

Vail Youth Symphony Student Handbook

Student Responsibilities

We at the Vail Youth Symphony understand that following a few key rules will really enhance the experience of all participants. Since the Vail Youth Symphony is dedicated to providing its participants with the best possible musical education, we ask participants to read the Student Handbook carefully. Please understand that we are only asking you to do what is in the best interest of the group.

Attendance:

Promptness and perfect attendance are expected of all VYS participants. Consistent attendance is extremely important to ensure all participants enjoy a rewarding and musically expanding experience. If, as a result of injury, you are unable to play your instrument, you will not be counted absent if you attend the rehearsal, sit with the your section, and take notes.

Absences:

The VYS schedule is very carefully considered. Every effort is made to ensure that our schedule doesn't conflict with important school events. We also publish our rehearsal and perform schedule well ahead of time. Please be sure to plan your individual and family calendars carefully, so as to avoid absences. Absences may be excused at the sole discretion of the conductor/director. Except in the event of an emergency, absences must be reported to your director as far in advance as possible.

Though every rehearsal is important, some rehearsals are critical for managing the expectations of the students and directors. Sectionals, chair tests, and dress rehearsals are **MANDATORY**. In the event that a student misses a sectional, chair test, or dress rehearsal without prior approval, the director may initiate a variety of consequences at his/her sole discretion, including but not limited to, reassigning chair placement, reassigning solo parts, etc.

Reporting Absences:

All absences, early departures, and late arrivals, except in the case of emergency, must be reported to the conductor/director before the beginning of rehearsal. Failure to communicate an absence to your director before the beginning of a rehearsal will result in an unexcused absence. The absence may become excused if extenuating circumstances are communicated to your director as soon as possible—though the director retains the sole right to determine whether or not that absence becomes excused.

Tardiness:

Tardiness is particularly troublesome in a group of dedicated musicians. Please make every effort to arrive to rehearsal at least 15 minutes early. This will allow you to be “on time” for the conductor/director. “On-time” means being seated, tuned, and warmed up (possessing all required materials for your instrument, your music, and a pencil) when the conductor/director raises their baton to start rehearsal. Please be paying attention, and stop talking immediately at the beginning of rehearsal.

Sectionals and Chair Tests/Music Checks:

Sectionals are held during rehearsals, and involve paying a professional coach to give direct instruction to a section of the orchestra. Essential information is learned at these rehearsals, and it is very difficult to keep up with other students, if a sectional is missed. The students must make every effort to learn from another student any material that was missed, so they may be ready for chair tests/music checks. Chair tests/music checks are MANDATORY. Each student must “pass” each music check. Chair placements for concerts and other leadership opportunities are determined in large part by the student’s performance at chair tests/music checks. In the event that a student does not pass a chair test/music check, that student will be informed by the end of the rehearsal if possible, or through email within 24 hours of the chair test/music check. The student will be required to retest at the next rehearsal, at which two directors will be present to evaluate their performance. If the student doesn’t pass their second chair test/music check, they will be asked to re-audition at the next semester to ensure that they are placed in the group best suited to help them increase their skills. At this re-audition, please be advised that many factors (including a student’s diligent efforts and positive attitude) will be taken into account. We want everyone to succeed, and to feel comfortable with their efforts.

Dress rehearsals:

Dress rehearsals are MANDATORY. Every participant must attend the dress rehearsals. Even if you have received permission to miss a dress rehearsal and to consider it an “excused absence,” the conductor/director may make some determinations about your participation in the concert. If you are in a leadership position (concertmaster, section, leader, etc.) you may lose your position. If you have earned a solo, it may be reassigned to another student. Such determinations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Concerts:

All concerts are MANDATORY. If you are unable to attend the concert, you may still rehearse with the group, but you will be unable to serve in a leadership position or audition for solos that will be played at that concert, and you may be asked to sit in the back of your section during rehearsals.

Withdrawing from the program:

We understand that individual circumstances sometimes require that a participant leaves the program. The Vail Youth Symphony incurs some costs per each student even before the first rehearsal starts. For this reason, after the first rehearsal, half of your tuition is non-refundable. You have the first two weeks of rehearsals to consider withdrawing from the program; if you withdraw before the third rehearsal, you may be entitled to a refund of up to half of your tuition. If you elect to withdraw from the program after the beginning of the third rehearsal, you will not be eligible to receive any refund.

