

PERFORMANCE LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

SOUND	
A	The "A" level is characterized by open, free, and relaxed tone production that appears effortless, by a consistent wall of sound, and by chords that consistently lock in total accuracy. The unit sound shimmers with open, matched resonance, and vowels seem to float on a stream of sound with no interference from consonants. Artistry, finesse, and vocal energy abound, and use of appropriate vocal textures help to paint a musical picture of the message conveyed.
B	The "B" level performance lacks the mastery of vocal skills found at the "A" level. Tuning and synchronization errors creep into vocal lines, creating varying degrees of error in accuracy and unity. Artistry and vocal energy are sometimes evident, but not a consistent due to focus on technique.
C	The "C" level shows varying degrees of vocal skill and a need for better support and stamina. Early diphthongs and consonants often impair vowel match, and lack of consistent support affects attempts at vocal artistry, barbershop style, and the ability to produce sustained and energized vocal lines.
D	The "D" level performer may or may not have begun work on building vocal skills. There are varying degrees of major accuracy or tonality problems, and no effort appears to have been made to match vowels to align chords. There is no apparent understanding of vocal energy, artistry, or barbershop style.
MUSIC	
A	The "A" level performance uses its mastery of vocal skills to present a song that seems made for barbershop style. The arrangement combines skillful use of the implied harmony, which requires an interesting variety of strong barbershop chords, with creativity in musical embellishments. The performer utilizes a wide range of dynamics and artistic, flowing phrases, or a combination of steady tempo, appropriate pulse, and rhythmic interest to captivate the listener.
B	The "B" level performance often has "the horse before the cart" because the arrangements would be more successful with the foundation of the basic skills found at the higher level. The inconsistencies in tuning and musical unity, together with the inability to produce and sustain a fully energized vocal line, keep the performers from getting the most out of the arrangement. There may also be balance problems due to the range demands and vocal inconsistencies.
C	The "C" level performance frequently appears to have concentrated on the interpretive plan before strengthening the vocal skills needed to perform that plan effectively. In a chorus, there are generally more than four notes in each chord. The arrangement may be beyond the present ability of the performer.
D	The "D" level performance suffers from lack of attention to the basics of good vocal production. At this level, anything but the simplest of barbershop arrangements will present challenges the performer is unable to meet. The only road to a higher level is work on vocal skills.
EXPRESSION	
A	The "A" level performance, with its mastery of vocal skills, takes musical storytelling to its highest level through genuine involvement, character identification, and skillful use of dynamics, flowing phrases, vocal energy, stylistic delivery, and appropriate pace. The fully synchronized unit is characteristic of this level.
B	The "B" level performance attempts the interpretive ideas found at the higher level, but inconsistencies in vocal abilities often impair success. Plans are good, but consistent delivery as a total unit seems just beyond reach. Synchronization problems within words and at phrase endings are characteristic here.
C	The "C" level performer often concentrates on the creative area of this category without attending to the detail found in the basic area that needs to be in a place for interpretative plans to be successful. The performer appears more concerned with delivering the plan than with genuine involvement and communication.
D	The "D" level performance suffers from lack of attention to the basics of good vocal production. At this level, work on dynamics is ineffective because of the lack of support and stamina. Unity is fleeting. At this level, the only path to higher achievement is work on stronger vocal skills.
SHOWMANSHIP	
A	The "A" level performance, with its mastery of vocal skills, takes visual storytelling to its highest level through physical energy and intensity that establishes a charisma that envelops the audience. Characterization is strongly established, and the planned choreography or staging totally supports and reinforces the musical product. Attention to the details of costume and appearance fully supports the visual image portrayed. The stage was made for this performer!
B	The "B" level performance often demonstrates ideas at the higher level that aren't as effective here because vocal skills lack complete mastery. The visual plan sometimes interferes with supported vocal lines. Performer can't consistently meet visual and vocal demands concurrently, and energy levels are inconsistent.
C	The "C" level performer often concentrates on the choreographic plan without integrating it into the musical plan or realizing that "moves" are a whole-body effort. Visual sell is in and out because performers' attention is on the mechanics. The visual plan needs to be considered as support for the musical plan.
D	The "D" level performance, though sometimes enthusiastic, suffers from lack of attention to the basics of good vocal production. The performer needs to recognize that Showmanship is about selling, and that it is almost impossible to sell a product that needs major repairs. The performance is often characterized by nerves that border on fear, and the message communicated is discomfort. The only road to a higher level performance is work on the vocal skills.