

# 16 TIPS

ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR

# VOCAL AUDITION

by Yona Marie



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## **Got auditions coming up and don't know if you're ready enough?**

I've auditioned for dozens of choirs in my lifetime, including school choirs and church choirs, chamber choirs, and acapella groups. Although I was pretty giddy with nerves and excitement for all of them, I managed to get into every single one. Two big factors come into play here: talent and preparation. If you've got the voice, let's make sure you're prepared to impress the judges with everything else.



### **Warm up Your Voice**

Make sure you've warmed your voice up well with scales, lip trills, sirens, and breathing exercises before you go into your audition. Warming up will be especially critical if your audition is the first thing in the morning. You may also want to use steam from a shower or a vocal steamer to clear your vocal passages if you tend to have inflammation, as I do in the morning from allergies.

### **Showcase Your Strengths with Your Pieces**

Make sure that the song choices you've made really highlight the best parts of your voice. If you're great at holding long, beautiful notes, pick a slow and beautiful song. If you're good with fast rhythms and vocal acrobatics, pick a song that has runs, riffs, or melismas.

### **Really Know Your Audition Pieces**

Yes, you know your songs, but do you really know your songs? Did you just rush to memorize them within the last few days, or have you had time with them? Have you performed them before while you were nervous? Have you sung them around your house for months? If so, you won't be as nervous about performing them in the audition. It's hard to sing your best while you're scrambling in your brain to make sure you know your next line.

### **Dress to Impress**

Dress the way that the audition organizers requested. Don't go overboard, and don't go too casual. You likely don't need to be very strict with your choices, and you could add some of your personality to how you look. Dress to feel good about yourself and look good to others.

### **Don't Stop if You Mess up**

Chances are, even if your voice is amazing and you know your songs very well, you will mess up. Even though it feels like it, the world is not over when you mess up. I used to get really down on myself in my younger years about not being hitting all the notes right or missing a word, but perfection is really overrated when it comes to singing. Most of the best vocal performances have obvious mistakes in them. Keep going. Try not to make a face or make a gesture to acknowledge that you've messed up, either.

### **Get Emotionally Involved with the Music**

Nothing is better than seeing a singer perform with a great voice and emotional involvement. This ability is often hard to find with young singers who have not fully grown into their personalities and their voice types. You don't need to overdo it, but just take a moment to really feel the music and the lyrics in your song. Connect with the moment in your own way. Use hand movements and show emotion in your facial expressions.

### **Practice in Front of People Who Make You Nervous**

Practicing on your own is great, but take it a step further. Practicing in front of a close friend or family member is better, but take it further than that if you can. You want to mimic the feeling of the butterflies you will likely have when you actually do your choir audition. Preparing while you are in that state will help you to relax and be more of yourself when the time comes.

### **Show up Early**

Showing up on time is a must, but go beyond that and show up early. A lot of choir auditions I've been to were in unfamiliar places where the other applicants and sometimes even the

organizers from the choir were a bit lost on how things were supposed to flow and where to go. Traffic, parking, location changes, big crowds, forgotten music, and so many other little things can turn being on time into being five or ten minutes late.

### **Leave Excuses at Home**

I've heard from choir directors that they get annoyed with how many people will come into an audition and say something along the lines

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of "forgive my allergies" or "I'm just getting over a cold." Even though you think something like this will increase your chances of getting accepted into the choir, it really doesn't do anything. It's not like it will really hurt your chances either, but just skip the excuses to be safe.

### **Record Yourself Singing**

Recording your performance with a video in order to hear and see yourself while you perform is a great idea. It's one thing to get feedback from your family and friends that you perform in front of, but it's even better to get feedback from yourself. No one knows what they want out of your visual and vocal performance as much as you do. Give yourself a chance to be a judge.



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### **Be Mindful of Your Diction**

Diction is becoming a lost art in the world of music. It's a super important thing to be mindful of, especially in the context of choir singing. Many consonants get lost when people sing in large groups and are not in front of a mic. Choir members really need to have a knack for pronouncing their words well when they sing.

### **Practice Sight-Reading Skills**

Your choir audition may involve some sight-reading, depending on the type of choir you are trying to get into. YouTube has a large number of practice videos that will help you with your sight-reading skills. This skill requires a good amount of time and consistency to train.

### **Practice Ear Training Skills**

You also may be required to show how well you are at hearing notes and intervals. Again, YouTube is a good place to find free practice videos to help. You can also use one of my favorite sites that I've used for over ten years, called MusicTheory.net, to find great ear training exercises.

### Mind Your Manners

Simple manners can go a long way. Don't forget little things like saying hello, introducing yourself, and thanking them for their consideration after your audition. Also, don't forget to smile. Many people can get so nervous in the audition process that they forget to smile and wind up looking like they had a stomachache the whole time.

### Try Positive Self-Talk

Affirm yourself with positive thoughts, chants, and feelings. Tell yourself that you are talented, you can do this, people like your singing, you have potential, and you will be fine even if you don't get the chance to be in the choir. Negative thoughts automatically flood our minds in moments like this and can cause us to be tense and distracted. Fight back with all the good things that are going on in your life. It's great that you're even taking the chance to audition. You're dope for even trying this out.

### Remember to Drink Water

Remember to hydrate with the best drink there is. Avoid drinks with caffeine in them that can dry out your voice. Also, avoid alcohol, which can dry your throat out as well. Why not drink the purest thing you can get? Be sure to drink water hours before your performance to make sure you are getting its hydrating effects. Drinking water right before your performance doesn't actually do much for you. Traditional Medicinals is also a popular drink among singers that can hydrate you and won't dry your voice out.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** As a session singer, writer, and producer who has worked with over two hundred clients to provide high-quality jingles, singles, and features, Yona spends her time creating and marketing new music and helpful resources for creators. Her recent collaborations include working with PBS Sound Field, Tribe of Noise, and the National Black Chamber of Commerce. Check out Yona's latest releases on Spotify and YouTube.

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