

Grade Two Theory of Music

Course



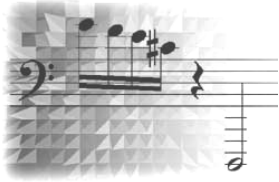
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Lesson 1: Notes, Rests and Ledger Lines



Notes and Rests Review

In Grade One, we learnt about the most common note and rest values, and we also learnt that if a note or rest is *dotted* (has one dot on the right side of the note head), its length is increased by half again.

Ties Review

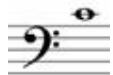
We also learnt that we can use *ties* to join notes of the same pitch together to make them longer.

Ledger Lines

We met middle C in the both the treble clef



and bass clef



and found out that the little line that goes through the middle of the note is called a *ledger* line, and that it makes extra room on the staff for us to use.

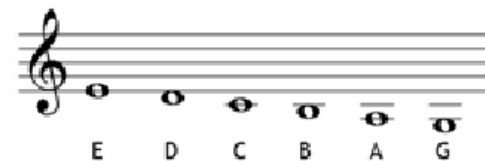
We can add more ledger lines to make more space on the staff. We can add ledger lines to the top of the staff, and to the bottom.

Let's add some ledger lines to the top of the staff in the treble clef:



The first note we use a ledger line on is the A.

Let's now add them to the bottom:



To the top of the bass clef:



and to the bottom:



In Grade Two Music Theory, you will need to be able to read notes written with up to 2 ledger lines.

Lesson 2: Treble Clef & Bass Clef



What's New in Grade Two

Hopefully you don't have too much difficulty working out where the notes are in treble and bass clef, but if you need to do some revision, check the Grade One lesson on treble and bass clefs.

In Grade Two Music Theory you need to be able to *rewrite* a melody in a new clef - from treble to bass or from bass to treble, *without changing the pitch of the music*.

Pitch

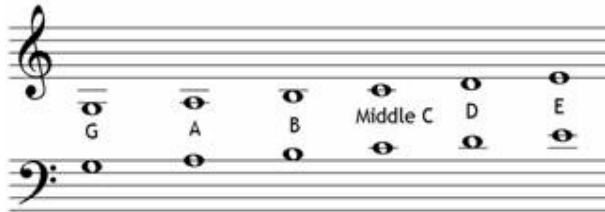
What is pitch? The *pitch* of a note means how high or low it is. We have many notes called "C", for example. Look at these three Cs - they are all at different *itches*:



On the other hand, these two Cs are at the *same pitch* although they are written in different clefs:



In the same way, the notes in each of these melodies are also at the same pitch although they are in a different clef:



Rewriting in a New Clef

Let's look at the kind of questions you might get in the Grade Two Music Theory Exam: the question could ask you to rewrite **single notes** with a new clef, or to rewrite a **whole melody**. Here's a question asking you to rewrite the whole melody:

Rewrite this melody in the treble clef, keeping the pitch the same. The first two notes are given.



You need to write the correct notes of course, but also make sure your handwritten music is neat! Copy each note into its new position right underneath the original melody - that way you'll make sure your notes are spaced correctly, and it's also easier to check that you haven't missed a note out by mistake!

Another useful tip is to write the last note first. Work this note out *very* carefully, and write it on your blank staff. If you make a small mistake in the middle of the melody, you will notice it more easily when you get to the end if things don't match up.

So, first, we'll put the last note in. It's the G below middle C:



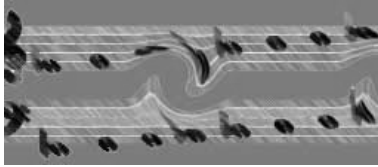
Now, start from the beginning. You don't need to spend time working out every note - just look at the general pattern. For example, for each note just say to yourself "next line up" or "2 spaces down" and so on.

When you have groups of quavers (eighth notes) or semiquavers (sixteenth notes), draw *all* the note heads in each group first. Next draw the first and last stems in each group, and finally add the beams and any other stems - and use a ruler! Pay attention to the direction of the stems - notes below the middle line have stems pointing upwards, and notes below the middle line should have stems pointing downwards.

Here's the finished answer:



Lesson 3: Major Scales



Major Scales

Major scales are built from tones and semitones, with the pattern TTSTTTS.

We've already learnt the scales of C, D, G and F major for Grade One Music Theory. In Grade Two you also need to know *A*, *Bb* and *Eb* major.

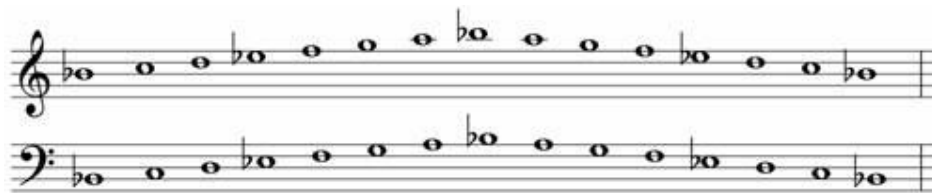
A Major

A major has three sharps - F#, C# and G#. Here's the scale of A major ascending (going up) and descending (going down) in the treble and bass clefs:

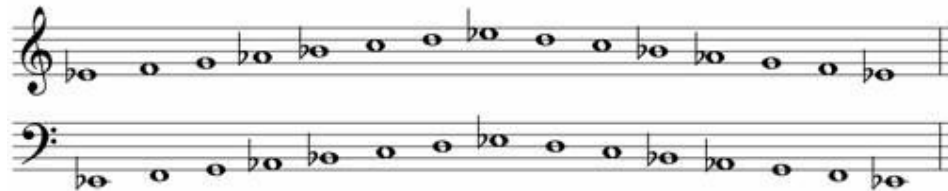


Bb and Eb Major

Bb major has two flats - Bb and Eb. Here's Bb major in full:

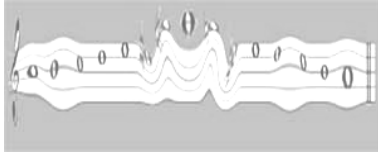


Eb major has three flats - Bb, Eb and Ab. Here's Eb major:



Tip! All keys which have the word "flat" in their name have flats in the scale but no sharps, and all keys with the word "sharp" in their name contain sharps but no flats! That's another reason why we always write Eb in the scale of Bb major, and never D#, for example.

