

**PREPARATION AND EFFORT: TIPS ON APPLYING  
JOHN WOODEN'S CONCEPTS**

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Since I finished my doctorate in the mid '90's, I have been heavily influenced by two great master teachers: Joe Allard and John Wooden. This article focuses on some concepts I've learned from John Wooden. (Joe Allard will have to wait for another day - for those interested go to: [www.joeallard.org](http://www.joeallard.org).)

John Wooden is a legendary basketball coach who coached at UCLA a generation ago. His ideas and concepts on leadership, success, performance, and motivation have become nearly as famous as his many basketball championships and records. His famous Pyramid of Success and other concepts are admired and used by leaders in organizations as diverse as Fortune 500 companies, military units, professional football teams, and even collection agencies.

The application of Coach Wooden's ideas to music has had a profound influence on me as an applied music teacher and professional musician. The following tips are some of the ideas I have gleaned from John Wooden's works that have been especially useful.

1. Focus on Preparation and Effort. Spend your time working on what is under your control: your preparation and effort.
2. Work Hard and Plan Carefully. The first block of the Pyramid of Success says, "There is no substitute for work. Worthwhile results come from hard work and careful planning." Wooden says, "I fully understood that the success of my leadership was directly linked to using time wisely." (*Wooden on Leadership*, p. 126)
3. Teach Good Habits. Steve Jamison says that the key to Wooden's winning championships is that he was great at teaching good habits. (*Wooden on Leadership*, p. xi-xii) A band director I know, Chris Stevens, says, "Practice does not make perfect, practice makes habit." ([ibpolymusic.datacorner.com/](http://ibpolymusic.datacorner.com/))
4. Focus Teaching Comments on How to Do Things Better. A study of Wooden's utterances during coaching found that only 6% were praises and 6% were reproofs. The study reported that 75% of his utterances were instructional in nature. ([www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2004-06/uoc-usc052604.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2004-06/uoc-usc052604.php))
5. Focus on Fundamentals. Constantly work on basics. "There is no replacement for sound fundamentals and strict discipline." (*They Call Me Coach*, p. 168)
6. Little Things Make Big Things Happen. Identify relevant details and accomplish them at a very high standard of performance. (*Wooden on Leadership*, p. 135)
7. Keep it Simple.
8. Model Expected Behaviors. Make every effort to match practice to precept. Wooden says, "Being a role model is the most powerful form of educating. Youngsters need good

role models more than they need critics." (*Quotable Wooden*, p. 98)

9. Be Quick, But Don't Hurry. Wooden says, "If you hurry, you're more likely to make mistakes; but if you're not quick, you won't get things done." ([www.teamarete.com/10tipstomanagement.html](http://www.teamarete.com/10tipstomanagement.html))

10. Develop Mental Toughness. John Wooden is very disciplined. Beneath his grandfatherly exterior beats the heart of a lion. Wooden and his players' mental toughness made them great.

11. Balance is Everything. Life is complicated and it's easy to get out of balance. Keep things in proper perspective. (*Be Quick - But Don't Hurry!*, p. 92)

12. Be Patient and Persistent. Coach Wooden developed his ideas and concepts over a long period of time - he spent fourteen years carefully crafting his Pyramid of Success. Wooden says, "Good things take time and that's the way it should be." (Wooden DVD, *Values, Victory and Peace of Mind*)

For more information on Wooden and his concepts I suggest starting with *Be Quick - But Don't Hurry!* by Andrew Hill with John Wooden, *The Essential Wooden* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison, and the Wooden DVD, *Values, Victory and Peace of Mind*.

An annotated bibliography of Wooden books, DVD, and websites is available on my professional website at [www.clarinetmike.com/resources/rsrc\\_teaching.html](http://www.clarinetmike.com/resources/rsrc_teaching.html). A printable version of these tips is also available on the website.

#### *About the Author*

**Dr. Michael Dean** is Associate Professor of Clarinet and Saxophone at Southeast Missouri State University. He is serving as President of the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors. He is an active clarinet recitalist, soloist, clinician, and orchestral/chamber musician, and has appeared as a recitalist at Carnegie Hall, the International Clarinet Association's *ClarinetFest* conference, and the NACWPI *National Symposium*. Dr. Dean's publications include a book, *Clarinet On Campus*, and articles in journals such as *WINDPLAYER*, the *NACWPI Journal*, and the *Southwestern Musician*. His new solo CD, *Desertscape: New Music for Clarinet*, is available at [iTunes.com](http://iTunes.com) and [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com). Dr. Dean is also featured as chamber musician and soloist on the *Red Mesa Trio* CD. He holds degrees in clarinet performance from Texas Tech University, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the University of Texas at Arlington. His professional web page is [clarinetmike.com](http://clarinetmike.com).