



A Guide to Running Auditions For Your A Cappella Group – Part I

Scheduling

Your group might be attached to a school or university, so you may plan your auditions for the beginning of the academic year, or you may not be bound by such cycles; in any case, don't underestimate the importance of timing.

Some things to consider:

- Give yourself enough time for a co-ordinated promotion strategy.
- Have at least 2 initial audition dates or you might miss out on some talent. If you want a second round of auditions (callbacks) then the same problem applies. If you're less inclined to offer multiple dates, make sure auditionees know that they need to commit to that date.
- Work out who you want on your audition panel and check they can be there! This might be some of the current group or former members. Bear in mind that too many or too few people can be intimidating.
- Think about venues. You probably want a large room (big enough for all your auditionees) and a small room to do some of the 1:1 tests.
- Have your auditions after a performance, so you can promote the opportunity to your fans. How about offering a free ticket to those who have already declared their interest, so they can come and see what you're all about?
- Don't plan auditions for a time when you should be preparing for a performing or recording. Auditions are time consuming but deserve your focus.
- Ideally have a gig on the horizon, far enough away so that new members have enough time to learn the ropes but close enough to get excited about. Doing your first performance is a big rite of passage when you join a group so keep up the enthusiasm amongst the new members even if it's going to be small or informal.
- Schedule socials events – this might mean planning to end the first few rehearsals early so you can have extra time afterwards, or even sacrificing a rehearsal to go bowling, do a pub quiz, or anything you think your new members will enjoy.

Promoting

How do you make sure there's a nice big queue of great singers clamouring to get into your group – and what do they need to know before they make the decision to apply? The second you know the auditions are happening, get a teaser message out there however you can – website, social media, posters, flyers and maybe the most important way – WORD OF MOUTH.

In your publicity materials for the auditions you should include:

- Logistics – how to sign up, the deadline, and THE DATE AND TIME OF THE AUDITIONS.
- A description of what kinds of things your group sings and how you do it – the best way is to share a YouTube video of a recent performance or rehearsal.
- How many members you have, and what voice parts you're looking for – you could use SATB descriptions or you could be less formal – “looking for men who can sing low”. If you have any restrictions, most obviously if you are an all-male or all-female group, you should mention those too.
- What's expected of members – if you rehearse on Saturdays and that's when the auditionee has to visit their Granny or go to ice hockey practice then tough luck – but you'd hate to make them go through the audition only to find they can't commit.
- What they can expect to be doing in the audition – knowing what they will have to do will help settle any nerves. Emphasise anything you'd like them to prepare, and be specific – if you want a solo, tell them if you want the whole thing, or just a verse and a chorus, and indicate style/genre, or “something that shows raw power/delicate kookiness” if you have a preference – this might help them decide which of the 40 bazillion songs to choose.

Now shout from the rooftops – your website is the best place to list info, then use social media to direct people to it – with pictures, facts, jokes, SoundCloud links etc. You'll need to post about your auditions a lot, ideally with something different added each time so that people who are paying attention don't get irritated.

Don't underestimate 'traditional' methods such as a banter-filled announcement in assemblies and posters in the student union toilets right above the mirror/urinal... But the more creative you can be, the more eye-catching your message will be, and if you can, spending some money advertising your auditions is a justifiable expense, provided you've thought carefully about where/how/when to advertise. If you're doing posters, consider printing a generic poster with an area left blank to add info too – then you can order a batch and use them for auditions and the next gig.

Make sure you let us know! We'll help promote your auditions however we can – we get lots of emails from people asking if there's an a cappella group nearby they can join. Other organisations such as Sing A Cappella!, Choir Place, Singers in London can also help.