

Section Leader Development

QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE SECTION LEADER

1. Willing and strong ability to learn.
2. Ability to sing part accurately, including reinforcing Director's interpretation.
3. Knowledge of vowel production sufficient to work toward section unity.
4. Musicality.
5. Leadership ability (modeling the way and encouraging the heart of others).
6. Reliability
7. Enthusiasm, consistent positive attitude, generous sense of humor, patience and persistence.
8. Respected by section (ability and confidentiality)
9. Ability to work as part of a team effort, in a supporting role.
10. Is willing to contribute the time and effort to do the job well.

GENERAL GUIDELINES IN WORKING WITH YOUR SECTION

1. Be prepared.... Know what your responsibilities are each week.
2. Be positive.... You are working on a team. If you have any problems or questions, always check with the director before the section rehearsal. Support your Director!
3. Stress proper posture when standing or sitting....set a good example
4. Encourage use of tape recorders, not only to record a new song, but also to record their own progress.
5. Stress discipline, keep in control of the section rehearsal. Use different methods of teaching.
6. Teach the characteristics of your voice part in relation to the melody. Correct wrong notes as you go - what is learned is harder to relearn.
7. Tape your section rehearsals then listen to yourself. Improve your teaching skills.
8. If you have an assistant or other section leader, take turns listening. **DO NOT SING WITH YOUR SECTION** - they will lean on you.
9. Watch for consistent trouble spots; often use a tape recorder to point these out.
10. Work on unity of sound - sing in a circle, sing facing each other. Remind them that no one is to out-sing the other.
11. Make your section rehearsals productive, positive, and fun. Let them know that this is their time to learn and promote team spirit.
12. Have your section stand while they work - it encourages proper breathing.
13. Provide extra section rehearsal dates as far in advance as possible.
14. Manage expectations - say what you are going to do, THEN DO IT!

CUES & CLUES IN THE MUSIC

Specifics to look for include:

1. Octave locks.
2. Awkward intervals
3. Who's on "doh"? (understanding the chord)
4. Chromatic/series of chromatics - ascend joyfully, descend reluctantly.
5. Tenor under the lead: broaden the tone.
6. Coning factors (all sections)
7. Details that confuse non-music readers (A Sharp is the same as B flat, etc.)
8. Sustained chords that will need "lift" - if you hold it, grow it.
9. Tricky rhythms or runs - syncopation, varied rhythmic treatments
10. Implied melodies/prominent passages for your part.
11. Dynamic and interpretive factors - reinforce the Director's plan.
12. Phrasing notations.
13. Breathing plan - also, no breath places.
14. Moving parts predominate over sustained parts.
15. What's happening in other partlines? Know when you're important or not!
16. Areas that invite tempo problems - segues into new parts of a medley, lots of words, later parts of the medley when energy "sags."
17. Louds and softs - in loud passages, sound takes over. In soft passages, lyrics take over.
18. Vowels and diphthongs.
19. Pick-ups in any part (usually the lead).
20. Repeated passages arranged differently.
21. Passages requiring high degree of vocal production, energy or musical artistry.
22. Spread voicings (balance)
23. Tuning or harmony accuracy factors
24. Possible disturbance from choreographic plan.
25. Difficult pitch? Get the first note solid.
26. Key changes.
27. Page turns.
28. All transition measures. All choruses could improve their performance level by spending time on the transition measures. Before key changes, each new "part" of the song, each new song in a medley.

MANAGING YOUR SECTION

I. PURPOSE - LEARN NOTES

Section leader is given the responsibility of teaching notes to section.

- A. Rote method - sing notes of one phrase of song to section. Section sings back to leader. Entire song is taught one phrase at a time.
- B. Rote/Music - Same method as (A) except with music.
- C. Have one or more leads at section rehearsal or a tape with the melody sung so that section can hear their notes as sung with the lead part.
- D. Order professional learning tapes, give them out two weeks before song presentation. On night of presentation, split into section rehearsals and section leader goes through the part with the tape.

II. PURPOSE - CHECK NOTES

Section leader is given the responsibility of checking notes previously learned.

- A. Have section sing part through while leader makes notes on music of sections of the song that sound "unsure".
- B. Break section up into groups of three or four. Have each group sing. It is easier to detect members who are singing wrong notes this way.
- C. Have each member sing part through.
- D. Add the lead part with each small group. Use two or three leads who attend the section rehearsal or use a tape.
- E. OR Have her sing her part into a tape recorder while the chorus is singing around her. The section leader then listens to the

tape and gives verbal or written POSITIVELY stated feedback either qualifying her to perform the song in public or noting areas that need improvement.

III. PURPOSE - BLEND SECTION

Section leader is given the responsibility to blend voices within their section.

- A. Check breathing techniques of individuals within section.
- B. Take section through some unison vocal warm-ups. Use vocalises that help activate the breathing mechanism. Also use vocalises that help open up resonators and “expand” the individual’s sound.
- C. Have members of section sing together in groups of two or three. Give advice based on basics of good vocal production, i.e. good breathing techniques, absence of interference muscles such as jaw, tongue, lips or throat. Encourage open resonators, especially the head resonators as controlled by the soft palate. Listen for voices that “stand out” from those around them. These are the people in the section who are using a different vocal approach. Try to determine the areas in which they need help.

IV. PURPOSE - ACCURACY AND CONING

Section leader has been given the responsibility of seeing that her section is singing accurately and with good balance.

- A. Section leader has members of the section mark their music to indicate which part of the chord is being sung on all notes that need special attention for accuracy.
- B. Leader has a section circle notes which need special attention for balance. As a rule of thumb in all sections, notes which are low need to be sung louder with a brighter projection. Notes which are sung high need less dynamic level and the use of a more “mellow” vocal treatment.

SOME OF THE MANY GOALS ATTAINABLE IN
SECTIONAL REHEARSALS

1. Learning notes and words perfectly!
2. Staying on pitch.
3. Learning the barbershop craft of the part
4. Achieving section blend
5. Achieving unity of dynamics within the section by emphasizing the director's dynamic picture.
6. Learning individual dynamic capabilities (for instance, that my "five" may not be your "five") and building the individual capabilities for dynamic contrast (for instance, "I'm going to learn to sing a more supported soft.)
7. Expanding individual vocal potential in all ways.
8. Learning better lyrical inflection habits within the section.
9. Unifying synchronization
10. Building section pride.
11. Achieving proper vowel match
12. Developing potential section leaders
13. Developing unified ways of flaunting your sectional superiority.