

VIRTUAL ENSEMBLE REHEARSAL TIPS



START WITH A WARM UP

Choose a group warm up that has multiple parts, such as a four-part chorale. This allows the ensemble members to start listening for intonation and get individuals comfortable with playing on the virtual platform. This can also serve as a test of the audio settings to ensure a smooth rehearsal period.

REHEARSAL STRUCTURE

Virtual rehearsals tend to run smoothly when the director rehearses in large sections with only one person playing unmuted (all others play their part while muted). The starting and stopping points of each section must be given and the leader is responsible for giving a cue for when to start playing. An 8-beat count off works well to establish a regular expectation for when to start playing. These large sections can then be repeated with a different unmuted leader so members can hear other parts while matching pitch and style.



FOCUS ON THE OBJECTIVE

Traditional rehearsal issues such as intonation, blend, balance, and alignment can be addressed during rehearsal, but the most important issue to address is rhythmic alignment between all parts. The director should anticipate issues that may arise in these areas and rely on the members to ask for assistance or repetitions to correct errors they experience during rehearsal.

USE A METRONOME OR CLICKTRACK

Each member must have a metronome in virtual rehearsals. When an individual is playing unmuted, others can easily play along if they can hear a metronome. If there are tempo changes in the music you are rehearsing, click tracks can be created with apps such as Tonal Energy or Frozen Ape.



REHEARSE IN SMALLER GROUPS

You may want to consider starting rehearsals in smaller groups, such as upper flutes (for flute choir) or woodwinds (for band). In these smaller groups, style and blending is easier to address. Then, when the whole group rehearses together, the style is already established and more time can be devoted to alignment and balance.

SAVE TIME FOR SOCIALIZING

Rehearsing virtually can be convenient and effective, but don't forget that music is a social experience. Because everyone must stay muted while they are not playing, we often miss the brief chatting that may take place before or after rehearsals. Saving a few minutes before or after rehearsal can help new members to get to know returning members and help the retention rate of your ensemble.



This guide was developed in collaboration with Mr. Isaac Medina, Director of the Austin Flute Choir and the Hendrickson High School Band in Pflugerville, Texas.