



2026 Music Rules

General:

1. Vocal and instrumental music must be classical, semi-classical, folk, patriotic, spirituals, traditional sacred, classic musicals, or movie music written in a traditional style. No secular pop, rock, country, or jazz music will be allowed.
 - a. The term “classical” is not limited to that specific time period but applies to selections of a different time period as compared to contemporary, popular music.
 - b. The terms “semi-classical” or “traditional” identifies music that is like classical music in form, style or quality but is less complex. **This is not a separate category.**
 - c. Vocal music from musicals and movies must be selected from the 2026 approved list. Any selection not on the list must be pre-approved at least four weeks before the competition date. Music must be arranged in a traditional or classical style. Directors, teachers, and parents should consider the association of the movie/musical itself; pieces from musicals whose plotlines include objectionable moral elements or that contain sexual innuendoes will not be approved.
 - d. Sacred music may include hymns (both modern and ancient), modern worship songs, Southern Gospel, and sacred classical pieces. Sacred music must be written and performed in a classical or semi-classically traditional style. (Example: not excessive syncopation, pop-style singing, etc.) The theology of the piece must be Biblically correct.
 - e. Medleys are acceptable.
 - f. All music approval is at the discretion of the competition committee.
2. Only live piano accompaniment is acceptable for soloists and groups.
3. Choreography may only be used if indicated by the composer/arranger and is limited to only hand clapping, finger snapping, foot stomping, and whistling.
4. No additional instruments (such as bells, finger cymbals, flute, violin, etc.) may be performed as accompaniment or descant even if written by the composer/arranger.

5. **Contestants must provide one original copy of the piece and one photocopy.**
Only the original will be returned.
6. All measures in a piece must be numbered or the contestant will be automatically disqualified.
7. In the interest of good taste, additions, cuts, or deviations in the music must be clearly marked on the judges' copies and are at the judges' discretion. Judges may take off only one point.
8. If using digital music, include a cover copy or page which indicated proof of purchase. One additional copy must be made but will not be returned. Only the original single print will be returned.
9. A student or group may **not** perform the same selection in two consecutive years. A selected piece may not be performed by more than one group from the same school/group in the same year.
10. Each student or director is responsible for retrieving the original copies from the judges following the performance. All additional photocopies will be destroyed.
11. Vocal and instrumental Grade Divisions are as follows: (This does not include piano or strings.)
 - a. Grades 3-5 Elementary (Students in grade 3 may participate in groups only.)
 - b. Grades 6-8 Middle School
 - c. Grades 9-12 High School
 - d. Students may compete in a higher group category but may not compete in a lower group category.

12. Piano and Strings divisions are as follows:

PIANO

Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced
Beginning Standard Literature Primer – Level 2	Early Intermediate Literature Late Intermediate Literature Levels 3-6	Early Advanced Literature Intermediate Advanced Literature Late Advanced Literature
May use music	Must be memorized	Must be memorized

The category entered is based on the level of the performance literature and not necessarily on the age of the student.

STRINGS

Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced
Approximately 1-2 years of lessons	Approximately 3-5 years of lessons	Approximately 6+ years of lessons
Suzuki levels 1-2	Suzuki levels 3-5	Suzuki levels 6+
May use music	May use music	Must be memorized

Accompanists:

1. Each individual or group must provide its own accompanist.
2. The accompanist does not count as part of the group number.
3. The accompanist may use a page turner.
4. If using the only original copy, the accompanist must show the original to the judges prior to performance. Copies will not be returned.

Time Limits:

1. Elementary school students (or beginning students) will perform one piece within a 3-minute time limit.
2. Middle school students (or intermediate students) will perform one piece within a 5-minute time limit.
3. High school students (or advanced students) will perform one piece within an 8-minute time limit.

Individual:

1. Piano and vocal solos must be memorized. (Exception: Beginning piano solos may use music.)
2. Instrumental solos do **not** need to be memorized. (Exception: Advanced string solos must be memorized.)
3. Instrumentalists may **not** use a page turner.
4. Instrumentalists do **not** have to have an accompanist but are strongly urged to use one.
5. A student may enter more than one individual category (such as sacred piano and classical piano or sacred vocal and musical theatre, etc.) but may not enter the same category more than once.