Lesson 4: Minor Scales



Minor Scales - Two Types

There are two kinds of minor scale - minor "harmonic" and minor "melodic". For Grade Two Music Theory, you can write whichever you prefer, but you must know which is which!

We think it's a good idea to learn about both kinds while you're studying, but to use the "harmonic" scale in the exam, because it's less complicated. So let's find out what the difference is!

Harmonic Minor Scales - A, E and D.

Harmonic minor scales are built on this pattern:

T - S - T - T - S - 3S - S

T=Tone (or "whole step")

S=Semitone (or "half step")

"3S" = three semitones

(Click for more on tones and semitones patterns).

Let's start by building a scale of A minor harmonic ascending (going up):



And now let's look at A minor harmonic descending (going down):



As you can see, it's exactly the same notes, but in reverse order.

Let's look at the two other minor scales you need to know for Grade Two Theory, E minor and D minor.



Play them slowly on a piano, if you have one, and look carefully at how many semitones there are between each note.

Minor Melodic Scales

Melodic minor scales are a bit more complicated, because they have one pattern on the way up, but another on the way down.

On the way up (ascending), the pattern is:

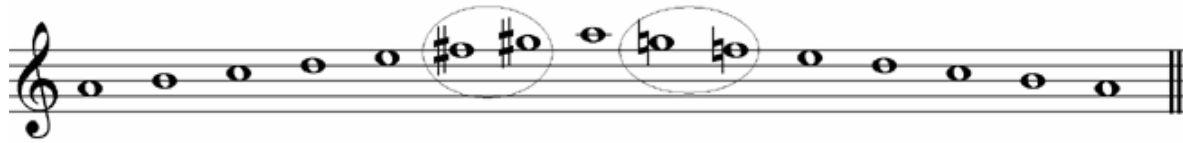
T - S - T - T - T - T - S

but on the way down the pattern is:

T - T - S - T - T - S - T

As you can see, the descending scale is not just a back-to-front ascending scale, (as it was in the harmonic scale). The top end of the melodic scale uses a completely different pattern. The very top note will always be the tonic (keynote) of the scale, but the two notes just below it are the ones which change, depending on which direction you're going in.

Here's A minor melodic, ascending and descending. Concentrate on the circled notes - they're the ones which change on the way down.



Let's see how E minor melodic and D minor melodic look:

E Minor Melodic:



D Minor Melodic:



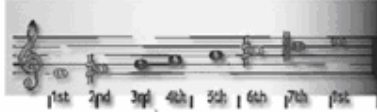
We'll learn about the key signatures for these scales in Lesson 7 - Key Signatures, and Lesson 8 - Writing Scales.

Extra Information

Just in case you were wondering, the words "harmonic" and "melodic" can be used to describe *intervals* as well as *scales*- but when we use them to talk about intervals they have a different meaning. You'll learn about harmonic and melodic intervals in Lesson 14 - Intervals.

It's correct to say "melodic minor scale" and "minor melodic scale". It doesn't matter which way round! The same goes for harmonic scales.

Lesson 5: Degrees of the Scale



What are the Degrees of the Scale?

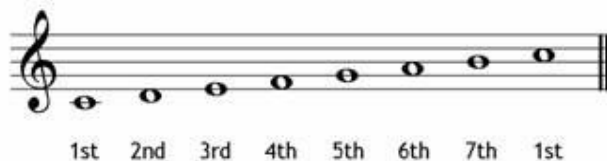
Any note of any scale can be given a number as well as a name.

The first/last note of the scale is often called the "tonic" or "keynote".

In the key of C major, C is the tonic. It's also known as the "first degree of the scale", because it is the first note.

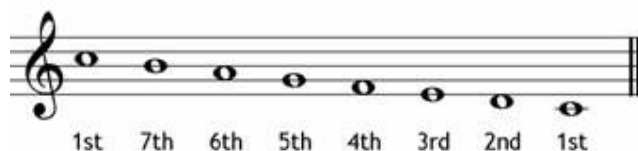
Degrees of the C Major Scale

Here's a scale of C major ascending, with all the *degrees* of the scale added:



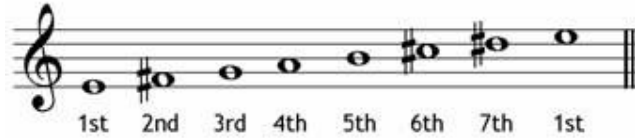
D is the 2nd degree of the scale, E is the third, and so on.

It's important to remember that we work out the degrees of the scale from the *ascending* (upwards) scale only. If we write out the descending scale, we will need to reverse the order of the numbers:



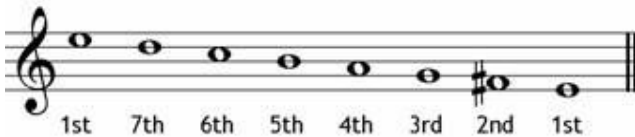
Degrees of Minor Melodic Scales

As we learnt in Lesson 4 - Minor Scales, minor melodic scales are *different* on the way down. So what happens to the degrees of the scale? Let's take a look. We'll look more closely at one of our new scales, E minor melodic. First we'll write out the ascending scale, then add the degrees of the scale under each note:



Look at the top end of the scale: C# is the 6th and D# is the 7th degree of the scale.

