781**

No Drums to beat without particular orders-

## **Head Quarters, Monday, July 20, 1778.**

The Commander in Chief directs that no drums beat after Retreat beating 'till Reveillee, unless by a general Order. Commanding Officers of Regiments and Corps are desired to see this order punctually complied with.

**Head-Quarters, V. Forge, Saturday, May 9, 1778.**

The hours appointed for the Exercise of the Troops having been changed makes it necessary to alter the hours appointed for the Drummers to practice which will for the future be from five to six in the morning and from four to five in the afternoon, any Drummer that shall be found practicing at any other than the time mentioned above shall be severely punished. The Adjutants of the several Regiments are to pay particular Attention to this order as they will be answerable for the Execution of it.

The use of Drums are as signals to the Army and if every Drummer is allowed to beat at his pleasure, the Intention is entirely destroyed, as it will be impossible to distinguish whether they are beating for their own pleasure or for a signal to the Troops

**At a Board of War, 23<sup>r</sup>. August, 1777.**

That the Subalterns in the Army be furnished with Muskets and Bayonets at the Expence of the States, and that all able bodied Fifers and Drummers be obliged to do duty as Soldiers and be furnished with Arms.

**Head Quarters, Middle-Brook, June 4, 1777.**

The music of the army being in general very bad; it is expected, that the drum and fife Majors exert themselves to improve it, or they will be reduced, and their extraordinary pay taken from them. Stated hours to be assigned, for all the drums and fifes, of each regiment, to attend them and practice--Nothing is more agreeable, and ornamental, than good music; every officer, for the credit of his corps, should take care to provide it.

The *revellie* to be beaten at day-break--the *troop* at 8 o'clock in the morning, and *retreat* at sunset. For the sake of regularity, the drum of the regiment, on the right of the line, to give three taps, allowing a sufficient equal space between each, as a warning to the drum of the one next on the left; which is to do the same, and so on, through the whole--the second line taking it by the right from the regiment in front, and the advanced Brigades, by the right from the regiment in the rear--These taps over, and a proper interval allowed for the warning to become general, the *drummer's call* must be given as the signal for what is to follow; and then the whole music of the line begin in concert--the *revellie*, *troop* or *retreat*, as it may happen.