



SOUND RECORDINGS CODE

The SAG-AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Sound Recordings (a.k.a. the “Code”), covers sound recordings on CDs, digital, vinyl, etc., and includes all music formats as well as audiobooks, cast albums, and any other sound recording utilizing vocal performance. The Code not only covers singers, but announcers, actors, comedians, narrators, and sound effects artists as well.

The Code applies to artists who work at scale and overscale, and who appear as both royalty and non-royalty artists. In addition, some artists may be royalty artists for their own recordings, but qualify as non-royalty artists when they appear on other artists’ recordings.

The Sound Recordings Code has been in existence since the early 1950s. Today, more than 600 companies are signed to it, including the three major labels: Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, and most of their subsidiary labels.

The following information provides a summary of the key provisions of the Code, as of January 1, 2025. Members should consult the actual Code for specific terms applicable to a given recording, and contact the SAG-AFTRA office for the rates and terms that apply to work performed on and before Jan. 1, 2025.

Basic Session Rates Effective Jan. 1, 2025 - Dec. 31, 2025

(rates are per person – per hour or per side, whichever is higher except where otherwise indicated by *)

Soloists and Duos	\$306.00	“Stepping Out”		Original Cast Albums:	
Group 3-8	\$139.25^A	Groups 9+:	\$139.25*	Call for rate information.	
Group 9-16	\$106.50^A	Solo/Duo Step Out		Sound Effects Artists:	
Groups 17-24	\$92.75^A	Groups 3-8:		First Hour	\$221.00*
Groups 25-36 (non-classical)	\$79.00^A	1 Singer Steps Out	\$139.25*	Each add'l half-hour	\$84.00*
Groups 36+ (non-classical)	\$68.25^A	2 Singers Step Out	\$96.50*	Contractors:	
Classical Recordings		3+ Singers Step Out	\$69.75*	Groups 3-8	\$67.75
Groups 25+ (with Orchestra)	\$175.50[†]	Actors, Comedians,		Groups 9-16	\$79.00
Overtime	\$59.00	Narrators, Announcers:		Groups 17-24	\$96.00
Groups 25+ (A Capella)	\$59.00*^A	Narrators/Announcers	\$264.25^A	Groups 25-35	\$116.25
Coach Rehearsal	\$23.75*^A	Actors - 1 Role	\$233.50^A	Groups 36+	\$138.50
		Actors - 2 Roles	\$465.75^A		
		Actors - 3 or more Roles	\$601.25^A		

^AMinimum call: two hours, [†]Three hour session

Health and Retirement Contribution Rate: 13.5% (Non-royalty and Royalty)

Premium pay (additional 50% of hourly rate) applies for work between midnight and 8 a.m., on a 6th or 7th consecutive day, or on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

A "side" is each track recorded (each overdub or multi-track is an additional side). Further, a side is defined as a track of up to 4 minutes 30 seconds. If the song is longer than 4:30, an additional "side" is paid for each additional period up to 4:30. (See Code for definitions and rules applicable to singles, classical recordings, and narrators/actors/announcers). To calculate number of sides: take the original track, add any overdubs or additional tracks performed, and multiply by the following based on the playing time of the song.

Playing Time Multiply by "Sides"

Up to 4:30	1
4:31-9:00	2
9:01-13:30	3

Example: A five minute song with two overdubs totals six sides (original track + 2 overdubs = 3 sides, multiplied by 2 because playing time is 5:00).

DIGITAL EXPLOITATIONS

Effective January 1, 2008, the Code provides for additional payment to non-royalty artists for the digital exploitation of sound recordings and music videos on which their performance appears. This includes Permanent Audio/Video Downloads (e.g., iTunes, master ringtones), Non-Permanent Audio/Video Downloads (e.g., subscription services), and Video Streams. All digital exploitation income is distributed by the SAG-AFTRA and Industry Sound Recordings Distribution Fund.

HEALTH AND RETIREMENT

The Code provides that the signatory label makes SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund payments on behalf of artists, whether royalty or non-royalty artists.

Non-Royalty Artists: The Code requires the label to make SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund contributions on all non-royalty earnings paid to a singer or performer appearing on a recording. Note that even a royalty artist may have non-royalty earnings. For example, if a royalty artist appears as a session singer on another royalty artist's recording, they are considered a "non-royalty" artist for purposes of session rates and SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund contributions.

Royalty Artists: Because of the unique nature of royalty contracts, the Code also requires that SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund contributions be made on royalties earned, even if un-recouped. Therefore, if the artist has royalties earned and credited, even if not paid to the artist because of recoupment, the artist receives credit towards their SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund eligibility.

Special provisions for royalty artists under contract: Royalty artists under contract to a label (a.k.a. active roster artists) are guaranteed eligibility for at least individual health coverage under the SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund for so long as they are on the active roster of the label. Every six months, the label will verify whether the artist's annual royalty earnings were sufficient to meet the minimum earnings threshold to qualify for SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund coverage. If not, the label will make a special payment to the SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund, to ensure that the artist is eligible for coverage under the individual health plan.

Please note: The artist must be enrolled in the SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund, and pay the necessary premiums, in order for the label to be required to make the special health payment to the Fund to ensure guaranteed eligibility.

In order for your earnings to be credited towards SAG-AFTRA Health Plan and AFTRA Retirement Fund eligibility or for a roster artist to participate in the special provisions ensuring health plan coverage, the label must be signatory to the Code. If you have any questions about whether or not your label is signed to the Sound Recordings Code, contact the SAG-AFTRA office.

CONVERSIONS

If your recording is licensed for use in another medium (e.g., movies), you may be entitled to a separate payment. Please contact SAG-AFTRA if your recording is released for use in films, TV, video games or commercials.

ARBITRATION

The Sound Recordings Code provides access to binding arbitration of disputes, whether for scale payments or matters arising under an individual agreement between the artist and the label. If you have a dispute with a record label, contact SAG-AFTRA to find out if your dispute can be submitted to arbitration.