

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Timeline and Steps to Audition for HYS
2. Audition Components Guidelines
3. Order of Audition Video Components
4. Judging criteria
5. Expected skills for each orchestra
6. Video submission guidelines
7. Recording tips
8. How to share your video link
9. Audition Video Components with Excerpts

Timeline and Steps to Audition for the 2026/27 HYS Season

1. February 16, 2026: Visit www.houstonyouthsymphony.org/auditions to download the Audition Guide by Instrument. This will include all information you need including the required excerpt for each instrument.
2. February – April: Practice the required audition components found in the Audition Guide.
3. March 5, 2026 at 7:30 PM: Zoom Audition Q&A - Registration is required. [Click to register.](#)
4. Late March: Audition Tutorial Videos available on HYS YouTube channel.
5. April 1, 2026: Online applications open. Visit <http://www.houstonyouthsymphony.org/auditions> to start your online application.
6. April 1-May 4, 2026: Submit your online application and \$55 audition fee. The deadline for submissions is **May 4, 2026, at 10:00 AM**. *For those who have financial hardship and would like to request an audition fee waiver, you must follow the instructions below BEFORE April 30 at 9:00 am. If you do not request a fee waiver before this day, you will not be considered for a waiver.*
7. Mid to late June 2026: Audition placement notifications sent by email. No phone calls, please.

AUDITION FEE WAIVER INSTRUCTIONS

To apply for a fee waiver, email hys@houstonyouthsymphony.org with one of the following options for documentation:

1. Documentation of free/reduced lunch program
2. College Board SAT or ACT fee waiver documentation
3. Proof of SNAP benefits
4. Proof of Medicaid insurance
5. First page of the most recent income tax return (not preferred but this will be required if you are accepted into HYS and apply for financial aid for the 26/27 season tuition.)

If you cannot provide one of the above, email hys@houstonyouthsymphony.org to explore other options.

ORDER OF AUDITION VIDEO COMPONENTS and GUIDELINES

Audition Video Elements for all applicants:

Each element must be a separate video.

1. Snare Drum Element (video #1)
 - a) Orchestral roll (soft to loud to soft over 20–30 seconds; not a marching roll)
 - b) Solo or Etude on Snare Drum (approximately 2 minutes)
 - i. All solos should be well–played, polished and in the appropriate tempo and style.
 - ii. Solos should demonstrate current technical ability and musical maturity.
 - iii. Solos should demonstrate contrasting styles and tempi.
 - iv. All–State and Region etudes may not be used.
 - v. You do not have to start at the beginning of the piece.
 - vi. Difficulty level of each solo will be taken into consideration.
2. Keyboard Instrument Element (video #2)
 - a) Two scales of your choice (major and/or minor, demonstrating your current technical ability)
 - b) Solo or Etude on Marimba or Xylophone (approximately 2 minutes)
 - i. Guidelines and standards for the keyboard solo/etude are the same as the snare drum etude above (1. b)
3. Timpani Element (video #3)
 - a) Solo or Etude on Timpani (approximately 2 minutes)
 - i. Guidelines and standards for the timpani solo/etude are the same as the snare drum etude above (1. b)
4. Orchestral Excerpts Element (video #4)
 - a) Two orchestral Excerpts – played at the marked tempo.
 - b) Cymbals excerpt must be played on orchestral/band cymbals, not marching cymbals.

We prefer that everyone perform on all the instruments above, but we understand that access to instruments may be difficult. If you do not have access to any of these instruments a letter of recommendation from a private teacher or band director describing your ability on that instrument in PDF form can be submitted. Please email Michael@HoustonYouthSymphony.org for details.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Each video component (Snare Elements, Keyboard Elements, Timpani Elements, Orchestral excerpts Element) will be judged on:

1. Rhythm
2. Intonation
3. Tone
4. Musicality and Style (Solos and Excerpts Only)
5. Technique
6. Difficulty Level

EXPECTED SKILLS FOR EACH ORCHESTRA

To gain a better understanding of our varying orchestra levels, we recommend you [watch past HYS concert performances on our streaming platform, A440](#). Videos are free to stream and will give you an idea of the level of music at which each orchestra performs.

SYMPHONY	PHILHARMONIA	SINFONIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-developed understanding of rhythm and time. Expanded understanding of pitch to read more complex music and tune timpani. Advanced ability to play two and four-mallet techniques. Expanded knowledge of auxiliary percussion instruments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-developed understanding of rhythm and time. Expanded understanding of pitch to read more complex music and tune timpani. Foundational ability to play two and four-mallet techniques. Foundational knowledge of auxiliary percussion instruments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A foundational understanding of rhythm and time. Ability to match pitch and tune basic intervals on the timpani (e.g., tonic and dominant relationships) Foundational ability to play two-mallet techniques.

NOTE: In the application, you will be asked which orchestra you would accept placement in. Select ALL orchestras that you would consider joining if you were offered a position in that orchestra. Your selections and how you answer that question on the application could determine whether you are placed into an orchestra, wait-listed, or declined.

Scenario: Your audition qualified you for Philharmonia and Sinfonia. However, on the application, you indicated you would only accept placement in Symphony. In this scenario, you would receive a decline email because you did not select Philharmonia and Sinfonia as orchestras in which you would accept placement.

VIDEO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Failure to follow the guidelines may result in your submission being disqualified.

