

Barbershop Tag Teaching Guidelines

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Tag Teaching Guidelines, Items 1 – 7 are critical for successful Tag Teaching

Tag (Definition)

A **Tag**, in barbershop music, is a dramatic variation put in the last section of the song. Its rough analog in Classical music is a coda.

Tags are characterized by heightening the dramatic tension of the song, frequently including a hanger, or sustained note against which the other singers carry the rhythm. In addition, good tags can be sung as short, stand-alone works. Tags may be soft and tender but are typically characterized by loud, "paint peeling," ringing chords. According to the competition rules of the Barbershop Harmony Society, every song entered for a competition must have a tag. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag_\(barbershop_music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag_(barbershop_music)), 10Jun2017.

Purpose of this Barbershop Tag Teaching Guidelines

Promote successful Tag singing and to get more singers teaching Tags.

Tag Teaching Guidelines

- 1. Know the words to the Tag;** without the correct words, no Tags can be taught.
A Tag list or a Tag website is helpful; see two great Tag website examples listed in Item: 12 below.
- 2. Know the starting chord with reference to the key or tonal center;** this is important for teaching the individual parts and to help give, if needed, everyone's starting pitch before beginning to sing the Tag.
- 3. Know the individual parts and the best teaching order for Tenor, Lead, Bari, Bass, and if applicable, any additional parts.**
Start with the part containing the most notes, the two parts with most perfect intervals, and/or a strong duet quality.
- 4. Know the sound of each individual chord in the Tag being taught;** knowing when a chord is incorrect can be helpful in identifying appropriate part corrections. Learn the sound of each chord by playing the chords on a piano or listening to a group sing the Tag.
- 5. Know the unique characteristics for the Tag;** Examples: Bass pick-up, Tenor has the melody, Lead post, Bari solo, individual parts singing different words at the same time, contrapuntal part movement, etc.
- 6. Always start with a simple, easy Tag for each new Tag session or when inviting another singer to sing a Tag with unknown singing abilities.**
Result: Instant chords sung with a successful and fulfilling outcome for all singers and listeners.
- 7. Teach the first voice part until it is learned, then teach the second voice part with the first voice part singing along quietly.** After the two parts have their parts memorized, teach the third part with the other first and second parts singing along quietly. Continue to teach the fourth part using the same process or sing the fourth part yourself; this helps everyone remember and rehearse their part.
Use the following additional teaching aids when teaching Tags:
 - Vocally give the key or tonal center before teaching individual parts to the Tag; find an appropriate key or use a pitch pipe.
 - Teach the Tag at the intended singing tempo or word rhythm interpretation; do not short cut and sing the part fast when teaching the individual parts; this helps everyone sing the Tag together.
 - Use audible pulsing of held notes and visual hand gestures (horizontal pulsing) to identify other moving parts.
 - Use visual up and down hand gestures to show the different pitches as you teach the individual parts.
 - Use number or solfeggio language to denote the notes of the scale for those who know the appropriate language; this can be done audibly or by using visual hand/sign language.
 - Teach one section of the Tag at a time for longer Tags; greater than two to four bars or measures.
 - Let singers know if they are singing unison or octave/doubling another part; if they do not know, they may be tempted to avoid someone else's part by finding another note other than the intended notes to be sung.
 - Let singers know if after a breath, the next note sung is the same as the note they were just on before the breath.
 - To correct out of tune chords, first verify the unisons, octaves, perfect fourth and perfect fifth intervals are keenly locked and in tune before correcting the other parts of chords; verify the vowels are also perfectly matched with good vocal production.
 - Reading (singing) written Tags are helpful but it is encouraged that singers learn the Tag quickly so they are not reading but focusing on listening to the chords, tuning, balancing, interpreting, matching vowels, visually connecting with the other Tag singers, etc. as they sing the Tag.
 - When learning a Tag, other singers that know the Tag can spot or assist singers by giving hand gestures (see "d" above) or by singing the correct notes as needed.
 - If singers are successful at singing their part correctly by themselves but struggle when singing against or with the other parts, tell them to not listen to the other parts, only their own. After successfully singing/experiencing the Tag sung correctly, they can then carefully listen to the other parts and chords.
- 8. If there are other singers standing by listening to Tag singing, invite them to sing a Tag.** Sharing Tags with other singers allows everyone an opportunity to sing and promotes positive Tag singing sessions.
- 9. Only one singer per part is allowed to sing a Tag unless helping a singer learn their part** or the Tag is being taught to a group or Chorus of singers.
- 10. When teaching a Tag to a group of singers, use the following steps for successful Tag teaching and to maximize the enjoyment for all singers.**
 - Use Barbershop Tag Teaching Guidelines above, especially steps 1 through 7 and encourage the singers learn one part and stick to the one part of their choosing because they will be singing the Tag in a quartet. Once the Tag has been taught, with musical/vocal improvements made along the way, and the Tag can be successfully sung without mistakes, have the group sing through the Tag two more times to reinforce everyone's part.
 - Then invite four voices to make up a quartet to sing the Tag with the rest of the group listening. After the quartet sings through the Tag, make a suggestion for improvement and have the quartet sing the Tag again.
 - Next, invite another foursome to sing the same Tag and if four new voices are not available, just replace individual parts with new voices. After the quartet sings the Tag, make an improvement and have the quartet sing the Tag again.
 - After all singers in the group have had an opportunity to sing the Tag in a quartet (that want to), teach another Tag to the whole group.
- 11. Always encourage and invite new or experienced singers, who have not experienced Tagging, to teach or sing Tags.**
- 12. Where to find Tags to teach and/or Sing?** Barbershop Tags website, www.BarbershopTags.com, is the best Tag website containing over 3000 freely-downloadable Tags. Many Tags come complete with learning tracks, sheet music - even video clips of them being sung.
Also see Darwin Scheel's Tag Collection, www.DNSTags.com, for additional selected Tags not found on Barbershop Tags website.

Tag – Why Teach or Sing Tags?

- Instant Fun, blending your voice with others while locking and ringing chords.
- Learning the Barbershop craft; fine-tuning of chords, vocal production, balance of chords, vowel matching, interpretation, diphthongs, singable consonants, exercises and improves tonal memory, etc.
- Learning to hear and identify chords and chord progressions used and not used in Barbershop singing.
- Getting singers hooked on Barbershop singing.
- Tag teaching/singing improves the Barbershop knowledge and vocal and listening skills of Chorus singers, Quartet singers, Directors, Coaches, and Judges.

Tags!

1

Tenor Lead

Bari Bass

I love you so. * It's in the bag. It's in the bag.

* Use optional Bari Bb note on "love" if the C note is a challenge to tune or when teaching new singers

* Many other substitute lyrics are possible with this Tag.

Words and Music by
John Lennon and Paul McCartney

3

The long and wind - ing road, we're lost, we're lost. we're lost, we're lost.

Words and Music by
Hedy West

4

If you miss the train I'm on, you will know that I am gone. You can hear the whis-tle blow a hun-dred miles, a hun-dred miles.

TT

rit.

5

Lost Lake in Or - e - gon, where does your wa - ter go? Down the la - va tube hole.

TT

Down the hole.

Words and Music By
John Lennon and Paul McCartney

6

Whis - per words of wis - dom, let it be, let it be.

let it be, let it be.

X X