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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.

AUDITION COMPONENTS GUIDELINES

- Scales (Select one major, one minor)
 - Must be memorized and played in 16th notes at a tempo of quarter note = 54-72. You may do separate bows or slurring of your choice.
 - Play as many octaves as you are proficient.
 - Difficulty level of each scale will be considered.
- Solos (Select two contrasting solos)
 - All solos should be well-played, polished and in the appropriate tempo and style.
 - All-State and Region etudes may not be used.
 - You do not have to start at the beginning of the piece.
 - Solos should demonstrate current technical ability and musical maturity.
 - Do not play multiple movements from the same piece.
 - Difficulty level of each solo will be considered.
- Excerpt A, B, or C (Those who want to be considered for Symphony must play Excerpt A)
 - Excerpt should be played at the marked tempo.
 - Difficulty level of the selected excerpt will be considered. Excerpt A is most difficult.

ORDER OF AUDITION VIDEO COMPONENTS

Audition Video Components for all applicants

All components must be performed in one continuous, uninterrupted take in the order below. Videos should not exceed 8 minutes. Applicants should not use a metronome or piano accompaniment in the video. See Video Guidelines section for detailed instructions.

1. 2 scales of your choice, memorized. One major, one minor.
2. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of the first solo piece
3. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of the second solo piece
4. Prepared Excerpt (Either A, B, or C). **New in 2026:** *To be considered for Symphony, you must prepare excerpt A.*

JUDGING CRITERIA

Each video component (scale 1, scale 2, solo 1, solo 2, excerpt) will be judged on:

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

Houston|Youth|Symphony

2026/27 CELLO AUDITION GUIDE

WHICH EXCERPT SHOULD I CHOOSE?

The guidelines below represent the expected level of your scales/solos that correspond to the selected excerpt.

EXCERPT A <i>Required for Symphony consideration.</i>	EXCERPT B OR EXCERPT C
Scales: Choose from all major and melodic minor scales. Select one major, one minor.	Scales: Choose from all major and melodic minor scales up to four sharps and flats. Select one major, one minor.
Solos: Selected pieces should be from major concertos or sonatas/solo works by two different composers, contrasting in style and tempo from the Classical era or later. Bach Partitas, Sonatas, or Suites for solo string instruments may be used.	Solos: Selected pieces should be contrasting in style and tempo. Do not play multiple movements from the same piece. Suzuki Book 3 is the minimum level for solos.

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	STRING ORCHESTRA	DEBUT STRING ORCHESTRA
Fluency in all positions	Fluency in all positions	- Proficiency in treble clef - Fluency up to 6th position	- Proficiency in tenor clef - Proficiency up to 5th position in repertoire	- Knowledge of tenor clef - Proficiency up to 4th position in repertoire

EXCERPT A

EXCERPT B

EXCERPT C

The shaded boxes represent which orchestras you could be placed in based on the excerpt you choose.

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: You prepared Excerpt B for your audition video. Your audition qualified you for String Orchestra and Debut String Orchestra. However, on the application, you indicated you would only accept placement in Sinfonia. In this scenario, you would receive a decline email because you did not select String Orchestra or Debut String Orchestra as orchestras you would accept placement in.

2026/27 AUDITION GUIDE

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. Choose the orientation (landscape or portrait) that best fits your instrument. Most instruments will be best in landscape orientation..
- 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. Your whole upper body and both arms should remain in view at all times. 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](#).*)
- Video 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 video is less than 8 minutes.
- Do not include: a metronome, piano accompaniment, speaking
- Tune your instrument to A=440.

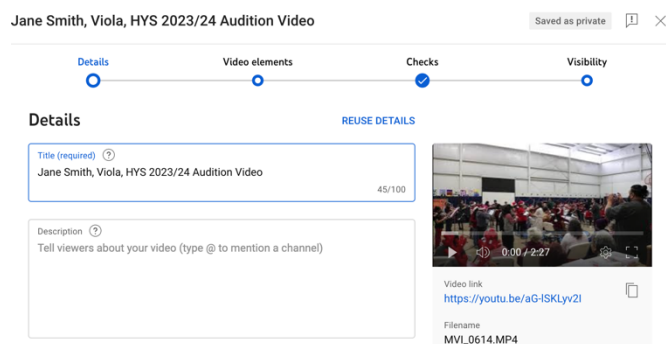
RECORDING TIPS

- 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. Ceiling fans should be off during recording.
- 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 in advance, 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.

