



Choosing a Place to Rehearse

As they consider returning to in-person rehearsals, many choruses have found that they are unable to use their previous rehearsal location. Finding an appropriate location is vitally important and in the current environment, extremely challenging. Many choruses are rehearsing outdoors or having “drive-in” rehearsals to achieve adequate social distancing. It is important to consider these options with your Management Team/Board of Directors. If an outdoor rehearsal will not work, here are some things to consider as you seek the best rehearsal space for your group:

1. Talk with your Administrative team to determine how much the group can afford to spend on a rehearsal site.
2. Determine the area or areas of your town or city that would be 1) most beneficial and desired; 2) acceptable; 3) unacceptable.
3. Needs and considerations:
 - Room size and capacity
 - “Stage” size – a space adequate for your group to stand and move with ease and stability, providing space for social distancing
 - Ventilation
 - Exposure to other people and groups associated with the facility
 - Cleaning and disinfecting practices of the facility
 - Willingness of facility management to create a plan for communication of exposure to COVID-19
 - Accessible and safe outdoor area for breakouts and social distancing
 - Parking spaces
 - Accessibility
 - Space for riser storage and flat floor sized to fit your need
 - Ceiling height. Taller ceilings provide better acoustics and room for arm moves/choreography from the top riser. Taller ceilings may offer better ventilation.
 - Check echo/“liveness” of the room. A “very live” room is not beneficial for rehearsal spaces. It gives a false sense of “bigness” to the sound and can overwhelm the director in listening, causing them to be unable to discern incorrect notes or vocal problems. Echo is highly problematic, causing many synchronization/unity issues. A quick test to determine how live the room is would be to stand in the room and snap your fingers or make a sudden noise. Does it echo? Can you feel/hear the sound hanging on? If so, this room may be too live for optimum rehearsal. Also, take note of the materials in the room. Wood or concrete floors and ceilings and hard surface furniture will create live sound, and echo is probably present in that room.
 - Adequate Lighting. Is there enough lighting to allow for energy and excitement? Darkened rooms tend to dampen energy and interaction.

- Rehearsal spaces. Do you need separate rooms for sections? If so, how many are needed in addition to the larger rehearsal space.
- What night of the week do you need/prefer?

Once your needs are clearly determined, the search is on! You have the map parameters of your search; now you'll need to make a list of the possibilities inside those areas. Keep in mind, many of the typical locations may not be available due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Some places to consider:

- Churches
- Schools
- Lodges
- Recreation centers
- Community centers
- Unused retail space

It is now time to reach out to contacts and make some connections with your community. Do any of your members have contacts that might lead to a possible site? Does anyone have friends they could ask about the availability of space in their churches, workplaces, etc? You can even contact your local community center or Chamber of Commerce for possible locations.

How do you talk with and negotiate an effective rehearsal site?

- Ask for a walk-through of the site. Now is your time to determine if this site meets your needs – size, parking, availability, etc.
- Consider the safety of the surrounding area, parking availability, and possible security guard availability as needed.
- Ask what other groups will be accessing the area.
- Discuss COVID-19 exposure plan.
- Discuss cleaning of facility, particularly before and after rehearsal.
- Measure “stage” area to make sure it fits your needs and potential needs of the next year.
- If the term applies in your country, tell them you are a non-profit organization. Ask if they have special pricing available for non-profits.
- Ask them for their rental price. Per week? Per month? How long does the contract last? What specifics are in the contract that you need to know?
- Some places may offer free usage. If so, ask what could be required to use the space for free. Options include periodic performances, clean up, contributing in some way, etc.
- Get contact information and the best time to contact so you can get back in touch with them when a decision is made.

Time to Sign the Contract!

- Find a member, family member, or friend who has some experience in reading contracts to take a look at the contract to make sure your negotiated elements are clearly in the wording. If you do not have anyone who has experience with contracts, contact your Regional personnel or the Membership Department at International Headquarters for help.
- Be prepared to pay at least the first month's rent or more, depending on how much the lessor requires.

- Have clear understanding of when and how the rent is due: date, weekly or monthly, etc.; by cash, check, credit card, etc.
- Does the contract state how you can end the contract/rental agreement? (Notice times, etc.)

Rehearsal spaces are very important for the development and on-going success of a chorus. While some groups begin at someone's home, having a separate dedicated rehearsal space provides members with a sense of permanence, professionalism, and commitment. It also provides and communicates room for growth when visitors come. What a visitor sees and experiences in the first visit will often determine whether they will return. Having a consistent rehearsal site allows everyone to know where to go for every rehearsal.

While it is sometimes challenging, finding a rehearsal site is well worth the effort and additional costs that may be incurred. Best wishes on finding the perfect "home" for your chorus!