School Participation/Private Lessons:

We expect all students to participate in their school programs. Such participation helps students to act as leaders within their school programs, and it helps other students learn and progress so that they may eventually join the Vail Youth Symphony as well. School programs, when experienced in conjunction with the Vail Youth Symphony, will help elevate the skill level of our participants. For this reason, we are offering a tuition scholarship of \$75 to students who participate in their schools' programs. For homeschooled students, or students whose home schools do not offer an orchestra program, the same scholarship may be available if that student participates in private lessons. Please be aware, if the student has a school orchestra available to them, and *elects* not to participate, private lessons *cannot* be substituted for the requirement. Private lessons may only be used to qualify for the scholarship if a school orchestra is unavailable to the student. In the event that a scheduling conflict prevents the student from participating in their school group (AP courses, graduation requirements, etc.—not strictly elective courses) please contact your director or a member of the Vail Youth Symphony Board, and they will discuss it with the Board and provide you with an answer. Any student looking to qualify for the \$75 tuition scholarship should remain in private lessons (as discussed in our policy) or in their school group for the entire year. If the Vail Youth Symphony learns that a student has not participated in their school group or private lessons for the entire year, the student may be responsible for paying back their scholarship to the Vail Youth Symphony. Questions regarding this policy may be directed to your conductor/director.

Rehearsal/Concert Cancellation Policy:

The Vail Youth Symphony makes every effort, including having substitute conductors/directors available, to provide the participants with a consistently excellent experience. In the case of an extreme emergency, a rehearsal or concert may be cancelled. In such an instance, as the expenses of the group have already been sustained, and a refunded tuition will not be possible.

Vail Youth Symphony Student Guidelines:

We are aware that many of our participants are new to auditioned groups, and they may be in need of some guidance. In an effort to help rehearsals run smoothly and to help participants know what is expected of them, we have provided the following guidelines.

1. We will not require you to bring music stands to rehearsals or concerts without advanced notice. Both Empire High School and the Vail Theater of the Arts have music stands available for our use.
2. **YOU MUST BRING ALL OF YOUR MUSIC IN ITS FOLDER TO ALL OF YOUR REHEARSALS AND THE PERFORMANCES.**
3. Bring a pencil and an eraser to all rehearsals. Be ready to mark your music! String Instruments are required to write in all applicable bowings and fingerings.
4. Do not wear hats to rehearsal.
5. Do not chew gum, or eat food during rehearsal. No open drinks will be allowed in the rehearsal area or in the Vail Theater of the Arts (VTOTA). You may bring a water bottle with a sealable top. Please do not bring distractions such as toys or books to rehearsal.
6. Turn off and stow away all electronics during rehearsal. You may text or call your family during the break or after the rehearsal. If you use electronics during the rehearsal, you may be asked to surrender those devices to the conductor/director until the end of the rehearsal. Even if the conductor is working with another section, you should be listening carefully and figuring out what aspects of their discussion may be applicable to you. At no point is it acceptable to “zone out” or fail to pay attention during rehearsal.
7. Please be professional—make sure you have all of the items your instrument may need with you at all rehearsals.
8. Please do not talk with your neighbor during rehearsal. Most of the places we rehearse can become very noisy and echo—your talking (even in a whisper) can prevent someone else from hearing important instructions. We have a limited amount of rehearsal time, and we want to make the most of it!
9. Please turn your music in to the Vail Youth Symphony directly after the concert. Please erase all of the markings you made in your music before you turn it in.

Student Safety

For the safety of our participants, we must insist that they are picked up promptly at the end of rehearsal. Students must not arrive to rehearsal more than 20 minutes early. *The Vail Youth Symphony cannot be responsible for the safety of participants before or after rehearsal.*

Seating

Seating placement within sections will be at the sole discretion of the conductor/director, and may be made with a variety of concerns in mind. Seating placements may change without notice. If you have a problem with where you have been asked to sit, please *discretely* direct an inquiry to your conductor/director.

