

Peace River Community Choir



Member's Handbook & Resource Guide

We believe:

That singing together should be fun.

That everyone has a voice and should be encouraged to sing.

That singing is therapeutic. It improves breathing and posture, stimulates the brain, relieves stress and revives the soul.

That copyright laws should be observed at all times. Our choir members receive original scores, not photocopies. If you wish to make your own rehearsal copies for the purpose of highlighting parts, you must destroy them at the end of the season. Members will be charged for lost or damaged scores.

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Choir Etiquette Guidelines

Welcome to the Peace River Community Choir. We are a group of adults who enjoy singing together for ourselves, our friends, and the community. We meet only once a week, so it is important to make each two hour rehearsal as productive as possible. We ask that you keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Attendance

Singing in a choir is a commitment to the director and to the other members of the choir. Your voice is just as important as the next person's voice and everyone has to get used to hearing everyone else. That's how good choirs are made. On the other hand, if you are sick, stay home! Ask a choir buddy from your section to share his/her score markings from the evening.

2. Rehearsal Time

Be on time! Arriving late is distracting to the director and other choir members and causes you to miss the warm-up, which is arguably the most important part of rehearsal.

3. Come Prepared

Always bring a pencil with you to rehearsal to mark directions on your scores. Circle, underline, draw pictures or symbols – whatever helps you to remember the details needed so we all sound as one. Please use pencils, not pens or highlighters as you need to erase all markings before returning your scores at the end of the season. Digital recording devices and use of website practice tracks are highly recommended. They can help you to practice between rehearsals and make our rehearsal time more productive. Opportunities will be made for your to record your parts.

4. Talking During Rehearsal

Choir singing is a sociable pastime and choirs are full of sociable people! The camaraderie in a choir is one of the most important aspects. Feel free to make merry to your heart's content before and after rehearsal and during breaks. It's really easy to start up little conversations with your neighbour during rehearsal. When this happens, the director has to either talk over you or wait until you're quiet. Chatter slows down rehearsal.

5. Be Positive

Whether you are an experienced choir member or are doing this for the first time, it is very important to be positive. We are all at different levels of expertise and it can be a challenge to make it a rewarding experience for all members. The number one rule is to have fun, then work hard, and then to always enjoy your accomplishments. Enjoy the music. It is chosen based on the needs and abilities of the group. We try to vary the music selections enough so that there is music we can all enjoy.

Quick Reference Guide













This section is designed to help you with some of the signs, symbols and words you may see on the printed page. If you are new to music-reading, there are many good resources on the internet which can explain music theory to beginners. We highly recommend www.musictheory.net for step-by-step explanations and do-at-your-own-pace exercises.

1. Beat and Rhythm

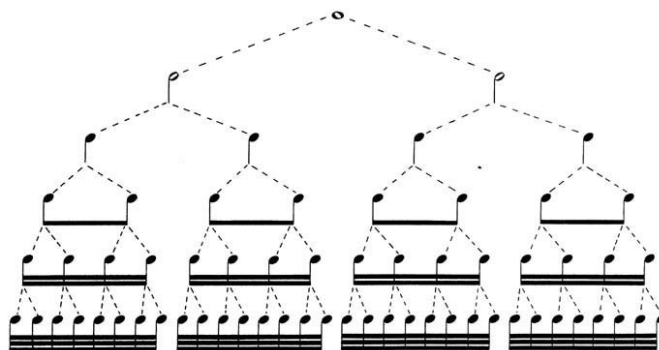
A beat is the regular pulse in a piece of music. The beat is affected by the time signature and tempo. All beats can be divided into smaller note values. This is known as subdividing. The combination of short and long notes used in each measure, or how the music moves within the beat, is known as the rhythm.

2. Notes & Rest Values

The duration of musical sounds (long or short) is indicated by different types of notes. A rest indicates that nothing is to be played for the duration of the rest.







whole rest		whole note	
half rest		half note	
quarter rest		quarter note	
eighth rest		eighth note	 or 
sixteenth rest		sixteenth note	 or 

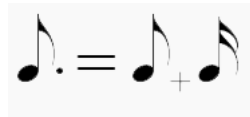
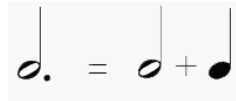
Whether a beam or flag is used for notes depends on the context. Two notes together in the same beat will usually be beamed, while notes on different beats may use flags.



