

“Basic Basics” of Quartet Rehearsing and Singing

This document is written for people attending a Harmony Brigade for the first time and who want to review some basics of quartet practice. Here are some of the most basic things you will want to review before attending a run-through, practice or rally.

Practice Makes Permanent. Always sing with your best ability, vocal production, performance intentions. What you practice becomes the thing you do when you aren't thinking specifically about it... make your default your best.

Warm Up. The first song you sing should be as good as your last.

Effort Is The Enemy. Don't sing hard, don't work hard. Use what you have, cleverly. Relaxed sounds are the best sounds.

Know Your Words And Notes. While the standard for a run-through is lower than for the rally, the better you know your words and notes before a rehearsal, the more you can get out of your time together.

Know Who Moves When. When parts move at different times, know exactly who moves when.

Know Your Pickups. Sing your pickups beautifully. Don't sing other people's pickups at all.

Know Your Breath Plan. In a chorus, you can drop a syllable and breathe almost anywhere. In a quartet, no one is covering you - you can only breathe in places where the music permits it.

Cover Other People's Breaths. There should only be dead air when the arranger gave everyone the same rest.

Know Your Song's Heart. Everything we do becomes easier when we have a sense of the story behind the song, an internal roadmap of the emotions we want the audience to feel.

Write Your Mistakes In Your Book. Any rehearsal or practice will highlight places that you can improve. Write them in your book, and remind yourself at home.

Let Other People Write In Your Book. When I sing, I'm very happy if there is someone holding my book, and writing suggestions. Another set of ears can fix things that I might not notice.

Write In Pencil. Sometimes a correction needs correction. :-)

Practice At Home, Soon. I find that if I can quickly rehearse alone after a practice, and address the mistakes I wrote down, I can reinforce the good habits I got out of the practice, and make the mistakes vanish more quickly. NEHB 2018 Notes On Quartet Singing