

10 Tips for Making Choir Rehearsals FUN!

Notes from Fun Music Company Seminar Interview with Carol Troutman Wiggins

Tip #1 Create a Lively Music Room

- Create an atmosphere for music in the music room.
- Light blues and greens are the colors that are said to enhance creativity.
- Make the room smell good - use plug-ins & air freshener & change the smell every few weeks to awaken the senses.
- Fill the room with musical instruments of all kinds in addition to the piano, bulletin board, and white board. Add puppets, props, CDs, posters, and stereo equipment.
- Display the instruments on the wall with pegboard and hooks for easy access. Makes the children “want” to touch them and find out what they sound like.
- Order inexpensive props from Oriental Trading Co. or other novelty companies
- Ask around - people always have an old instrument lying around that they are willing to donate, even if it is a jaw harp or Harmonica, or music stores have old stock/dented goods they will sell for a little of nothing
- Use Mirrors if possible - with a curtain so you can shut off the mirror when you don't need it.
- VISUALS-VISUALS-VISUALS: Have lots of Instrument and composer posters around



Tip #2 Take Pictures Of Everyone and Everything Continuously

- People love to see pictures of themselves performing
- Designate a choir photographer
- Take advantage of funny moments & special times
- Show a slide show at rehearsals and performances
- Make sure every person gets a picture taken of themselves (if they want to, of course!)

Tip #3 Make Up Simple Choreography and Movements

- Involving the whole body makes choir much more fun!
- Use your hands to create what the words are saying
- examples:
 - Love: Draw a heart shape or touch both hands on chest
 - March: March with your feet
- Motions do not have to be complicated

Tip #4 Use Simple Props

- Novelty catalogues are an excellent creative guideline for prop use
- Parachute: There are lots of games you can play with a parachute
- Wear funny eyeglasses if song is about seeing or sight or eyes
- Use pom-poms (even boys like pom-poms if the motions are not “girly”)
- Bouncing balls (large or small)
- Ribbon wands
- Kazoos - all ages love them



- Flashlights in the dark for songs about light
- Glow-in-the-dark light rope can be attached to clothing for exciting performances
- Flags for patriotic songs
- Candles (battery operated) for holiday songs
- Cardboard sparkle stars/smiley faces, etc.
- Use inflatable microphones, or sticks, or hairbrushes - allow them to sing into them

Tip#5 Keep Rehearsals Active and Varied, while teaching technical concepts such as breathing

- Walk around the room singing! The movement gets energy going even with adult choirs and it increases breath control, breath support and increased serotonin levels elevates mood.
- While doing warm-ups, have your choirs raise their hands while hitting the highest notes or squat down while hitting the lowest note.
- Make funny Sounds and do actions as warm ups:
 - Frog Sound: Hop around the floor like a frog
 - Elephant sound: move arm up and down like an elephant trunk
 - Laughing sounds are great for diaphragm control
- Use balloon props
 - Each member of the choir hits it up in the air and their voice follows it up or down
 - Run with balloons between the knees
- Pinwheels teach breath control. See who can last the longest!
- Have a dress Up day: you could designate a day of the week to become “Dress Up day” choose a theme and ask the children to come to class with a costume or instrument on the theme, while featuring songs in the theme.
- Present a Musical Or Musical Drama
- Hula hoop contests to music - strengthens body core for stronger diaphragmatic breathing

Tip #6 : Use Rhythm Instruments to create variety and Interest In Choir Warm Ups

- Use Rhythm instruments such as Rhythm sticks (claves), maracas, cymbals, finger cymbals triangles and woodblocks : bells such as wrist bells, jingle bells and sleigh bells
- Use Coloured Handbells, bell plates or hand chimes and use white gloves when playing handbells to make them feel special
- You can also incorporate specialty instruments such as Boomwhackers, Recorders and Ukuleles
- Make your own Instruments based on pots and pans, water containers etc
- Demonstrate an instrument of the week



Tip #7 Get your hands on other Useful and Fun Equipment

Such as:

- Karaoke Machine: great opportunity to teach your choir how to use a microphone properly. Karaoke Contests are great fun!
- Puppets: Use Fuzzy Bird Puppets with a squeaky beak to help with rhythm exercises where choir sings a line then the puppet sings a line
 - Do lip syncing with puppets
 - Make cute and creative sock puppets

Tip#8: Make Performances Fun

- Have scenery - utilize projectors to make stage a little more visual
- Do skits: present a short skit to set the mood before presenting a song. It doesn't need to be long and if you don't have one, you can get the choir members to write one.
- Use Masks and hats: these are inexpensive and look great on stage
- Other Possible and Simple Costume Ideas:
 - Pirate: add red sash and a paper pirate hat
 - Cowboy: add hat and red bandanna
 - Roman: wear white pillowcase with the neck cut out and a gold leaf garland and harp
 - Construction worker: add hat, construction paper tool belt with paper cut out tools
 - Hawaiian: add shorts or grass skirts and inflatable ukulele (wearing the same colour shirts for a performance)
 - Red and Green for Christmas, pastels for spring, white, red and blue for patriotic
 - Warrior Songs: make cardboard hats and breastplates covered in aluminium foil
 - Sheep: Glue white cotton buds to a white t shirt
 - American 1950's: skirt, rolled up jeans etc
 - Beach day: beach towels, flip flops, beach balls and play rhythm games tossing the ball
 - Rockband: metallic tinsel wigs and inflatable guitar



Tip # 9 Use the Right Equipment

- Use a Stereo system with a dual speaker balance for split track accompaniment CD's
- Overhead Projector or digital Screen
- Karaoke Machine
- TV
- Tape recorder
- Video Camera to tape the class- to provide a instant critique of the session
- Plenty of Plastic Storage bins with drawers/wheels+prop storage
- Shelves, Shoe Racks and more....

Tip #10 Don't be discouraged even if you have a small or even No Budget

- Ask for donations
- Have a coin drive: members bring their extra change to fill up a 5 gallon jug. It adds up!
- Do a class fundraiser- car wash, bake sale, hot dog sale etc
- Have a talent show- make tickets and sell them. Bring Finger food
- Send notes home with instruments and items needed and list the price. Businesses are sometimes willing to donate the items or funds

Old Chinese proverb:

**"Tell me and I'll forget;
show me and I may remember;
involve me and I'll understand."**