Student Preparedness

All participants must be prepared for every rehearsal. The Vail Youth Symphony Faculty is comprised of dedicated musicians who love to teach—if a student is having difficulty with any of the music, we will make every effort to help that student. It is for this purpose that we have chosen to provide sectional coaching and chair tests/music checks. If the director feels that a student is particularly unprepared he or she may elect to pull a student out of rehearsal for one-on-one help, etc. If the student fails a chair test/music check then consequences may result, as described in the section titled “Sectionals and Chair Tests/Music Checks.” If the student elects not to adequately prepare himself/herself despite the best efforts of the staff, the student may be asked to perform once more, individually and privately for the conductor/director, who may choose to place the student on probation. The nature of the probation and the time period allowed for the student to improve before they may be asked not to participate in the next concert are in the sole discretion of the conductor/director.

Music and fees

Sheet music is one of the most significant expenses for a group like the Vail Youth Symphony. Replacing lost or damaged music or folders can be difficult and extremely costly. If you lose or damage your music, or fail to turn it in on time (especially in the case of rented music) **YOU WILL BE CHARGED.**

Vail Youth Symphony Student Code of Conduct

We hope that participants enjoy their experience at the Vail Youth Symphony. In an effort to ensure that every student feels safe and valued, we ask that all students adhere to our Student Code of Conduct.

1. Be respectful and polite to all—fellow musicians, staff, and those who will be on site at Empire High School or the Vail Theater of the Arts.
2. Foul language will not be tolerated.
3. Give the conductor/director your full attention, and respond immediately to the requests of the staff. Show your respect by listening carefully and complying with all musical directions.
4. Bullying will not be tolerated.
5. All participants must respect the rehearsal and concert venues.
6. All participants must respect the music and equipment of the Vail Youth Symphony, or those groups (such as Empire High School) who allow us to use their equipment. Inappropriate use or treatment of equipment or facilities will not be tolerated.
7. Food and drink (except for re-sealable water bottles) is not allowed in the rehearsal or concert venues.
8. The dress code for VYS participants is the same as the dress code for the Vail School District and students will be expected to adhere to it.

Disciplinary Action:

All disciplinary action will be decided on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the director/conductor and the Vail Youth Symphony Board of Directors. Generally, it may include but is not limited to: a verbal warning, sitting out a rehearsal with an unexcused absence, and contacting the student's parent. If a student has been asked to leave a rehearsal, the director has the right to refuse the student's re-entry into the orchestra for the rest of that rehearsal. We sincerely hope that none of these disciplinary actions will ever be needed. We love kids; we love music; and we love to teach. Working together, we are confident that we will develop an atmosphere of excitement and professionalism.

Dismissal from VYS:

If a student is persistent in violating the student guidelines or code of contact, it is possible that they may be asked to leave the Vail Youth Symphony. Likewise, some egregious actions may result in the immediate dismissal of the participant from the Vail Youth Orchestra. This is the last thing that the Vail Youth Symphony desires, but the

decision is in the sole discretion of the conductor/director. In such cases any refund of tuition will not be made available.

Some examples of behavior that would warrant immediate dismissal include (but are not limited to):

1. Possessing a weapon or dangerous object.
2. Possession of illegal drugs, or illegal possession of prescription drugs. The use or misuse of chemicals will not be tolerated.
3. Any threat to persons or property.
4. Theft, illegal actions, or damage to property will not be tolerated.

Concert Dress:

As an auditioned group, the Vail Youth Symphony wants to project professionalism to its audience.

We ask that women performers wear **all black**. Concert dress may be **dress pants and a shirt**, or a **floor length dress, floor length skirt and shirt**, etc. Tops must **cover the shoulder** and adhere to the dress code. Please wear **black closed-toe shoes and black hose or socks**. In general, we are looking to cover the entirety of the body from shoulders to toes with black. This helps the audience to focus on the instruments and the musical performance. We are performing as a group, so please consider whether or not your choices may detract from the group as a whole. If you are uncertain about your choice, please consider alternatives. Think conservative.

We ask that men performers wear a **black suit or tuxedo with a white shirt and black bow-tie**. Please wear **black shoes and socks**. We are performing as a group, so please consider whether or not your choices may detract from the group as a whole. If you are uncertain about your choice, please consider alternatives.