Choir Stave Layouts for SAB, SSA, SATB, and SSATB Voicings

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A choir needs an SSA system. List the three staves from top to bottom and the clef for each.

Answer: Soprano I (treble), soprano II (treble), alto (treble).

Reason: SSA has three upper voices, so all three staves use treble clef and are ordered from highest to lowest voice.

Check: Confirm three staves, all treble clefs, and order soprano I, soprano II, alto.

Task 2

Plan an SSATB system with five staves. Each staff is 9 mm high. Gaps are 7 mm within the upper three staves, 10 mm between alto and tenor, and 7 mm between tenor and bass. What total vertical height is needed?

Answer: Five staves at 9 mm = 45 mm. Gaps: 7 + 7 + 10 + 7 = 31 mm. Total = 45 + 31 = 76 mm.

Reason: Add the height of all five staves and the four gaps between them.

Check: Recount staves (5) and gaps (4), then add 45 + 31 = 76 mm.

Task 3

A copyist draws an SATB system but puts a bass clef on the tenor staff. Is this correct? Explain.

Answer: No. The tenor staff should use a treble clef, sung an octave lower, unless a different labeled convention is used.

Reason: SATB tenor is conventionally written in treble clef to keep the upper two voices visually related and to match common choral practice.

Check: Check that the tenor staff has a treble clef and a label indicating octave transposition if needed.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

You are checking a filled SAB system. The alto note heads sit clearly on the correct lines, stems are consistent, and lyrics align under the notes, but the handwriting is a personal style different from the copyist's. Should you accept it?

Answer: Yes, if it meets the rubric: correct placement, consistent stems, aligned lyrics, and legibility.

Reason: The convention defines x-height from baseline to midline and allows valid handwriting alternatives; the rubric checks clarity and correctness, not a single style.

Check: Apply each rubric item to the filled system and accept any style that passes all checks.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Correct number of staves for the voicing.
- [ ] Correct clef on every staff.
- [ ] Correct top-to-bottom voice order.
- [ ] Bar lines cross all staves in the system.
- [ ] Voice labels present at the left margin.
- [ ] Spacing groups voice families clearly.
- [ ] Handwriting keeps note heads on correct lines or spaces.
- [ ] Any valid handwriting style is accepted if legible and consistent.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?