

HOW TO WORK WITH AN ACCOMPANIST

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Working with an accompanist is an important skill to know as a performer. There will be many times in your life you will need to work with a pianist, and the way you do this can make or break your audition. Many auditions are ruined solely because the singer has not thought about this part of the audition. Here is a list of what you should think about when preparing to work with an accompanist.

Preparation

- Buy your sheet music (Sheet Music Direct, Online Sheet Music, musicnotes.com)
 - Do not buy the fake book or easy piano version
- Buy a small 1" black binder, and clear, non-glare plastic sheet protectors
- Make sure your music is printed clearly with no markings, stains, or missing notes
- Photocopy your sheet music if in a book
 - Make sure all notes are visible on copied page (do not cut off any notes, especially on the bottom)
- Put your music back-to-back in the sheet protectors, unless it is only two pages
 - If it is two pages, put the pages side-by-side facing each other to eliminate a page turn for the accompanist
 - If it is one page, put it in the binder or mount it on a manila folder or piece of cardboard. No loose pages!
- Put the sheet protectors in your small binder
 - It is a good idea to have a large binder that contains all of your sheet music alphabetized for easy access in the future
- Make sure the binder is in good shape and has no worn out hole punches/sheet protectors
- Make sure cuts are very clear (use big, colored markings, making sure not to cover up the music)
- Make sure alternate endings are marked
- Make sure the grammar makes sense with the cut, especially how it starts and ends
- Look at exactly where you've written start and stop. Are those your start and stop points or the accompanist's? There is usually a difference.
- Be aware of how much you are expected to sing (16 bars, 1 minute, etc.)
- Make sure your song is in the right key (do not expect the accompanist to be able to change your key on the spot)
- Make sure the accompaniment is sight-readable. Talk to an accompanist prior to the audition.
- It is beneficial to have music that contains chord symbols above the music (G, Em, Am7, etc.)
- Have the accompanist turn as few pages as possible

At the audition

- Singers should fill out an audition card and bring it with them into the audition room (these may or may not be a feature of a college or professional audition).
- If the singer is auditioning for a panel of individuals who do not know them, they may be asked to slate – which is where the singer states their name and what they are singing (including song title and composer or musical it is from).
- If the first two words out of your mouth when you meet your accompanist are, "I'm sorry...", that is two strikes against you.
- Tell the accompanist where you are starting and ending, as well as other important information (tempo changes, go directly to second ending, no repeat, dynamic markings, etc.)
- Inform the accompanist of any cuts that are made
- Sing the beginning of your selection to give an indication of how fast or slow you want it to go (make sure you are clear!). Snap your fingers if that helps. This is the speed your accompanist will play so make sure you are right.
- Walk confidently to your audition spot and give a little nod to the accompanist when you are ready to begin
- When singing, do not look any of the panelists in the eye. While eye contact encouraged when speaking to the panelists, singers should select a spot above the panelists heads as their focus when singing (unless the scene context requires something different).
- Sing your heart out!
- After singing, make sure to thank both the panelists and the accompanist.