

Sing, Montana!

Code of Conduct

Revised 6 February 2022

The following code of conduct is designed to facilitate excellence in both our music and our micro-community. It's based on years of experience and observation as to what works well in other groups, and what typically causes them to fail in various ways. When you become a member, you are agreeing to abide by the following standards of conduct. This is not only your compact with the Director, but with the rest of the chorus. You are a team that thrives as each part does its own work, and that suffers when it does not. How we conduct ourselves is very important.

1. I will be responsible for learning my part to the songs we sing, making use of the sheet music and rehearsal aids that are provided, and will do so as soon as possible after the music is issued, but **no later than four weeks afterward**.
2. Regarding the rehearsal aids, I recognize that a great amount of work goes into facilitating those singers who do not read music well, such that they can learn their music outside of rehearsal time, and be a strong contributing member of the ensemble, just like a professional singer would be. I understand why it would be negligent not to make use of them, and why this would signal that I'm not interested in carrying my own weight.
3. I further understand that teaching notes in rehearsal wears on the Director and the more advanced singers in the group, and that I should be very thankful for any rehearsal time spent helping me to catch up, and should not consider myself entitled to that help, but that it is a favor to me, and as an attempt to help the organization make up for the failure of the members to do their part.
4. Absences are very costly—and not just to the absent ones. You can't "make up" for an absence, because the chorus had to make do without you there, and there's no way to fix that. When you know you'll be absent, you need to inform the Director and your Section Leader in writing as far in advance as possible and also during the last few days before the absence in question. (It's great to know on January 10th that you're going to be out of town on April 4th, but it's very hard to keep up with that information until April 4th, so we need another reminder in those last few days. To miss without informing us makes us wonder whether you care.
5. When you miss a rehearsal, it is up to you to find out what you missed (from someone in your section, and not from the Director, who is too busy to help you reliably with that question.) Please choose wisely who you ask.
6. Ideally, nobody misses any rehearsals. And you certainly don't want to give the impression that you don't **mind** missing rehearsal, because look what that says to your team. ***If you miss four or more rehearsals in one semester***—and especially if that seems OK with you—the Director and your Section Leader may well want to discuss with you whether this is really the right chorus for you. Does this mean that we're fine with everybody missing three times? No, and we hope that if you have to miss just once, that **you** would wish you didn't.
7. We do our best to plan the performances months in advance, and to announce the dates at the beginning of the semester. This is a painstaking process, prone to many difficulties. Part of being a member is making a commitment to be there at the performances. If you miss a performance for a reason that doesn't seem appropriate to the team spirit of what we're doing, it is likely that you'll not be welcomed back in the future. Serious sickness, hospitalization, and death in the family are always justified absences, but any other reason will be handled on a case-by-case basis. And please do not ever ask us to move a performance date to accommodate a conflict for you. If you ask that, you're asking scores of people to go through the scheduling process all over again, to get you out of a commitment you already made to us all.
8. While at the rehearsal location, I will abide by the [House Rules](#) of the Great Room.
9. I understand that rehearsals will start and end promptly. I will be punctual, as tardiness can be highly counterproductive, disruptive, discouraging, and socially insulting.

