



Sweet Adelines
INTERNATIONAL

Music Copyright and Licensing FAQs

The Questions and Answers below are related to copyright, legal affairs and licensing for Sweet Adelines members and competitors.

Q: How do I know if a song is contestable for Sweet Adelines?

A: Competition songs – Music Licensing versus Competition Worthiness

We receive many questions regarding music licensing and suitability. All music available on the Sweet Adelines website is licensed and the copyright printed on the first page of the sheet music. As long as you purchase one copy for each person in your quartet/chorus, you can legally sing the song for as long as you wish. SA recommends retaining receipts for all purchased music. If you decide to sing that music in competition, it will be cleared and ready to affirm in your competition forms re: music chosen to be sung in your competition performance.

However, whether the song is appropriate for competition – given the criteria of the Music Category of the *Judging Category Description Book* – is a separate issue. There are many factors in determining a song's suitability for competition including the technical aspects of the Song and Arrangement itself, the degree of competence in the performance of the elements of barbershop style, and the vocal capabilities of your quartet/chorus. The requirements for a contest song are available in the Music Category section of the *Judging Category Description Book*, which many choruses own and which is available from the [Sales Department](#) of Sweet Adelines International. The [JCDB is also available to members in the Members Only section of the web site](#). Other resources in evaluating competition music can be your coaches, music judges and arrangers.

For questions regarding music copyright and licensing contact [Music Services](#). For questions pertaining to judging and song suitability contact [Competition Services](#).

Q: What if I purchase music directly from an arranger?

A: Generally, when you purchase music, you can assume that appropriate permissions have been obtained. However, if you are not certain, it is acceptable to ask the music provider to verify that the arrangement has cleared the copyright approval process.

Q: How can I tell if an arrangement is legal?

A: A legal copy is one that has been made with permission and contains a notice on the first page of the music, similar to: Used with permission by Publisher.

Example:

Copyright © 1977 UNIVERSAL - POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. and CURB SONGS
Copyright Renewed
This arrangement Copyright © 2017 UNIVERSAL - POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. and CURB
SONGS
All Rights Reserved Used by Permission
Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

Q: What should I do about music that is currently in our library that I think is illegal – either illegal photocopies of legal arrangements or copies of illegal arrangements?

A: SA recommends that all members review their music libraries and eliminate any illegal music. If you would like to obtain legal copies of the arrangement, contact the arranger or designated agent. SA recommends keeping receipts of all purchased music.

Q: How do I obtain an arrangement of a specific song?

A: First, search the [Sweet Adelines store](#) by song title or arranger. If you are unable to find the arrangement you seek, contact [Music Services](#) for more information. Be sure to include the song title, composer and arranger so Music Services staff can research the song. If the arrangement is not on file at headquarters, members should contact an arranger directly for information.

Q: Is there a list of songs available? What is the difference between SA's published and unpublished music?

A: Yes, there are two different lists available. The "Published Music List" is filled with songs purchased in advance and SA has already paid the publisher for a certain number of copies. SA has also paid the arranger for the "right" to the song. The [Published Music List](#) is available on Sweet Adelines website.

SA's unpublished music is called Arranged Music. If you choose to purchase Arranged Music, SA will pay a commission to the arranger and royalties to the publisher on copies as we sell them. The Arranged Music List is available by contacting [International Sales](#). The current cost is \$5 USD.

Q: How long does it take to obtain licensing for a song? How much will it cost?

A: Experience has shown that it will take anywhere from a few months to two years for the entire approval process, depending upon how quickly the individual publisher responds. Arrangers who submit a [Permission to Arrange](#) form will be charged a nominal fee based on membership and whether or not they are members of the [SA International Music Arrangers Program \(IMAP\)](#). Arrangers are also responsible for paying any licensing fees required by the publisher. Publisher fees vary, but generally run anywhere from \$20 to \$75 USD, plus a per copy fee.

Q: Can anyone other than IMAP members use SA headquarters for clearing arrangements?

A: Yes, Arrangers who are not members of the IMAP program can download a Permission to Arrange form. Instructions are on the second page. If you have questions, feel free to contact [Music Services](#).

Q: What if I want to use a medley?

A: A Medley is a group of songs or tunes sung or played one after the other as a single piece of music. Arrangers should submit a Permission to Arrange form for each song or portion of a song (no matter how small the segment). The request must indicate that the song will be included in a medley. Please note that Publishers could charge a Publisher fee for each song or part of a song used in the Medley.

Q: What if a publisher does not grant permission (denies) a request to arrange or make additional copies?

