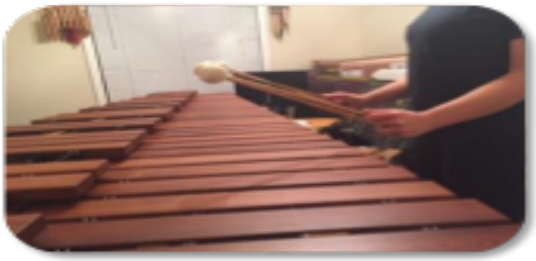
Keyboard Guidelines

Approach

When approaching a mallet instrument, make sure the instrument is at the appropriate height before setting your hands. The top of the keys should be at the same height as your waist or belt. Your feet should be shoulder-width apart and at an appropriate distance from the keyboard (one foot should be slightly in front of the other so you can move back and forth between manuals). This distance is determined by the length of your arm in relation to the type/size of the instrument. When you put your mallets in the center of the bar on the natural keys, your forearm should be slightly below level creating an angle greater than 90 degrees at the elbow. If your forearm is completely level then you need to lower the instrument.

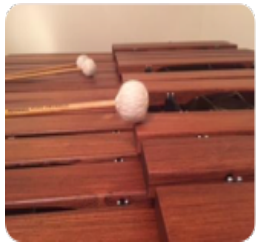
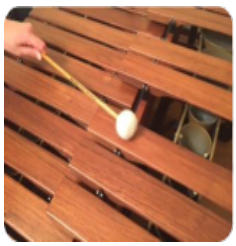
When playing vibraphone, the right foot will be on the pedal and the left will be comfortably behind the pedal. The balance point will be between the heel of the right foot and the ball of the left foot. When playing in the highest register it is suggested that the left foot go behind the right, to make sure the keys are played in the correct playing zone.

Playing Zones

The correct playing zones for keyboards are in the center of the bar directly over the resonators. For the accidentals it is best to aim for the top of the resonator tube to ensure that you play directly in the center of the bar. When playing on the edges of the marimba (not applicable to vibes, xylo, or bells) you must make sure you are not playing on the very edge of the key, so that you can produce a good full sound. **Do Not Play On The NODES!**

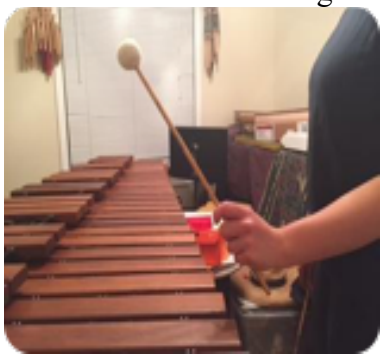
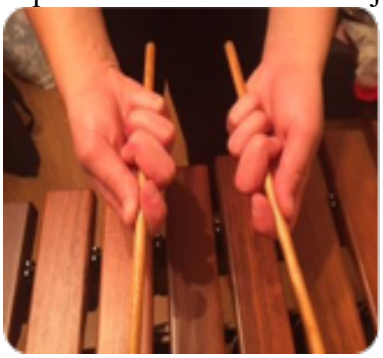
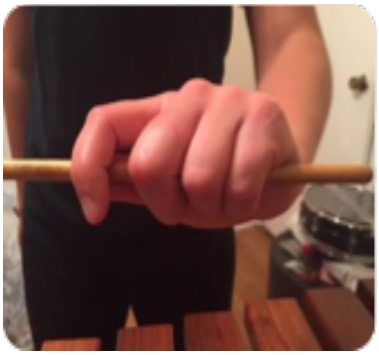
YES! **NO!!!** ☹

Two-Mallet Technique

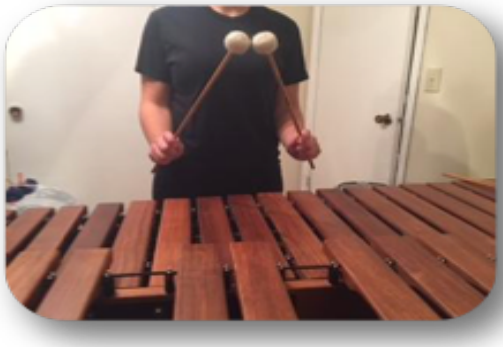
Grip

At CHS we use the “rear fulcrum” 2-mallet grip. You hold the mallet by the middle, ring, and pinky fingers with around 1½ inches from the back of the hand to the end of the mallet shaft. The thumb and index finger then wrap around the mallet (as seen in figure 2). These two fingers should not place any pressure on the mallet. The hand should not be flat but turned inwards at a slight angle (45 degrees). The wrist and arms should form a natural angle that puts no stress on the wrist joint.