3. Dotted Notes

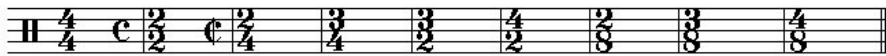
Placing a dot immediately after a note or rest increases its value by one half.

ITEM	NOTE	REST
Dotted half note/rest		
Dotted quarter note/rest		
Dotted eighth note/rest		

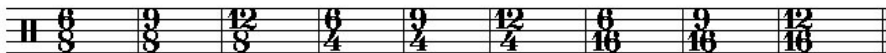


4. Time Signatures

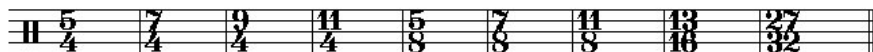
Time signatures tell you how many notes are in the bar and what type of feel the music will be. The top number in the time signature tells you how many beats will be in each bar (measure). The bottom number tells you the kind of note which gets one beat. The most common time signature, often indicated with a simple C, is 4/4 (“four four”) which contains the equivalent of quarter notes in every bar. The following are simple time signatures.



The next group are compound time signatures. A compound time signature is where the beat or pulse falls on a dotted note and is divisible by three. This creates a rocking type of feel. In 6/8 time, for example, the director can choose to conduct six beats per measure, or two dotted quarter note pulses per measure.



Occasionally you will encounter odd time signatures where the number of beats in each bar is an odd number. Don't worry – just follow the director and she will keep everyone singing together!



Metronome markings include a note value and a number that indicates how many of that note value occur per minute. For example, this metronome marking indicates that there are 120 quarter notes per minute: ♩ = 120 (walking speed, 2 beats every second)

5. Barlines

A vertical line drawn through the staff is called a barline. The first note or rest of a bar always falls straight after a barline. The completion of a musical phrase or sentence, verse, chorus etc is indicated by a double barline. The end of a piece or song, or exercise is indicated by a double bar, consisting of one light line and one heavy line. Dotted double bars, called repeat signs, indicate that a section of music is to be repeated.



6. Repeat Endings

At the end of a section you may sometimes see more than one ending. After repeating the first time the 1st ending is replaced by the 2nd ending.



7. Articulation

Articulation refers to how sounds are joined or separated. Notes that are to be detached are referred to as *staccato* and are indicated by a dot above or below the note head.



It is safe to assume that all other notes are to be sung *legato*, that is, smoothly connected. Notes are often grouped together in phrases, much like words are grouped together in sentences. A breath mark (·) indicates where the singer can breathe and therefore separate the sounds of the phrase.

8. Accidentals

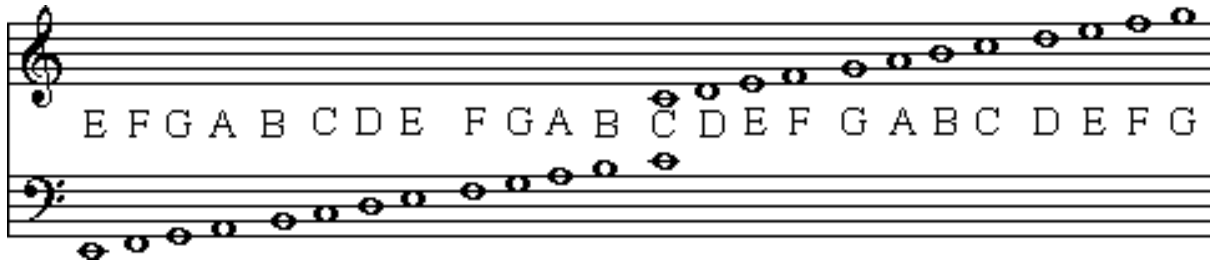
Sharps, flats or naturals not belonging to a particular key signature are called accidentals. They can occur anywhere in the music.

sharp raises a note one semi-tone for that measure

♭	flat	lowers a note one semi-tone for that measure
♮	natural	Cancels a sharp or a flat for that measure

