

The Three Category System Vs. The Four Category System

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The North American barbershop organizations are:
The Barbershop Harmony Society started as SPEBSQSA in 1938
Sweet Adelines International began in 1945
Harmony Incorporated started in 1959

A BRIEF LOOK AT HISTORY

At its beginning, SPEBSQSA had celebrities and politicians who served as judges. In 1941 SPEBSQSA (now BHS) created a judging system and from then on it was no longer judged by celebrities. In 1950 SPEBSQSA carefully designed judging criteria in five-categories with a coaching/evaluation included for contestants. Harmony Incorporated has used the same system as SPEBSQSA/BHS, with certified judges from both organizations. In 1993 the Barbershop Harmony Society and Harmony Incorporated devised a compact, three-category system.



In the beginning, Sweet Adelines used the men's system and had male and female judges. In 1961 Sweet Adelines Inc. created its own separate four-category judging system and no longer required male judges. 1972 Sweet Adelines dropped coaching evaluations in favor of written scoresheets.

The Three Category System:

- Singing
- Music
- Performance



... and all other
barbershop organizations
worldwide except SAI



The Four Category System:

- Sound
- Music
- Expression
- Showmanship

Singing vs. Sound

Singing (BHS and HI)

- Intonation
 - Melodic and harmonic
- Vocal Quality
 - Support, free tone, resonance, ring, tone placement, vibrato/tremolo, tessitura, suitable to performer
- Unity
 - Single voices, timbre match, word sound match, balance, attacks, releases, synchronization, flow, pronunciation, enunciation
- Expansion
 - Root/3/5/7, degree, quality, ensemble ring, barbershop style
- Artistry
 - Musical, technical, tone color, expression, from the heart

Sound (Sweet Adelines International)

70% Unit Sound

- Vocal Skills
 - Posture, breathing, phonation, resonance, articulation
- Accuracy
 - Notes, intervals, chords, tuning/intonation, section and part accuracy, synchronization
- Barbershop Blend
 - Tone and vowel production

30% Artistic Sound

- Energized Vocal Line
- Tone Flow
- Dynamic Flexibility
- Vocal Style

Music BHS/HI vs. Music SAI

Music (Barbershop Harmony Society)

Holistic over evaluation rather than weighted by percent

Melody

- Distinguishable, tonal center, alteration

Lyrics

- Quality, phrasing

Harmony

- Barbershop 7ths,
- Major/Minor triads
- Voicings/Voice-leading
- Progressions
- Balance

Tempo/Rhythm/Meter

- Forward motion, rubato/Ad lib
- Swing/steady

Construction and Form

- Overall concept/contour
- Added material
- Transition/medley

Embellishment

- Stylistic
- Appropriate
- Degree

Theme (global)

- Purpose
- Mood/story,
- Unity and Contrast
- Flow/climax

Suitable to Performer

- Song Choice
- Difficulty

From the Heart

Music (Sweet Adelines International)

30% Song and Arrangement

- Merit as Barbershop Material
- Form/Melody/Lyrics
- Arrangement
 - Harmonization
 - Voicing

70% Performance

- Vocal Skills
- Harmony Accuracy
- Barbershop Style
 - Tempo/Rhythm
 - Musical Unity
 - Phrasing
 - Dynamics
 - Musical Energy
- Musical Artistry

Performance vs. Expression

Performance (BHS/HI)

Vocal/Musical Elements

- Melody/Harmony/Lyric
- Dynamics
- Tempo/Rhythm
- Intonation/Synchronization

Effect/Impact

- Believability
- Creative
- Genuine/Heartfelt
- Excitement/Energy
- Suitable to Performer

Expression (SAI)

Technical Elements

- Vocal Skills
- Synchronization/Unity
- Word Delivery (vowels, diphthongs, consonants, enunciation)
- Musicality

Artistic Interpretive Plan

- Lyric Flow
- Phrasing
- Forward Motion
- Embellishments
- Dynamics
- Tempo/Rhythmic Elements
- Inflection
- Energy
- Finesse and Artistry
- Characterization
- Emotional Communication

Performance vs. Showmanship

Performance (BHS/HI)

Visual Elements

- Audience Engagement
- Character development
- Facial/Focal/Physical
- Ensemble Rapport/Unity

Effect/Impact

- Believability
- Creative
- Genuine/Heartfelt
- Excitement/Energy
- Suitable to Performer

Showmanship (SAI)

Preparation (30% for Visual Plan)

- Entrance/Break/Exit
- Costume
- Makeup/Grooming
- Choreography
- Creativity

Performance (70% for the Communication of the Visual and Musical Product)

- Vocal Skills
- Energy
- Poise & Command
- Entrance/Break/Exit
- Characterization
- Physical Expression
- Choreography
- Unity
- Audience Rapport
- Pitch Pipe Technique
- Posture

**Showmanship is inspired by show choir.
Performance is inspired by musical theater.**

Differences in the systems:

In Sweet Adelines International:

- Choruses must compete every three years to maintain their charter
- All SAI categories level in sound/vocal skills
- No spoken dialogue is allowed except in the open division and performance package
- No side mics are provided for quartets.
- SAI has several competition options – Open Division, Performance Package and video evaluation
- Tape lines are marked for quartets to optimize microphone pickup and sensitivity
- Lighting options are not available on contest songs.
- There is more emphasis on vocal skills as a means of establishing audience rapport.
- Showmanship (visual) and Expression (vocal) are separate categories.
- Pitch pipe technique and entrance/exit/break are specific elements to be evaluated as part of showmanship.
- We list posture as an element which can impact the musical and visual product and ensure strong vocal skills.

Other Differences in the systems:

- Shorthand (BHS/HI) vs. Legible Score Sheets (SAI)
- Face to Face Evaluations (BHS/HI) vs. Written Evaluation (SAI)
- Time limits (SAI) vs. No Time Limits (BHS/HI)
- Judge qualification criteria
- 3-year certification (BHS/HI)
- Annual recertification with training every 3 years (SAI)
- Must compete in a chorus or quartet to remain a judge. (BHS/HI)
- Pre-competition leveling (SAI)
- 30-day coaching rule (BHS/HI)
- Contest Administrator (BHS/HI) vs. Panel Secretary/Panel Chair (SAI)
- Asterisk Judge (BHS/HI) vs. Panel Chair/Entire Panel Sound Check (SAI)
- Judge turns in a score (BHS/HI) vs. Handing in the entire scoresheet (SAI)
- Tie score is broken by Performance (BHS/HI) vs. Tie score broken by Sound (SAI).

Similarities in the Systems

- The group that performs the best wins
- Each contest song is worth 100 points
- Two competition songs per contest
- International qualification based on score (or win).
- Judges are responsible to select the winner
- Each category has a director/specialist
- Procedure for addressing outlying scores.
- Props and sets are allowed.
- Assesses audience rapport
- Vocal and visual
- Rewards creativity
- Assesses/considers energy
- Both are focused on the audience experience
- Both want to get beyond technique and plan and into artistry and authentic connection.

