



rockschool®

VOCALS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Rockschool Vocals syllabus?

Our Vocals syllabus sits within our Rockschool Graded exam series and covers individual vocal grade exams from Debut – Grade 8. The grades support learners in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding required to be a musician performing in the 21st-century music industry.

2. What repertoire is covered?

Across the graded syllabus, you will find 10 specially selected and arranged tracks covering contemporary styles from the 1950s – present day, including Musical Theatre, Film and TV, Jazz, Rock, Soul and Pop.

3. Is there a separate syllabus for Male and Female Vocals?

No. It is very important to us that we enable all learners to sing tracks they enjoy without there being specific gender boundaries. This means that each track is presented in its original key but candidates can transpose the track into a key that suits their own vocal range.

4. How can I choose repertoire that suits my voice?

Each track listing shows the vocal range and the key features that are being assessed. This means you can select the songs at each grade which will help you to develop your technique and performance style and work out if the song can be transposed into an appropriate key to suit your own vocal range.

5. What is in the book?

Each book contains everything you need to prepare for the exam, including all technical exercises and examples of Unseen Tests. The tracks are presented as a vocal score so the assessed Vocal line sits on one staff with the Piano Accompaniment on a separate system underneath. Each book also comes with a QR code so you can stream the full audio and backing track direct from our website. We've also provided separate MusicXML files so you can take the backing tracks and put them into software notation programmes to aid the production of transposed parts.

6. Does the Vocals Syllabus use Backing Tracks or do I need an Accompanist?

The RSL Vocals syllabus can be performed **with backing tracks or with an accompanist**. As each book comes with full professionally-recorded exemplar audio, backing tracks, MusicXML files, and a piano accompaniment, you and your teacher have a good level of flexibility for lessons, practice and the exam. Please refer to our syllabus and our Free Choice Piece guidance for more information. This is particularly important if you are using alternative arrangements of backing tracks in your exam.

7. How do I access the repertoire and exam materials?

You can get the books from our publishers, Hal Leonard, in **hard copy** from www.musicroom.com. You can also get hold of the books in **digital format** direct from our online shop.

8. Is RSL Vocals available in Replay and the Learning Platform?

Yes. All digital purchases of the Vocals syllabus come with Replay direct from our site. The RSL Vocals Syllabus will also shortly be available via your active Learning Platform subscription.

9. What if there's nothing in there I like?

We like to think that there is a really engaging range of pieces in our books. But, thanks to our Free Choice Piece option, you can choose up to three pieces from anywhere else to prepare and submit instead. Please refer to our Free Choice Piece criteria to check that your repertoire is at the appropriate level. This includes pieces of music from other exam boards. Please refer to our guidance **here** for more information, including guidance about using alternative backing tracks. We also have an optional, paid checking service where you can verify

whether your chosen piece and/or backing track is at the appropriate level for the grade you are entering.

10. What do candidates need to prepare for their exam?

For the **Performance Certificate**, learners can prepare five pieces and perform those for the exam.

For the **Graded Music Exam**, learners also prepare Technical Exercises and practice for the Unseen Tests

11. What are the Technical Exercises and Unseen Tests?

The Technical Exercises require learners to prepare scales, sing at sight and perform selected backing vocal harmonies in order to fully develop the skills required to be a vocalist in the 21st-century. Candidates have various choices, depending on the grade and test: please refer to the relevant grade book for more details.

The Unseen Tests give students the choice of Sight-Reading or Interpretation and Improvisation; Melodic Recall Aural Tests; as well as General Musicianship Questions.

12. How do I take my exam?

Learners can enter for and take their RSL Vocals exam using exactly the same formats as all of our other graded music exams **at a Public Exam Centre, through a Private Exam Visit, Live-Streamed Exam, or Recorded Digital Submission**. Please see our **website** for more details.

13. What feedback do I get on my exam?

Candidates will receive a digital marksheet shortly after taking their exam, we aim to provide a printed certificate within eight weeks of their scheduled exam date.

