

UNDERSTANDING ATTACKS AND RELEASES IN BAND

When it comes to playing a musical instrument in a band, understanding attacks and releases is essential to creating a unified ensemble sound. Whether you play a brass, woodwind, or percussion instrument, understanding attacks and releases is crucial for creating a high-level performance.

What are Attacks and Releases?

An attack is the start of a note, where the sound begins. A release, on the other hand, marks the end of a note. Imagine that you are a painter. When your paintbrush first touches the canvas, the brushstroke begins and the start of a line is formed—this is the attack. When you want to end the line, you lift the paintbrush, ceasing the movement—this is the release.

The Importance of Proper Technique

Proper attacks and releases are essential for achieving clarity and precision in music. Part of this is understanding that “attack” does not mean to “attack the note.” This is why some musicians will simply say “start” instead of “attack.” On wind instruments, the note will generally start with a tongue articulation. There are many, varied ways to articulate a note on a wind instrument, each requiring different starts or attacks. For percussion, the note will start when the stick or mallet makes contact with the instrument. Releases for winds occur when the player stops sending air through the horn. Like attacks, the manner in which the air stops will determine how the release sounds. Releases for percussion are a little more complex. Some instruments like timpani, vibraphone, or cymbals will ring until dampened. If your music says “L.V.” (let vibrate), you should let the instrument ring until it stops on its own, otherwise stop the ringing with your hand at the start of the next note or rest.

**This article was adapted by ChatGPT.*

Open AI. (2024). ChatGPT (Apr 1 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>