Stroke

From the set position of about a half-inch above the bar, the stroke begins with the head of the mallet and then is continued through the wrist and arm in a fluid motion. The mallet should come directly up and not away or towards the body or move from side to side. At a moderate tempo the stroke will be mostly wrist and less arm. As the tempo increases the stroke will become all wrist, however as the tempo decreases you will incorporate arm to connect the strokes. The speed of the mallet coming down to make contact with the board should never change, but the speed of the rebound stroke will be determined by how fast or slow you are playing. When playing slow connected strokes the mallet should feel like there is a rubber band attached to the keys. So, when you move the mallet up it will be as if you are trying to stretch the rubber band. When you initiate the downward motion, the mallet will shoot downward, as if you gave in to the pull.



Four-Mallet Technique

Grip

At CHS we use the Steven's technique when playing four mallets. When beginning to learn Steven's technique we highly recommend purchasing "Method of Movement" by Leigh Howard Stevens. This method book has everything you could possibly need to fully understand the grip and different ways you can approach the instrument. This packet will go through the basics of setting the grip and striking the instrument with some of the different techniques that will be used at Central High School.

1. Turn your hand sideways in a "Handshaking" position.

2. For the inside mallet, put the "butt" of the mallet in the center of the palm, slightly above the "life Line" that goes around the thumb pad.

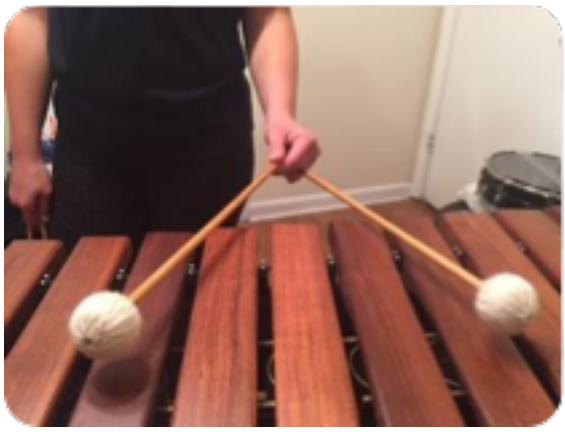
3. Curve out your pointer finger as if you were creating a perch for a small bird. The mallet will rest on the 3rd joint of the pointer finger, directly above the fingernail.

4. The Outside mallet will be placed in between the middle finger and the ring finger directly under the first joint (knuckle). The pinky and ring finger will then wrap around the bottom of the shaft.

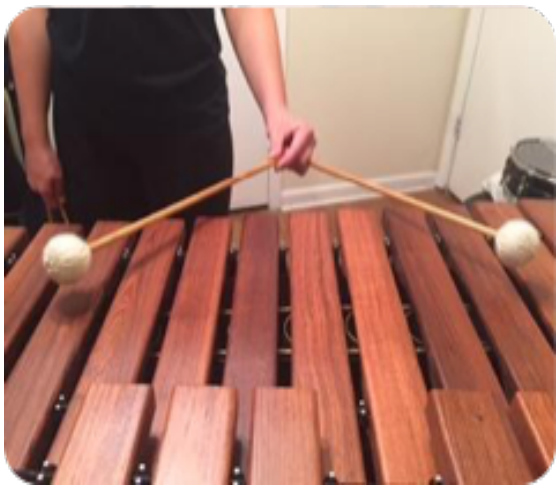
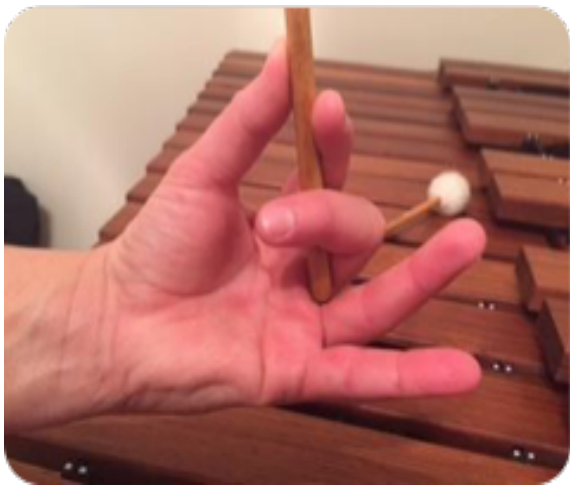
5. The thumb will rest on the top of the mallet creating a fulcrum for the inside mallet. The middle finger will then create stability by resting on the bottom of the shaft. (Your middle finger will either be on top of the shaft or slightly wrapped around it, depending on your hand size.)