A: In this rare instance, any arrangement will not be legal.

Q: Will the international organization protect me if I use these procedures for songs I sing?

A: The system set up through international headquarters has been reviewed by a copyright attorney and provides a basis in developing positive relationships with the publishers with whom we do business. The internal organization is confident that arrangements and subsequent photocopies made using these procedures are in compliance with copyright law.

Q: What if I'm a member in a country other than the United States?

A: Permission to arrange form and/or photocopy arrangements must still be obtained and requests submitted to [Music Services](#) at international headquarters. Requirements specific to your own area should also be followed.

Q: Since all regional and international competition music must now be cleared, what happens to a competitor if an arrangement they sing is found to be illegal?

A: The competitor may be disqualified. If it is determined that a contestant has provided false information or has not appropriately obtained permission for an arrangement, and as a result the organization is subject to extraordinary expenses, legal fees, or fines, that contestant may be asked to share in these costs.

Q: How may I obtain additional information regarding [Copyright Law](#)?

A: Several resources are available. [The United States Copyright Law: A Guide for Music Educators](#), is a free resource. The [Sweet Adelines Chapter Guide \(Section VIII\)](#) includes copyright information in *Keep the Music Ringing*. Additionally, [Amazon has several handbooks](#) on copyright for music educators available for purchase.

Q: Are there other areas of copyright besides arranging and photocopying music?

A: Yes, there are several areas of licensing for performance and recording. Most of these are [covered here](#). Please contact [Music Services](#) if you have specific questions regarding procedures in this area.

Q: Can I post a video of our performance on our website and on social media sites such as Facebook?

A: Yes, but only after you have received [written permission from Competition Services](#). Additionally, your chorus/quartet is responsible for any additional licensing necessary, per [Social Media guidelines](#).

Q: Our chorus has dissolved. What can we do with our music?

A: Your chorus can gift their purchased sheet music to another Sweet Adelines chorus or quartet. Be sure to include proper documentation (receipts, letter stating the music is a gift, etc.) in case the recipient is ever required to show proof of the gift.

Q: Can our quartet use music purchased by our chorus?

A: Yes, as long as each quartet member has paid for one copy of the sheet music.

Q: What is a mechanical license? Why do I need one?

A: A mechanical license allows you to create an audio recording, which could be a CD or a PDD (permanent digital download). Visit www.harryfox.com for more information and to secure a mechanical license.

Q. A new person joined our chapter when an existing member quit. Can the new person use our existing music?

A. Yes, as long as you don't make any new copies. Any new copies must be purchased legally from an authorized distributor, such as the SA store, where you can search via song title or arranger. To place an order, [shop our online store](#), send an email to sales@sweetadelines.com or call toll free (U.S./Canada) 877.545.5441 or 918.622.1444 outside the U.S./Canada.

Q: Can I make an audio and/or video recording of my performance without breaking copyright law? If so, can it be sold or used only for educational purposes? Does it apply to sheet music?

A: Legally, you can make one audio/video copy of a performance or rehearsal for archival, educational or study purposes and one copy as a backup. To distribute Audio-only copies to members or offer them for sale, a mechanical license is required for each copyrighted song used on the recording. For DVD/video projects, a synchronization license is required for each copyrighted song used on the recording. If the concert DVD will not be distributed, and only one or two copies will be made for educational purposes, legal clearance is not required.

Q: What are [public domain](#) songs? What is the process for using public domain songs?

A: Music and lyrics published prior to 1923 are in the U.S. Public Domain. Copyright laws vary by country so you will need to verify copyright laws in your area. Songs in the public domain are free and can be used by anyone. When a song in the public domain is arranged, the end result is a "derivative work" and its copyright belongs to the arranger. Therefore, that work is now protected by copyright under federal law – there is no longer a requirement or need to register works with the Copyright Office in order for an official copyright to be in place.

A partial list of public domain songs is available on www.pdinfo.com.

Q: Where do I send ASCAP, BMI and SESAC report forms? Where can I get a blank ASCAP/BMI/SESAC form?

A: ASCAP/BMI/SESAC forms should be remitted no later than 10 days following your event to Sweet Adelines International, Finance Department, 9110 S. Toledo Ave., Tulsa, OK 74137. The form can also be faxed to 918.388.8083. Questions can be sent to [Music Services](#).

Q: Our Region is going to offer a webcast in conjunction with regional competition. What type of license will we need for that?

A: Every website should have an ASCAP license, which will include licensing for the webcast. If you want to verify you have an ASCAP license contact Max DeMagistris at mdemagistris@ascap.com.

