

Practice Questions

Have the music open in front of you when you answer these questions.

1. What is the **title** of the piece?
Explain what the title means, or why you think the composer chose that name.
If there is a subtitle, briefly explain what it means.
If there is an *Op.* number or other identifying number, briefly explain what it means.
2. What is the name of the composer?
Is the composer a contemporary composer (i.e. still living)?
3. What does the **time signature** of this piece indicate?
Is it compound time (with dotted-note beats) or simple time?
4. Does this piece begin with a shorter bar than usual?
If so, what is the name for the short bar at the start of the piece?
5. What is the main **key** (or tonality) of the piece?
6. Are there any **modulations** (changes of key)? If so, name the other keys used, and point out where they occur in the music. Don't include the very brief modulations. Look for ways to recognise the new key; there may be accidentals (\sharp , \flat , \natural), or the new keynote may be heard strongly in the melody or the bass at the end of a phrase.
7. Make sure you can identify the **letter name** of each note in the piece.
To begin with, find the highest and lowest notes of the piece, and name them.
8. Identify all of the **time names** (e.g. minim, dotted crotchet, etc.) that you can find.
How many beats does each type of note receive?
9. Name all of the rests that you can find in the piece.
How many beats does each type of rest receive?
10. What is the tempo (speed) of this piece?
What is the suggested metronome setting (in beats per minute)?
11. Explain any other **musical words** or abbreviations that you can find in the piece.
If it is an abbreviation (e.g. "*cresc.*" or "*rall.*"), what is the full word?
12. Point out and explain any of these signs that apply to your piece: stave, treble clef, bass clef, leger line, bar line, sharp, flat, natural, bar line, double bar line.
13. Identify all of the dynamic markings in the piece (e.g. *f*, *mp*, $\text{$).
Say the Italian name of each one, and explain what it means in English.
14. Explain any other **musical signs** (e.g. $>$, \cdot , \odot) that you can see in the piece.

Now that you have learnt the meaning of the performance instructions in your pieces, think about how you can use this knowledge to continue to improve your playing.

Basic Signs and Terms

Pitch

A *treble clef*  indicates notes of high pitch. A *bass clef*  indicates notes of low pitch.

 is a *stave* or *staff*. Notes are written on the lines or in the spaces of the stave.

In piano music, two staves are used, connected by a *brace* {

The small lines for notes above or below the stave are *leger lines*.

		
sharp	natural	flat
raises the pitch of a note by one semitone	Cancels a sharp or flat	lowers the pitch of a note by one semitone

Duration

				
semibreve whole note	minim half note	crotchet quarter note	quaver eighth note	semiquaver sixteenth note

The *time signature* shows how many beats are in each bar. A *bar line* shows the end of a bar.

If the time signature shows crotchet beats, a semibreve would receive four beats, a minim would receive two beats, a crotchet would receive one beat and a quaver would receive half a beat.

A semibreve rest is also called a *whole bar rest*.

A dot after a note or a rest adds half of its value. So $\text{minim} = \text{crotchet} + \text{crotchet}$

Curved lines linking notes of the same pitch are *ties*, which join two notes into one longer note.

Dynamics

<i>pp</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>mp</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ff</i>
<i>pianissimo</i> very soft	<i>piano</i> soft	<i>mezzo piano</i> moderately soft	<i>mezzo forte</i> moderately loud	<i>forte</i> loud	<i>fortissimo</i> very loud
 <i>crescendo</i> gradually becoming louder			 <i>diminuendo</i> gradually becoming softer		

Articulation

Curved lines joining notes of different pitch are *slurs*. Slurred notes should be played *legato* (smoothly and well connected).

Staccato, indicated by a dot above or below a note, means short and detached.

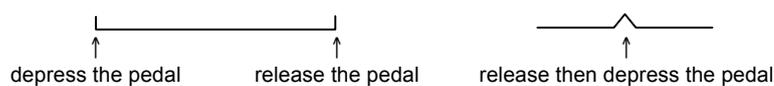
Other signs

An accent (>) means emphasise the note.

:|| means repeat from the beginning; ||: || means repeat the section between the signs.

Some pieces have alternative endings for repeating sections (first and second time bars). If the repeat is not played, the first time ending should be omitted.

Sustaining pedal signs:



A *double bar line* indicates the end of a section (||) or the end of the piece (|||).

Glossary

Aeolian mode - the natural minor scale, e.g. the white-note scale beginning on A.

Accidental - a sharp, flat or natural found within a bar (not in the key signature).

Augmented chord - a 3-note chord of superimposed major 3rds, e.g. C-E-G \sharp .

Beat - the regular underlying pulse of a piece of music, used to measure the duration and emphasis of the notes.

Baroque - a style of music composed between 1600 and 1750. Baroque music is ornate and elaborate. Baroque composers include Purcell, Telemann, Bach, Scarlatti and Handel.

Blues - a type of popular music that is often slow and melancholy.

Blues scale - a type of scale commonly used in popular music; its most characteristic feature is the use of a flattened 5th (or raised 4th), e.g. C-E \flat -F-F \sharp /G \flat -G-B \flat -C.

Chromatic - moving in semitone steps, as in a chromatic scale.

Circle of fifths (or cycle of fifths) - a progression of chords whose roots fall a 5th or rise a 4th, giving the music a strong sense of direction.

Classical - a style of music composed between 1750 and 1810. Classical music is light and elegant. Classical composers include Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert.

