

Alabama All State Clarinet Audition

8-week boot camp

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Whether this is your first time auditioning for All State or you have a few auditions under your belt, this 8-week boot camp will help you prepare for Alabama All State Band auditions in January. I'm a veteran of the Alabama All State Band system, having made 1st chair in the Red Band multiple times, and I also received 1st prize in the Alabama All State Solo Competition. Now, I perform professionally and teach the next generation of clarinetists how to prepare for All State auditions and beyond. My students regularly make top chairs in every All State band and receive Superior ratings at the State Solo Festival. I hope this boot camp helps you or your students prepare for your All State audition!

Here's a boot camp breakdown:

This boot camp is divided into 8 weeks. If you begin in mid to late November, you will have time to complete the boot camp before the All State auditions in January. I have included each of the four components of the All State audition each week – scales, etudes (technical and lyrical), and sight-reading. This practice plan is designed for absolute beginners, so more advanced players or those who have already begun preparing can adjust accordingly or use this plan as an opportunity to review and polish material already covered.

I have included specific goals for each of the All State components each week. I have not created a specific daily practice plan, as each student's practice schedule may vary. I recommend practicing 5-6 days every week for at least an hour for maximum improvement.

Scales

Junior High: "Students will have 4 minutes from the first note of the C scale to complete the scale requirements: 12 major scales, C Harmonic Minor, A melodic minor, chromatic scale. Scales will be played one octave, as specified on each instrument's scale sheet. Students must pass five major scales and related arpeggios to continue the audition process. All scales must be memorized."

Senior High: "Wind players must correctly play a minimum of seven scales and their related arpeggios. All scales must be memorized. Scales to be played at a suggested tempo of MM quarter note = 120. All major scales (and the 2 minor scales) must be played two octaves. The chromatic scale must be played from low E to G above the staff three octaves and a third."

- **ALWAYS practice scales with a metronome!** As you learn new scales each week, begin at a slower tempo (MM=40-60) and slowly increase the speed throughout the week. Repetition is the secret to great scales!
- **Break down each scale.** Here are a few ways to practice scales:
 - Add-a-note: Play the first note several times, then the first two notes several times, then the first three notes, etc until you've completed the entire scale.
 - One octave at a time (for senior high clarinetists who must play all scales two octaves)
 - Ascending scales
 - Descending scales
 - Arpeggio (ascending then descending)
- **Don't neglect previous scales.** This boot camp is designed to add 2-3 scales each week in addition to the scales you've already practiced. For example, in week two, you should focus on learning the Eb and Ab scale in addition to the three scales from Week 1. By week 7, you should be playing all scales, including chromatic.

Etudes

In addition to learning the proper notes and rhythms, make sure you are following the dynamics, tempo, and other extra-musical instructions, such as articulation and stylistic details. Spend a portion of each practice session “woodshedding,” where you repeat each section to improve accuracy and precision. Your practice session should also include a performance component, in which you perform each section without stopping to fix any mistakes. This will increase mental focus and stamina. As with scales, make sure you are adding each week's sections to previous week's sections, so you do not need to relearn anything. Record yourself and critique these recordings to maximize improvement.

Sight-Reading

Sight-reading is a skill which can be improved like anything else, although most students neglect to practice it! The key to improve your sight-reading is to practice a variety of short pieces in a variety of styles. Each week of this boot camp contains a specific aspect of sight-reading to focus on, such as note identification or rhythm. The great thing about sight-reading is that you can use any piece of music for any instrument to practice, but here are a few of my favorite sight-reading resources:

- All-State Sight Reading series – available at www.larrysallstatemusic.com/
- www.sightreadingfactory.com – You can customize your sight-reading by difficulty, duration, key signature, and many more variables.
- www.imslp.org – Find tons of music for free online!
- Band books – Flip through your band book to find exercises to sight read.

Additional All State audition advice

- The key to improvement is consistent practice. You can't cram for a musical audition, so make sure to start well in advance and practice regularly to increase your chances of making All State.
- Know all your scales! Many musicians only prepare 5 or 7 scales (the required amount to pass the scale room) but remember that you must play these scales PERFECTLY in order to make it to the etude room. Scales are arguably the easiest part of the audition because they remain the same every year. You should be able to play all your scales with very few mistakes. Remember, repetition is the secret to build the muscle memory necessary for scales.
- Take lessons. Find a band director or private lessons instructor who can provide personal attention as a supplement to your individual practice.

