

SINGING WITH AN ACCOMPANIST

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Whether you sing jazz, musical theater, pop or classical music, working with a pianist can be daunting. As a vocalist, you need to develop the musical and personal skills that will enable you to interact successfully with your fellow musicians. Your accompanist is there to support you, but you will want to follow the list below to ensure you have a successful audition/class!

Do's and Don'ts!

Do: Know the printed introduction on the sheet music. Know what it sounds like, how it helps you hear your starting note, and what beat the measure you begin singing on. Listening to the karaoke version or original recording is not sufficient.

Don't: Ask the accompanist to play the intro for you! You will not book the job/get the part. It shows your lack of preparation.


Do: Make sure your intro, cuts and tempo are marked in your score (sheet music). Use colored pencils or markers so the accompanist sees these easily. Also make sure all notes are clearly seen (none are cut off).

Don't: Leave your music blank- if you forget to mark tempo, cuts, etc. it will only make you look unprepared. You will not book the part!

Do: Make sure your music is in the correct key. You can use "musicnotes.com" which allows you to hear the first page and sing along, play the melody yourself on a piano, or have someone play for you to make sure your sheet music is correct.

Don't: Ask your accompanist to transpose/play your music in another key. This should never be expected of an accompanist and shows your lack of preparation.

Do: Have your sheet music in a 3 ring binder (preferably 1/2 inch to 1 inch), double sided and easy to read. Some accompanists prefer plastic protectors. I prefer paper that I can fold the bottom corner to turn. Either way, make sure it's double sided, clean (not blurry) and in a binder. Make sure the rings aren't broken too!

Don't: Come to your audition/class with loose paper.  It will likely fall off the piano. You will not book the part!

Do: Audition with appropriate material. Not only "age appropriate" but also, acceptable for an accompanist to sight-read for an audition.

Don't: Audition with JRB (Jason Robert Brown), Sondheim or music that is obscure and difficult to play. This includes chord charts! If the accompanist will struggle with your song, your audition will suffer.

Do: Give the tempo to the accompanist. Sing the first line quietly in your tempo while tapping the beat or showing the beat with your head/body.

Don't: Snap or tap while giving the tempo, or ask "how fast does this piece go?" Accompanists will communicate with the director/teacher. If you don't know the tempo of your piece and/or can't communicate it clearly, you will not get the part.

Do: Thank your accompanist, even before you audition. Show them respect.

Don't: Give your music to the accompanist and walk away without any communication.

Do: Give a polite nod or smile at the accompanist after you've given your slate to the director so they know you're ready to sing.

Don't: Verbally tell them "ok, I'm ready!"

Do: (This is the hardest one)- Sing in the tempo you have practiced. You are in control. If there is a part of the song where you slow down/speed up, do that. The accompanist will follow you. You are driving the car! If the accompanist is not as experienced, or isn't following you, keep singing at your tempo and remain in charge. The directors will know that you are confident and professional and the accompanist is at fault.

Don't: Stop your audition if the accompanist is too slow/fast, or snap at the accompanist during the audition to give them a better tempo.

If you are intentionally singing slower/faster to cue them, they are really not listening to you, and it's a train wreck, then politely stop and ask the directors "may I give my tempo to the accompanist again please?"

Do: Thank your accompanist when you pick up your music.

Don't: Grab your music and run, especially if you had a less than desirable audition.

WORKSHOP TIME!!

We'll practice leading the accompanist in a live audition/class format. If you can practice this skill with any friends who accompany/play, it's the most important part of working with an accompanist!