Coda - the final section of a piece.

Compound time - a time signature where the beats are dotted notes (dividing easily into three).

Counterpoint - two or more melodic lines heard simultaneously, in a way that makes musical sense.

Cross rhythm - the simultaneous use of two different rhythmic groupings (e.g. 2 against 3).

Diminished 7th chord - a chord containing three superimposed minor 3rds, e.g. G \sharp -B-D-F.

Dissonance - a clashing sound, e.g. a 2nd, a 7th.

Dominant - the 5th note of a scale. Hence G is the dominant note of C major, and G-B-D is the dominant triad of C major. The dominant chord is the second most important chord, after the tonic.

Dominant seventh chord (V⁷) - a dominant triad with an added minor 7th above the root. In F major, the dominant 7th chord would be C-E-G-B \flat . The dominant 7th chord leads strongly to the tonic.

Dorian mode - a minor scale with a raised 6th, e.g. the white-note scale beginning on D.

Episode - a contrasting section.

Fugal - a style of composition in which each voice enters in turn with the main theme.

Harmonic minor scale - a form of minor scale where the 7th note is raised by a semitone.

Harpichord - a keyboard instrument that was used frequently in the Baroque and early Classical periods, before the piano became popular. The strings are plucked with a quill when the key is struck.

Hexatonic - a 6-note scale.

Imitation - where the melody or rhythm of one voice part is copied by another.

Interval - the distance between two notes. Hence, C to E is the interval of a 3rd.

Inversion - to turn upside down. This can apply to intervals, chords or melodies.

Key signature - a sign at the beginning of a line of music, indicating which notes are to be played as sharps or flats. Each major or minor scale has a specific key signature.

Leading note - the 7th note of a scale, which leads by semitone step to the tonic.

Lydian mode - a major scale with a raised 4th, e.g. the white-note scale beginning on F.

Melodic minor scale - a form of minor scale having a raised 6th and 7th note ascending, and using the *natural minor scale* descending.

Mixolydian mode - a major scale with a flattened 7th, e.g. the white-note scale beginning on G.

Mode - an ancient 7-note scale, in which the tones and semitones are ordered slightly differently from modern major and minor scales. Modes were originally formed using only the white keys of the piano.

Modulation - a change of key during the course of a piece, usually requiring the use of accidentals.

Motive (or motif) - a short, recognisable musical pattern.

Movement - a self-contained section of a longer piece. When a piece contains several movements, it is usually performed with a short break between each movement.

Natural minor scale - a form of minor scale without a raised 7th note. Also called the *aeolian mode*.

Ostinato - a recurring musical pattern (i.e. something that is obstinate or persistent).

Pentatonic scale - a 5-note scale. There are many versions of this scale, the most common being the one formed using the five black keys on the piano.

Phrase - a musical sentence. Notes within a phrase are usually played smoothly and well connected.

Phrygian mode - a minor scale with a flattened 2nd, e.g. the white-note scale beginning on E.

Pitch - the aspect of music relating to how high or low the sound is.

Primary triads - the tonic, dominant and subdominant chords in any key.

Relative major/minor - scales sharing the same key signature, e.g. G major and E minor.

Rhythm - the aspect of music concerning the duration and emphasis of notes in relation to the beat.

Riff - a short, catchy pattern that is repeated throughout a piece.

Romantic - a style of music composed between 1810 and 1900. Romantic music is passionate and expressive. Romantic composers include Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Grieg.

Secondary dominant - a chord that temporarily acts as the dominant to a chord that is not the tonic. For example, in C major, the chord D-F#-A could be a secondary dominant if followed by the triad G-B-D, without necessarily being considered a modulation. Also called *applied dominant*.

Semitone - the distance between two neighbouring keys on the piano (e.g. from C to C#). A semitone is the smallest interval possible on the piano.

Sequence - when a musical pattern is repeated at a higher or lower pitch, e.g. E D C F E D G F E.

Seventh chord - a 4-note chord of 3rds (e.g. C-E-G-B \flat).

Simple time - a time signature where the beats are undotted notes (which divide easily into two).

Subdominant - the 4th note of a scale. Hence F is the subdominant note of C major, F-A-C is the subdominant triad of C major, and F major is the subdominant key of C major.

Syncopation - a change to the normal accent scheme caused by placing an accent or long note on a weak beat, or by having a rest or a tied note on a strong beat.

Theme - a melody that will recur throughout a piece.

Tierce de Picardie (Picardy third) - an alteration to the tonic triad in a minor key, changing the minor 3rd to a major 3rd to make a major chord.

Time signature - a sign found near the beginning of a piece of music, indicating the number of beats in each bar and the time value of each beat.

Tone - the distance of two semitones (e.g. C to D).

Tonic - the first, and most important, note of a scale. The tonic note is also known as the keynote, and the tonic triad is the "home" chord.

Tonic pedal point - the sustaining or repetition of the tonic note, usually in the bass. A tonic pedal confirms or strengthens the sense of key.

Transposition - where a given melody is rewritten in a different key. The characteristic shape of the melody is preserved, but it will sound at a higher or lower pitch.

Triad - a 3-note chord of 3rds (e.g. C-E-G). Triads can be formed above any note of a scale.

Twelve-bar blues - a chord progression commonly used in popular music. The most common version of the twelve-bar blues is: I | I | I | I | IV | IV | I | I | V | IV | I | I.