Interval Changes

When changing intervals, your goal should be to always keep your thumb on top of the mallet and facing towards the ceiling. You should also make sure to keep your "perch" out and never curl your finger into your palm. Interval changes up to a seventh should always be done by "spinning" or rolling the mallet shaft in between the pointer finger and thumb. As you roll to a larger interval you will see that your pointer finger begins to straighten as your thumb remains on top of the mallet.

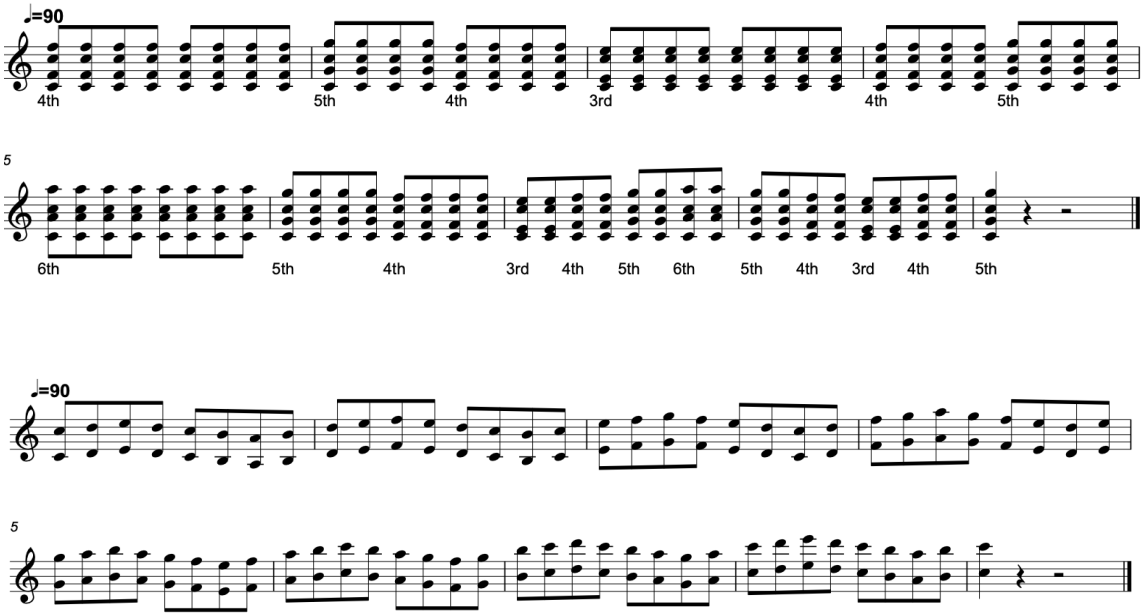
When using an extended octave grip for long use of right hand octaves or octaves at the bottom of the keyboard, (Left Hand) your mallet will roll up your palm towards the base of your fingers. The inside mallet will "lock" in to position at the base of the middle finger and at the top of the palm.

8’s

Option 1 To be played in Block, Left to Right, and Right to Left. Option 2 to be played in all Major Keys.