Now we'll write out the descending form of E melodic minor, and add in the numbers:

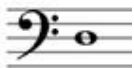


In E minor melodic, there is no D#, only D natural, and no C#, only C natural. This doesn't make any difference to the *degree* of the scale. So, we can say that the 6th degree of the scale of E minor melodic is C natural *or* C sharp.

Working Out the Degree of the Scale

To work out what degree of the scale a note is on, all you need to do is count *upwards* from the first note (or "tonic" or "keynote") of the scale. Here are two questions for you:

1) What degree of the scale of Bb major is this note?



In Bb major, the tonic is Bb. The second note is C, and the third note is D. This note is D (notice the bass clef!), so it's the *third degree of the scale of Bb major*.

2) What note is the 5th degree of the scale of A minor?

In A minor, A is the first note. B=2, C=3, D=4 and E=5. So *E* is the 5th degree of the scale of A minor.

Lesson 6: Key Signatures & Accidentals



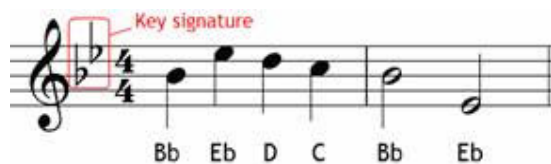
Keys and Key Signatures

If a melody uses mostly the notes of the Bb major scale, we say that the music is "in the key of" Bb major.

We don't write out the flat symbols for the Bs and the Es every time they appear in the music - because there would probably be rather a lot of them! Instead, we use a *key signature*: at the beginning of each new line of music, we write a Bb and an Eb, to remind us that *all* the Bs and *all* the Es need to be flattened.

The key signature also tells us very quickly that the music is in Bb major, without having to count all the flats!

Here's a key signature of Bb major, with the note names marked under the melody:



Accidentals

Sometimes we need to add extra flats, sharps and naturals within a melody, even when we have already got a key signature. It might be because the music changes key for a short time, or just because they sound nice, or because the music is in a *minor* key.

If we add sharps, flats and naturals inside the music itself, they are called "accidentals". Special rules apply to all accidentals.

Rules for Accidentals

Accidentals are always written on the *left* side of the note they affect. We write



and never



Accidentals don't only affect the note they are next to. After an accidental has been written, every other note of the *same position* on the staff is also affected, but *only until the next barline*.



- Note 1 is C natural
- Note 2 is C sharp, because of the accidental
- Note 3 is also C sharp, because it's in the same bar
- Note 4 is C natural, because the sharp is "cancelled" (stopped) by the barline

Key Signatures WITH Accidentals

Now let's see what happens when we have both a key signature *and* accidentals together. Here's a couple of bars of music in the key of F major, so the key signature has one flat, Bb:



- Note 1 is Bb, because of the key signature
- Note 2 is B natural, because of the accidental
- Note 3 is also B natural, because it's in the same bar as note 2
- Note 4 is B flat, because the barline cancels (stops) the natural accidental

Now you are confident working with both key signatures and accidentals, we'll move on to the types of question you might get in Grade Two Music Theory which involve using them in the next lesson.

Lesson 7: Working with Key Signatures



Major Key Signatures with Sharps

The major scales we've learnt which use sharp key signatures are G, D and A major. The sharps in key signatures are always written in this order:

F# - C# - G#

in these treble clef positions:



and these bass clef positions:



You need to learn the *exact* positions of the sharps on the staff. We *never* write the sharps in the following positions, for example:



The F sharp and G sharp need to be moved up an octave.

Major Key Signatures with Flats

The major keys with flats we need to know about for Grade Two Music Theory are F, Bb and Eb. The flats are always written in this order:

Bb - Eb - Ab

The treble clef flats are always written in these positions:



and the bass clef flats are written in these positions:



Again, the *exact* position of the flats is very important, so make sure you know where they go!

Minor Key Signatures

Music which is written in a minor key will usually use a mixture of a key signature plus accidentals.

There are no special *minor* key signatures - we use the same ones as in the major keys, but we write accidentals in the music where they are needed.

Let's look at A minor again, as an example. Remember, we have 3 different A minor scales:

- A minor harmonic: A ↔ B ↔ C ↔ D ↔ E ↔ F ↔ G# ↔ A
- A minor melodic, ascending: A → B → C → D → E → F# → G# → A
- A minor melodic descending: A ← B ← C ← D ← E ← F ← G ← A

So, in our music, sometimes we might need F# or G# and sometimes not! For the key signature, we choose the notes in the *melodic minor descending scale*. For A minor, this means no sharps or flats, so it's the same key signature as C major.

The key signature for a minor key is always the same as the the key signature for the major key which is the *3rd degree* of the minor scale. In A minor, the 3rd degree of the scale is C, so A minor and C major have the same key signatures.

We sometimes use the words "*relative minor*" and "*relative major*" to talk about this relationship. For example, C major is the *relative major* to A minor.

In Grade Two Music Theory, you also need to know about D minor and E minor, so let's work out the relative major keys for these two:

- D minor: D → E → F. F is the 3rd degree of the scale of D minor, so the key signature for D minor is the same as for F major - one flat.
- E minor: E → F# → G. G is the 3rd degree of the scale of E minor, so the key signature for E minor is the same as for G major - one sharp.

Re-writing Music With or Without a Key Signature

For grade two, you might be asked to copy out a short tune with or without a key signature. If the melody has already got a key signature, you'll have to write it *without*, and if it doesn't have a key signature, you'll have to re-write the music *with a key signature*.

From "With" to "Without"

Look carefully at the key signature and accidentals in this melody, and think about which notes need to have sharps or flats next to them:



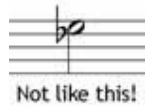
All the Bs and Es will need to be flat, the low ones and the high ones, except where there are accidentals.

