

# Be the Best You Can Be

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## **Feel the thrill of being “the best” at something** (you are the judge!!)

Embrace excellence – it’s FUN and REWARDING to work hard and do something well!

Always fight mediocrity!

Enjoy simple projects done to the best of your ability rather than big projects not done as well.

Recognize/appreciate all for what they do and give, without compromising your standards.

Plan ahead by using ‘backwards’ planning – what is the end you want?

Discover your passion and live the message.

Use both sides of your brain. Know how you learn best.

## **Characteristics of the ideal chorus member!** *(As shared by an International First Place Director)*

Learns to sing all the notes/words correctly.

Attends all rehearsals without the need for a “policy”.

Is a self-starter and self-motivated.

Cares about the whole – is aware of the entire chorus.

Knows the goals of the chorus and the larger, international organization.

Works on personal vocal development outside of chorus.

Displays a positive attitude on the riser and off.

Loves the artistic aspect of our craft.

Understands herself and what makes her tick.

Constantly searches for higher quality – reviews and checks accuracy.

## **A Successful Personal Vocal Production Plan Needs Dedication**

### **Our body/mind**

Our body is our instrument – what we think directly affects our performance.

Our body is our instrument - the way we treat it directly affects performance.

Our mind relays messages to our body – for better and for worse.

Infections come through our mouths - be careful.

Hydration is critical. Drink water, especially ½ hour before rehearsal.

Be smart and aware – eat well, sleep well, speak easily, take care of illnesses,  
laugh a lot, exercise and do not smoke.

Try to keep negative thoughts (and negative people) out of your life!

### **Our voice**

Our voice reflects our state of mind, our health, our age and our focus.

After three days of nonuse, vocal folds begin to atrophy – SING EVERYDAY!

Vocal plan for daily conditioning:

Hum lightly when you get up and while in the shower, use the following pattern:

1. Small slides
2. Held notes
3. Half step intervals

If there is vocal fold stiffness, try the ‘whine like a puppy’.

(If the whine is difficult, rest your voice for a day and try again the next day)

Do rolled “rrr”s, raspberries, or bubble lips while driving. The vocal pattern doesn’t matter, but always keep it free and easy feeling.

Each day, choose small sections of chorus/quartet music to rehearse.

Avoid singing the tag – just think and loop it!

If you rehearse the tag, just hum it. Keep relaxed.  
Find a free 5 minutes (alone) and stand with feet apart, hands on hips while vocalizing your part to current songs on hum's, ho's, ha's, hee's.  
Vocalize your part on light staccato "doots".  
Keep the sound full of air. (Staccato helps strengthen the breathing muscles)  
Balance vocal use and vocal rest - after rehearsal, hum lightly for a day.  
If you have back-to-back rehearsals or performances, warm-up slowly and well.  
Spend time humming and doing slides before starting other vocalises.

### **Our spirit:**

Our spirit can be heard in our voice and seen in our body.  
Stress and tension will transfer to our vocal folds.  
Neck, shoulders and upper body reflect our state of mind, be conscious of them and roll to release tension frequently.  
Confident performances come from careful preparation.  
Confidence in life may be reflected by how we care for our body and voice.  
Praise frequently; give assistance when it is needed, recognize contributions.

### **Tips for better singing:**

To find a soft palate space that works for most pitches, silently fog your palm.

To remind yourself to sing tall vowels, place your pointer fingers at the corners of your mouth and keep them there while you rehearse.

To remember to engage the zygomatic muscles, pull on your 'cat whiskers'.

To remind yourself to keep the larynx seated, place a finger lightly on your voice box while you sing.

To remember to create space between the back molars, place two fingers where your jaw hinge is. Careful not to open too wide.

To check vowels and your lip posture, use a mirror when you sing. You should look natural, not contorted. Mouth should not have a big jaw drop.

To make sure you are singing in the "appropriate" voice, hum the passage, and then sing it in the same space and quality.

To help keep the sternum up and ribs expanded; rehearse with arms out in front of you in a barrel configuration or with a hand on the back of a chair.

For vowel continuity, be aware that only small changes are needed in the soft palate area, the tongue position and lip position for different vowels.