- All components of the video must be performed in ONE continuous, unedited take in the correct order. Do not stop and start the camera between components.
 - If you do not like a take, you may try again, as long as your final submission is in one continuous, unedited take.
 - You may not edit, cut, splice, or otherwise alter your performance.
 - The picture must remain stationary: no panning, zooming, multiple cameras, or fading in/out.
 - Video framing: Place the video recording device so that you, your instrument, and your full range of motion are always in the frame, filling out the frame as much as you can. Make sure your music stand does not cover your face, instrument, arms/hands, and range of motion. (See sample videos on the [HYS YouTube Channel](#).)
 - The total runtime for all videos must not exceed 8 minutes. The judge will stop watching at 8 minutes. Make sure all the components of your audition fit within 8 minutes. It is ok if your videos add up to less than 8 minutes.
 - Tune your instrument to A=440.
-

RECORDING TIPS

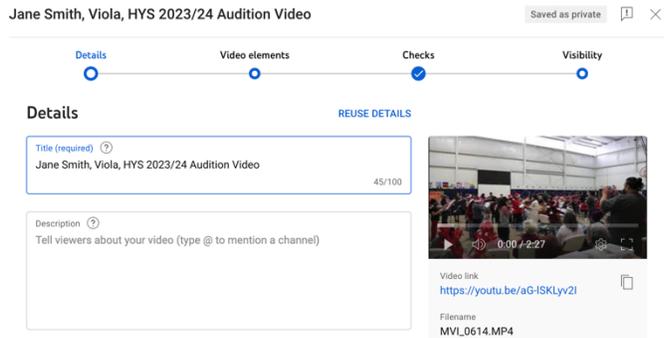
- Recording on a phone or tablet device is fine. A special camera is not necessary.
- You may want to have someone else press the record and stop button for you.
- Record in a neutral acoustic in your home. Not in your closet (not enough echo) and not in your bathroom (too much echo). A living room or other open space should be ok.
- Record when you can have quiet and no interruptions.
- Film in a well-lit space. Make sure there is more light in front of you rather than behind you so that you are not backlit.
- For string instruments, make sure your f-holes are directed toward the video recording device.
- Place the video recording device on a flat surface with the microphone area unobstructed.
- Check sound levels to make sure sound is not distorted in loud passages and inaudible in soft passages.
- It is best to use the rear camera rather than the front-facing (selfie) camera as the rear camera is typically a higher resolution. Front selfie cameras can also result in the video being flipped.
- Time your solo pieces ahead of time so you know where to start and stop. You do not have to start at the beginning of your solo piece(s). You can go over/under the required number of minutes in order to finish a phrase.

Houston Youth Symphony

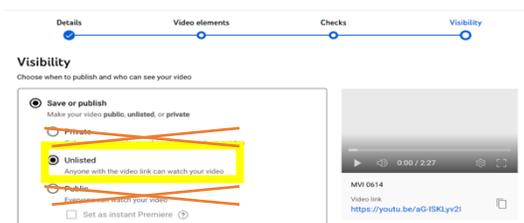
2025/26 AUDITION GUIDE

HOW TO SHARE YOUR VIDEO PLAYLIST LINK

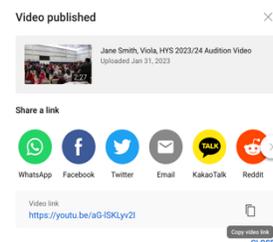
1. **Record your audition videos**, following the audition video submission guidelines.
2. **Go to <http://studio.youtube.com/>**
3. If you already have a Gmail account, log in to your account. (Gmail and YouTube have the same login information.) You may use a parent/guardian account. Note: Gmail/YouTube does not allow children under 13 to have their own accounts.
4. If you do not have a Gmail account, create an account. You must be over 13 to create a Gmail account.
5. Once you are logged into YouTube Studio, **go to the upper right corner, and click "Create."**
6. **Upload your videos.**
 - a. Remember, each component must be a separate video.
7. Your title should be your **First Name, Last Name, Instrument, HYS 2025/26 Audition Video** (i.e. Jane Smith, Viola, HYS 2025/26 Audition Video)



8. **Click Next to get to Step 4: Visibility and select Unlisted.** Then click Save. Note: Selecting "Private" does not create a shareable link. You must select "Unlisted."



9. **Copy the video link.** If you navigate away from this screen, the video link can be accessed again by visiting the "Content" in the left side menu of the YouTube Studio landing page. Click on your audition video and copy the video link again.
10. **Test your video link in a private browsing window to ensure the link works.** Watch your video from beginning to end to make sure it is the correct video and has all of the required components. Incorrect/incomplete video links may jeopardize your application to HYS.
11. **Paste each video link into its appropriate field in the HYS application.**



2026/27 PERCUSSION AUDITION EXCERPTS

Excerpt 1 of 2 – Cymbals

note: play on orchestral/band crash cymbals, NOT marching band cymbals

Rachmaninov, Piano Concerto No. 2, Mvt. 3

Play both selections with brief pause between each (note different tempi for each selection)

half note = 48

rit. **Meno mosso.** (♩ = 48)
Piatti soli.
pp

ritard.

Allegro scherzando. (Moto primo, ♩ = 116)
pp *f* Gr. C. e P

Più mosso. (♩ = 120) *acceler.*

half note = 100

Risoluto. (♩ = 100)
f Gr. C. e Piatti.

Percussion excerpt 2 of 2 – TambourineTchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker*, Act I, Scene 4

quarter note = 168-180

Allegro scherzando. (Moto primo, ♩ = 116)
ff *p*

cresc. *f* *mf*

cresc. *ff* *sfz*