Start by pencilling in a cross above each flattened note, so you don't forget any.



Copy out the music *neatly*, adding the flats (or sharps) where they are needed. Remember that you only need to put *one* accidental in a bar for it to affect the rest of the notes in that bar that are the same pitch.

Don't forget to keep any accidentals from the original tune, like the E natural here. Write the accidentals on the left side of the note, making sure they are *right next to the note-head* on the same line or space:



Here's the finished answer:



From "Without" to "With"

If you have to rewrite a melody *with* a key signature, you will be told the key of the melody (pewh!)

Start by putting in the correct *key signature*. Check above if you've forgotten them!

Now start to copy the notes. Every time you come across an accidental, check if it's already in the key signature. If it isn't in the key signature, you'll need to keep it there in the music as an accidental.

We'll use the same tune as before, but work backwards on it!



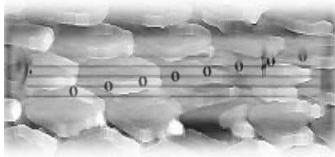
The key is Bb major, so the key signature will have Bb and Eb in it.

The only accidental in this tune which is neither a Bb nor an Eb is the *E natural* in bar 4. So, we need to get rid of all the flats but keep this E natural:



Always go back and check your answers, as it's very easy to miss out an accidental by mistake!

Lesson 8: Writing Scales



Types of Question

In Grade Two Music Theory there are lots of different types of questions with scales. Here are some things you might have to do:

- Write a major or minor scale either ascending or descending, and either with or without a key signature.
- Add clefs, key signatures or accidentals to a given scale.

Now we've learnt about the pattern of tones and semitones in major, minor harmonic and minor melodic scales, and about the key signatures and clefs needed, we just need to practice each type of question.

Writing Scales

Here are two important rules for you:

1. Write ONE note per line or space
2. Use semibreves (whole notes)

Here's an example question, and the steps to follow to get full marks:

Write as semibreves (whole notes) the scale of A minor ascending, without key signature but adding any necessary sharp or flat signs. State which form of the minor scale you have used.



1. Whatever the scale is, the first thing you need to do is put in your starting note (the tonic, or "keynote"). If you're writing an ascending scale, start low. For descending scales, start high. Make sure you leave enough room on the left for the key signature, if you need one.
2. Next, using semibreves (whole notes), fill up the lines and spaces - one note per line/space, until you have *eight* notes. Don't draw the notes too close together!
3. Look again at the *type* of scale you need to write - is it major or minor? Think about the sharps and flats you'll need for that scale - what sharps or flats appear in the key signature? Do you need to add any extra accidentals?
4. Major scales and and minor melodic descending scales don't need *any* extra accidentals. Minor harmonic scales need **ONE** sharpened note on the 7th degree of the scale, and minor melodic ascending scales need **TWO** sharpened notes on the 6th and 7th degrees of the scale.

("Sharpened" is not the same as "sharp". A "sharpened" natural is a sharp, but a "sharpened" flat is a natural. "Sharpened" means "raised by one semitone".)
5. Put in the key signature, if you've been asked to write one. Now add any necessary accidentals. (Note - you'll **NEVER** write a *flat* as an accidental in a scale with a key signature - only sharps and naturals are possible.)

Adding Clefs

Sometimes you'll be asked to write in the clef of a scale. Look at the first note and the key signature of the scale. Decide if the first note must be treble or bass clef:



In this scale, the first note needs to be a G, so we should write a treble clef:



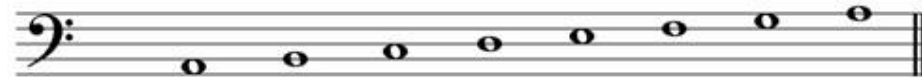
Working Through a Question

Let's work together through the scales question at the beginning of this lesson, using the steps we suggested above.

1) We write the first note: A. It's an *ascending* scale, so we start with an A low on the staff:

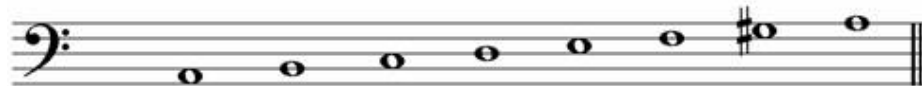


2) We'll fill up the lines and spaces, until we have 8 notes:



3) We need to write a minor scale, without a key signature. (We'll choose A minor *harmonic*.) A minor has no sharps or flats in the key signature, like its relative major, C major.

4 & 5) Minor harmonic scales have an accidental sharpened 7th degree of the scale, so we need a G sharp. Let's put it in.



That's our finished scale of A minor (harmonic) ascending.

Writing Time Signatures

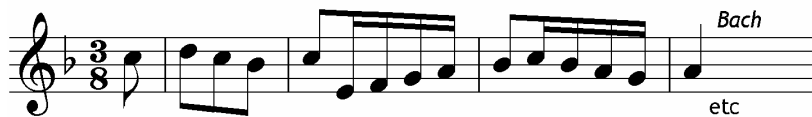
In a typed page like this one, it's ok to write out time signatures as two numbers with a slash between them, like so - 3/8. BUT when you write time signature on a staff, you should make sure you don't write them like this!

On a staff, time signatures should be written *one number directly above the other* and *without* a slash or line, like so:

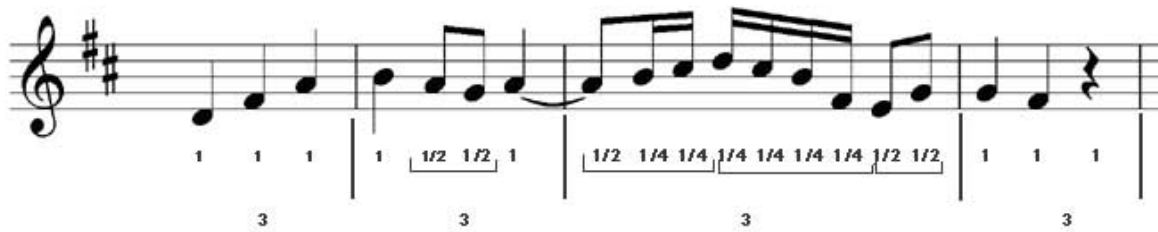


Examples

Here are some short tunes using the new time signatures from the grade two syllabus.



