

Rule of the **BREATH**

Breathe in the shape
of the first/next
vowel you sing.

Rule of PHRASE SHAPE

Most phrases begin
softer then
crescendo and then
decrescendo.

Rule of MELODIC CONTOUR

When the melody
ascends, crescendo;
when it descends,
decrecendo.

Rule of DYNAMIC CONTRAST

When crescendo-
ing, think louder
than the dynamic
written; vice versa.

Rule of PUNCTUATION

Usually add a half-beat rest at a mark of punctuation to define phrasing; watch the conductor carefully!

Rule of the STEADY BEAT

Note values longer
than the steady beat
crescendo or
decrescendo
(watch!).

A rhythmic dot almost always indicates a momentary "swell"

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Rule of the DOT

A rhythmic dot
almost always
indicates a
momentary “swell”.

Rule of *Chiaroscuro*

The higher you sing,
the more *oscuro*
you must think;
the lower you sing,
the more *chiaro*.

Rule of **CROSSING** the *PASSAGGIO*

Create more space
when ascending but
don't think louder
unless it's indicated.

Rule of WORD STRESS

Underline the most
important word /
syllables — emphasize
the same syllables in
singing as you would
in speech.

Rule of the SLUR

Implied tenuto on
the first note of any
two-note phrase
(“sing, get out!”).

Rule of the DIPHTHONG

Sustain the primary
vowel; the second
vowel sounds just
before the next
consonant/syllable.

Rule of the CONSONANT ONSET

Consonants are
articulated before the
beat, vowels are
articulated on the beat.

Rule of the CONSONANT RELEASE

Sound the consonant
release on the
next beat.

Rule of the SHADOW VOWEL

When the final
consonant before a
breath/rest is voiced,
add a shadow vowel
after the consonant.

Rule of the GLOTTAL STROKE

If a lyrically
important word
begins with a vowel,
initiate with a gentle
glottal stroke.

Rule of DISSONANCES

Lean into the
dissonant notes
(tension) and lift off
of resolutions
(release).

Rule of “The”

If followed by a vowel, pronounce [ði] (“thee” earth); if followed by a consonant, pronounce [ðʌ] (“thuh” world).

Rule of VOICING

In polyphonic
music, “mic” the
important motives
and “shush”
everything else.

Rule of ARTICULATION

Depends on the style
period of the piece—

Choral Insights &

Choral Music:

History, Style, and
Performance Practice.

Rule of the DIRECTOR

The director
overrides any rule
he/she decides!

