

The eight steps of launching a successful barbershop quartet:

1) Find Four Voices

This may be based on friendship, ability, experience, vocal styles, age, or mutual agreement.

2) Set a Goal with a Time Reference

This could be competing in a contest, singing in the annual show, Valentines, or community gigs. The time reference could be the contest date, show date, the end of the year or any date that lets everybody know how long a commitment is being made to the group. The time reference provides a date when each person can decide to renew their commitment.

3) Pick a Theme

What is your quartet going to be primarily known for – traditional barbershop, comedy, Disney, 70s, 80s, show tunes, modern music, or Bartok? A theme isn't meant to constrain your repertoire, but will help you pick music and find a direction to drive your efforts.

4) Pick Music

This is much easier if you have a theme. Your ability level should also help guide music selection. Any member should be able to veto a selection. Music and track resources are plentiful and growing.

5) Regular Rehearsals

A consistent schedule helps planning and minimizes lost time. Pick it and stick to it.

6) Plan Rehearsals

Have an outline of what you want to accomplish. It can be the same plan each week or differ, but having a plan will produce the best results. How long will you warm up, how long will you spend on each song, what songs will you work on, what parts of songs do you want to work on, what time will you finish? Success may be in these details.

7) Get Coaching

When you have done some solid work, get someone to listen. Barbershop peers are easy to find and will likely offer advice. Get several reviews so that if reviewers say the same thing you can take notice. Take all coaching constructively. Not all coaches will say the same thing so discuss with your quartet what you hear from coaches before making changes. Down the road, you may want to pay for higher level professional coaching.

8) Use Technology

Recording and playback devices provide instant feedback for balance, style, breathing, etc. and you can do this easily from phones, tablets, or computers. Take it up a notch and find free or inexpensive software for even better quality recordings. Practice singing against each other's recorded tracks.

While singing in a quartet is a commitment, most who have say that it is the golden lining of barbershop singing. Get started today!

Submitted by Jeff Healion - Reno Silver Dollar Chorus