Start by counting the notes in each bar. Use a value of 1 for a crotchet (quarter note), $\frac{1}{2}$ for a quaver (eighth note), 2 for a minim (half note) and so on. Group quavers and semiquavers together to make complete beats:



Here you can see that each bar contains *three* crotchet beats. The top number of the time signature tells you *how many* beats to count in each bar, so the top number must be 3 in this case. The lower number tells you *what kind* of beats to count, and the number 4 means "crotchet" (quarter note) beats, so our time signature needs to be $\frac{3}{4}$.

Remember that the *lower* number of the time signature tells you the *type* of beats you need to count. In Grade Two, there are only three possibilities:

- 2 = minims (half notes)
- 4 = crotchets (quarter notes)
- 8 = quavers (eighth notes)

And, in Grade Two, there are only three possibilities for the top number too. Your top number will always be 2, 3 or 4.

Difficult Time Signatures

Let's try another question, this time a bit harder. What's the time signature for this tune?



When you count up the notes in each bar, you'll find there are in fact 8 crotchet (quarter note) beats per bar. So is the time signature $\frac{8}{4}$? Well, no. (The time signature $\frac{8}{4}$ *does* exist, but it's very rare and it's definitely *not* on the Grade Two Music Theory syllabus!) We can count the minims (half notes) instead, and we'll find that we have four minim beats per bar.

When we count minims, the time signature has the number "2" as the bottom number. We counted four minims, so the time signature must be $\frac{4}{2}$. Other "minim" time signatures you might see at Grade Two are $\frac{2}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{2}$.

Here's a final question. What time signature do we need here?



Here, we can't count crotchets, because we would have one and a half beats per bar, which is not possible - no half beats allowed! We can't count minims either, so we'll need to count quavers (eighth notes).

This melody has three quaver beats in each bar, so the time signature must be $3/8$. Remember that the "8" means "quaver beats".

Here's a summary of all the time signatures that you might find in Grade Two Music Theory:

- $2/2$, $3/2$, $4/2$ (minim beats)
- $2/4$, $3/4$, $4/4$ (crotchet beats)
- $3/8$ (quaver beats)

$2/2$ or $4/4$?

You might be wondering what the difference is between $4/4$ and $2/2$, as they have exactly the same number of beats per bar? Well, the answer is, not much! If you see lots of minims, choose the $2/2$ time signature. If you see lots of crotchets, use the $4/4$ time signature. Don't worry if you're not sure which one it should be - in Grade Two these two time signatures are interchangeable.





Here are some typical $4/4$ bars - you can usually find crotchets and quavers in the melody:



And here are some $2/2$ bars - you'll often see more minims and crotchets, and not so many quavers:





Each note from the original needs to be *twice* as long. This means you need to change it

into the next longest type of note. So, if you have a  , change it into a  ; if you have a  , change it into a  , and so on.

Dealing with Dotted Notes

What do we do with dotted notes? Just change them in the same way, but keep the dot there! Looking at small dotted notes like quavers (eighth notes) can get confusing, so let's compare a dotted crotchet and a dotted minim to see what happens.

 = 1½ beats (or 3 quavers)

 = 3 beats (or 6 quavers)

So, you can see that a dotted minim (half note) is *twice as long* as a dotted crotchet (quarter note). In the same way, a dotted quaver (eighth note) is twice as long as a dotted semiquaver (16th note), and so on.

Here's the finished answer to our question:

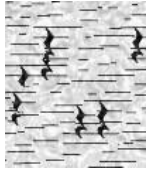


Half the Value

If you are asked to rewrite the music in notes/rests of *half* the value, the process is the same, but the other way round: a semibreve (whole note) will become a minim (half note), a minim will become a crotchet (quarter note) and so on. Again, dots don't make a difference, just keep them there! Look at the finished answer for the question we just did - if we *halve* all the note values in our answer we'll get back to the original note values again!

Make sure you write your notes and rests out as neatly as you can, and don't forget to add any ties or accidentals if necessary!






Lesson 12: Adding Rests



Rests Review

Do you remember how to draw each of the rests correctly?

Here's some quick revision:

	UK Rest Name	US Rest Name	Tips
	Semibreve	Whole	Hangs off the second line from the top
	Minim	Half	Sits on the middle line (think 'middle=minim')
	Crotchet	Quarter	Draw it like a backwards '3'
	Quaver	Eighth	Like a '7' with a blob on the top!
	Semiquaver	Sixteenth	A '7' with 2 blobs!

How to Add Rests to a Melody

If you get a question asking you to add a rest or rest to a melody, the first thing you need to check is the time signature.

Here's an example question:

Add the correct rest(s) at the places marked * in this tune to make each bar complete.



The time signature is 2/2, so we need to have 2 minim (half note) beats per bar.

Find the first bar with missing rests, and pencil in the values of the notes that you *do* have. Add small values together to make complete beats, where you can.



Here we can see that we only have one and a half beats in the second half of the bar, where in fact we need 2. So we need a quaver (eighth note) to complete the full minim beat. Here's the rest added to the bar:



Try to work out the other rests for yourself, in the same way. Remember that your rests need to make *complete* beats. Think carefully about the last bar - you need to complete the first minim (half note) beat first, then finish the bar off, so you'll need two rests in the last bar.

