

Guidelines for Selecting Competition Music

1. Song should have a singable melody within a 10th (A below middle C to C above middle C, for example)
2. Melody line should not be jumpy, especially in an uptune. If the melody is jumpy, other parts will be as well, and tuning will be more difficult.
3. All parts should be within the COMFORTABLE singing range of the singers. Average ranges for each part:
Lead: A below middle C to C above middle C
Bass: Eb below middle C to F/G above middle C
Bari: G below middle C to Bb above middle C
Tenor: E above middle C to F/G an octave and a half above middle C

If your chorus is large, you may be able to expand these limits.
4. Spread voicings (chords spread over 2 octaves) should be kept to a minimum. They enhance an arrangement, used sparingly, but are difficult to tune, balance, and sing strongly.
5. Lyric should be interesting, and in an uptune, easy to articulate. Look for singable consonants, vowels that work well for your ensemble, and open vowels on target chords.
6. Introduction should set up the story line. Does it set the mood and scene? The tag should be strong and satisfying, as well as dramatic or exciting.
7. Chords in the arrangement should enhance the lyric.
8. The arrangement should be creative.
9. The baritone line should be predominantly below the lead for best barbershop balance.
10. Voice leading should be reasonably easy for the singer to hear and execute.
11. The song must have a lyrical climax and the climax of the lyric and the music should be congruent.
12. Be sure the arrangement allows for breathing in natural places.
13. Check to be sure the song is in a key your group can sing in well. The keys easiest for our singers are Ab, Bb, Eb and F.
14. If key changes appear, the chord progressions should be logical and easy to hear and sing. Key changes are simpler when a voice part retains a note through the chord progression.

15. The more sharps or flats that occur outside the key signature of the song, the more difficult the arrangement.
16. If choosing a medley, the songs must have a basic theme, either musically or lyrically. The medley must be musically satisfying, with a feeling of continuity and unity.
17. Be sure your group has the energy to maintain good vocal production throughout the arrangement.

Problem areas:

1. Rangy lead line
2. Jumpy melody
3. Melody line transfers
4. Implied harmonies that do not lend themselves to barbershop
5. Weak bass line
6. Monotonous melody or chord progressions
7. Chromatics, bell chords, key changes or patten
8. Many lead-ins or pick-ups
9. Consistent illogical intervals in any part
10. Random chord changes
11. Over-arranged material