Q: I received a gift of sheet music. Is that legal? Can I buy music from another chapter?

A: Legally purchased music can be given or sold without restriction. The music can also be used in competition or for any performances, providing you have proof (receipt/purchase record and/or transfer letter) the music was obtained legally via gift or purchase. However, you cannot make copies of the music. You will need to legally purchase additional copies from SA International Sales or the arranger.

Q: Can I use my legally purchased music with quartets and my chorus?

A: Yes, you can use legally purchased music (or learning tracks) with multiple groups, as long as you have approval from your chorus. However, if you need additional copies of the music, you will need to purchase them from SA International Sales so payments/royalties will be sent to the copyright holder.

Q: Can I use a performance, or a segment of a performance, as background music on my website? Can I post a performance video on YouTube?

A: Posting videos online, on any site, requires a synchronization license from the copyright owner/publisher. If a copyright holder notices a non-licensed song used in combination with a video posted on YouTube or another site, they can ask the user to remove the video and users can be fined.

To secure a license for these songs, visit the [ASCAP](#) and [BMI](#) websites. You will need to send the publisher a written request with the following information:

- the details of the license you'd like to secure
- the territory (worldwide)
- term (how long you intend to post the video)
- description of your project and its intent
- and media (web/YouTube).

Once arranged, any songs in the Public Domain (those written in 1923 or before) become the property of the arranger, so you will need to contact them for permission as well.

Q: My quartet is going to perform on TV and on the radio. How do I ensure I'm following copyright law?

A: U.S. copyright law offers certain rights to the copyright owner, who could be either the song writer or someone who has been assigned ownership, such as a publisher or an estate, through contractual agreements. These [rights](#) are to:

- Prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work;
- Reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or recordings;
- Distribute copies of the work to the public;
- Perform the work publicly; and
- Display the copyrighted work publicly.

For a TV and/or radio appearance, the applicable ideas are the performance and derivative work aspects. When music is paired with video footage, a derivative work is created. This work requires a music synchronization license, which the TV and/or radio station(s) are responsible for securing.

Q: I've heard there is a "30-second rule" that allows me to use a segment of a song without a license. Is that correct?

A: Unfortunately, that rule does not exist. Any/all segments of a song or songs in their entirety, must be "cleared" through individual licenses with the copyright holder, performance licenses, and, in some cases, with [SoundScan](#).

Q: I'd like to sing a song at a funeral. Do I need to worry about copyright?

A: No. If you have purchased legal copies of your music, the [religious services exemption](#) in Copyright Law permits performances of copyrighted religious works at places of worship or at religious assemblies.

Q: How does woodshedding fit in? Can I record a woodshedded performance?

A: Woodshedding – the art of harmonizing by ear (with or without notated music) – refers specifically to barbershop music. It is legal to sing on the spot without music as long as the music you are singing adheres to all copyright and licensing rules listed above, including the ASCAP/BMI/SESAC performance licenses. If you record the performance, follow the rules for mechanical and synchronization licenses.

Q: We destroyed illegal copies of a song. However, we would like to continue using an arrangement once clearance has been obtained. Does this mean we are paying twice for an arrangement?

A: No. When you purchase from Sweet Adelines Sales you will only pay a per copy fee.

If you purchase directly from an arranger, the arranger decides their fees. Arrangers can pass on the handling cost as well as the copyright holders fees as first-time charges. However, the arranger may be willing to waive his/her own fee if the group has already paid it one time.

Q: How long does copyright last?

A: For works published after 1977, the [copyright lasts for the life of the author plus 70 years](#). On items completed in the course of employment or specifically commissioned, the copyright lasts between 95 and 120 years, depending on the date the work was published. Works published in the US prior to 1923 are in the public domain.

Q: Can I alter sheet music and use it as part of a fundraiser?

A: Unfortunately, no. It is illegal to revise and reproduce sheet music as you do not own the actual music yourself. If you are interested in a [Chapter fundraiser](#), SA offers Rustic Cuff jewelry as a fundraiser option.

Q: What do I do with all this information?

A: It's a good idea to organize your ensemble's music history. Suggestions include:

- A history of songs performed in major shows.
- A separate document/spreadsheet detailing music purchases and clearance history that includes basic information such as arranger, songwriter and publisher credits will make filling out [SA's Song Information Sheet](#) a breeze.
- Create a one-page song order/pitch list for performances that can be easily included on your basic performance data information sheet.
- Monitor your hard copy music library inventory keeping "active" music readily available.
- Generate song lists that form the basis for scripts and tech cue plans for chapter shows and other performances where emcee's speak.