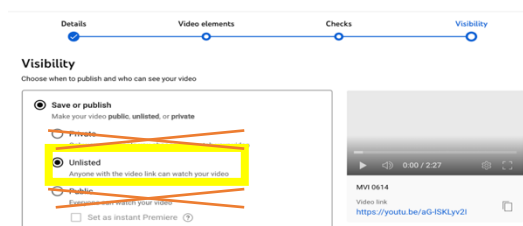
2026/27 AUDITION GUIDE

HOW TO SHARE YOUR VIDEO LINK

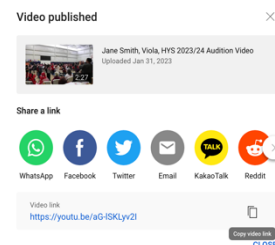
1. **Record your audition video**, following the audition video submission guidelines.
2. **Go to <http://studio.youtube.com/>**
3. If you already have a Gmail account, log in to your account. (Gmail and YouTube have the same login information.) You may use a parent/guardian account. Note: Gmail/YouTube 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 video.**
7. Your title should be your **First Name, Last Name, Instrument, HYS 2026/27 Audition Video** (i.e. Jane Smith, Viola, HYS 2026/27 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 your video link into the HYS application.**



2026/27 CELLO AUDITION EXCERPTS

Audition Video Components for all applicants:

(SEE AUDITION GUIDE FOR TIPS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT EXCERPT)

All components must be performed in one continuous, uninterrupted take in this order.

1. 2 scales of your choice, memorized. One major, one minor.
2. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of first solo piece
3. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of second solo piece
4. Prepared Excerpt (Either A, B, or C). *In order to be considered for Symphony, you must prepare excerpt A.*

If you have questions about the appropriateness of your prepared pieces, please email us at HYS@houstonyouthsymphony.org.
Allow 7 days for a response.

(excerpts begin on next page)

2026/27 CELLO AUDITION EXCERPTS

EXCERPT A

You must prepare Excerpt A to be considered for Symphony.

Smetana, Overture to *The Bartered Bride*

half note = 140

Vivacissimo

ff *sf non legato*

sf *sf* *sf*

ff *sf*

sf *sf* *sf* *sf*

sf p subito

pp

sempre p

pp

cresc. *poco a poco* *poco* *cresc.*

2026/27 CELLO AUDITION EXCERPTS

Audition Video Components for all applicants:**(SEE AUDITION GUIDE FOR TIPS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT EXCERPT)**

All components must be performed in one continuous, uninterrupted take in this order.

5. 2 scales of your choice, memorized. One major, one minor.
6. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of first solo piece
7. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of second solo piece
8. Prepared Excerpt (Either A, B, or C). *In order to be considered for Symphony, you must prepare excerpt A.*

If you have questions about the appropriateness of your prepared pieces, please email us at HYS@houstonyouthsymphony.org.
Allow 7 days for a response.

EXCERPT B

Glinka, Overture to *Ruslan and Ludmila*

half note = 130-152

The musical score for Excerpt B is for cello and consists of eight staves. The first staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. It begins with a red bracket on the left and contains dynamic markings 'ff' and 'ff'. The second staff continues the bass line with fingering numbers. The third staff continues the bass line with fingering numbers. The fourth staff is in treble clef, marked 'Soli' and 'mf cantabile', with dynamic markings 'f' and 'ff'. The fifth staff continues the treble line with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'ff'. The sixth staff is in treble clef, marked 'vibrato', with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'ff'. The seventh staff continues the treble line with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'ff'. The eighth staff is in bass clef, marked 'p' and 'f', with dynamic markings 'f' and 'cresc.' and ends with a red bracket on the right.

2026/27 CELLO AUDITION EXCERPTS

Audition Video Components for all applicants:**(SEE AUDITION GUIDE FOR TIPS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT EXCERPT)**

All components must be performed in one continuous, uninterrupted take in this order.

9. 2 scales of your choice, memorized. One major, one minor.

10. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of first solo piece

11. Approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes of second solo piece

12. Prepared Excerpt (Either A, B, or C). *In order to be considered for Symphony or Philharmonia, you must prepare excerpt A.*

If you have questions about the appropriateness of your prepared pieces, please email us at HYS@houstonyouthsymphony.org.
Allow 7 days for a response.

EXCERPT C

Bernofsky, *Heart of Fire*

mm 17-33 & mm 70-76

quarter note = 120

17

22

25

27

31

33

6

mf

(brief pause)

69

cresc.

mf

75

dim.

80

3

p