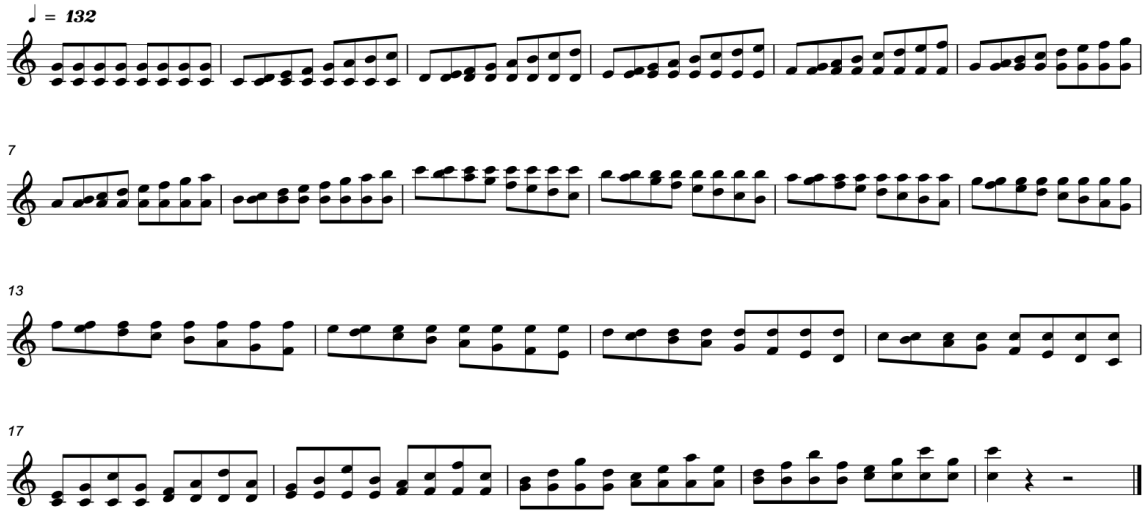
Metronome at Quarter Note 80-200



Accent Tap

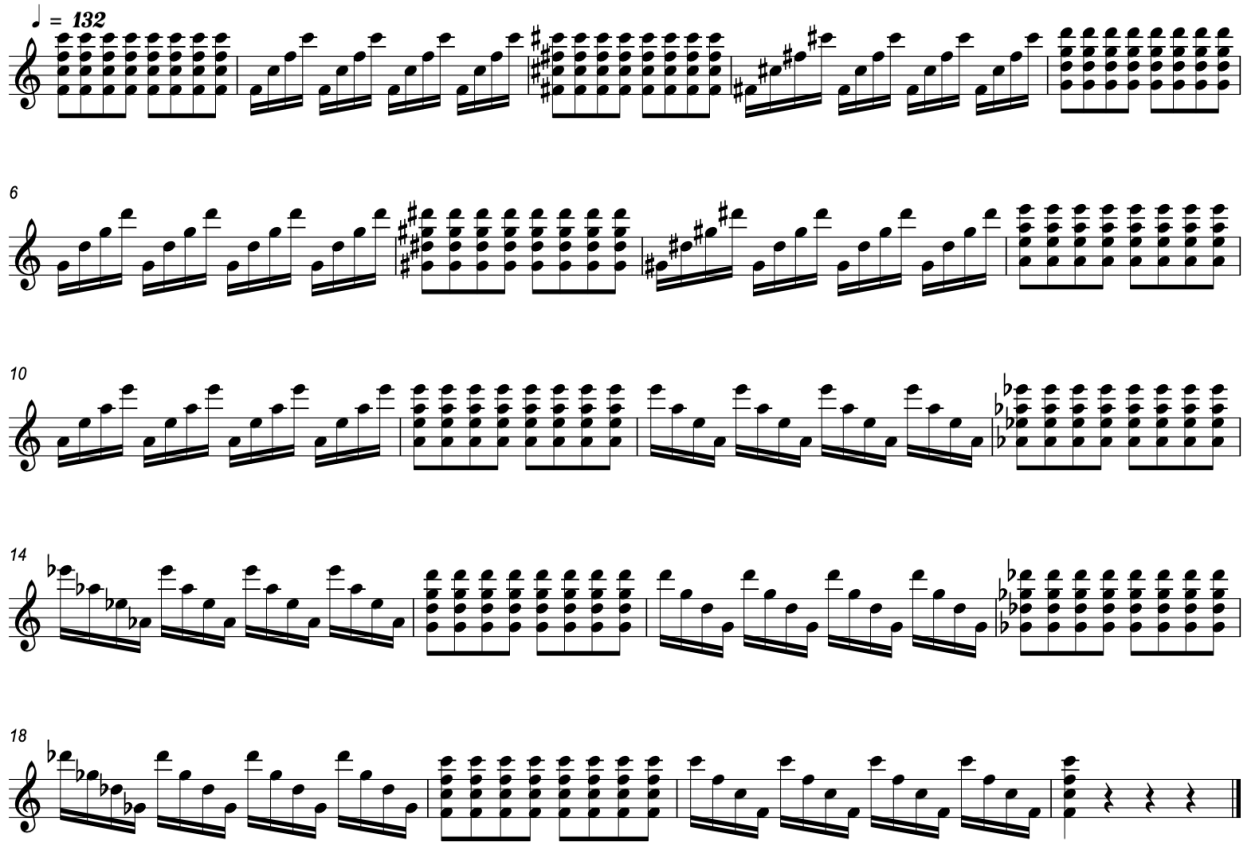
To be played in all Major Keys

Metronome at Quarter Note 90-150



Double Beat