Here are a few articles I've written to help you with your All State preparation (all articles can be found on www.jennyclarinet.com):

- The Complete Guide to Making All State
- How to Become a Master Sight Reader
- The Musician's Practice Quilt – a guide to practicing and preparing music
- I Got (Better) Rhythm
- The Prepared Musician's Pre-Performance Mental Checklist
- The Musician's Practice Pyramid

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a Skype lesson for personal All State coaching, you can use the Contact page on Jenny Clarinet.

Happy practicing!

Senior High Clarinet

Abbreviations:

All State Lyrical = ASL

All State Technical = AST

Sight-reading=SR

Week 1

- **Scales:** C, F, Bb
 - **AST:** measures 1-8
 - **ASL:** measures 1-9 (Good news! Measures 6-9 are nearly identical to measures 21-24, so once you've mastered these measures, you've already learned half of the etude!)
 - **SR:** Note identification
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Week 2

- **Scales:** Eb, Ab
 - **AST:** measures 9-16
 - **ASL:** measures 10-15
 - Don't get discouraged! There are some tricky rhythms, so double check that you're playing them correctly. If you're uncertain, ask your band director or music teacher to demonstrate. Focus on a measure a day, and don't forget to use a metronome!
 - **SR:** Rhythm
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Week 3

- **Scales:** Db, Gb
 - **AST:** measures 17-24
 - **ASL:** measures 16-20
 - **SR:** Time signatures
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Week 4

- **Scales:** B, E
- **AST:** measures 25-34 (Congrats, you made it through the technical etude!)
- **ASL:** measures 21-24 (This should look familiar!)
- **SR:** Key signatures

Week 5

- **Scales:** A, D, G
 - **AST:** measures 1-16
 - **ASL:** measures 1-15
 - Polish any rough spots and begin to increase the tempo for both etudes.
 - **SR:** Dynamics
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Week 6

- **Scales:** c harmonic minor, a melodic minor
 - **AST:** measures 17-34
 - **ASL:** measures 16-24
 - Polish any rough spots and begin to increase the tempo for both etudes.
 - **SR:** Vocabulary (dolce, cantabile, etc)
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Week 7

- **Scales:** chromatic
 - **AST:** all
 - **ASL:** all
 - Continue increasing tempo; practice mock auditions in which you play through the entire etude without stopping, despite any mistakes you may make
 - **SR:** Combine all elements
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Week 8

Mock audition week

Do daily mock auditions in which you play every scale, etude, and sight-reading in All State order without stopping, no matter how many mistakes you make. This will build physical endurance and mental stamina for the actual audition. Record and critique yourself regularly. To simulate the nerves you'll likely have at the audition, ask your band director, private clarinet instructor, or anyone else to judge these mock auditions.

- **Scales:** all
- **AST:** all
- **ASL:** all
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Junior High Clarinet

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Bonus tip: Practice the lyrical etude by playing duets with yourself! Record yourself playing one line and play along with the recording. You can also play this as a duet with your clarinet friends.

Week 1

- **Scales:** C, F, Bb
 - **AST:** measures 1-2
 - **ASL:** measures 1-4
 - **SR:** Note identification
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Week 2

- **Scales:** Eb, Ab
 - **AST:** measures 3-4
 - **ASL:** measures 5-9
 - **SR:** Rhythm
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Week 3

- **Scales:** Db, Gb
 - **AST:** measures 5-6
 - **ASL:** measures 10-14
 - **SR:** Time signatures
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Week 4

- **Scales:** B, E
 - **AST:** measures 7-8 (Congrats, you made it through the technical etude!)
 - **ASL:** measures 15-22 (Congrats, you made it through the lyrical etude!)
 - **SR:** Key signatures
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Week 5

- **Scales:** A, D, G
 - **AST:** measures 1-16
 - **ASL:** measures 1-9
 - Polish any rough spots and begin to increase the tempo in both etudes.
 - **SR:** Dynamics
-

Week 6

- **Scales:** c harmonic minor, a melodic minor
 - **AST:** measures 17-34
 - **ASL:** measures 10-22
 - Polish any rough spots and begin to increase the tempo in both etudes.
 - **SR:** Vocabulary (dolce, cantabile, etc)
-

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- **Scales:** chromatic
 - **AST:** all
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