9. Notes on the Grand Staff

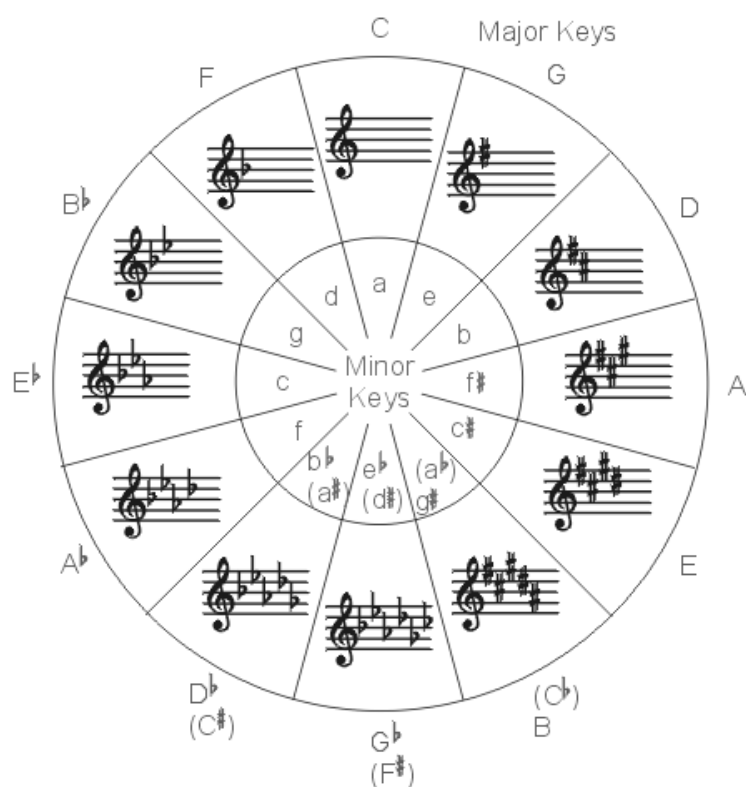
Sopranos and altos read notes on the treble staff; basses and baritones read notes on the bass staff. Notes for tenors are sometimes written on the bass staff and sometimes on the treble staff but sung an octave (8 notes) below. We do not expect choir members to memorize the notes on either staff. It is much more important to look at the shape of the phrases, that is, whether the notes move up or down, and whether they move by step or skip. This will give you a general idea of the pitches. For specific pitch names, refer to the chart below:



10. Key Signatures

Music using a specific set of pitches is said to be in a particular key. Most of our music is written in major or minor keys. The arrangement of sharps or flats at the very beginning of each staff tells you what key the music is in. The following chart shows the major and minor keys for each key signature.

Circle of Fifths



11. Terminology

Most words and abbreviations you see on your score are written in Italian. This is because the system of music notation was developed in Italy during the Renaissance period. The following terms are likely to appear in your scores:

Dynamics = the softs and louds of music

<i>ppp</i>	pianississimo	very very soft
<i>pp</i>	pianissimo	very soft
<i>p</i>	piano	soft
<i>mp</i>	mezzo piano	medium soft
<i>mf</i>	mezzo forte	medium loud
<i>f</i>	forte	loud
<i>ff</i>	fortissimo	very loud
<i>fff</i>	Fortississimo	very very loud
< cresc.	crescendo	gradually becoming louder
> decresc.	decrescendo	gradually becoming softer
> dim.	diminuendo	gradually becoming softer
◇	messa di voce	becoming louder then softer
<i>sf or sfz</i>	sforzando	forced, with emphasis
<i>fp</i>	forte piano	loud then suddenly soft

Tempo = the speed of the music

Grave	very slow
Largo	slow
Larghetto	a little faster than largo
Adagio	moderately slow
Andante	“walking” tempo
Andantino	a little faster than Andante
Allegretto	a little slower than Allegro
Allegro	fast, cheerful
Vivace	lively
Presto	very fast
Prestissimo	very very fast
Moderato -	moderate(ly)
Molto	very
Accelerando	gradually becoming faster
Ritardando	gradually becoming slower