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10. At the appointed starting time for rehearsal, I will:
 - a. Be in my seat, completely ready to go, having arrived early enough to have my head in the game, and to make it obvious to all that I'm ready.
 - b. Help my neighbor, if necessary, to get his or her head in the game.
 - c. Be completely silent and attentive to the Director, upon being called to order, such that it is obvious to the Director that I'm ready to go.
 - d. Have all my music at hand and ready to go.
 - e. Have at least two writing utensils in good shape.
 - f. Be ready to work hard for the duration of the rehearsal.
11. When the Director asks for order, I will **immediately** come to order, silent and still, even if in mid-sentence. I will immediately look at the Director so that it is obvious to him that I'm ready to go.
12. If my neighbor is out of order, I will immediately remind him or her to come to order. I will do this by hand signals if possible, and will avoid doing it by conversation.
13. If I should fail in any of the foregoing items (learning my parts, following the House Rules, being punctual, prepared, orderly, and attentive, I recognize that this is counterproductive to the goals of the Director and the chorus. **I will request permission to apologize publicly to the chorus and Director at the next available break, or at the end of rehearsal.** This way, we can acknowledge the failure, forgive it, and move on, and remind everyone by this practice that our conduct is indeed important.
14. I understand that if I am a member of this chorus, I am committed to good communication, starting with submitting a valid email address upon signing up—and checking it twice a day. This applies to teens and adults, with every member being required to have his or her own personal email address, so that there's no "middle man" required in the communications process. Non-member parents are welcome to be included in the email distribution, as well, but we can't afford to have teens cut off from communications because their parents aren't diligent at it.
15. I will promptly respond to all emails. "Got it." is the minimal courteous response---unless the email calls for a more detailed response, in which case, responding with "Got it" shows that you didn't really read it very well.
16. If I am a minor, I recognize that my responsibilities in this chorus are not any different from those of the adults. I'm equally responsible for knowing my parts, being here, and behaving well. If I am an adult member and/or the parent of a minor member, I recognize that teens are held to the same standards as the adults in **every** case, including public apologies for our failures.
17. While at the rehearsal and performance venues, I will strive to behave congenially and honorably toward all members, and in all matters, just as I would expect to be treated this way myself.
18. I will strive to protect the atmosphere of the rehearsals and other gatherings, refraining from grouchy, negative, harshly sarcastic (as opposed to humorously sarcastic), undermining, or overreaching words or actions.
19. I will refrain from assuming any teaching or supervisory role unless expressly appointed to such position by the Director. This includes making instructive or critical comments in rehearsal. If you know your section is missing notes, however, it is your **duty** to ask the Director to go over the passage of music in question in order to help your section. This does **not**, however, prohibit you from quietly pointing out to your neighbor a missed note. Those who feel as if their neighbor is routinely overbearing in this, however, should see the Director privately to seek a solution.
20. I will refrain from discussing the particulars of politics and religion while at *Sing, Montana!* functions. This is not because they are not important, but because they are simply outside our particular mission, and are likely to cause dissension that is irrelevant to what we are here to do. This chorus exists deliberately as a peaceful oasis in the midst of a blazing desert of disagreement, and not as a public forum for advancing the members' political or religious views.
21. Our rehearsals are usually high in humor, by design of the Director himself, and also with the help of the occasional quip from the members. The occasional one-liner quip is **generally** quite welcomed---especially if it's a good one—and the Director may even ask that it be repeated, because he enjoys a good one as much as anybody else—if it seems to him a fine time to pause for a few seconds. But there is a right time and place for everything, and the Director will be the sole judge on whether there's time for it

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in any given instance. If you note that the Director is shutting down such discussion, or not encouraging it to go on, it's best to keep the quips to yourself until some better time.

22. I agree that the Director has the final word in all chorus decisions, including, but not limited to, membership, conflict resolution, repertoire, musical interpretation, performance attire, who will sing what, and who will have any responsibilities beyond singing—such as section leaders, logistics managers, etc. I understand that I may freely discuss any concerns or ideas with the Director, but will do so privately, unless in a public session designated for such discussion.
23. I understand that the stylistic choice of the Director for Freedom Choir is that we will generally go on the minimal side regarding vibrato. I agree to go along with this in good faith, and I expect it to be mentioned if my vibrato is considered excessive.
24. By participating, I willfully grant the Director (and his designates, if any) permission to correct my singing and other behaviors as needed. While the going societal paradigm may be that corrections are ideally handled privately, I understand that such is quite impractical in an organization of this type, and that at the Director's discretion, certain corrections—whether as to music or behavior—may be made publicly as needed to facilitate the rehearsal efficiently. I do not have a right to be upset over being corrected for my musical or behavior errors.
25. I understand that one of the Director's jobs is to correct music errors that occur in the ensemble. I also understand that when those errors occur, it may not be that they were committed by everybody. I promise, therefore, not to be personally offended, as if every correction were aimed at me.
26. I understand that since most people are horrified at the thought of auditioning, no audition is required for Freedom Choir, and that the Director also avoids singling out members to have them sing their parts, when in search of persistent errors. In return for this kind consideration, however, I recognize that I have some duty to be self-aware with regard to my singing, and that if it's in doubt, I should get some help from a friend, a section leader, or the Director.
27. I understand that if my singing were to suffer enough, and no remedy could be found, I might be asked to leave the ensemble, or to take on some non-singing role.
28. I understand that Directors are people, too, and that habitual infractions against rehearsal etiquette and diligence will wear considerably on his attitude. I further understand that while he does not see and hear everything from the podium, he very likely sees more of what I do than I might think he does.
29. I agree to participate enthusiastically in fundraising and recruitment efforts—to the best of my ability, however great or small that may be.
30. I agree to treat the audience like royalty, presenting our performances as an enthusiastic service to the public, as my personal contribution to the continuance of the rich heritage of choral music and stagecraft alike.
31. I have read and will abide by the [COVID-19 Policy](#) issued by the *We, Montana!* Board of Directors.

Member name

Member Signature

Date

Parent Signature (if member is a minor)