

**Auditioning for College Voice Programs**  
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The following suggestions are offered in hopes of demystifying the audition process for college voice programs. While requirements change from one university to another, they are remarkably similar, and the expectations are nearly universal.

Dress

There is no official dress code for auditions, but a great rule of thumb is “Sunday best.” No one was ever offended by a male auditioner in a suit and tie or a female auditioner in a modest dress. Ladies should avoid dressing too provocatively. For ladies, makeup and hair should be tasteful and reasonable.

Repertoire

Requirements vary from school to school, so it’s always good to be absolutely sure that you have met the requirements. Generally, it is better to sing something widely known so that the listener will be hearing your *voice* rather than being introduced to a new song. It is a good idea to stick close to the approved lists for contest, as these are songs which are thoroughly vetted, and well within the bounds of technical expectations for your age.

If you’re performing a song in a foreign language, be sure that you coach the pronunciation with a qualified adult. Also, be sure that you can comfortably and accurately pronounce the title and composer of all of your selections, as this shows your preparation level. Practice introducing your pieces, so that you sound eloquent and confident in your audition.

Memorization

Auditions must be sung from memory. Be sure to have your audition pieces memorized well in advance of your auditions. It is natural to be nervous for auditions, and nothing will bring you more comfort than knowing that your music is totally memorized. Talk to your teacher about strategies for memorizing your songs, and implement these strategies well in advance of your college auditions. In addition, it is helpful to perform your songs before your auditions. Talk to your teacher about singing your songs for your high school choir. This will give you a chance to try out your pieces, and to learn to deal with the adrenaline of live performance.

Sight-singing

Most schools will ask you to sight-read a short excerpt. Often they will not specify whether you are to sing on solfege (do re mi, etc), numbers (1 2 3, etc), or on “la la la.” Feel free to ask what they would prefer. Before starting the sight-singing excerpt, take a moment. Make a note of its key, its time signature, and any tricky rhythms or intervals. Then be sure to *breathe* and *go slowly*. The two biggest mistakes that young sight-singers make are forgetting to breathe and rushing. If you don’t sight-sing regularly in your school choir, ask your director to give you some excerpts to try so that you can practice to prepare for your audition.

Recommendation letters

Recommendation letters, written by your choir director and/or voice teacher (preferably both), are an excellent addition to your application package. Even if they are not specifically asked for, they should be sent. It is traditional for recommendation letters to be confidential--in other words, sealed and sent by the teacher separately. This shows the reader that the information in the letter is unvarnished and reliable.

### “Fit” with a program

When you visit and audition at a university, realize that you are the “consumer.” Ask yourself: “if accepted, would I feel comfortable going here? Do I like the campus? Does this school feel like a good fit?” No single university is right for everyone, and each student must pick the school that best fits their needs and desires. Avoid choosing schools merely because friends go there or because your parents went there. Choose your school based on quality, reputation, value, and most importantly, *fit*.

### A few words of encouragement

Auditions are held in order to find good people. The people holding the audition are hoping that *you* are that person, and therefore are rooting for you to succeed! It can sometimes feel like the audition panel is *against* you, but this couldn't be further from the truth. We want you to succeed!

It is also important to understand that audition panels are not looking for *perfection*, they are looking for *potential*. Everyone has technical issues that they're working on, but I get very excited about students who show great vocal potential, a good background in musicianship, a positive attitude, and strong expressive skills.