14. When do exams run?

Within the UK and Republic of Ireland, a live-streamed exam, or private day of live exams can be organised at any time throughout the year as long as the venue meets certain criteria. Candidates can also visit a public exam centre at set times throughout the year, organised into Spring, Summer and Winter sessions. Candidates can also submit their Recorded Digital Exam at any time. Further details can be found **here**.

Outside the UK, exams are organised into 'tours' which take place at different times throughout the year. For more information, please contact your local RocksSchool representative.

15. Can Vocals candidates take their exam with Rockschoo candidates?

Yes. We have a team of highly experienced examiners who are able to assess all Rockschoo instrumental and vocal candidates, including students who have been following the RSL Classical syllabus in Piano or Violin. Our exams team can co-ordinate exam days to ensure everything runs smoothly.

16. Do I need to start at Debut and work my way up or can I start at any level?

There are no requirements to work through each grade in turn. We recommend that you look at the benchmarking criteria and the repertoire for each grade to identify which level you should start at.

17. I've already done Grade 4 Vocals with another exam board, can I move straight across to Grade 5 Rockschoo Vocals as or do I need to start again?

Our graded exams are benchmarked at set levels so that the learning you have done with another board should help you to transfer across to Rockschoo Vocals relatively easily. You can therefore transfer across to Rockschoo Vocals at any level; you just need to check the benchmarking criteria and repertoire lists to select pieces at the right level for you. You can also use repertoire from other exam boards as part of your Rockschoo exam through our Free Choice Option.

18. Do I need to have grade 5 theory to take an exam at Grade 6 – 8?

No. While theory grades are helpful, we do not require you to have passed a grade 5 theory exam in order to access and enter our higher grades.

19. How much do the exams cost?

Full information about our exam fees can be found [here](#). Candidates can usually expect to receive the certificate and marksheet within three weeks of taking the exam.

20. Do the exams carry UCAS points?

Yes. The Rockschoo Vocals exams are recognised by OfQual and carry 6 – 30 UCAS points from Grades 6 – 8. More information can be found [here](#).

21. Where can I find out more information?

Please visit our website [here](#). For further information and to discuss your requirements in more detail, contact business@rslawards.com

22. Can I change the lyrics of my song?

Minor changes of lyrics, either to suit the gender of the singer or to remove / adapt explicit words, are permitted so long as pitch and rhythmic structure are not affected. This does not need approval in advance; however, please let the examiner know at the beginning of the exam. Any further or more substantial changes made without prior approval may impact on the marking, as the lyrics form part of the requirements for the grade.

23. For the Harmony Ear Test at Grades 6-8, what is meant by 'harmonise a diatonic 3rd or 4th above the vocal part'?

The use of the word 'diatonic' indicates that the candidate should only use pitches that belong to the prevailing key/scale (i.e. not sharpened or flattened). The candidate is asked to sing a harmony line that follows the sung part(s) on the recording closely, using the same lyrics and rhythmic phrasing. For Grades 6-7, this means harmonising a 3rd above the recorded melody when this is being sung on the root or the 3rd, or 4th above if the melody is being sung on the 5th. For Grade 8, the same principle applies, except as there is a second vocal line on the recording the candidate is asked to harmonise above the higher part – again using the appropriate 3rd or 4th intervals in relation to the prevailing key.

24. Can I transpose a song to suit my vocal range? Yes.

Each piece in the grade book is presented with a MusicXML accompaniment file which can be used for this purpose. Alternatively candidates can provide their own track, but this will be considered 'Adapted Repertoire' (click [here](#) for more information). Candidates may sing in any octave which is appropriate for their voice; however they should not change the octave of internal sections of a song, e.g. the chorus or middle 8.

25. What if I notice a difference between the notated vocal line in the grade book and the accompanying audio track for my song?

For the 2021 vocals syllabus we have provided audio realisations of the songs featuring a professional vocalist. As is common with popular vocals performance, these interpretations sometimes include stylistic or expressive developments of the notated score. As an exam candidate, you are free to develop the songs in a similar fashion, provided you are clearly using the notated material as a guide. However, be careful that you don't simplify the song, or reduce the level of demand, as this may impact the marks awarded in the exam. Of course, performances which align with the published audio realisations will not be judged in this way.