

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Official Rulebook and Evaluation Criteria, and not as a substitute for either. Download the Official Fine Arts Rulebook and the Evaluation Criteria at [www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm](http://www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm).

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## VOCAL SOLO

### 1. PREPARE EARLY AND PRACTICE OFTEN.

To present a superior vocal performance and demonstrate excellent skill sets requires weeks and months of preparation. The day of the festival should NEVER be the first time you've performed your piece in front of an audience. Seek out multiple opportunities to present your entry and get feedback.

### 2. SONG CHOICE IS CRITICAL.

The right song for you is a song that considers and clearly demonstrates YOUR current skill sets. The right song has a clear Christian message, demonstrates your vocal range, and demonstrates your ability to control your voice through various layers of phrasing, dynamics, and pitch variation. The wrong song has very little melodic, dynamic, or lyrical variation.

### 3. ACCOMPANIMENT IS IMPORTANT.

Although this category is primarily about evaluating vocal technique, your accompaniment plays an important role in the overall impact of your presentation. In vocal solo, a cappella is almost NEVER a good idea. Doing an a cappella piece leaves you wide open for a wide variety of pitch, rhythm, and tempo problems that very easily derail the presentation. Additionally, just because you CAN play an instrument doesn't mean that you should accompany yourself. If you accompany yourself, excellent vocal technique will almost certainly suffer. A flaw-filled accompaniment often leads you to concentrate so much on your playing that you lose your focus on vocal technique causing the accompaniment to become more of a distraction than a help.

### 4. COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE.

Remember that you communicate with your voice, body, and face. Draw the audience in with engaging posture and facial expressions and take control of your physical space on stage. Keep the microphone off of your bottom lip and down from the front of your face. Don't allow poor/unfinished stage presence or poor microphone technique to distract from your message.

### 5. LEARN EXCELLENT DIAPHRAGM SUPPORT.

Adequate breath for good singing must be supported by your diaphragm. With adequate breath support, you can sing comfortably and cleanly through your phrases with the same fullness and richness at both the beginning and the end of each phrase. Excellent breath support also helps you maintain accurate pitch and good tone quality throughout.

### 6. HIT THE PITCH.

Good pitch is essential to a SUPERIOR performance. Listen carefully to your music for pitch cues that will help your intonation. Record yourself practicing so that you can hear where the trouble spots are. Remember to sing through the center of your notes and not push up to them. Pushing up to your notes often creates a harsh, pressed sound and leads to flatness. Remember that each note in the phrase has its own moment even if it is part of a vocal run. Be sure sing through each of them keeping them in tune. If you can't maintain excellent intonation throughout the vocal run, then you probably shouldn't be attempting it!

### 7. REMEMBER "ONE THOUGHT, ONE BREATH!"

Each musical/lyrical phrase should be sung through in one breath. Avoid breathing in the middle of the phrase or worse yet, the middle of a word.

### 8. KNOW YOUR SPACE, LOUDER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER.

Be sure to incorporate dynamic variation into your performance, but know your space and control your volume accordingly. A large room absorbs your forte and may make your pianissimo virtually inaudible. Work on good microphone technique to help you balance out your volume based on your space. Remember that singing soft requires just as much breath support, energy, and vocal quality as singing forte.

## **9. SAY WHAT YOU MEAN TO SAY.**

Good diction is important. You want to make sure that your words come out cleanly and as they are supposed to sound. Accomplishing this requires some over-enunciation at times. Make sure that words have their appropriate consonant endings carefully placed, e.g. “LorD” instead of “Lor...” Make sure you have nice open and accurate vowel sounds, e.g. “Me” NOT “Meh” and “You” not “Chew.”

## **10. SMILE, RELAX, HAVE FUN, AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.**

Work on developing your own musical style. Don't try to sing a song that is not “you” just because you think it's a good fine arts song; and don't try to sing a song the same way the original artist does it. Make it your own. Don't be afraid to do things differently. Avoid doing runs, oos, and ahhs (or any other “vocal gymnastics”) if they don't fit you or if your current skill set doesn't support the run technically. If you're going to do them they need to fit your musical concept, serve a purpose in the song, and be spot on technically.