Answer:



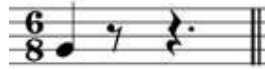
Is this wrong?

Look at that last bar again. Students often wonder if it's wrong to write something like a dotted minim rest or a minim followed by a crotchet, in this type of bar. After all, it's just a silence isn't it, so does it really matter?

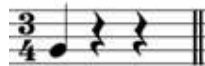
Well, the short answer is, yes, it does matter! You *must* look carefully at the time signature, and you *must* make up complete beats before you do anything else. A similar situation often comes up when we compare the time signature of 3/4 with 6/8. What's the right way to add rests to this 6/8 and this 3/4 bar?



First we need to remember that in 6/8, we have *two dotted crotchet (quarter note) beats*. So the first thing we need to do is make the first beat complete - so we add a quaver. Then we have one dotted crotchet beat left, so we can use a dotted crotchet, like this:



If the time signature is 3/4, we get a different answer, although the length of the silence is technically exactly the same! In 3/4, we have three crotchet (quarter note) beats. So, we just need to put in two crotchet rests, like this:



Lesson 13: Tonic Triads



Building Tonic Triads

What are tonic triads? Tonic triads are simple chords with just three notes in them. To build a tonic triad, we start by taking the first note from any scale (which is also known as the "tonic"). Let's make a tonic triad of D major. We start by writing the first note of the scale of D major - D:



Next we add a note which is 2 notes higher (also known as the third degree of the scale). In the scale of D major, the note which is 2 notes higher than D is F#:



Finally, we add the note which is two notes higher than the last note - otherwise known as the fifth degree of the scale. In the scale of D major, the fifth degree of the scale is A:



The notes D-F#-A make up the tonic triad in the key of D major.

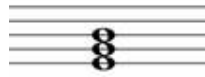
We can also build tonic triads in minor keys of course. The rules are the same, but we need to use the minor scale. In D minor, the tonic is D, the third degree of the scale is F (natural) and the fifth degree of the scale is A. So, the tonic triad of D minor looks like this:



Tonic triads are always built on the tonic, third and fifth degrees of the scale.

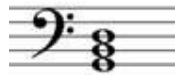
Adding a Clef to a Tonic Triad

You might be asked to add a clef (either treble or bass) to a tonic triad. You'll see the tonic triad on the staff, and will be told what key it's in, like this:



G Major

Remember that tonic triads are always built on the *first* note of the scale, so in this tonic triad, the lowest note has to be a G, because the key is G major. This note will be a G if we add a bass clef:



G Major

Adding Accidentals to a Tonic Triad

Sometimes you might need to add some accidentals as well as a clef. Look at this tonic triad:



Bb Major

Here we need to add a treble clef, so that the lowest note is a B, and we also need to put a flat sign \flat on the B, to make it a Bb:



Bb Major

Naming the Key of a Tonic Triad

Another type of question you might get in the Grade Two Theory Exam, is to *name the key* of a tonic triad.

Again, you need to think first about the *lowest note* of the chord. Look carefully at the *clef* and the *key signature* or *accidentals* too. You should also look at the middle note of the chord to see if it's a major or a minor tonic triad.

What key is this tonic triad in?



The lowest note is A (it's in the bass clef), so it's a tonic triad in the key of A. The middle note is C#, which is the third degree of the scale in A major (in A minor, the third degree of the scale is C *natural*). So, this tonic triad is in *A major*.

Grade Two Tonic Triads

Here's a list of all the tonic triads you'll need to recognise for Grade Two, in both the treble and bass clef:

C Major D Major Eb Major F Major G Major A Major Bb Major D Minor A Minor

C Major D Major Eb Major F Major G Major A Major Bb Major D Minor A Minor

Finding Tonic Triads in a Melody

Sometimes you might need to find three notes in a melody which form a tonic triad when they're put together.

You'll be told what key the melody is in, and could see a question like this:

This melody is in C major. In which bar can all three notes of the tonic triad be found?



Because the piece is in C major, the tonic triad must contain the notes C-E-G. (They could be in any order.) Bar two contains the notes C, E and G, so that's the right answer. (Bar one doesn't contain a G, so it's not right!)

Lesson 14: Intervals



New for Grade Two

What you need to know about intervals for Grade Two is more or less the same as for Grade One.

You need to be able to write and recognise any harmonic or melodic interval, written in any of the keys for this grade (C, D, Eb, F, G, A and Bb major and A, E and D minor). There are no new techniques to learn, just the new key signatures.

Working Out Intervals

The lesson on intervals from Grade One teaches you everything you need to know about how to work out intervals, the difference between melodic and harmonic intervals, and how to write them neatly.

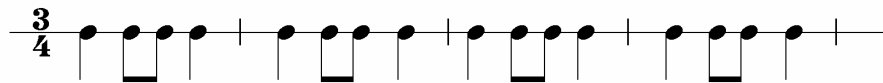
Lesson 15: Triplets



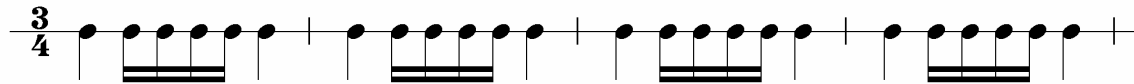
Triplets

A "triplet" is a group of three notes played in the time of two.

