



CHOIR NINJA™

CHOIR NINJA FAMILY GUIDE

Become a Choir Ninja, One Belt at a Time.

WELCOME TO CHOIR NINJA!

Your singer is learning to become a more independent musician through Choir Ninja, a scaffolded music literacy program designed specifically for choir students. Just as students learn to read words before they can independently read a book, young musicians need to learn how to read and understand the language of music.

Choir Ninja helps students build those skills one step at a time.

Through short, consistent practice in sight-singing, rhythm, and ear training, students learn to understand what they see on the page, connect notation to what they hear, and eventually sing unfamiliar music with greater independence and confidence.

WHAT ARE THE BELTS?

Choir Ninja uses a ten-belt progression to make music literacy growth visible and motivating for students.

White → Yellow → Orange → Green → Blue → Purple → Red → Brown → Black → Grandmaster

Each belt represents a new set of music-reading and musicianship skills. Students begin with foundational concepts and gradually progress toward more advanced skills, including increasingly challenging rhythms, melodic patterns, intervals, key signatures, and independent singing. The belts aren't just rewards. They represent real musical skills students have learned and demonstrated.

HOW DOES MY SINGER EARN A BELT?

Students practice the skills for their current Choir Ninja level during regular choir rehearsals.

Practice may include:

Ear Training

Students develop their musical ear by listening, identifying, comparing, echoing, and singing musical patterns.

Rhythm

Students learn to recognize, perform, and maintain increasingly complex rhythmic patterns.

Sight-Singing

Students learn to look at unfamiliar music and sing it using the musical skills and strategies they have developed. When students have had an opportunity to learn and practice the skills for their level, they



demonstrate their progress through a belt assessment. Successful completion means they are ready for the next challenge!

WHY EAR TRAINING?

Reading music isn't just about recognizing notes and symbols on a page. Singers also need to understand how music sounds. Choir Ninja connects the ear to the eye through a simple process:

Hear It → Echo It → See It → Sing It

Students develop their ears alongside their music-reading skills so that, over time, the symbols they see on a page begin to represent sounds they can understand and produce independently. The stronger the connection between what students see and what they hear, the more confident and independent they can become as musicians.

DOES MY SINGER HAVE TO BE PERFECT?

No! Learning to sight-read means learning how to work through unfamiliar music. Mistakes are an important part of that process. Students learn to keep going, listen carefully, recognize when something does not sound right, and use musical strategies to recover.

The goal of Choir Ninja is not to create perfect first attempts. The goal is to develop independent musicians who know what to do when they encounter music they have never seen before.

WHAT IF STUDENTS PROGRESS AT DIFFERENT RATES?

That's okay. Music literacy is a skill, and students develop that skill at different rates based on their age, experience, previous musical training, and individual needs. Some students may need additional practice before moving to the next belt. Others may be ready to move more quickly.

A student's current belt is simply a picture of the skills they are working on right now. The goal is growth, not racing another student to the next belt.

WHAT AGES IS CHOIR NINJA FOR?

Choir Ninja is designed primarily for middle school choir students, with a scaffolded sequence that takes singers from beginning music reading through skills that prepare them for high school choir. Because students enter music programs with different levels of experience, Choir Ninja can also be adapted for other ages and ability levels, including students in grades 4–5 and 9th grade.

The appropriate starting point is based on a student's musical experience and ability, not simply their grade level.



CAN MY SINGER PRACTICE AT HOME?

Absolutely! Short, consistent practice outside of rehearsal can help students strengthen their skills and become more confident, independent music readers.

Your singer's teacher may send home **Choir Ninja exercises** that can be used for additional practice. Students can work through these exercises using the same process and strategies they use during choir rehearsal.

Some teachers may also use **Sight Reading Factory**, an online sight-reading platform that allows students to practice singing unfamiliar musical examples. If your singer receives a Sight Reading Factory assignment, completing it at home can provide valuable additional practice.

Students do not need to practice for long periods of time. Even a few focused minutes can help reinforce the skills they are developing in class. The goal of home practice is not to memorize an exercise. It is to continue developing the skills students need to approach unfamiliar music independently.

HOW CAN FAMILIES HELP?

You do not need to be a musician to support your Choir Ninja!

A few simple things can make a big difference:

- Ask your singer what belt they are currently working toward.
- Ask them to show you something new they have learned.
- Encourage your singer to practice using Choir Ninja exercises provided by their teacher.
- If your teacher uses Sight Reading Factory, encourage your singer to complete assigned sight-reading practice.
- Encourage short, consistent practice rather than waiting until right before a belt assessment.
- Celebrate progress, not just passing a belt.
- Remind your singer that mistakes are part of learning a new skill.
- Encourage them to keep going when something is difficult.
- Celebrate each belt as evidence of growing musicianship.

You don't need to sit at a piano, read music, or correct your singer's notes. Simply providing time, encouragement, and a place to practice can help.

One of the best questions you can ask is:

“What can you do now that you couldn't do before?”

That is what Choir Ninja is all about.



WHAT WILL MY SINGER GAIN?

As students progress through Choir Ninja, they are working toward much more than earning belts.

They are developing the ability to:

Read Music

Understand musical notation and recognize musical patterns.

Hear Music

Develop the musical ear needed to understand pitch, rhythm, and melodic relationships.

Sing Independently

Rely less on a teacher, piano, or another singer to learn a part.

Solve Musical Problems

Recognize mistakes, make adjustments, and keep going.

Build Confidence

Approach unfamiliar music with strategies instead of simply guessing or waiting for someone else to sing it first.

Prepare for Future Ensembles

Build the music literacy foundation needed for increasingly advanced choral experiences. Ultimately, Choir Ninja helps students move from simply learning the notes they are taught to becoming musicians who can begin to figure out the music for themselves.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

Every belt represents growth.

Whether your singer is earning their first White Belt or working toward Grandmaster, each step represents new musical skills, greater independence, and another accomplishment worth celebrating.

Encourage the effort. Celebrate the progress. Ask about the next belt.

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