

S.T.A.R.S. – Sight-reading Guidelines

S – **Sharps or Flats in the Key Signature.** Identify Key Signature first! Silently practice notes from the Key Signature. Look for Key Signature changes in the piece

T – **Time Signature and tempo markings.** Identify and look for changes in these in the piece of music

A – **Accidentals** – check for any accidentals not found in the Key Signature.

R – **Rhythm** – Silently Count and Clap (when instructed to do so) all difficult rhythms. Pay special attention to Rests!

S – **Signs** – look for all signs that indicate **Dynamics, Articulations, Tempo Changes, Repeats, 1st and 2nd Endings,** and any other instructions printed on your music.



THE SIX COMMANDMENTS FOR DEVELOPING SIGHT READING SKILL³ (CONTINUED)

1. **Sight Read More:** “We learn by doing.” Set aside a specific part of *each* practice period for sight reading practice. Just as you work to improve your tone quality, rhythm, and/or technical skill, the same is for sight reading. If you have difficulty sight reading music, start with easy material first. As your skills begin to improve, gradually increase the difficulty of material.

2. **Develop the Proper Attitude:** “A strong desire to become an excellent sight reader.” Every new piece of music encountered in rehearsal (including the music in your method book) should be viewed as an opportunity for developing your sight reading skill.

3. **Develop Your Powers of Concentration:** “A question of mind over matter.” Reading music at sight requires total concentration. Practice sight reading when your mind is fresh and alert.

4. **Don’t Stop:** “Good sight readers are constantly reading ahead.” When you sight read a piece of music, don’t stop until you reach the end. In ensemble (group) sight reading, always try to keep your place in the music by focusing on beat one in each measure: skip what is too difficult and come back in when you can.

5. **Know Your Instrument:** “Good sight readers recognize patterns of sound and rhythms.” Technical proficiency (know-how) on your instrument is necessary if you wish to become a good sight reader – scales, articulations (tonguing), dynamics, flexibility, tone, alternate fingerings or slide positions, and so on.

6. **Analyze the Music Before You Play It:** “Sight read it in your head before you sight play it on your instrument.” Use the **S-T-A-R-S** method!



³ Garofalo, Robert. Blueprint for Band. Meredith Music Publications, 1983.