

Leading Singsongs

Singsongs are fun, morale building, a tension release, an enthusiasm builder, and a way to generate a sense of belonging. They are a means of individual expression, but also if group unity.

It's important to plan your singsong ahead of time and to practise the songs. You don't have to be a great singer to lead a singsong, but you do have to be organized and enthusiastic.

A few tips for song leaders ...

- (a) **Be enthusiastic!** - If you do not act like you enjoy singing nobody else will either. Be happy, confident, and responsive to your group. Use your hands to encourage singing and keep the beat, use your eyes to maintain contact and demand attention. Use your voice to have fun.
- (b) **Know the song!** - Start the singsong with a song everyone already knows. Find out ahead of time some songs that everyone is familiar with so you don't have to ask when you are trying to begin the songs. Don't use the book for the first song either - have your hands free to show enthusiasm and to get the crowd going.
- (c) **New songs** - Even the most "well known" songs will be unknown to some people. Sing the song through one time or ask those who know it to sing with you. If it's a short song, sing it through twice; if it's a longer song, everyone will know it by the third verse or so.

Let's Sing Out!

Group singing is group forming. People who have not worked or played together before will co-operate in a group endeavour more readily after participating in group singing. Singing creates fellowship and sense of identification. Everyone belongs to the group and the group belongs to everyone.

Who Can Lead Group Singing?

Many people shy away from leading group singing because they lack formal musical training. However, musical training and ability are not important qualifications for leading. Anyone who loves music and people can lead singing. Having a sense of pitch and rhythm, a sense of humour, lots of enthusiasm and a willingness to share all help to make the singsong work well.

Why Have Group Singing?

Nearly all people enjoy music in some form. Unfortunately, many people don't express themselves musically because they feel inadequate when it comes to singing. Group singing requires no special talents. It is a group activity in which each person's voice becomes a part of the total group. It offers all of us the opportunity and pleasure of musical expression without becoming self-conscious.

Singing together also makes a group feel more at ease and helps to centre their interest. In addition, singing together can help people get acquainted, promote fellowship and co-operation, teach an appreciation for music, and be a source of inspiration.

When To Have Group Singing

Group singing can and should be a part of each club meeting. Singing at the beginning of a meeting unifies the group before business is conducted. Singing also fits well into the middle or at the end of the meeting because people welcome the lift given by a good song session at any time.

Be sure to include group singing in any special club or community activity such as parents' meetings, achievement programs, parties, tours, banquets, and talent programs.

Plan Your Song Session Ahead of Time

Thoughtful planning of your musical selections can greatly assist the success of your program. Keep the nature of the group and the occasion in mind when selecting songs. The order of the songs is not as important as the appropriateness of the selections. Some songs achieve specific moods which can be used effectively during your program to develop community spirit.

When possible, plan a song session that is long enough to create an atmosphere of enthusiasm for singing. An opening song and a closing song are limited in value and may become merely habit with little meaning. Singing for 10 minutes at a time is much more effective than singing one song several times during the meeting.

Here are some additional tips:

1. Use a variety of songs that fit the particular situation. Don't use all action songs, all fun songs, all patriotic songs, all slow songs, or all fast songs.
2. Begin with a song everyone knows. Finish with one of your best. Those in between should be familiar to many in your group but include a new one for variety.
3. Avoid overuse of parodies and novelty songs that wear out or are in bad taste.

Use Songs To Change Group Feeling or Mood

Singing greatly affects feelings and emotions -- capitalize on this. Well chosen songs can change the feeling of a group from quietness to hilarity. Therefore, if you need to move your group from a loud and excited feeling to a serious mood or vice versa, choose songs appropriately.

Extra Tips for Song Leaders

1. List the songs you expect to use; select a variety. Singsongs should include loud and quiet songs, new and familiar songs.
2. Announce songs clearly.
3. Use an accompanist if a good one is available. If a piano is used, it should be placed so that the accompanist can see the leader. Remember, no accompanist is better than a poor one.
4. Stand where everyone can see you and as close to your group as possible. Then get the attention of your group.
5. If possible, memorize songs you will lead and put your whole heart into singing. Never use a songbook unless everyone has one.
6. Announce the song name so all can hear. Give the number if it is in the book.
7. Give pitch on which to start the song or have your pianist do this, if you have one. Give a sharp decisive movement that will bring everybody in on the first tone. Emphasize the harmony or rhythm which makes any song have appeal.
8. When teaching a new song, first sing through it yourself. If the song is long, teach a line at a time. If there is a chorus, it's a good idea to teach it first. Encourage new songs.
9. Keep your group's attention. As soon as you finish one song announce the next so there is no delay. Do not neglect any part of your audience during the leading of a song. Encourage the participation of those who are not singing.
10. Think of your audience as individuals and not as a group. Encourage everyone to participate.
11. If needed, use a visual aid (example - songbook, flipchart, etc.)
12. Use a play song or a "round" when the audience is tired. Practice a round with the entire group first. Indicate the number of times to sing it through.
13. If singing is only part of a program, do not use more than your share of time.
14. Be enthusiastic -- it's contagious. Try to make good songs popular. Sing the same song often enough so members learn the words and do not always need books.
15. Use group singing in LS/MFT (Let's Stand - My Fanny's Tired) situations. Remember that the mind can absorb only as much as the seat can endure!