To look at how triplets work, we'll first look at a short rhythm in 3/4 time. Remember that in 3/4 time, one crotchet beat can be divided into two quavers:

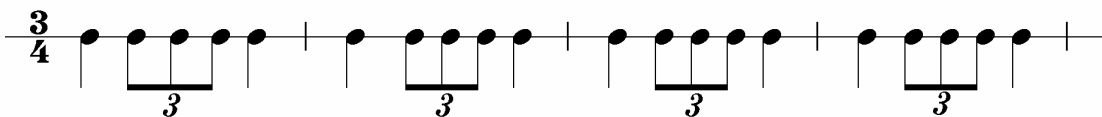


One crotchet beat can also be divided into four semiquavers:



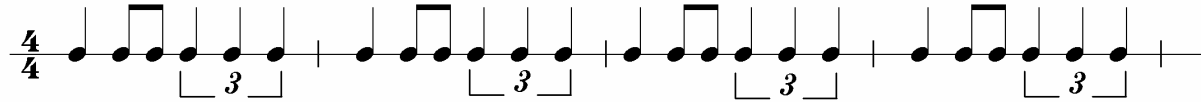
But, if we want to split the crotchet into *three* equal parts, we need to use a triplet. To show a triplet, we write the notes as three quavers beamed (joined) together, and we also write "3" on the beamed side of the notes. (These days it's not necessary to put a slur marking too.)

Look at this rhythm using triplets:



Crotchet Triplets

Triplets don't always have to be quavers - we can make triplets out of notes of *any* length. We can split a minim up into three equal notes by writing triplet crotchets, for example:

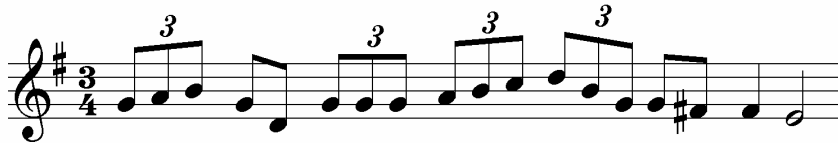


Crotchets don't have beams, of course, so we write crotchet triplets with a square bracket, with the number 3 in the middle of the longest line.

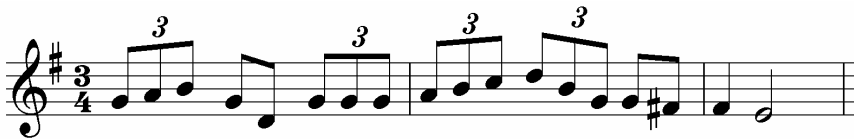
Adding Barlines with Triplets

Adding barlines to music with triplets can look difficult at first glance, but don't panic! Remember that you are looking at three notes in the space of two, and that they are grouped together in *whole beats*. Here's an example:

Add the missing barlines to this tune.



Answer:



Adding Rests with Triplets

Here's a melody which you need to add rests to, and the melody contains a triplet:



What do we need to do? We can see that there is a triplet marked with a "3" above the beamed quavers, but there are only two notes written instead of three. (Triplets always have three notes in them.) The star (*) shows us where the missing rest is supposed to go - in this case it's in the middle of the triplet.

The other notes in the triplet group are quavers; we've got two quavers but we need three, so the rest must have the value of a quaver. Draw the quaver rest carefully, in the place shown by the star. If you have to write a crotchet triplet rest, make sure it's inside the square "triplet" brackets.

Here's the finished answer, with the quaver rest in place:



Lesson 16: Composing a Rhythm



Rhythm Review

Composing a rhythm in Grade Two Music Theory is just a little bit harder than for Grade One. Read the Grade One lesson first, to get the general idea, then return to this page to see what's new for Grade Two.

What's New

In Grade Two, you're only given one bar of rhythm, (in Grade One you get two), and you have to compose three more.

The rhythms you are given (and those you are supposed to write) will be a little bit more complicated than in Grade One. They'll often include dotted rhythms or triplets, for example.

Example Question

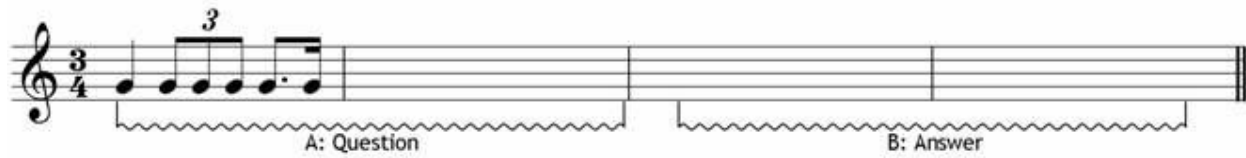
Here's a question for us to work through together:

Write a four-bar rhythm using the given opening.



How do we start? The first thing to learn is that your 4-bar rhythm must be made up of *two phrases* - we'll call them A and B. Phrase A is the first two bars, and phrase B is the last two.

We can think of phrase A as a "question", and phrase B as the "answer".



Question Phrases

As you can see, in Grade Two we are actually only given *half* a question (whereas in Grade One you're given a complete 2-bar question). The same kind of thing in words could be something like "why do you.....?" or "have you ever.....?" There are probably millions of ways to finish these questions in a sensible way, and even more ways to finish them with something meaningless!

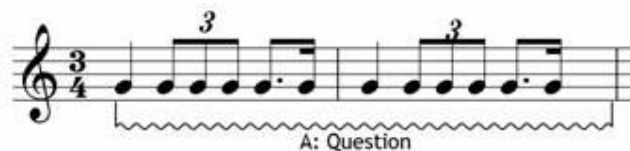
We could ask

- Have you ever been to France?
- Why do you get up at 7 o'clock?

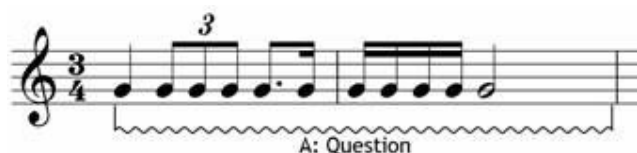
But it wouldn't make much sense if we asked

- Have you ever yesterday afternoon?
- Why do you rabbit mountains?

In music, the question must also make sense - *musical sense*. This means that you need to write something which fits with the first bar, and not something that is totally unconnected to it. Let's take a look at some examples.



