

Prout School Music | Choir

Summer Practice Plan (2026) - tentatively due September 4, 2026

Mr. Ryan Cox, Director of Music



Welcome to Choir!

Just like your sport of choice, it's important to keep your musical skills up in the off-season to avoid the "summer chops" phenomenon that happens every fall. That's the goal behind introducing this summer ~~assignment~~ practice plan. In the same way your coaches expect you to stay active when you're out of season, I'm expecting something very similar.

For our incoming musicians, welcome to Choir at Prout! You're part of a tight-knit musical family now, and we're all excited for you to join us. This is my chance to make sure you're familiar with the expectations of a high school music program. Since you're all coming from a variety of schools with vastly different definitions of what "choir" means, I want to make sure we're all on the same terms when August rolls around.

For our returning musicians, welcome back! Let's take the lessons we've learned from last year and keep the momentum going. What I'm hoping you'll notice when we reconvene in August is that rehearsals are way smoother when we're all confident singers. As you all know, we are responsible for a lot of music in Choir between concerts, Masses, and other engagements. We can tackle some more interesting music, too! My goal with this plan is to keep you in shape, so we can play at a level truly fitting of a quality high school choir.

I tell our captains every year when we meet for the first time – there is no reason we can't be one of the best choirs in South County, if not the state. That starts with buying in, trusting the process, and pushing yourselves and each other to be better every day. I don't expect you all to play like professionals, but if you set out to improve a little bit each time you play, you'll be amazed at the progress looking back. So, let's get to work! I'll be practicing this summer as well – we're in this together.

Reach out any time over the summer if you have questions. All the details you need follow.

See you soon!

Mr. Ryan Cox, M.M.

Director of Music and Mathematics Faculty

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NOTE: Those who audition for RIMEA All-State are exempt from this assignment. See below.

Your offseason practice plan

There are three parts to this practice plan – a piece of your choosing, a short assigned excerpt that you will learn in parts, and some aural skills work. Find the details for everything you need below, including links to all the resources you need.

New Members

Complete [this Google Form](#) so I can get some more information about your background!

All singers

Any resources for this assignment can be found in [this Google Drive folder](#).

Sing anything	Pick a <u>30-60 second cut</u> of a song of your choosing that you find best showcases your ability as a singer. Anything is fair game here as long as you feel that you're putting your best foot forward!
Excerpt Sheet music Four-part audio Part tracks Soprano Alto Tenor Bass	For "Abide With Me", learn your part and be prepared to sing it both solo and in quartets with other students. If you don't know exactly what your voice part is – soprano, alto, tenor, or bass – no worries! Choose the one that feels most natural to you. <u>Sopranos</u>, this is not a high part at all. I'm listening for control in your lower register, plus properly aligned vowels and overall diction. (This is true for <i>all</i> singers, but especially the sopranos as this part is not terribly hard.) <i>Note that the audio from the King's Singers has one difference in the alto part, m. 12 – they sing an F, I'm listening for the C</i>
Aural skills	There are a few different parts to this. 1. Solfege scale  do re mi fa sol la ti do do ti la sol fa mi re do - You should be able to sing up and down the major scale, using appropriate solfege syllables (above), in any key comfortable for your own voice. - You do not need to double the top pitch (high <i>do</i>) when singing - Pay close attention to the half steps: <i>mi-fa</i> and <i>ti-do</i>, as they tend to go out of tune the most easily - Start on whatever pitch is comfortable! We use <i>movable do</i> here, meaning that <i>do</i> is just the first note of the scale, not necessarily C. <i>Continued on the next page</i>

Aural skills
continued

2. Scale patterns

- Some of the best ways to get comfortable in and around the scale is to play with patterns. Two of the most common are:



- Ignore the articulations; I took this from the concert band assignment.
- However, you should take time to work out the solfege. Both patterns begin on *do*.
- Write in your syllables!

3. Teoria sight singing

- You're going to get a short melody to sight-sing when you complete your playing test.
- Teoria seems to be a good starting place to get you used to tackling that process!
- I set up a fairly simple practice module [here](#) to get you started.
 - If you press "Reset score and edit options" you can play with the settings. (Including the clef, for basses)
 - The next steps up in difficulty, in order, would be to add "notes 1 to 7", then "arpeggios". You are NOT expected to go this far; this is only for those who may want an additional challenge.

More info on the next page

How we're assessing it

Tentatively due September 4, 2026

Within the first week of school, you will be asked to sing your 30-60 second cut, your part of "Abide with Me", a selection of the aural skills work to be determined, and a short melody to sight-sing, like the exercises on Teoria. **You should be prepared to sing everything assigned** – they're all helpful for you to develop as musicians!

These selections can either be recorded at home and submitted on Google Classroom, or can be sung in person for me when we're both free. Each area of your practice plan will count as its own playing test grade, which is counted out of five points. These are graded mostly on *effort, not perfection*. I'm using this as a way to keep you singing, and loosely figure out where you belong on parts. This is NOT an audition, and there MAY be some things out of reach for some of you. That's okay! **This is an assessment of what you CAN do, not what you can't.**

For full credit: The student sings the assignment on time, live or recorded, and (if recorded) the director is able to access the file to provide feedback. It is clear that the student has worked hard to present their best possible work, sing in tune, with appropriate tone, and in time, with appropriate rhythms and diction where appropriate.

Students who audition for the RIMEA All-State Festival are exempt from this assignment, since they will be preparing at a level beyond what I am expecting here. Since the audition takes place in Q2, they must complete a mock audition with me before the end of Q1.

Practice tips

1. Slow and clean is better than fast and sloppy.
2. Print your music, or use an iPad, and mark up your music. Circle tricky spots, write in notes, fingerings, articulation...whatever you have to do to succeed. The pros do it too.
3. Set clear goals every time you practice. These could be as specific as "I'm going to perfect these two measures" or as general as "I just want to play to blow off some steam after a tough day of work." Either way, always have an objective.
4. To that end, a locked-in, 20-minute practice session is better than spending 2 hours "practicing" but scrolling TikTok for most of the time.
5. Practice makes *permanent*, not perfect. Whatever you practice becomes habit.
6. A 1% improvement is still an improvement. Aim to improve one thing every time you play.

Resources

Metronomes: [Google](#) (built-in) | [Web](#) | [App](#) (what I currently use)
Tuner: [App](#) (what I currently use - also doubles as a pitch pipe)
Pitch reference: [Online pitch pipe](#)

Questions? Email me!

I'm here to help, and no relevant question is stupid. My email is rcox@theproutschool.org.