

Face coverings and singing

Face coverings have become part of everyday life and, even as restrictions ease, it's likely they will continue to be around for a while. So how do you use them as a choir or singing group?

What does the guidance say?

Wearing a face covering indoors is a legal requirement in all four UK nations (exemptions do apply, as per the [official face coverings guidance](#)). For in-person rehearsals, wearing face coverings while not actually rehearsing (e.g. entering and leaving the room, during breaks etc.) is simple – you must wear them.

It's a little less simple when it comes to wearing them while actually singing. The [DCMS Performing Arts guidance for England](#) (guidance from other nations refers to the DCMS guidance too) says non-professionals should: “Wear face coverings where possible”, and points to separate guidance called ‘Suggested principles for safer singing’. It’s worth highlighting that later in [the DCMS guidance, in the section about face coverings](#), it says: “Performers must wear a face covering at all times other than when in the course of their employment or in the course of providing their services. This means that they do not have to wear a face covering during rehearsals and performances, but must wear one at other times.” This is about professional musicians (“... course of their employment or in the course of providing their services...”) and so does not apply to non-professionals singing in a choir. As such, the advice for non-professionals is to “wear face coverings where possible”.

The '[Suggested principles of safer singing](#)' guidance makes clear that “wearing face coverings reduces the mass of aerosol expelled when singing”. But it also says we do not have evidence for: “the degree to which wearing face coverings during singing reduces transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19”. Based on this, the guidance recommends wearing face coverings while singing as a precautionary measure (along with all other measures remaining in place, of course).

The [general face coverings guidance](#) says that you are only exempt from wearing one “if it would negatively impact on your ability to exercise

or participate in a strenuous activity”. As it is possible to sing with a face covering, and singers’ masks are easily available – which facilitates singing in a mask – this would indicate that singing is not an exempt activity.

What should your group do about face coverings?

Our view at Making Music is that you should wear a face covering while singing unless you are exempt. There will be people with medical conditions that can’t wear one, but, broadly speaking, for most people, it is possible.

The question you should ask yourself is: why shouldn't I wear one? The aim is to make rehearsals as safe as practically possible, with a range of measures that reduce risk to an acceptable level. Wearing a face covering while singing is a practical measure that will reduce risk – so why not have it as one of your measures? If there were to be a case of Covid-19 at your rehearsal that spread to others and you weren’t wearing masks, how would you feel?

There is no doubt it is not ideal to sing in a mask, but it is possible – and it will reduce risk. There are also masks available designed specifically for singing. We have collated some below and would like to thank the Association of British Choral Directors for helping us with this.

[Sing Safe](#), a Making Music Corporate Member, is a silicon insert that's durable and worn underneath your mask to keep it off your mouth, allowing you to sing comfortably and confidently while keeping you and others safe. [Making Music members receive a 10% discount](#).

- [Banks Music Publications](#) have singers' masks with a specially designed lightweight frame that holds the material away from the nose and mouth allowing normal vowel production and projection.
- [The Broadway Relief Project](#) - a coalition of Broadway designers and stitchers that normally build costumes for Broadway hit musicals. The Singer's Mask was developed for singers to capture droplets and provide comfort and ease of motion while singing.
- [Funky Masks for singers](#)
- [Random Rose face masks on Etsy](#)
- [Alison Crutchley handmade masks](#)
- [Joan Fernley has produced patterns](#) for making singers' masks and [YouTube tutorials](#) - many of the names above are producing to

her pattern. She also runs a Facebook group '[Masks for performers](#)'.

- [Miss Kiddy singers mask](#)

General government guidance on face coverings

[England](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

[Scotland](#)

[Wales](#)

Performing Arts guidance on face coverings

[DCMS Performing arts](#)

[Suggested principles for safer singing guidance](#)

(both of these documents are for groups in England, but the principles outlined in them are applicable to all nations)

We hope you find this Making Music resource useful. If you have any comments or suggestions about the guidance please [contact us](#). Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the content of this guidance is accurate and up to date, Making Music do not warrant, nor accept any liability or responsibility for the completeness or accuracy of the content, or for any loss which may arise from reliance on the information contained in it.

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