



SINGING CATEGORY

Overview of the 5 key elements of the singing category: (i) Intonation, (ii) Vocal quality, (iii) Unity, (iv) Expansion, (v) Artistry (see glossary below)

A Level: 81-100

Performances demonstrate the most consistent artistic barbershop singing. Very few distractions owing to lack of singing skill; rather, the focus is primarily on artistry

Characteristics of this score	Ways to improve
<p>Lower A: 81 - 86 Performances at this level demonstrate very competent vocal skills. The elements of singing will be:</p>	Continue to reinforce good vocal production to blend as a consistently artistic unit
Consistently in tune	Maintain attention detail and fine tuning in each voicing
Consistently very good vocal quality	Continue to reinforce good vocal technique
Consistently very good unity	Consider the finer aspects of unity in synchronisation and matched words & vowel sounds.
Consistently very good expansion	Working on the above will help the group create an even more consistently expanded sound.
Consistently apparent artistry	Continue to build on vocal nuances and artistic effects to enhance the performance.
<p>Mid A: 87 - 93 Performances at this level demonstrate excellent skill. The elements of singing will be:</p>	Continue to reinforce good vocal production and sustain as the artistic unit.
More consistently in tune	Maintain attention detail and fine tuning in each voicing
Excellent vocal quality	Continue to reinforce good vocal technique
More consistently a unit	Consider the finer aspects of unity in synchronisation and matched words & vowel sounds.
More consistently apparent expansion	Working on the above will help the group create an even more consistently expanded sound.
More consistently apparent artistry	Continue to sustain artistry to enhance the performance.
<p>Upper A: 94 - 100 Performances are rare and magical, with little if any vocal distraction. The elements of singing will be:</p>	Continue to strive for perfection
Consistently in tune	
Consistently excellent vocal quality	
Consistently a unit	
Consistent expansion of sound	
Consistent artistry	



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B Level: 61-80

Performances which frequently show skills of artistic barbershop singing, mixed with more distractions or lack of artistic unity

Characteristics of this score	Ways to improve
Lower B: 61 - 66 Performances at this level demonstrate better than satisfactory vocal skills. The elements of singing will be:	Continue to work on vocal production at every rehearsal to maintain and improve vocal quality. Work to blend into an artistic unit
Often in tune	Use section rehearsal to work on matching vowels and word sounds. Record/listen to the group to identify places to improve the tuning.
Vocal quality better than satisfactory	Continue to work on vocal skills in rehearsals, applying technique to songs; taking each phrase and ensuring good vocal quality throughout.
Often showing good unity	While maintaining good vocal quality and intonation, improve unity and synchronisation through matching word and vowel sounds. Ensure direction is clear and followed
Expansion of sound often heard	Working on the above will help the group create more consistently expanded sound.
Often artistic	Find opportunities for vocal artistry to enhance the performance eg. Vocal nuance and effects; dynamics.

Mid B: 67 - 73 Performances at this level demonstrate good vocal skills. The elements of singing will be:	Continue to work on vocal production at every rehearsal to maintain and improve vocal quality and apply it more frequently. Work to blend into an artistic unit more of the time.
Mostly in tune	Duet and trio parts. Block chords to tune and balance them. Record/listen to the group to identify places to improve the tuning.
Mostly good vocal quality	Listen to identify places where vocal quality slips and correct by rehearsing; maybe specific vowels or phrases within a song. Address all elements of good vocal quality at every rehearsal.
Mostly showing good unity	While maintaining good vocal quality and intonation, improve unity and synchronisation through matching word and vowel sounds. Ensure direction is clear and followed.
Mostly with expanded sound	Working on the above will help the group create a more expanded sound.
Artistry is mostly evident	Find opportunities for vocal artistry to enhance the performance eg. Vocal nuance and effects; dynamics.

Upper B: 74 - 80 Performances at this level demonstrate very good vocal skills with fewer distractions. The elements of singing will be:	Work to blend into an artistic unit more consistently so that your skills no longer show to the audience.
Frequently in tune	Identify occasional, specific tuning issues and fix by blocking chords, ensuring good vocal quality, balance and word sound/vowel match.
Very good vocal quality	Aim for every voice in each part to show consistent vocal skill. Continue on vocal production at every rehearsal.
Frequent unity	While maintaining good vocal quality and intonation, aim for consistency in all aspects of singing. Ensure direction is clear and followed.
Frequent expansion of sound	Working on the above will help the group create a more expanded sound
Frequent artistry	Practise and rehearse techniques until the performance is automatic and techniques no longer show and the audience is transfixed by your message



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C Level: 41-60

Performances which demonstrate adequate skills, with some signs of artistry, but with notable inconsistencies

Characteristics of this score	Ways to improve
Lower C: 41 - 46 Performances at this level demonstrate some lack of skill and/or nervousness The elements of singing will be:	Individual parts focus on the basics of good vocal production (see glossary)
Occasionally in tune	Ensure each part learns their notes correctly and can hold their part whilst performing with others.
Occasionally of good vocal quality	Each part to become more competent in singing with a freely produced, resonant, well supported tone, and maintain good quality throughout the performance
Occasionally demonstrating good unity	Whilst working on the points above, think about matching word sounds and synchronisation.
Occasionally expanded sound	Working on the above will help the group create more consistently expanded sound.
Occasional artistry	Look for more artistic opportunities.

