

INTRODUCTION TO ARRANGING

Steps in the Arranging Process

1. Choose the right song to arrange.
 - a. The title should suggest something of interest to the singer and audience.
 - b. It should have a preponderance of strong barbershop chords. (i.e., out of the 11 BBS chords, most of them should be major triads, barbershop 7th and barbershop 9th chords.)
 - c. The lyrics should be relevant to today's singers and audiences. There should be a strong rhyming pattern. The lyrics should fit the melody.\
 - d. The melody should be in a singable range for leads, should be simple and memorable, and have few wide intervals. There should be few accidentals. There MUST be a musical high point, and it should coincide with the lyrical one.
 - e. If it's a ballad, it should lend itself to an ad lib style of delivery. If it's an uptune, will it be driving, or will it swing?
 - f. Is the chorus of the song written in 8 bar increments? There should be a 32- or 40-bar chorus. It should have a strong rhyme scheme and an AABA, ABAB or ABCA-type form.

2. Choose the right key.
 - a. Identify the highest and lowest notes in the melody. Pick a key that allows the lead to sing the majority of the song in the middle of her range.
 - b. Most singers prefer "flat" keys (F, Bb, Eb, Ab); most arrangers arrange in "flat" keys. The key of G is common, too. Occasionally, an arranger might select the key of D, particularly if there is a key change going up to Eb.
 - c. Be careful when you transpose sheet music to the new key—mistakes can occur easily!

3. Begin the arrangement.
 - a. Become familiar with the song. Play it, sing it, listen to it over and over.
 - b. Make an initial construction plan. Think about different possible components: introduction, verse, chorus, repeat, chorus, tag.
 - c. Arrange the first 8 bars of the chorus to assess the challenges inherent in the song.