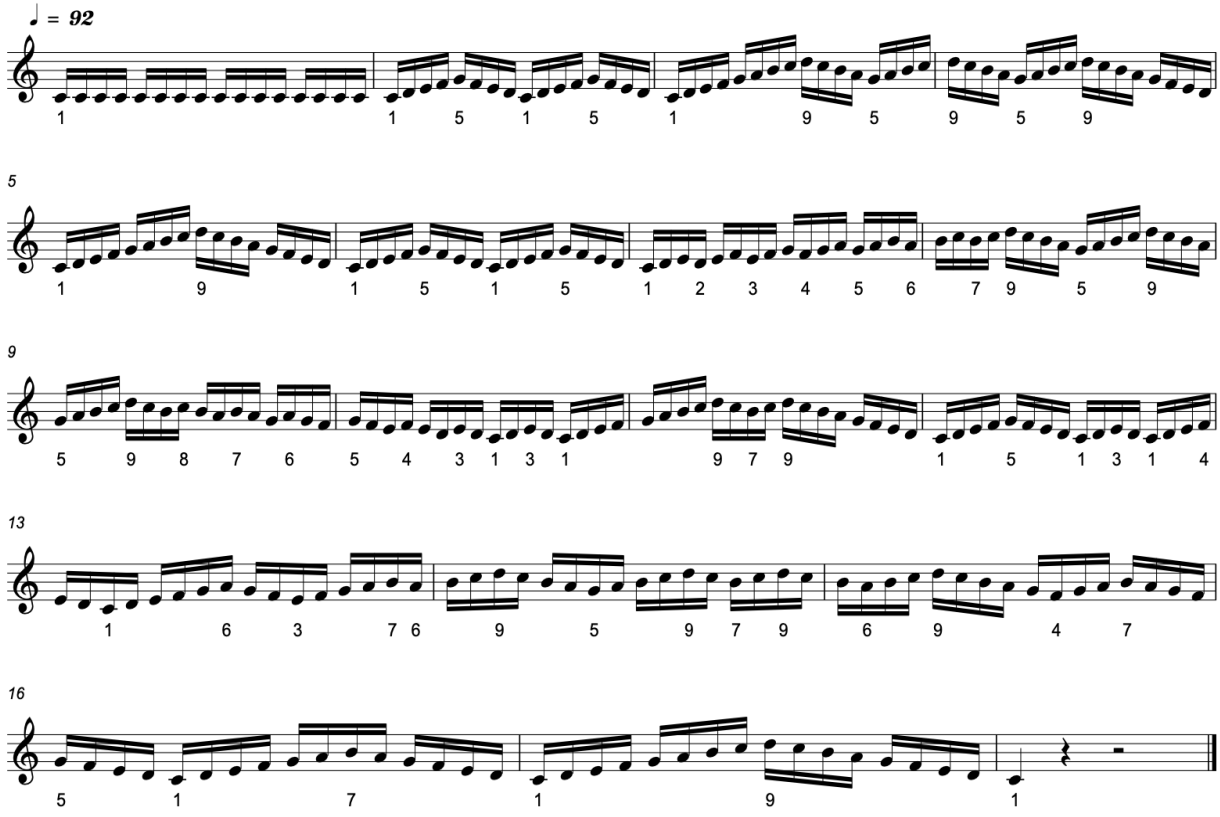
Metronome at Quarter Note 90-150



16th Rolls

To be played in all 12 Major Keys.

Metronome at Quarter Note 80-130



Triplet Rolls

Focus on rhythmic accuracy.

Metronome at Quarter Note 90-150