Mid C: 47 - 53 Performances at this level demonstrate adequate vocal skills. The elements of singing will be:	Individual parts focus on the securing the basics of good vocal production (see glossary) to become more competent singers
Sometimes in tune	Ensure each part can hold their part securely whilst performing with others to maintain better tuning
Satisfactory vocal quality	Focus on maintaining a freely produced, well-supported and resonant tone. Basics of good singing (see glossary.)
Some degree of unity	Whilst working on the points above, to create a better unity, improve synchronisation, match word sounds and vocal quality, ensure appropriate balance of parts.
Some expansion of sound	Working on the above will help the group create a more expanded sound.
Some artistry	Consider additional opportunities for artistry.

Upper C: 54 - 60 Performances at this level demonstrate fairly good vocal skills, more pleasing at times. The elements of singing will be:	Ensure pleasing vocal production (see glossary) is more consistently heard, aiming for the parts to blend into an artistic unit
Generally in tune	Pay close attention to tune each part more securely with each other. Rehearse in duets, to identify specific 'locking' opportunities
Generally good vocal quality	Maintain a freely produced, well-supported and resonant tone throughout, and strive for a consistently pleasing vocal quality
General degree of unity	Whilst working on the points above, to create a better unity, ensure appropriate balance of parts, improve synchronisation, match word sounds and vocal quality & timbre
Generally expanded sound	Working on the above will help the group create a more expanded sound.
Generally artistic	Consider an artistic approach to the whole performance.



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D Level: 1-40

Performances in which the elements of good singing are rarely heard

Characteristics of this score	Ways to improve
<p>Lower D: 1 - 20 Performances at this level demonstrate significant performance errors due to a lack of skill and/or obvious nervousness.</p> <p>The elements of singing are likely to be:</p>	<p>Consider the groups' readiness to perform in public. Build confidence in the group to help overcome nerves. Seek advice on suitably simple arrangements and to help develop the groups' skills.</p>
Out of tune	Ensure each part learns their notes correctly and can hold their part whilst performing with others.
Lacking vocal quality	Learn to sing with a freely produced, resonant, well supported tone. (Basics of good singing; see glossary)
Lacking unity	Whilst working on the points above, think about matching word sounds and synchronisation.
Lacking expansion of sound	Working on the above will help the group towards creating expansion of sound.
Lacking in artistry	Focus on the above elements at this stage in your development.

<p>Upper D: 21 - 40 Performances at this level demonstrate rare to occasional moments of good skill.</p> <p>The elements of singing are likely be:</p>	<p>Consider the groups' readiness to compete and song choice. Build confidence in the group to help overcome nerves. Seek advice to help develop the groups' skills.</p>
Rarely in tune	Ensure each part learns their notes correctly and can hold their part whilst performing with others to maintain better tuning
Of poor vocal quality	Focus on maintaining a freely produced, well-supported and resonant tone (Basics of good singing; see glossary.)
Rarely a unit	Whilst working on the points above, match word sounds and improve synchronisation to create a better unit sound.
Rare expansion of sound	Working on the above will help the group create a more expanded sound.
Rarely artistic	Look for artistic opportunities in the song.
<p><i>To progress from a D to a C score; the performers needs to demonstrate more secure basic vocal skills and a satisfactory level of tuning.</i></p>	



Singing Category Glossary

Intonation	This is another word for tuning. Notes need to be sung correctly so the overall sound is pleasing. Barbershop singers adjust pitches to achieve perfectly tuned chords
<i>Melodic tuning</i>	Maintaining chosen pitch of the song
<i>Harmonic tuning</i>	Tuning the chords
Vocal Quality	Vocal quality is good when it is well supported, freely produced and resonant
<i>Support</i>	Best defined as breath support & breath management, a pre-requisite for good tone quality
<i>Freely Produced</i>	Sing with lack of vocal tension
<i>Resonant</i>	To amplify and reinforce the sound using space in the upper body
Unity	Matched word sounds, matched tone quality, sound flow, precision and synchronisation
Expansion	The characteristic barbershop 'ring' achieved with good tuning, good vocal quality and unity of sound
Artistry	The unification of techniques into a transparent whole so skills cease to become apparent to the listener