

Youth Orchestra Survival Guide

Bring to every rehearsal – instrument, pencil, eraser, mute.

Markings on music to be made with pencil only.

1. Up to the mark

- a. If you have trouble with the rhythm of a passage, mark the main beats with a vertical or slightly slanted slash.
 - b. Ritards can be marked with a wavy line above the passage – also any sudden rubato, etc. It's a signal to keep a close eye on the conductor.
 - c. Make absolutely sure you know before you begin a piece of music what the conductor's beat is, eg. in a slow 4/4 movement is he or she subdividing and beating in 8? Mark your part accordingly (in 2, or in 6, or whatever). Also mark at the beginning of each movement how many preparatory beats the conductor is giving.
 - d. If you miss an accidental, mark it in! Anyone can make a mistake once, but it's embarrassing to make it twice and three times is unforgivable.
 - e. Sudden changes can be marked with eyeglasses, meaning: attention.
 - f. Try to keep fingerings to a minimum. If you need to mark one in, write the first note fingering only. If you and your stand partner need to write different fingerings, then the outside player's fingering goes above.
2. **Don't take a break** – always count bars rest. Don't rely on anyone but yourself. Also, double check every entrance by glancing up at the concert master to re-assure yourself.
3. **Good vibrations** – vibrate all pizzicato - it really makes a difference.
4. **Page turner** – Inside players take your responsibility for turning pages seriously. Once you have seen what is coming up on the next page, you can prepare yourself by writing on the bottom of the previous page either:
- a. "time" – i.e. play out the page – there's no hurry or,
 - b. "v.s." (versus subito) – turn quickly and well in advance – but not too soon.
- Outside players – while your partner is marking the part keep playing or counting rests, so you can show them where to resume playing.
5. **Bowing changes** – Ideally the section leaders' bowings are marked in all the parts. When the rehearsals begin, only the bowing changes need to be marked. If you part is unmarked, try to get the bowings in as soon as possible.
6. **Divide and rule** – Playing chords and double stops: always assume that these are to be divided, unless told otherwise by the concertmaster, or marked "unis" by the composer. In a 2-note chord, the outside player plays the top note and the inside player plays the bottom. For a 3 note chord, depending on whether the combination makes 5ths or 3rds, try to cover 2 notes if it sounds well. Four note chords can of course be divided 2 and 2. Never "roll" or arpeggiate a chord unless told to do so by the conductor or concertmaster, or indicated by the composer. Any large "Divisi" sections may be divided desk by desk or otherwise according to the instructions of the conductor or section leader.
7. **Be Graceful** – Any ornaments or grace notes which are at the discretion of the performer should be explained by the conductor or, ideally, demonstrated by the concertmaster.

Excerpted from: McDougall, Barb. Youth Orchestra Survival Guide. The Junior Strad.