This is ok, but not very interesting. We didn't create anything new, so we shouldn't expect many points for this!



This doesn't fit very well because none of the note values in bar 2 appear in bar 1, so there's no connection.



This one is very good - bar two uses some old material from bar one (the triplet), and some new material (the minim).



This one is also good - the note values all appear in the first bar, but we've changed the order of them. So, there is a strong connection, but it's not an exact copy.



Again, this is good because it re-uses some, but not all, of the rhythms from bar 1.



Not a good choice - the only note value which appears in both bars is the crotchet, but everything else is completely different.

Answering Phrases

Before we think about answering the question phrase, we need to choose a completed question! Let's say we finish our question phrase like this:



Look at the types of rhythm we've used. We've got three types: a plain crotchet, a triplet quaver group and a dotted quaver/semiquaver pair.

We should use mostly these same types of rhythm in our answering phrase. The very last note of the phrase should be a reasonably long one (at least a crotchet), so that the rhythm sounds properly finished. Let's take a look at some answering phrases and see which ones are any good, and why.

This sounds fine. We re-used some of the important rhythms, but not in the same order, and we finished on a nice long minim.

This doesn't sound very good. Because we forgot about the triplets, the last two bars don't fit very well.

Here we forgot to use the dotted quaver rhythm, and the last bar is certainly not very interesting!

This one is good - the rhythms are re-used in a different order and the final minim is a good ending note.

This is also a good answer. The rhythms are linked, and the last crotchet is a long enough ending note.

Lesson 17: Foreign Terms & Symbols



On From Grade One

For Grade Two Music Theory, you have to know all the foreign musical terms and symbols which are listed for Grade One, and a few more.

In each grade of the ABRSM music theory exams there are more foreign terms to learn, but you always have to know all the terms from the earlier grades too.

Metronome Markings

A metronome is a gadget which makes a loud, regular clicking noise. You can set the speed of the clicks. Metronomes are used so that musicians know exactly how fast to play a piece of music, and they're also useful to practise with.

Metronome markings sometimes appear above the staff, to tell you about the tempo of the music, because the Italian tempo terms are sometimes not very exact. Metronome directions are made up of a *note symbol* and a *number*, joined together by the equals sign, like this:

♩ = 126

This means that the tempo of the music should be about 126 crotchets (quarter notes) per *minute*. Metronome indications always tell you how many notes to play per minute. (Of course, it's best if you actually have a metronome so that you can set it to click at the speed indicated.)

Metronome markings can use any note length, but the most common are the quaver, crotchet and minim (eighth, quarter and half note).

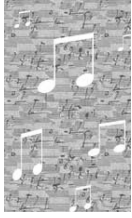
New Terms for Grade Two

TEMPO			
Allargando	al-lar-gan-do		Broadening (getting a little slower and probably a little louder)
Allegro assai	al-leg-ro as-say		Very quick
Andantino	an-dan-tee-no		Slightly faster than andante (or slightly slower)
Grave	grar-vay		Very slow and solemn
Larghetto	lar-get-toe		Rather slow (but faster than largo)
Largo	lar-go		Slow and stately
Presto	press-toe		Very fast
Vivace	vi-var-chay		Lively and quickly
Vivo	vee-voe		Lively and quickly
DYNAMICS			
Fortepiano	for-tay pi-ya-no	FP	Loud then immediately soft
Sfortzando	sfort-zan-doe	Sf, Sfz	Forced, accented
Sfortzato	sfort-zar-toe	Sf, Sfz	Forced, accented
PHRASING			
Dolce	dol-chay		Sweetly & softly
Espressivo	es-press-ee-voe	Espress., Espr.	Expressive
Giocoso	jo-ko-so		Playfully, merry
Grazioso	grat-zee-oh-so		Gracefully
Maestoso	my-stoe-so		Majestically
Sostenuto	sos-ten-oo-toe		Sustained
Tenuto	ten-oo-toe		Held
OTHER TERMS			
A	a (as in "cat")		At, To, By, For, In, In the style of
Al, Alla	al, a-la		To the, In the manner of
Assai	as-say		Very
Con, Col	kon, kol		With

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E, Ed	<i>e</i> (as in "bed")		And
Ma	<i>ma</i> (as in "man")		But
Meno	<i>men-no</i>		Less
Molto	<i>mol-toe</i>		Very, Much
Mosso, Moto	<i>moss-o, mo-to</i>		Movement
Non	<i>nonn</i>		Not
Piu	<i>pi-yu</i>		More
Senza	<i>sen-za</i>		Without
Simile	<i>see-mi-lay</i>	Sim.	In the same way
Troppo	<i>tropp-o</i>		Too much (<i>non troppo = not too much</i>)

Lesson 18: Handwriting Music



Copying Out Music

Just like in the Grade One Theory Exam, the final question in the paper is to copy out a section of music *exactly* as it is written.

There are ten points available for this question, which seems quite an easy ten points on the face of it, but you really must be very careful to copy out everything neatly.

The Basics

Take a look at the Grade One Lesson on handwriting music. The advice in the Grade One lesson will be useful for you in *all* the music theory exams, in all the grades.

Remember to copy out *everything*, including the markings for tempo, dynamics and expression. Go back and double check that you haven't forgotten anything, and then check again!

Common Mistakes

Here are some very common mistakes that students make when copying out music - make sure you don't make them!

- Don't forget to put the barline at the end of the extract.
- The first note of each bar is always the same distance (about $\frac{1}{2}$ a centimetre) from the barline on its left.
- Accidentals are written on the *left hand* side of the note head
- Try to keep the same distance between the notes as you see in the original.
- Make sure the note stems are pointing in the right direction.
- Black note-heads must be a good solid colour - make sure you can see no white space at all inside the notehead.
- Don't forget ties!
- Read the question *very* carefully - make sure you copy out the right bars!