Groups:

Small and Large Vocal Ensembles:

1. Small ensembles (2-6 members) and large ensembles (7-12 members) will perform one memorized piece within a 5-minute time limit.
2. Small ensembles may **not** be directed. Large ensembles may be directed.

Small and Large Instrumental Groups:

1. Small ensembles (2-6 members) and large ensembles (7-12 members) will perform one piece (with music) within a 5-minute time limit.
2. Small and large ensembles may be directed.

Piano Duet:

1. Students may perform one piece within the time limit of their individual category.
2. Students must be in the same age category.
3. Piano duets do **not** need to be memorized.

Handbell/Handchime Ensemble/Choir:

1. A small ensemble will consist of 2-6 members and will perform one piece within a 5-minute time limit.
2. A large ensemble will consist of 7-12 members and will perform one piece within a 5-minute time limit.
3. A handbell/handchime choir will consist of 13+ members and will perform two pieces within a 10-minute time limit. An elementary choir may perform one piece within a 5-minute time limit.
4. Both ensembles and choirs may be directed.

Performance Procedures:

1. Each individual contestant will introduce himself, the school/group represented, and the title of the piece before performing.
2. Individual contestants will bow and acknowledge their accompanists after performing. One point will be taken off for failure to bow or acknowledge the accompanist.
3. For small and large ensembles, one member will introduce the school/group represented and the title of the piece before performing.
4. For directed groups, the director will introduce the school/group represented and the title of the piece(s) before performing.
5. Instrumentalists may tune their instruments with the piano or tuner prior to introducing themselves and the piece.

Choral:

1. The director will introduce the school/group represented and the titles of pieces before performing.
2. Elementary Choral Groups (13-24 members) and Youth Choirs (25+ members) will perform **one selection within an 8-minute time limit**.
3. Middle School and High School Choral Groups (13-24 members) and Youth Choirs (25+ members) will perform **two selections within a 10-minute time limit**.
4. Selections may be sacred anthems, classical, semi-classical, foreign language, cultural/folk, patriotic, spirituals, or traditional classic Broadway. (Example: *Climb Ev'ry Mountain* from *The Sound of Music*)
5. Students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades may compete in High School Choral.
6. Students in 5th grade may compete in Middle School Choral and in Elementary School Choral.
7. Students in 3rd grade may compete in Elementary School Choral.

Band/Orchestra:

1. A Band/Orchestra will be considered a group of seven or more musicians.
2. The director will introduce the school/group represented and the titles of the pieces before performing.
3. Elementary Band/Orchestra will perform **one selection within a 10-minute time limit**.
4. Middle School and Senior High Band/Orchestra will perform **two selections within a 15-minute time limit**.
5. Students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades may compete in either Middle School or High School Band/Orchestra.
6. Students in 5th and 6th grades may compete in either Middle School or High School Band/Orchestra. Students may compete in a higher group category as well as their own age category. They may not compete in a lower group category.

Band, Choral, and Strings Festivals

Each year, WMA Fine Arts Competition offers band, choral, and strings festival performances in the evening awards ceremony. High school students in grades 7-12 are invited to take advantage of these unique one-hour festival workshops led by skilled guest conductors from 4:00-5:00 on the afternoon of the competition. The festival band, choir, and strings will be performing in the closing ceremony at 6:30 p.m., along with the Best of Show from several competition categories. All competition winners are announced, and awards are given in the evening awards ceremony. The evening awards ceremony is open to the public and is free of charge.

Choral directors, teachers, and/or parents will need to order adequate quantities for their students. To receive the benefit of this band/choral/strings experience, it is the student's responsibility to learn the piece prior to the festival rehearsal. Memorization is not required. Students may participate in only one festival.

A group or individual does not have to compete to participate in the festival; likewise, a group or individual that does compete does not have to participate in the festival, although it is strongly encouraged to experience the full day of competition. The fee for the festival is \$5.00 for each participant. Please be sure to indicate participation on the registration forms.

For the convenience of choral students and directors, the festival music link is provided here as well as on the website.

Link for Band Music:

Link for Choral Music:

Link for Strings Music: