MyMusicTheory.com

Grade Three

Music Theory

Complete Course, Exercises & Answers

(ABRSM 2018+ Syllabus)

BY VICTORIA WILLIAMS AMUSTCL BA MUS

© www.mymusictheory.com

Published: 10th January 2018

CONTENTS

1. New for Grade Three 4
2a. The Demisemiquaver (UK) 5
2a. The Thirty-Second Note (USA) 6
2b. Symbols & Terms 7
2. Notes, Symbols & Terms Exercises 9
2. Notes, Symbols and Terms Answers 10
3. Scales 11
3. Scales Exercises 15
3. Scales Answers 18
4. Key Signatures 19
4. Key Signatures Exercises 23
4. Key Signatures Answers 25
5. Degrees of the Scale and Tonic Triads 26
5. Degrees of the Scale and Tonic Triads Exercises 28
5. Degrees of the Scale and Tonic Triads Answers 30
6. Time Signatures (UK) 31
6. Time Signatures (USA) 34
6. Time Signatures Exercises 37
6. Time Signatures Answers 38
7. Adding Bar Lines or a Time Signature (UK) 39
7. Adding Bar Lines or a Time Signature (USA) 43
7. Adding Bar Lines or a Time Signature Exercises 47
7. Adding Bar Lines or a Time Signature Answers 48
8. Adding Rests & Beaming Notes in Groups (UK) 49
8. Adding Rests & Beaming Notes in Groups (USA) 53
8. Adding Rests & Beaming Notes in Groups Exercises 57
8. Adding Rests & Beaming Notes in Groups Answers 58
9. Intervals 59
9. Intervals Exercises 61
9. Intervals Answers 62
10. Transposition 63
10. Transposition Exercises 65
10. Transposition Answers 66
11. Rewriting with Different Time Values 67

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

11. Rewriting with Different Time Values Exercises 70
11. Rewriting with Different Time Values Answers 71
12. Questions about a Score 72
12. Questions about a Score Exercises 74
12. Questions about a Score Answers 75
13. Finding Deliberate Mistakes 76
13. Finding Deliberate Mistakes Exercises 77
13. Finding Deliberate Mistakes Answers 78
Grade 3 Music Theory Practice Test 79
Grade 3 Practice Test Answers 83
Annex 85

1. NEW FOR GRADE THREE

WELCOME TO THE GRADE THREE MUSIC THEORY COURSE!

Grade three is a gentle step up from grade two – but you do need to know all the material on the syllabuses for grades 1 and 2, in order to begin grade 3.

The things you need to know already are:

- Notes and rests from the semibreve (whole note) to the semiquaver (16th note)
- Bass clef and treble clef
- Time signatures 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 and 3/8
- Major scales and key signatures in C, G, D, A, F, Bb and Eb
- Minor scales (harmonic and melodic) and key signatures in A, E and D
- The degrees of the scale
- Tonic triads (e.g. the chord of C-E-G in C major)
- Interval numbers (e.g. 2nd, 3rd)

In grade three music theory, you'll extend your knowledge of the keys, to include all keys with up to four sharps or flats. This means you'll be learning 8 new keys:

- E major
- Ab major
- B minor
- G minor
- F# minor
- C minor
- C# minor
- F minor

You'll also learn three new time signatures:

- 6/8
- 9/8
- 12/8

You'll learn some new foreign terms and symbols, as well as the demisemiquaver (32nd) note.

You'll learn how to transpose music into a new clef.

You'll learn how to describe intervals in more detail, using a **type** as well as a number.

Are you ready? Let's get started with grade three music theory!

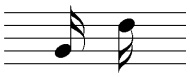
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

2A. THE DEMISEMIQUAVER (UK)

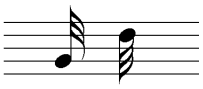
THE DEMISEMIQUAVER

The smallest note you will have come across in grades 1 and 2 is the semiquaver. Remember that 4 semiquavers are worth 1 crotchet.

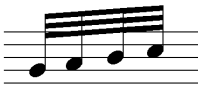
A semiquaver has two little tails on the stem, which are always on the right hand side.



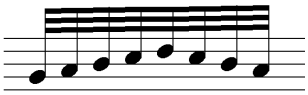
The **demi**semiquaver is worth half a semiquaver. You need 8 demisemiquavers to make up the value of 1 crotchet. A demisemiquaver has **three** little tails:



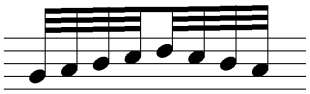
Demisemiquavers are usually grouped and beamed in **fours**:



But because we need **eight** of them to equal one crotchet, we often put two groups of four together:



To make it easier to see the division of beats, many people prefer to use one long beam at the top, to join all the notes, and then two shorter beams on each group of four:



One semibreve is worth 32 demisemiquavers. One minim is worth 16. One crotchet is worth 8. One quaver is worth 4. One semiquaver is worth 2 demisemiquavers.

The demisemiquaver rest looks like this:

It has three tails, and each tail sits within a space on the stave.

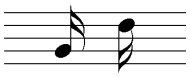
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

2A. THE THIRTY-SECOND NOTE (USA)

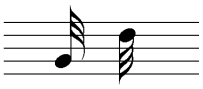
THE THIRTY-SECOND NOTE

The smallest note you will have come across in grades 1 and 2 is the sixteenth note. Remember that 4 sixteenths are worth 1 quarter note.

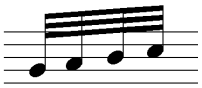
A sixteenth note has two little tails on the stem, which are always on the right hand side.



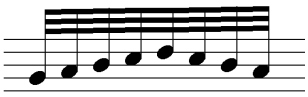
The **thirty-second note** is worth half a sixteenth note. You need 8 thirty-seconds to make up the value of 1 quarter note. A thirty-second has **three** little tails:



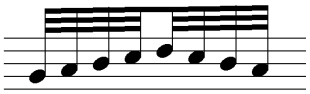
Thirty-second notes are usually grouped and beamed in **fours**:



But because we need **eight** of them to equal one quarter note, we often put two groups of four together:



To make it easier to see the division of beats, many people prefer to use one long beam at the top, to join all the notes, and then two shorter beams on each group of four:



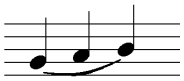
One whole note is worth 32 thirty-second notes. One half note is worth 16. One quarter note is worth 8. One eighth note is worth 4. One sixteenth note is worth 2 thirty-seconds.

The thirty-second rest looks like this:

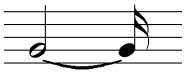
It has three tails, and each tail sits within a space on the stave.

2B. SYMBOLS & TERMS

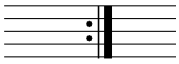
Here are some symbols which you might be tested on in the grade three music theory exam.



The **slur**. This curved line groups together notes which should be played in a legato way (smooth and without breaks between the notes).



The **tie**. This curved line looks exactly like a slur, but it joins together two (or more) notes which are the same pitch. It means “add the two note values together”.



The repeat bar line. This bar line has two lines - one thin and one thick, and two dots. It means “go back to the start/ the last repeat bar line and play again”.

fz Forzato. “Forced” or “sharply accented”.

Foreign Terms

Don't forget, you need to know all the terms listed for grade 1 and grade 2, as well as these!

ad libitum, ad lib.	at choice, i.e. a passage may be played freely
adagietto	rather slow, but faster than adagio
agitato	agitated
alla breve	with a minim beat (half note beat) (2/2)
amore	love
amoroso	loving
anima	soul, spirit
animando	becoming more lively
animato	animated, lively
ben	well
brio	vigour
con	with
con anima	with feeling
deciso	with determination
delicato	delicate

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

energico	energetic
forza	force
largamente	broadly
leggiero	light or nimble
marcato, marc.	emphatic, accented
marziale	in a military style
mesto	sad
pesante	heavy
prima, primo	first
prima volta	first time
risoluto	bold, strong
ritmico	rhythmically
rubato, tempo rubato	with some freedom of time
scherzando, scherzoso	playful, joking
seconda, secondo	second
seconda volta	second time
semplice	simple, plain
sempre	always
stringendo	gradually getting faster
subito	suddenly
tanto	so much
tempo comodo	at a comfortable speed
tranquillo	calm
triste, tristamente	sad, sorrowful

2. NOTES, SYMBOLS & TERMS EXERCISES

Exercise 1 (UK terms)

How many demisemiquavers are worth the same as

a. two semibreves
b. one minim
c. one crotchet
d. three quavers

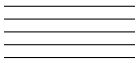
Exercise 1 (USA Terms)

How many thirty-second notes are worth the same as

a. two whole notes
b. one half note
c. one quarter note
d. three eighth notes

Exercise 2

Draw a demisemiquaver (32nd) rest:



Exercise 3

Complete the table with the English translations of these musical terms.

Italian	English	Italian	English
ad libitum (ad lib.)		*adagietto*	
agitato		*alla breve*	
amore		*amoroso*	
anima		*animando*	
animato		*ben*	
brio		*con*	
con anima		*deciso*	
delicato		*energico*	
forza		*largamente*	
leggiero		*marcato, marc.*	
marziale		*mesto*	
pesante		*primo, prima*	
risoluto		*ritmico*	
rubato, tempo rubato		*scherzando, scherzoso*	
seconda, secondo		*seconda volta*	
semplice		*sempre*	
tanto		*tempo comodo*	
tranquillo		*triste, tristamente*	

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

2. NOTES, SYMBOLS AND TERMS ANSWERS

EXERCISE 1

a. 64
b. 16
c. 8
d. 12

EXERCISE 2

EXERCISE 3

Italian	English	Italian	English
ad libitum (ad lib.)	at choice (played freely)	*adagietto*	rather slow, but faster than adagio
agitato	agitated	*alla breve*	with a minim (half note) beat (in 2/2)
amore	love	*amoroso*	loving
anima	soul/spirit	*animando*	becoming more lively
animato	lively/animated	*ben*	well
brio	vigour	*con*	with
con anima	with feeling	*deciso*	with determination
delicato	delicately	*energico*	energetically
forza	force	*largamente*	broadly
leggiero	light/nimble	*marcato, marc.*	emphatic/accented
marziale	in a military style	*mesto*	sadly
pesante	heavy	*primo, prima*	first
risoluto	bold/strongly	*ritmico*	rhythmically
rubato, tempo rubato	with freedom of time	*scherzando, scherzoso*	playful/joking
seconda, secondo	second	*seconda volta*	second time
semplice	simple/plainly	*sempre*	always
tanto	so much	*tempo comodo*	at a comfortable speed
tranquillo	calmly	*triste, tristamente*	sadly/sorrowful

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

3. SCALES

Major Scales

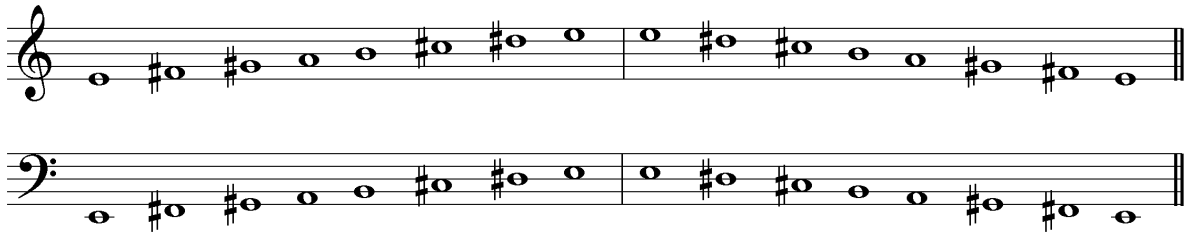
You should already be familiar with the scales of C, G, D, A, F, Bb and Eb major, as these are on the syllabus for grades 1 and 2. All major scales are built using this pattern of tones (T) (whole steps) and semitones (S) (half steps): T-T-S-T-T-T-S. The first new scale in grade three music theory is E major. E major has four **sharps:** F#, C#, G# and D#.

If you look closely you'll discover that each sharp is exactly **one 5th** higher than the previous one.

Start at F(#) and count 5 notes, and you will arrive at C(#): [**F**, G, A, B, **C]**. Then start at C and count up 5 notes and you will arrive at G(#): [**C**, D, E, F, **G]**. Start at G and count up 5 notes and you arrive at D(#): [**G**, A, B, C, **D]**.

This is an easy way to remember the order of sharps – this is the beginning of the "circle of 5ths" (because if you keep on going, you'll eventually end up back at the beginning!)

Here's the scale of E major, ascending and descending, in treble and bass clef:



The other new major scale we're going to learn is Ab major.

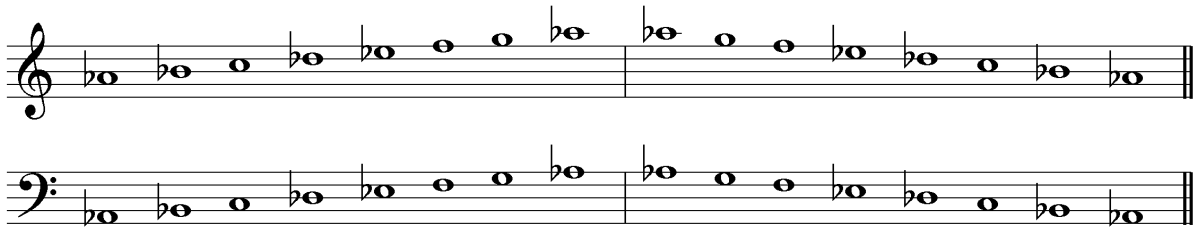
Ab has got four **flats** – Bb, Eb, Ab, and Db.

An easy way to remember the order of flats is to count **down** five notes from the first one. The first flat is Bb:

B, A, G, F, **E**.
E, D, C, B, **A**.
A, G, F, E, **D**.

The circle of 5ths works in both directions – if you count **upwards**, you get the order of sharps. If you count **downwards**, you get the order of flats!

Here is the scale of Ab major, ascending and descending in treble and bass clef:



Also, you could just learn the word "BEAD" which spells the flats in order!

MINOR SCALES

You should already be familiar with the minor scales in the keys of A, E and D. For grade three, you also need to know the minor scales with up to four sharps or flats in the key signature:

- B minor
- G minor
- F# minor
- C minor
- C# minor
- F minor

In grade two music theory we learnt that there are two types of minor scales, the **harmonic minor** and the **melodic minor**.

- The harmonic minor has the pattern T-S-T-T-S-3S-S (3S = 3 semitones).
- The melodic minor has one pattern on the way up and another on the way down:
    - Ascending (from bottom): T-S-T-T-T-T-S
    - Descending (from top): T-T-S-T-T-S-T

At grade two, you were given a free choice about which version of the minor scale you wanted to write. But at grade 3, you will be told which version you have to write, so you **must** learn both versions of each scale. If you find it difficult to remember all the patterns of tones and semitones, try this method instead: learn the notes of three types of minor scale for **A minor** - they are easy to learn. Then write out the A minor scale and calculate whether each step is a tone (whole step), semitone (half step) or three semitones (three half steps). Then use the same pattern as a guide, to write out a new scale in a different key.

On the next two pages you will find all the new minor scales you need to know for grade 3 music theory.

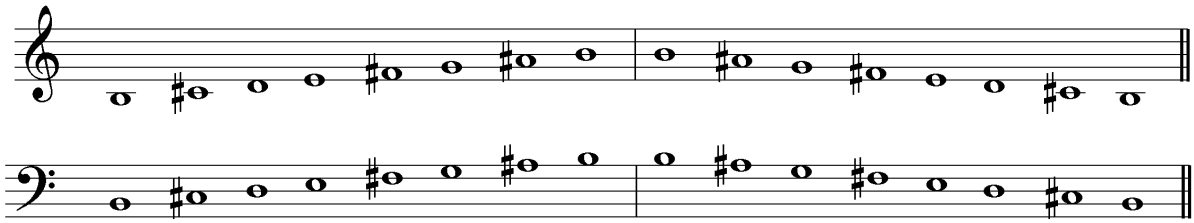
Notice that in F# minor and C# minor there are two notes which you might not have seen before: E# and B#. These are both **white notes** on the piano.

E# is the same note on the piano as F natural and B# is the same as C natural. But although they are the same note on an instrument, they are **different** notes in music theory, and you must be careful to use the correct one. Remember that in scales, you can only use each letter name **once**, apart from the first and last notes of the scale. So we use E# (and not F natural) in F# minor, because we have already used the letter "F" as the first and last notes of the scale.

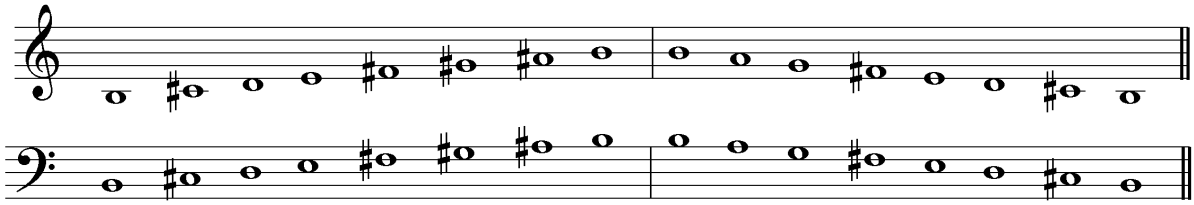
E# and F are called "enharmonic equivalents" (and so are B#/C and all the other notes which you are probably more familiar with, like Ab/G# or Eb/D# etc.)

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017

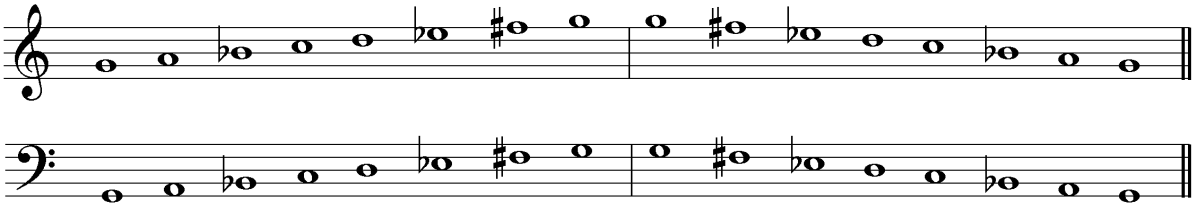
B minor harmonic



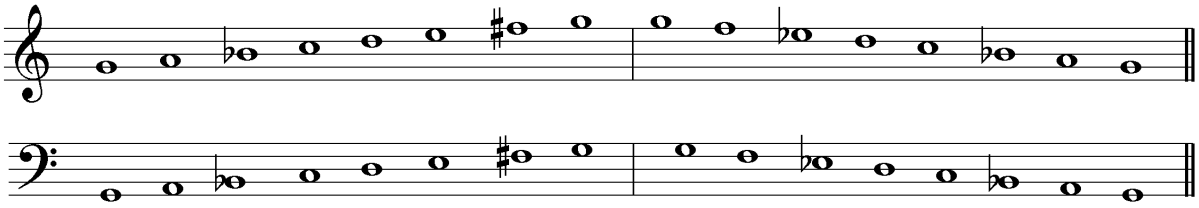
B minor melodic



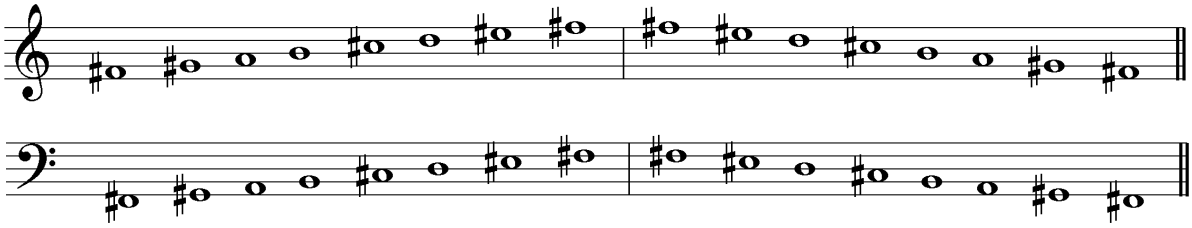
G minor harmonic



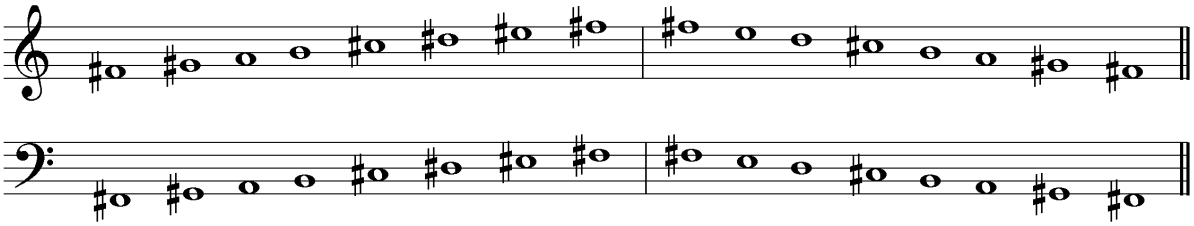
G minor melodic



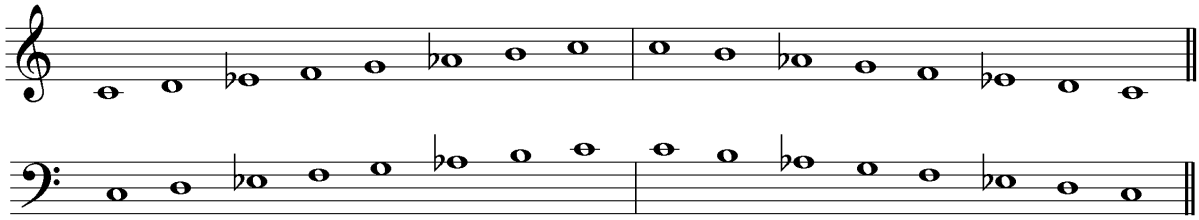
F# minor harmonic



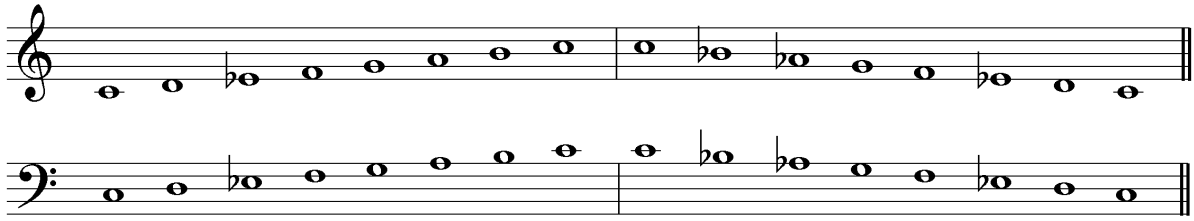
F# minor melodic



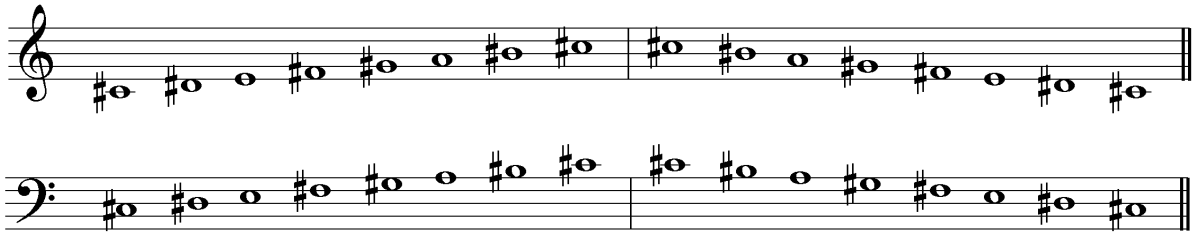
C minor harmonic



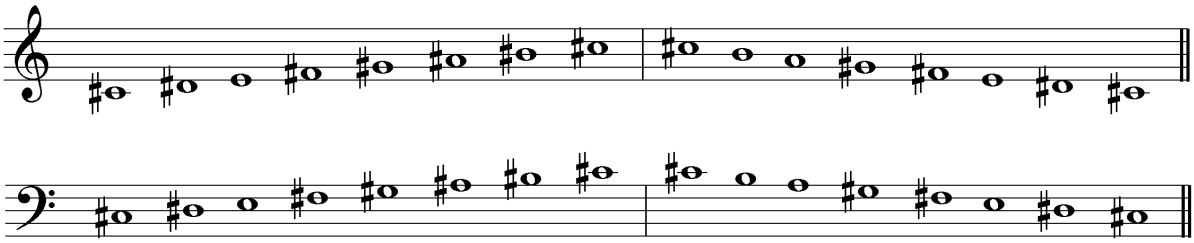
C minor melodic



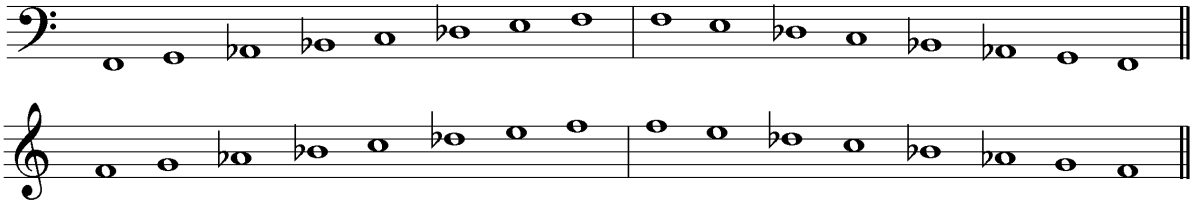
C# minor harmonic



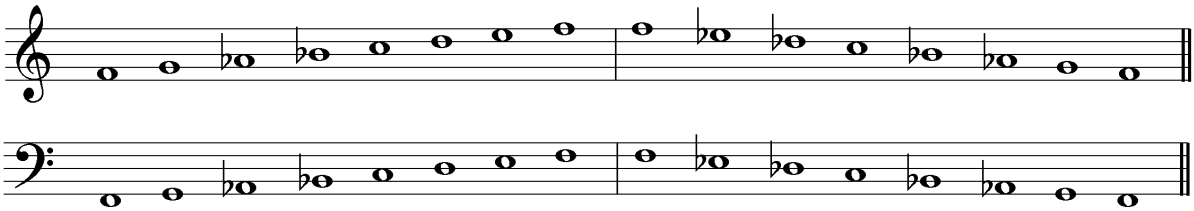
C# minor melodic



F minor harmonic



F minor melodic

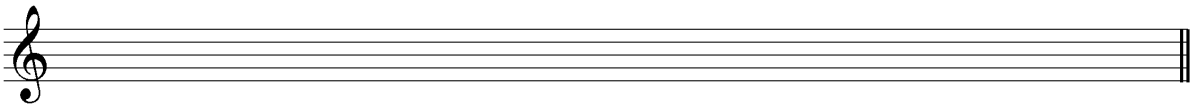


3. SCALES EXERCISES

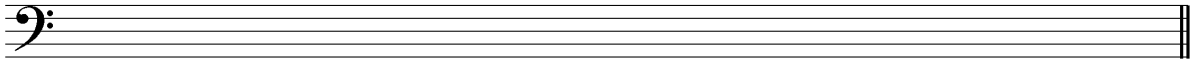
EXERCISE 1

Write as semibreves (whole notes) the scales named below, without a key signature but including any necessary sharp or flat signs.

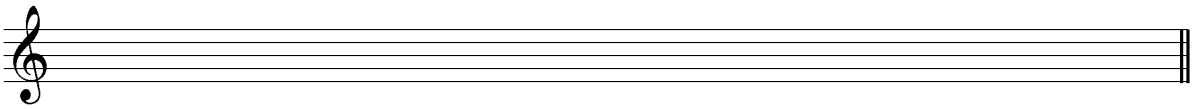
a. E major ascending



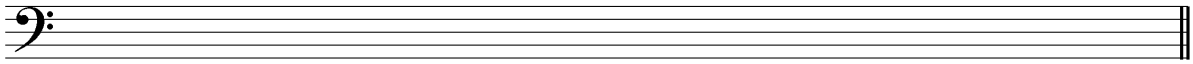
b. A major descending



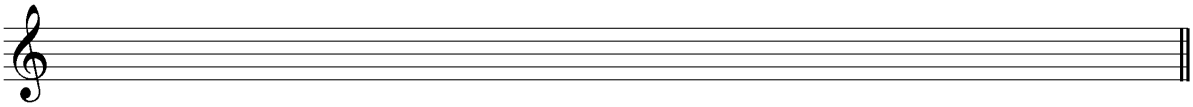
c. F minor harmonic ascending



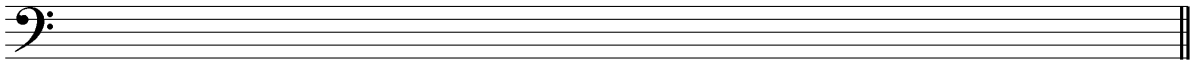
d. B minor melodic ascending



e. C# minor melodic descending



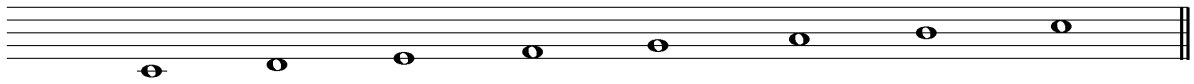
f. C minor harmonic descending



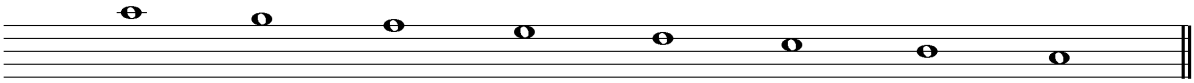
Exercise 2

Add the correct clef and any necessary sharp or flat signs to make each of the scales named below. Don't use key signatures.

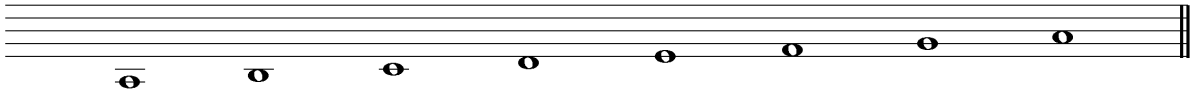
a. E minor harmonic



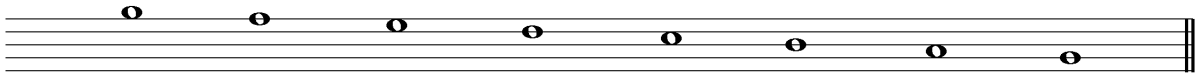
b. Ab major



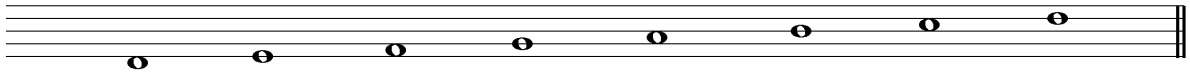
c. A minor melodic



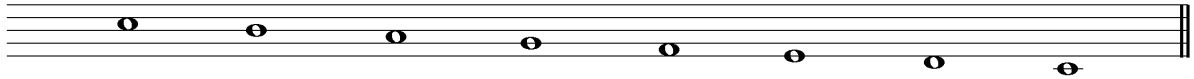
d. Bb major



e. F# minor harmonic



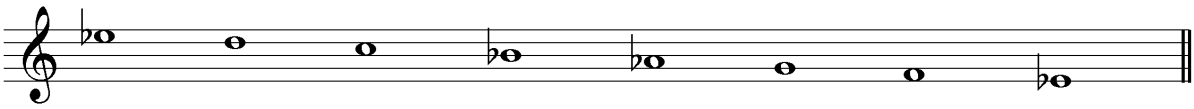
f. C minor melodic



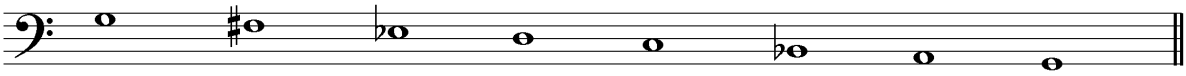
Exercise 3

Name the key of each of the following scales. If the key is minor, state whether the scale is in the harmonic or melodic form.

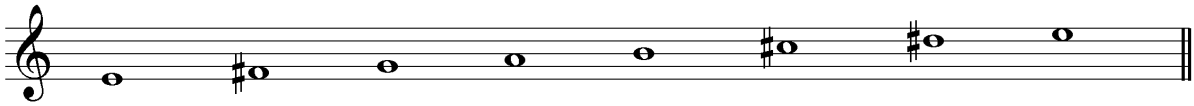
a.



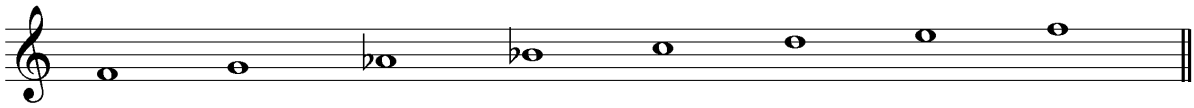
b.



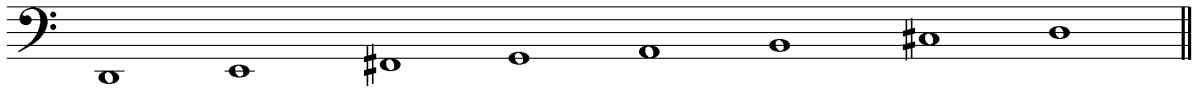
c.



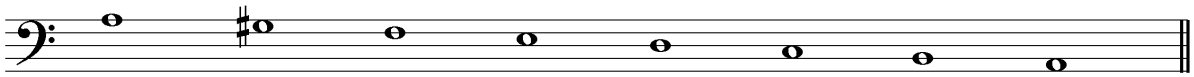
d.



e.



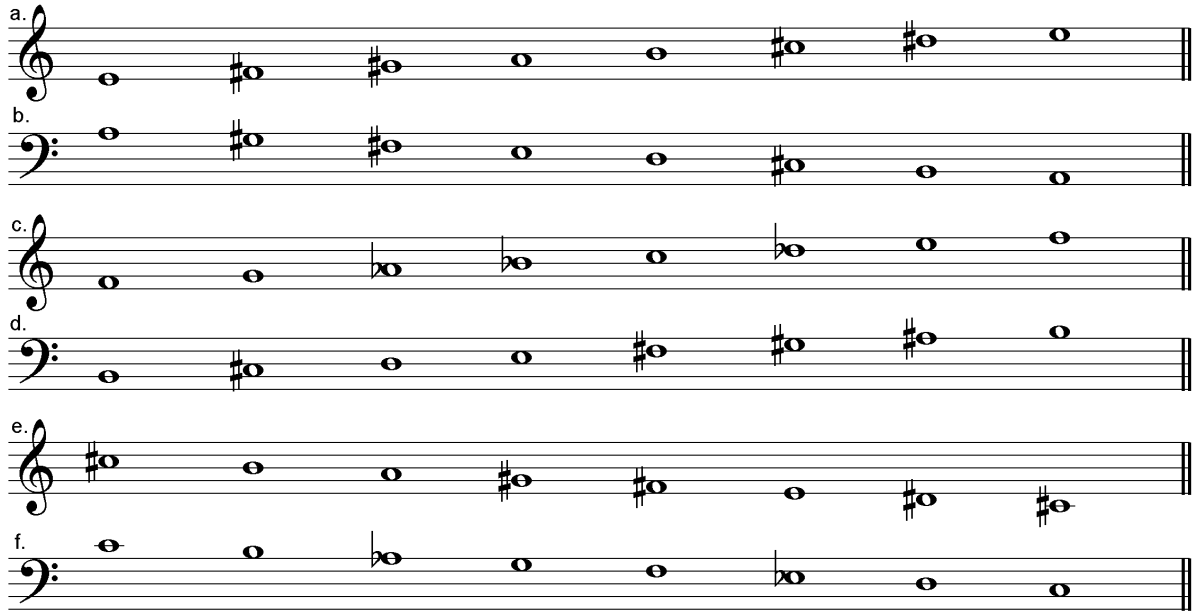
f.



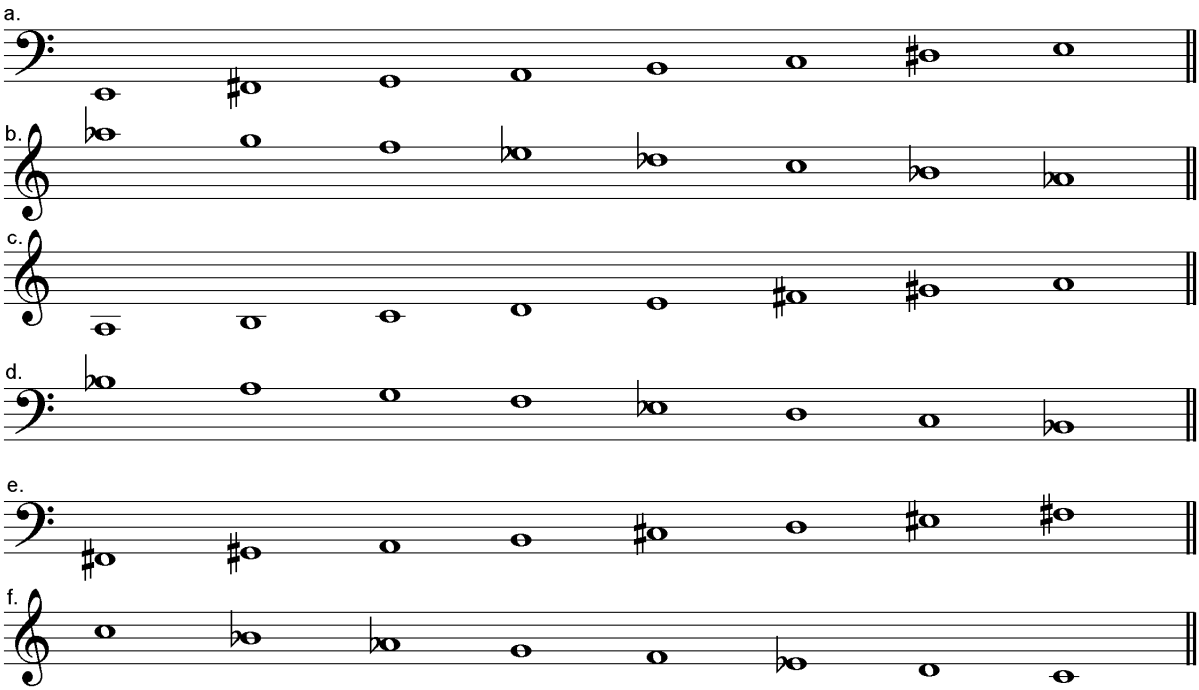
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

3. SCALES ANSWERS

Exercise 1



Exercise 2



Exercise 3

a. Eb major

b. G harmonic minor

c. E melodic minor

d. F melodic minor

e. D major

f. A harmonic minor

4. KEY SIGNATURES

Key signatures are written after the clef and before the time signature.

Key signatures have to be written very carefully. You need to make sure the flats and sharps are written

- in the right **order**
- in the right **position**

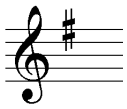
In the grade three music theory exam, you need to be able to write and understand key signatures with up to **4** sharps or **4** flats.

SHARP KEY SIGNATURES

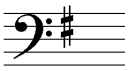
The sharps, in order, are F# - C# - G# - D#.

F# is used for G major and E minor
F# and C# are used for D major and B minor
F#, C# and G# are used for A major and F# minor
F#, C#, G# and D# are used for E major and C# minor

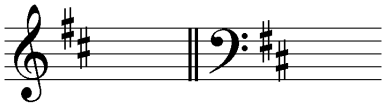
Position of the Sharps
In the treble clef, F# is always written on the top line:



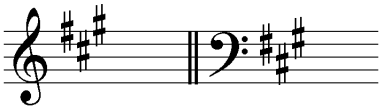
In the bass clef, it's always written on the second line from the top:



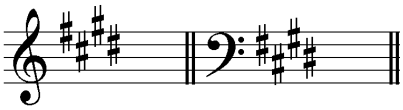
C# is written **lower** than the F#:



G# is written **higher** than C#:



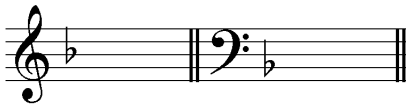
D# is written **lower** than G#:



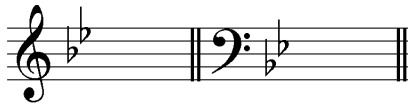
Look at the pattern: it goes down, up, down, in both clefs!

Flat Key Signatures

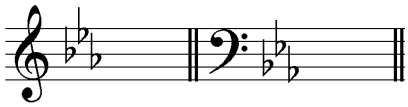
Position of the Flats
In the treble clef, Bb is written on the middle line, and in the bass clef, it's written on the 2nd line from the bottom:



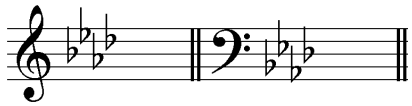
Eb is written **higher** than Bb:



Ab is written **lower** than Eb:



Db is written **higher** than Ab:



Look at the patterns: up, down, up, in both clefs - the opposite to the sharps' pattern!

Relative Major and Relative Minor

We say that G major is the "relative major" to E minor, and that E minor is the "relative minor" to G major, because they use the **same** key signature.

To find out what the key signature is for a **minor** key, you first need to find the key signature for its relative **major**. So if you want to find the key signature for C# minor, you need to work out what the relative major of C# minor is.

To find a relative major, count upwards **one tone (whole step) and one semitone (half step).** Make sure you count 3 **different letter names** too.
C# - D# is one tone (whole step),
D# - E is one semitone (half step).
Therefore, the relative major of C# minor is E major. It has 4 sharps.

To find out the relative minor, do the opposite – count downwards **one semitone and one tone**.
G major:
G- F is one tone,
F - E is one semitone.
So, the relative minor of G major is E minor.

Key Signatures and Minor Keys

The **key signature** for a minor key includes all the sharp/flat notes from the natural minor scale – this is the same as the **descending melodic minor scale**.

For example, A minor melodic descending is A-G-F-E-D-C-B-A. There are no sharps and flats, so there are also no sharps or flats in the key signature for A minor.

Some students think that because A minor harmonic includes G#, there must be a G# in the key signature. This is a mistake!

When you write a minor scale **with** a key signature, you will need to add some **accidentals** (sharps and flats next to the notes) if the scale is:

- harmonic minor, ascending or descending: raise the **7th** degree of the scale by one semitone (half step).
- melodic minor ascending only (raise the **6th AND 7th** degrees of the scale by one semitone (half step).

In some scales a raised note will be written with a **sharp**, in others you will need to add **naturals**, to cancel flats from the key signature.

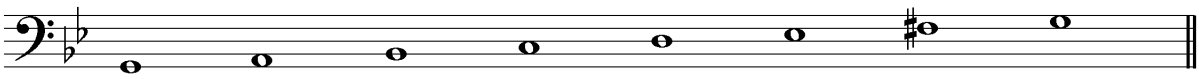
Descending minor melodic scales should have no extra accidentals added.

Here are some examples of minor scales with a key signature **and** accidentals.

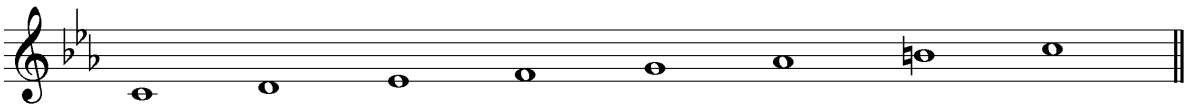
Harmonic Minor Keys

All **harmonic** minor scales have a **raised 7th** degree of the scale.

G minor harmonic (F becomes F#)

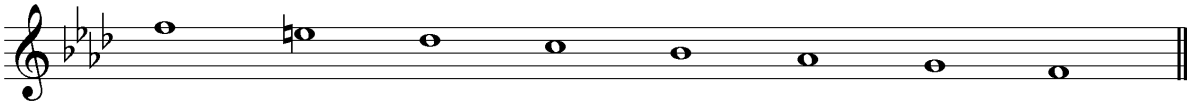


C minor harmonic (Bb becomes B natural)



Don't forget that the degrees of the scale are worked out from the **ascending** scale, so in a descending scale the 7th degree will be at the beginning of the scale instead of the end.

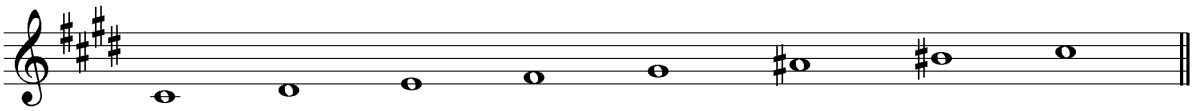
For example, here is the descending scale of F minor harmonic. The 7th degree of the scale is E natural.



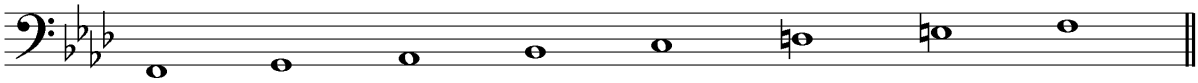
Melodic Minor Keys

All melodic minor ascending scales have **raised 6th and 7th** degrees of the scale:

C# minor melodic (A and B become A# and B#)



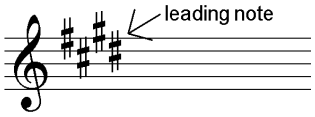
F minor melodic (Db and Eb become D natural and E natural).



Tips

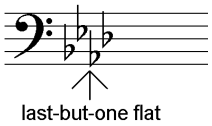
Here is a quick way to check which key a key signature represents:

- in **sharp** key signatures, the last sharp in the key signature is the **leading note** (note before the tonic). It's one semitone (half step) lower than the tonic of the major key. For example:

  The last sharp is D#. The note one semitone (half step) higher than D# is **E**. This is the key signature for E major.

- in **flat** keys, the last-but-one flat in the key signature is the **tonic** of the major key. For - example:

  The last-but-one flat is Ab. This is the key signature for Ab major.

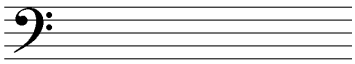
You need to remember that F major has only one flat (because there isn't a "last-but-one flat" in F major!

4. KEY SIGNATURES EXERCISES

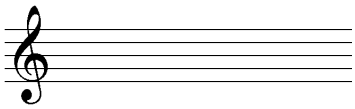
Exercise 1

Write out the following key signatures.

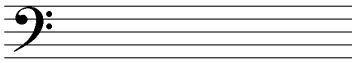
a. D minor



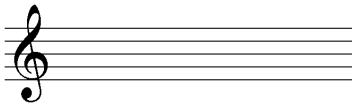
b. E major



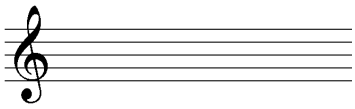
c. B minor



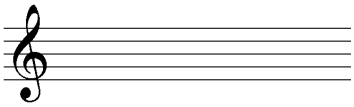
d. Eb major



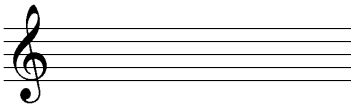
e. Bb major



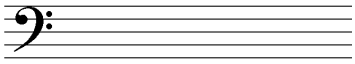
f. G minor



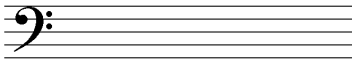
g. C# minor



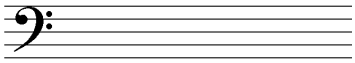
h. A major



i. F minor



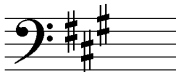
j. E minor



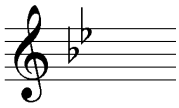
Exercise 2

Give the **two** keys (relative major and minor) which belong to each of these key signatures.

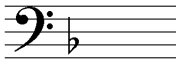
a.



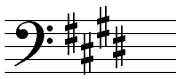
b.



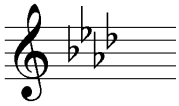
c.



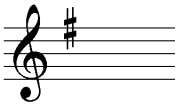
d.



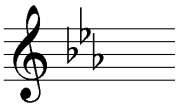
e.



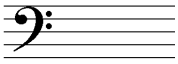
f.



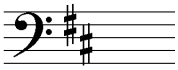
g.



h.



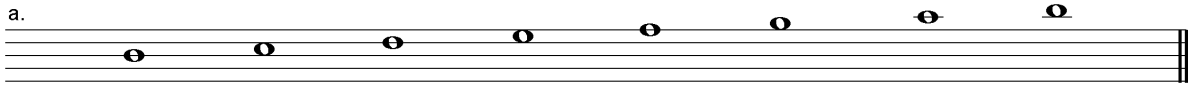
i.



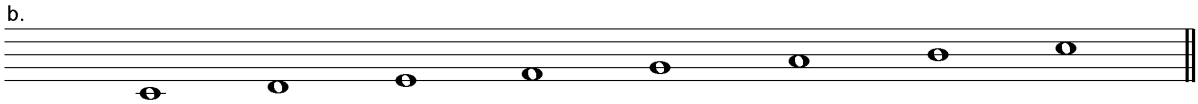
Exercise 3

Add the correct **clef**, **key signature** and **accidentals** to make each of the scales named below.

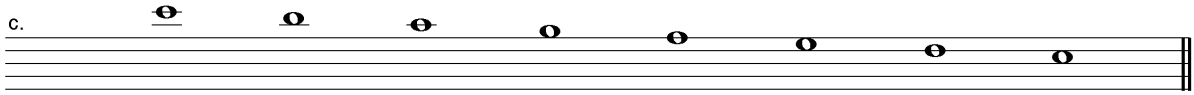
a. B harmonic minor



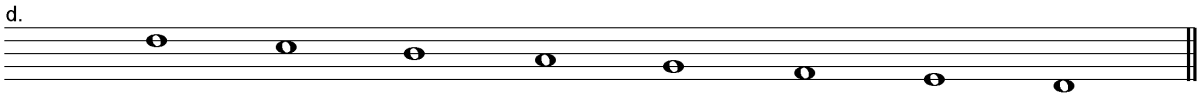
b. C melodic minor



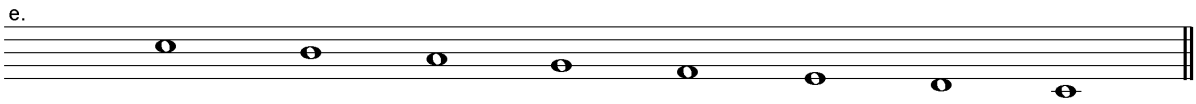
c. E major



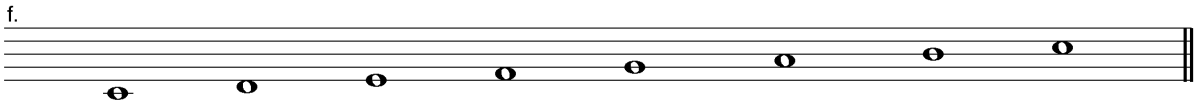
d. F melodic minor



e. C# harmonic minor



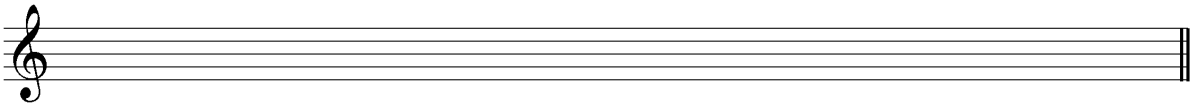
f. E melodic minor



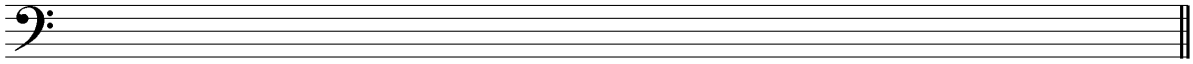
Exercise 4

Write as semibreves (whole notes) the scales named below:

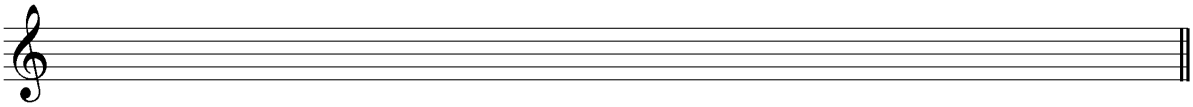
a. E major, descending, with key signature.



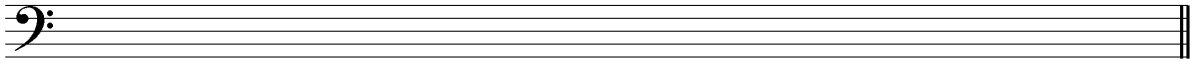
b. F# harmonic minor, ascending, with key signature and any necessary accidentals.



c. B melodic minor, ascending, with key signature and any necessary accidentals.



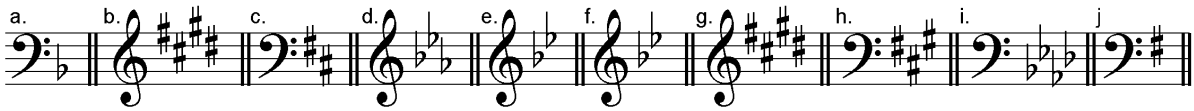
d. G harmonic minor descending, with key signature and any necessary accidentals.



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

4. KEY SIGNATURES ANSWERS

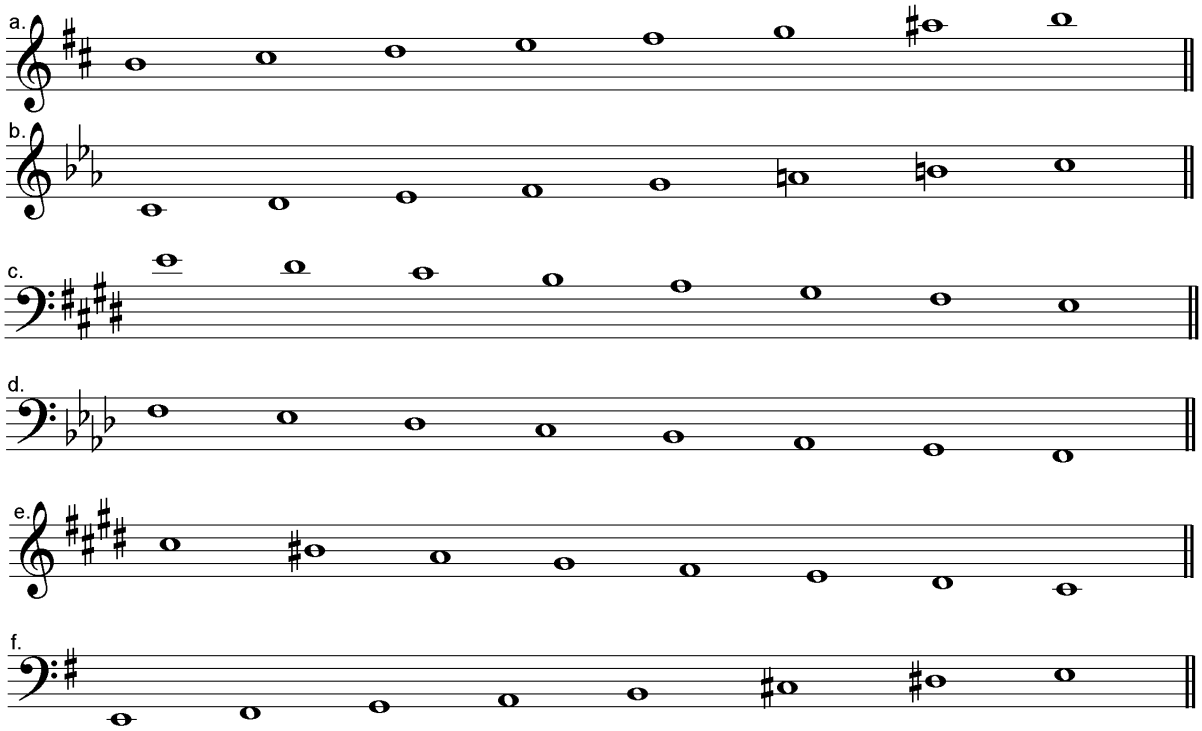
Exercise 1



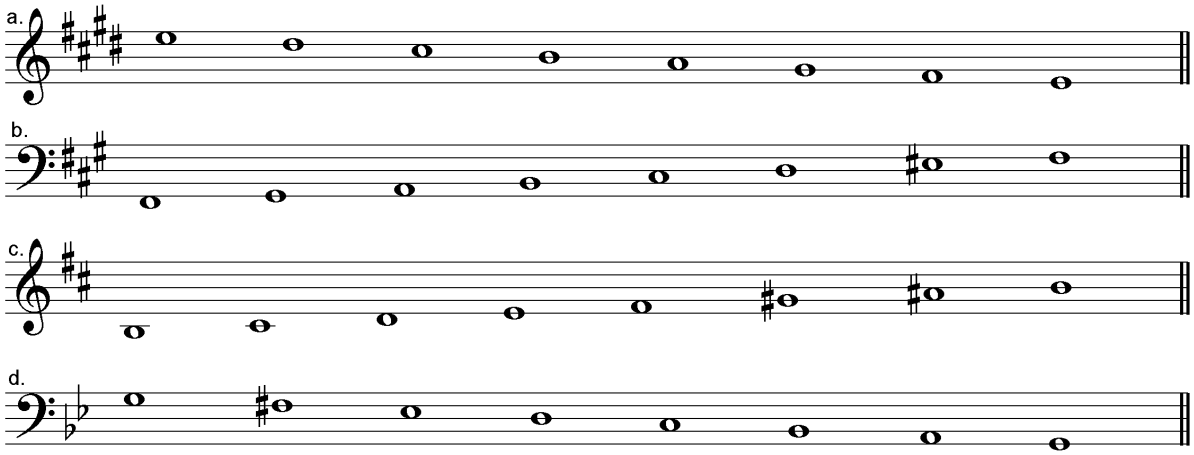
Exercise 2

a. A major / F# minor
b. Bb major / G minor
c. F major / D minor
d. E major / C# minor
e. Ab major / F minor
f. G major / E minor
g. Eb major / C minor
h. C major / A minor
i. D major / B minor

Exercise 3



Exercise 4

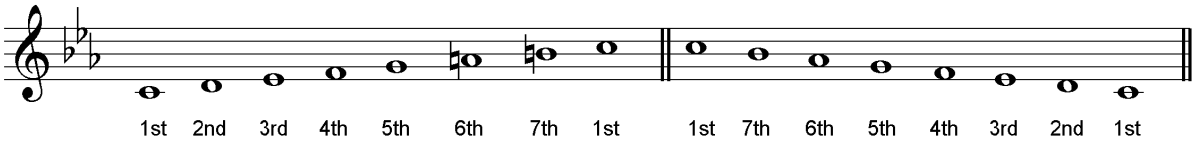


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

5. DEGREES OF THE SCALE AND TONIC TRIADS

Degrees of the Scale

The degrees of the scale are numbers given to each note of the scale in order.
The numbers are based on the ascending scale:

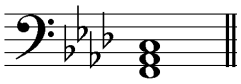


In a harmonic minor scale, the 7th degree of the scale is always raised by a semitone (half step). In a melodic minor scale, the 6th and 7th degrees of the scale are raised by a semitone in the ascending scale, but no degrees of the scale are changed in the descending scale.

Tonic Triads

The first degree of the scale is also known as the **tonic**.

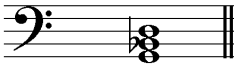
A tonic triad is a chord built up from the 1st, 3rd and 5th degrees of the scale.
For example, here is the tonic triad in F minor:



It's built on the tonic, F, with the 3rd degree of the scale, Ab, and the 5th, C.

Identifying Tonic Triads

You might be asked to **identify** a tonic triad. What key is this tonic triad?



First, work out the lowest note. The lowest note here is G.

Next, look at the middle note – does it occur in the major or minor form of the scale? The middle note here is Bb. Bb occurs in G minor, but not in G major. Therefore, this chord is the tonic triad in G minor.

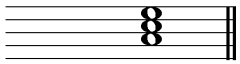
If you are not sure whether it's major or minor, you can count the semitones (half steps) from the lowest note to the middle note. If there are 3 semitones, it's minor, if there are 4, it's major.

For example, G-Bb is 3 semitones (count G#-A-Bb), and G-B is 4 semitones (count G#-A-Bb-B).

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

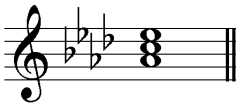
Adding a Clef and Key Signature/Accidentals to Tonic Triads

You might be asked to **add a clef and a key signature or accidentals** to a tonic triad. Which clef and key signature do we need to add to this tonic triad?



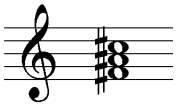
To make the lowest note an A, we need to add the treble clef. (If we put a bass clef, the lowest note would be a C.)

The key signature of Ab major has 4 flats, so we need to write in Bb, Eb, Ab and Db, in their correct positions:

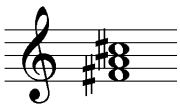


If you are asked to add **accidentals** instead of a key signature, start by making a note of what the key signature is (e.g. Bb-Eb-Ab-Db for Ab major), then look at the triad and identify any notes which will need accidentals. In the Ab major triad, the Ab and Eb will need flats next to them, but the C does not need any accidentals.

If you don't have much space to write the accidentals, place the **highest** accidental close to the note on the stave, then off-set any lower accidentals to the left, so that they have enough room. For example, here is the tonic triad in F# minor, which needs F# and C#. If you write both of them close to the triad, they will overlap and become unreadable, making the A seem to have a sharp as well:

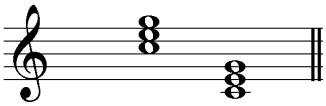


Move the lower sharp to the left, and they both become legible:



Which Octave?

It doesn't matter which octave you write a tonic triad in. Here are two tonic triads in C major, in different octaves:



Try to avoid using lots of ledger lines though!

5. DEGREES OF THE SCALE AND TONIC TRIADS EXERCISES

Exercise 1

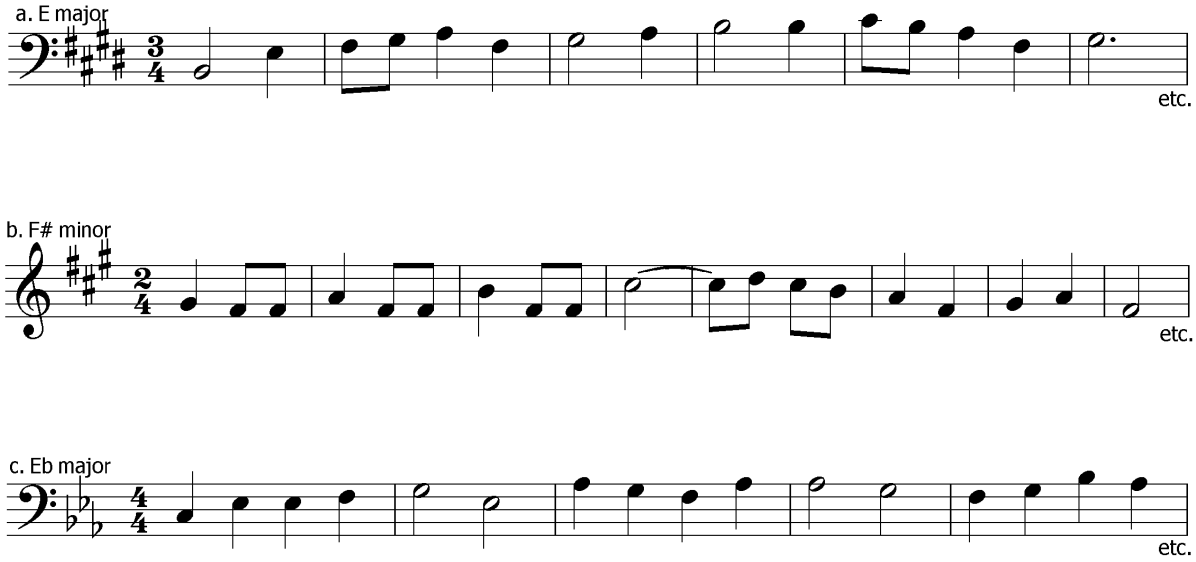
a. In a melodic minor ascending scale, which degree(s) of the scale must be raised?

b. In a harmonic minor ascending scale, which degree(s) of the scale must be raised?

c. What's another name for the first or eighth degree of the scale?

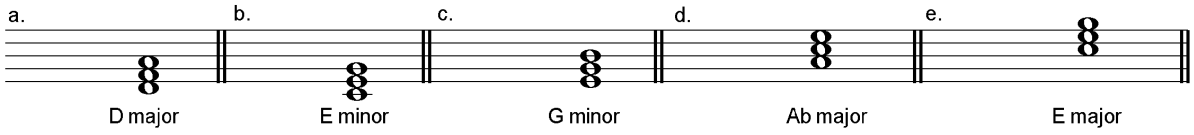
Exercise 2

Which degree of the scale do these melody extracts i) begin and ii) end on?



Exercise 3

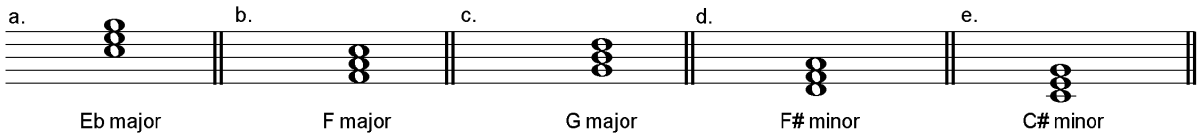
Add the correct clef and key signature to each of these tonic triads.



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

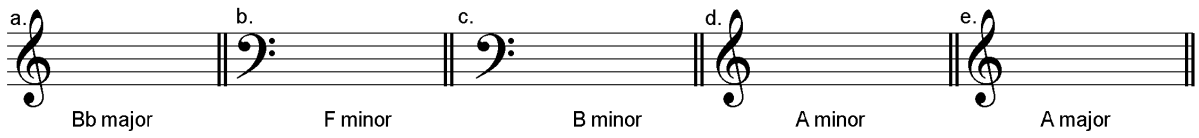
Exercise 4

Add the correct clef and any necessary sharp or flat signs to each of these tonic triads. (Do **not** use key signatures).



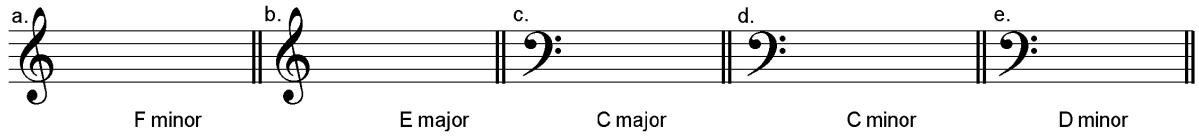
Exercise 5

Write the tonic triad of each of the following keys. Do not use key signatures, but remember to add any necessary sharp or flat signs.



Exercise 6

Write the key signature and tonic triad of each of these keys.



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

5. DEGREES OF THE SCALE AND TONIC TRIADS ANSWERS

Exercise 1

a. 6th and 7th

b. 7th

c. Tonic (or keynote)

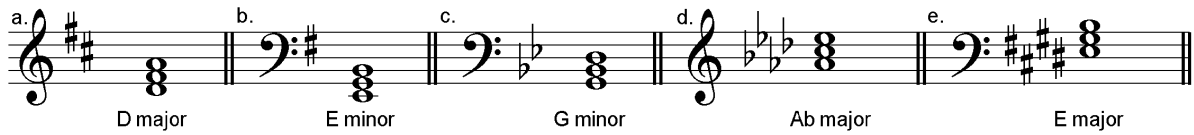
Exercise 2

a. Begins on 5th, ends on 3rd

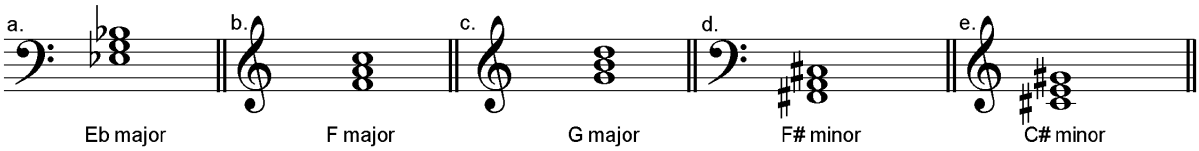
b. Begins on 2nd, ends on 1st

c. Begins on 6th, ends on 4th

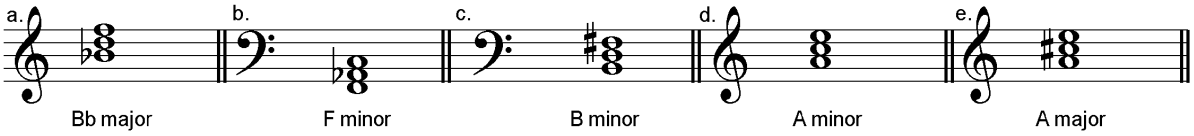
Exercise 3



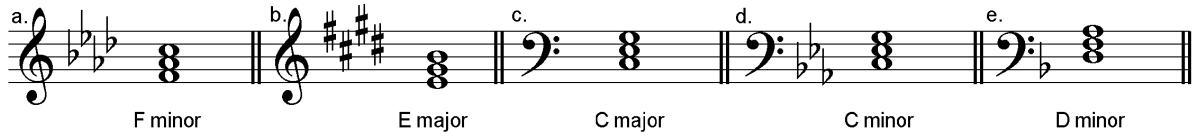
Exercise 4



Exercise 5



Exercise 6

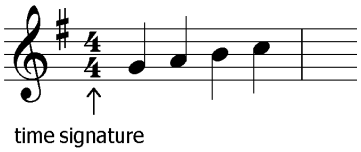


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

6. TIME SIGNATURES (UK)

Quick Revision

A time signature is made up of two numbers, one written above the other. It's written only at the beginning of a piece of music, or within the music if the time signature changes in the middle of a piece. (It's not written on every new line, unlike the clef and key signature).



The top number tells you how many **beats** (not notes) to count in each bar.
The bottom number tells you what type of note to count.

Bottom number 4=crotchet beat
Bottom number 8=quaver beat
Bottom number 2=minim beat.

So, 4/4 tells you that there are **four crotchet** beats in each bar.

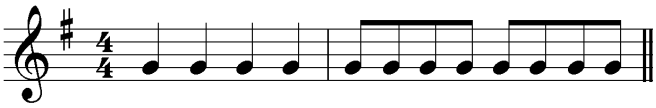
Simple Time Signatures

Up till now you have only learnt about **simple** time signatures. (Perhaps you didn't think they were very "simple" though!)

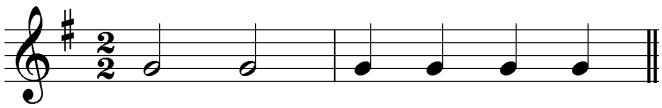
A **simple** time signature is one where:

- the top number in the time signature is 2, 3 or 4
- the main beat is divided into **two**
- the main beat is **not** a **dotted** note
- the bottom number of the time signature tells you what type of note is used for the **main beat**

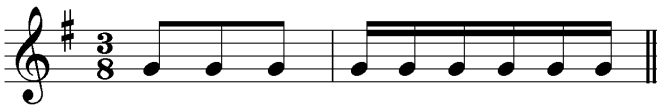
For example, in 4/4 the main beat is a crotchet. If we want to divide the crotchet, we split it into **two quavers**:



In 2/2, the main beat is a minim. We can split each one into **two crotchets:**



And in 3/8, the main beat is a quaver. We can split each one into **two semiquavers**:



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

COMPOUND TIME SIGNATURES

Compound time signatures are new for grade three theory. A **compound** time signature is one where:

- the top number is 6, 9 or 12
- the main beat is divided into **three**
- the main beat is **always** a **dotted** note
- the bottom number shows you the **division** of the beat, not the main beat.

Here are the three compound time signatures you need to know for grade three theory:

6/8

The bottom number 8 tells us to count **quavers**, the top number tells us there should be **6** in a bar. But, the **main** beat is not quavers – because that would give us six beats in the bar. (There are always, 2, 3 or 4 beats per bar, or an irregular number which doesn't divide into 2, 3 or 4, such as 7).

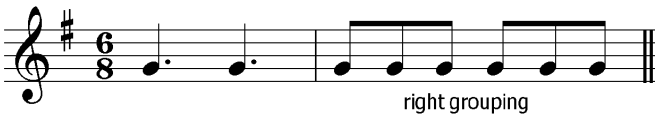
We need to work out what note value is equal to **three** of the notes in the time signature: what are 3 quavers worth?

Three quavers = one dotted crotchet.

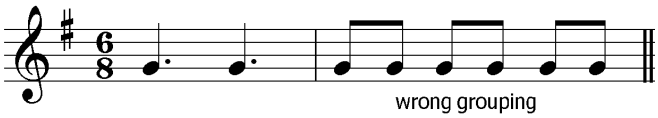
Each bar has two dotted crotchet beats.

In fact, the main beat in any compound /8 time is the **dotted crotchet.**

The quavers should always (whatever the time signature) be beamed to make complete beats whenever possible:



This grouping is wrong, because the quavers are grouped to make three beats, instead of two. (This grouping would be fine for 3/4 time, which has three beats per bar).



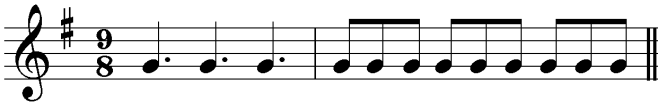
9/8

There are 9 quavers per bar.

Each group of three quavers makes one main beat, which is worth a dotted crotchet.

There are three dotted crotchet beats per bar.

Here you can see the dotted crotchet main beats, which are then each sub-divided into three quavers. The quavers are beamed in threes, to make up one complete beat each.



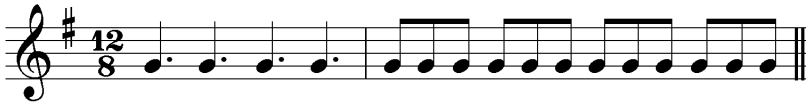
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

12/8

There are 12 quavers per bar.

Each group of three quavers makes one main beat, which is worth a dotted crotchet.

There are four dotted crotchet beats per bar. The quavers are beamed to make it easy to see that there are four beats per bar.



Remember! An undotted beat is always split into two. A dotted beat is always split into three.

Duple, Triple and Quadruple Time

All the time signatures that we've learnt so far can be described as **duple**, **triple** or **quadruple**.

These words refer to the **number of main beats** per bar.

In simple time, it's very easy to work out – just look at the **top** number.

2=duple, 3=triple and 4=quadruple.

- 2/2 and 2/4 are duple time
- 3/2, 3/4 and 3/8 are triple time
- 4/2 and 4/4 are quadruple time

In compound time, you need to count the number of main beats, or you can divide the top number by 3.

- 6/8 is duple time (2 dotted crotchets per bar)
- 9/8 is triple time (3 dotted crotchets per bar)
- 12/8 is quadruple time (4 dotted crotchets per bar)

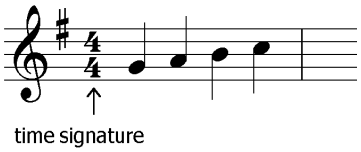
Here's all that information summarised in a table:

(Top Number)	**Duple**	**Triple**	**Quadruple**
Simple	2	3	4
Compound	6	9	12

6. TIME SIGNATURES (USA)

Quick Revision

A time signature is made up of two numbers, one written above the other. It's written only at the beginning of a piece of music, or within the music if the time signature changes in the middle of a piece. (It's not written on every new line, unlike the clef and key signature).



The top number tells you how many **beats** (not notes) to count in each measure.
The bottom number tells you what type of note to count.

Bottom number 4=quarter note beat
Bottom number 8=eighth note beat
Bottom number 2=half note beat.

So, 4/4 tells you that there are **four quarter note** beats in each measure.

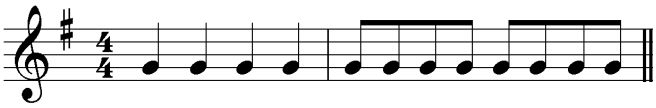
Simple Time Signatures

Up till now you have only learnt about **simple** time signatures. (Perhaps you didn't think they were very "simple" though!)

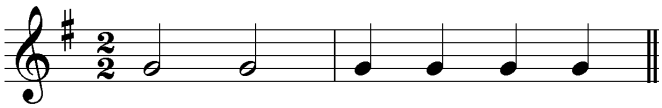
A **simple** time signature is one where:

- the top number in the time signature is 2, 3 or 4
- the main beat is divided into **two**
- the main beat is **not** a **dotted** note
- the bottom number of the time signature tells you what type of note is used for the **main beat**

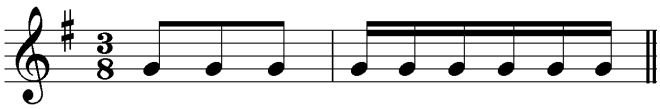
For example, in 4/4 the main beat is a quarter note. If we want to divide the quarter note, we split it into **two eighth notes**:



In 2/2, the main beat is a half note. We can split each one into **two quarter notes:**



And in 3/8, the main beat is an eighth note. We can split each one into **two sixteenth notes**:



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

COMPOUND TIME SIGNATURES

Compound time signatures are new for grade three theory. A **compound** time signature is one where:

- the top number is 6, 9 or 12
- the main beat is divided into **three**
- the main beat is **always** a **dotted** note
- the bottom number shows you the **division** of the beat, not the main beat.

Here are the three compound time signatures you need to know for grade three theory:

6/8

The bottom number 8 tells us to count **eighth notes**, the top number tells us there should be **6** in a measure. But, the **main** beat is not eighth notes – because that would give us six beats in the measure. (There are always, 2, 3 or 4 beats per measure, or an irregular number which doesn't divide into 2, 3 or 4, such as 7).

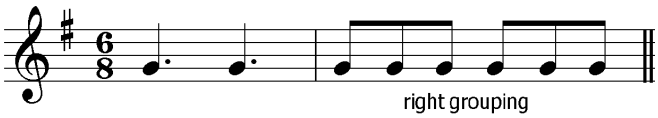
We need to work out what note value is equal to **three** of the notes in the time signature: what are 3 eighth notes worth?

Three eighth notes = one dotted quarter note.

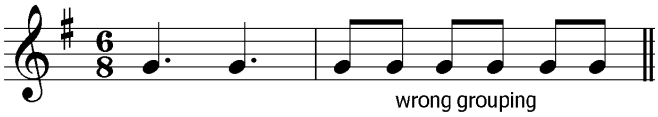
Each measure has two dotted quarter note beats.

In fact, the main beat in any /8 time is the **dotted quarter note.**

The eighth notes should always (whatever the time signature) be beamed to make complete beats whenever possible:



This grouping is wrong, because the eighth notes are grouped to make three beats, instead of two. (This grouping would be fine for 3/4 time, which has three beats per measure).



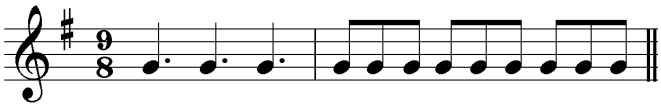
9/8

There are 9 eighth notes per measure.

Each group of three eighth notes makes one main beat, which is worth a dotted quarter note.

There are three dotted quarter note beats per measure.

Here you can see the dotted quarter note main beats, which are then each sub-divided into three eighth notes. The eighth notes are beamed in threes, to make up one complete beat each.



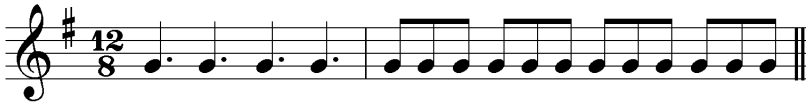
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

12/8

There are 12 eighth notes per measure.

Each group of three eighth notes makes one main beat, which is worth a dotted quarter note.

There are four dotted quarter note beats per measure. The eighth notes are beamed to make it easy to see that there are four beats per measure.



Remember! An undotted note is always split into two. A dotted note is always split into three.

Duple, Triple and Quadruple Time

All the time signatures that we've learnt so far can be described as **duple**, **triple** or **quadruple**.

These words refer to the **number of main beats** per measure.

In simple time, it's very easy to work out – just look at the **top** number.

2=duple, 3=triple and 4=quadruple.

- 2/2 and 2/4 are duple time
- 3/2, 3/4 and 3/8 are triple time
- 4/2 and 4/4 are quadruple time

In compound time, you need to count the number of main beats, or you can divide the top number by 3.

- 6/8 is duple time (2 dotted quarter notes per measure)
- 9/8 is triple time (3 dotted quarter notes per measure)
- 12/8 is quadruple time (4 dotted quarter notes per measure)

Here's all that information summarised in a table:

(Top Number)	**Duple**	**Triple**	**Quadruple**
Simple	2	3	4
Compound	6	9	12

6. TIME SIGNATURES EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

Describe each of these time signatures as

- Simple or Compound
- Duple, Triple or Quadruple

The first one has been done as an example.

a. 3/4: simple triple

b. 4/4

c. 9/8

d. 4/2

e. 2/4

f. 3/8

g. 6/8

h. 2/2

i. 3/2

j. 12/8

EXERCISE 2

Complete the following:

(E.g. The time signature 3/4 means that there are three crotchet (quarter note) beats per bar.)

a. The time signature 2/4 means that there are _____ beats per bar.

b. The time signature 3/2 means that there are _____ beats per bar.

c. The time signature 12/8 means that there are _____ beats per bar.

d. The time signature 3/8 means that there are _____ beats per bar.

e. The time signature 6/8 means that there are _____ beats per bar.

f. The time signature 4/2 means that there are _____ beats per bar.

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

6. TIME SIGNATURES ANSWERS

EXERCISE 1

b. 4/4: simple quadruple

c. 9/8: compound triple

d. 4/2: simple quadruple

e. 2/4: simple duple

f. 3/8: simple triple

g. 6/8: compound duple

h. 2/2: simple duple

i. 3/2: simple triple

j. 12/8: compound quadruple

EXERCISE 2

a. The time signature 2/4 means that there are two crotchet (quarter note) beats per bar.

b. The time signature 3/2 means that there are three minim (half note) beats per bar.

c. The time signature 12/8 means that there are four dotted crotchet (dotted quarter note) beats per bar.

d. The time signature 3/8 means that there are three quaver (eighth note) beats per bar.

e. The time signature 6/8 means that there are two dotted crotchet (dotted quarter note) beats per bar.

f. The time signature 4/2 means that there are four minim (half note) beats per bar.

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

7. ADDING BAR LINES OR A TIME SIGNATURE (UK)

New at Grade Three

In your grade three music theory exam you might have to add a time signature to a short melody. Although you also had this task at grade two, it's a bit harder at grade three.

This is partly because the time signatures 3/4 and 6/8 have the **same number** of quavers in them, so it's harder to tell them apart.

You'll also find the rhythms are a bit more complicated, which might include demisemiquavers, dotted notes and tied notes.

The time signatures you need to choose from at grade three are:

- 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 (minim beat)
- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 (crotchet beat)
- 3/8 (quaver beat)
- 6/8, 9/8, 12/8 (dotted crotchet beat – these are the compound time signatures)

Adding a Time Signature

To work out a time signature you need to discover two things:

1. What kind of beat is the main beat?
2. How many of these main beats are there per bar?

The easiest way to work out **what kind** of beat is the main beat, is to look for notes which are **beamed together**. (Obviously you need to look for a bar with quavers or semiquavers).

- Notes are beamed to add up to **one whole beat**. You need to work out what kind of note you need **one** of, to equal the notes which are beamed.
- When a new beat begins, a new beam begins too.
- Notes can also be beamed to add up to **one whole bar**, but only in **simple time**.

To work out **how many** main beats per bar there are, draw a circle around each group of notes that makes one full beat. Each circle has to contain the same value of notes overall. Then count the number of groups you circled. The number of circles in one bar is the number of beats per bar.

To work out the **time signature**, look at the information you have worked out.

The number of circles per bar will be 2, 3 or 4. This tells you whether the time signature is **duple**, **triple** or **quadruple**. Duple time signatures have either 2 or 6 as their top number. Triple time signatures has 3 or 9 as their top number. Quadruple time signatures have 4 or 12 as their top number.

If each circle adds up to the value of a minim, the beat is a minim and the time signature will have a lower number 2. The top number will be 2, 3 or 4.

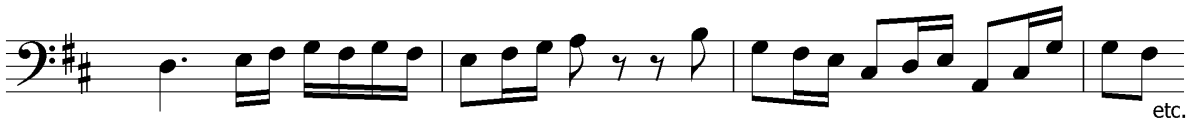
If each circle adds up to a crotchet, the lower number will be 4. The top number will be 2, 3 or 4.

If each circle adds up to a quaver, the lower number will be 8. The top number will be 3. (2/8 and 4/8 don't come up in the grade 3 exam).

If each circle adds up to a dotted crotchet, the lower number will be 8 (compound time). The top number will be 6, 9 or 12.

Here's an example question.

Add the time signature to this melody:



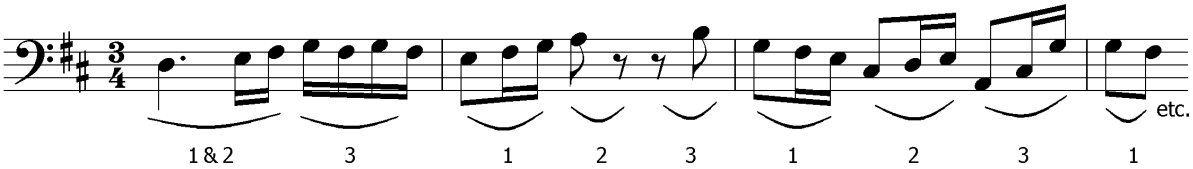
Look at the first bar and notice how the semiquavers are beamed. There are two joined together, and four joined together. Use the larger group.

Four semiquavers=1 crotchet. The first note of that group (the first G) must be the start of a new main beat, so the main beat is a crotchet. (If the main beat had been a dotted crotchet, the other two semiquavers would also be joined on, making six beamed semiquavers in total).

Look at bar 3. The quavers and semiquavers are again grouped together to add up to one crotchet each.

The main beat is therefore a crotchet beat.

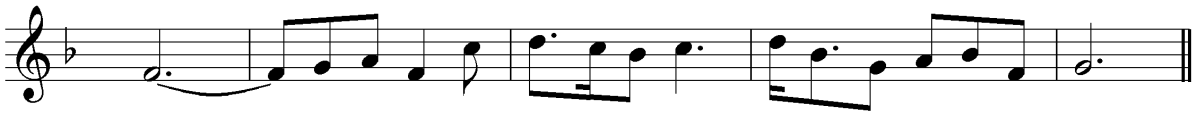
Next, work out how many crotchets there are in each bar:



In each bar there are 3 crotchets' worth of beats.
(Notice that the last bar doesn't have a bar line at the end – it's not a complete bar, so it doesn't matter how many beats there are in it.)

Because the main beat is a crotchet, the lower number of the time signature is 4. Because there are **three** crotchets per bar, the top number is 3. The time signature is 3/4.

Here is another example:

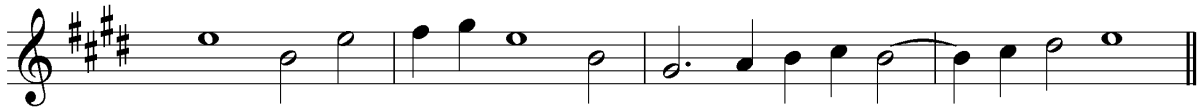


Choose bar 4 to look at first, as it has the most quavers/semiquavers.

- Remember that the notes are beamed to together to make **one** of something. What value do the beamed notes add up to? The answer is: the dotted crotchet. One dotted crotchet is worth the same as [semiquaver+dotted quaver+ quaver], and one dotted crotchet is worth the same as three quavers.
- It is **compound** duple time, because the main beat is a **dotted note**. The top number is 6.
- The bottom number is 8. (The bottom number is 8 because there the top number is 6, and there are 6 quavers' worth in each bar.)

Sometimes there will be no quavers or semiquavers to help you. If that is the case, you need to remember that there can only be 2, 3 or 4 beats per bar, no other number! (For grade 3 theory, that is!)

Look at this example:



- The first bar contains **eight** crotchets.
- Crotchets can't be the main beat, because there are too many of them (8).
- Semibreves can't be the main beat, because semibreves are never used as the main beat (there are no time signatures with the lower number 1).
- So, minims are the main beat.
- There are four minims per bar.
- The time signature is 4/2.

Adding Bar Lines

You might be asked to add bar lines to a melody.
Look carefully at the time signature and write down the following information:

- How many beats
- Type of beats

Take your time – it's easy to make mistakes when you're in a rush!

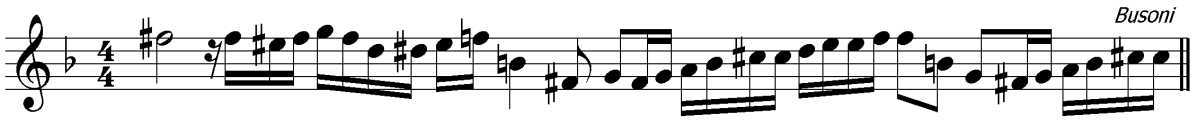
Carefully count the notes, marking off each complete beat.
When you've reached the number of beats you need to make a complete bar, use your ruler and draw a neat bar line quite close to the first note of the next bar.

Continue until you get to the end of the piece.

Pay **very careful** attention to the end of the piece.

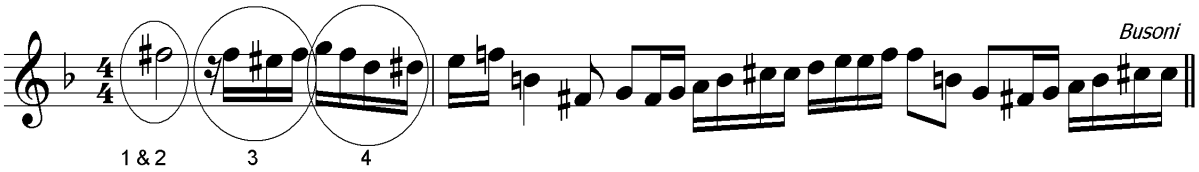
- If there is a bar line after the last note, the last bar **must** be complete.
- If there isn't a bar line, the last bar can contain **any number** of notes, (as long as it's not longer than a normal bar!) It might or might not be complete, so be careful.

Here's an example:

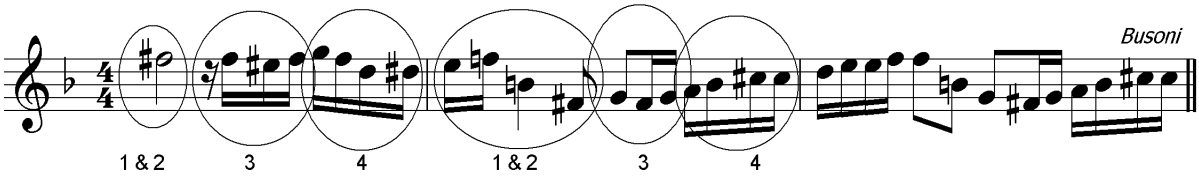


The time signature is 4/4, so each bar needs four crotchet beats.

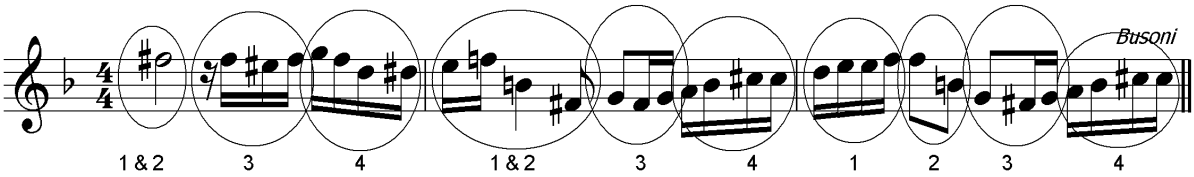
Count and mark off the crotchet beats until you reach four, then draw a bar line:



Repeat:



Double check the last bar – there is a bar line here so it should be a **complete** bar:



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

7. ADDING BAR LINES OR A TIME SIGNATURE (USA)

New at Grade Three

In your grade three music theory exam you might have to add a time signature to a short melody. Although you also had this task at grade two, it's a bit harder at grade three.

This is partly because the time signatures 3/4 and 6/8 have the **same number** of eighth notes in them, so it's harder to tell them apart.

You'll also find the rhythms are a bit more complicated, which might include thirty-second notes, dotted notes and tied notes.

The time signatures you need to choose from at grade three are:

- 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 (half note beat)
- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 (quarter note beat)
- 3/8 (eighth note beat)
- 6/8, 9/8, 12/8 (dotted quarter note beat – these are the compound time signatures)

Adding a Time Signature

To work out a time signature you need to discover two things:

3. What kind of beat is the main beat?
4. How many of these main beats are there per bar?

The easiest way to work out **what kind** of beat is the main beat, is to look for notes which are **beamed together**. (Obviously you need to look for a measure with eighths or sixteenths).

- Notes are beamed to add up to **one whole beat**. You need to work out what kind of note you need **one** of, to equal the notes which are beamed.
- When a new beat begins, a new beam begins too.
- Notes can also be beamed to add up to **one whole measure**, but only in **simple time**.

To work out **how many** main beats per measure there are, draw a circle around each group of notes that makes one full beat. Each circle has to contain the same value of notes overall. Then count the number of groups you circled. The number of circles in one measure is the number of beats per measure.

To work out the **time signature**, look at the information you have worked out.

The number of circles per bar will be 2, 3 or 4. This tells you whether the time signature is **duple**, **triple** or **quadruple**. Duple time signatures have either 2 or 6 as their top number. Triple time signatures has 3 or 9 as their top number. Quadruple time signatures have 4 or 12 as their top number.

If each circle adds up to the value of a half note, the beat is a half note and the time signature will have a lower number 2. The top number will be 2, 3 or 4.

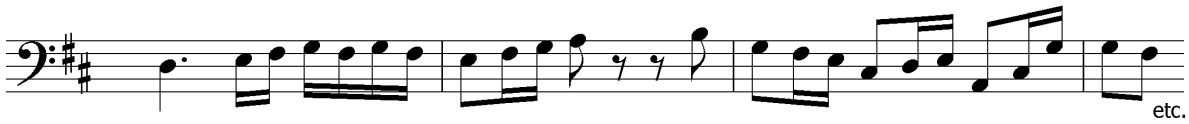
If each circle adds up to a quarter note, the lower number will be 4. The top number will be 2, 3 or 4.

If each circle adds up to an eighth note, the lower number will be 8. The top number will be 3. (2/8 and 4/8 don't come up in the grade 3 exam).

If each circle adds up to a dotted quarter note, the lower number will be 8 (compound time). The top number will be 6, 9 or 12.

Here's an example question.

Add the time signature to this melody:



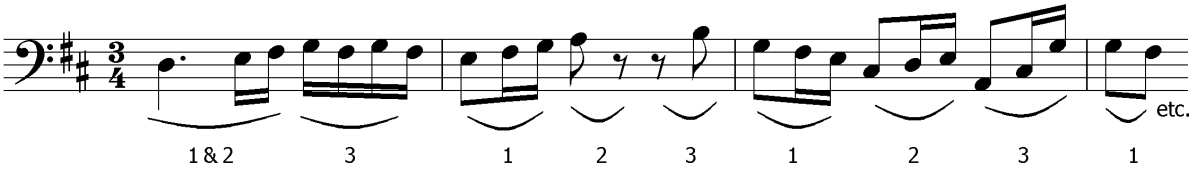
Look at the first measure and notice how the sixteenths are beamed. There are two joined together, and four joined together. Use the larger group.

Four sixteenths=1 quarter note. The first note of that group (the first G) must be the start of a new main beat, so the main beat is a quarter note. (If the main beat had been a dotted quarter note, the other two sixteenths would also be joined on, making six beamed sixteenths in total).

Look at measure 3. The eighths and sixteenths are again grouped together to add up to one quarter note each.

The main beat is therefore a quarter note beat.

Next, work out how many quarters there are in each measure:

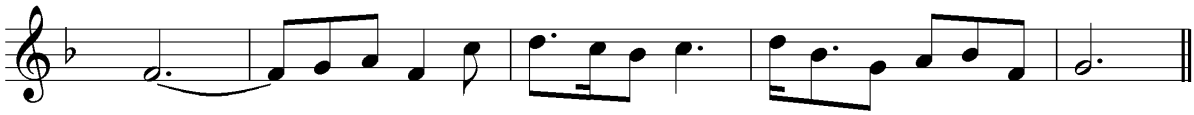


In each measure there are 3 quarter notes' worth of beats.
(Notice that the last measure doesn't have a bar line at the end – it's not a complete measure, so it doesn't matter how many beats there are in it.)

Because the main beat is a quarter note, the lower number of the time signature is 4. Because there are **three** quarter notes per measure, the top number is 3. The time signature is 3/4.

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017

Here is another example:

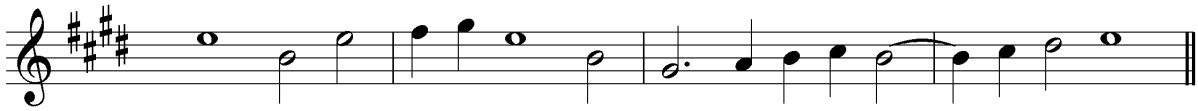


Choose measure 4 to look at first, as it has the most eighths/sixteenths.

- Remember that the notes are beamed to together to make **one** of something. What value do the beamed notes add up to? The answer is: the dotted quarter note. One dotted quarter note is worth the same as [sixteenth+dotted eighth+ eighth], and one dotted quarter note is worth the same as three eighths.
- It is **compound** duple time, because the main beat is a **dotted note**. The top number is 6.
- The bottom number is 8. (The bottom number is 8 because there the top number is 6, and there are 6 eighth notes' worth in each measure.)

Sometimes there will be no eighth or sixteenth notes to help you. If that is the case, you need to remember that there can only be 2, 3 or 4 beats per measure, no other number! (For grade 3 theory, that is!)

Look at this example:



- The first bar contains **eight** quarter notes.
- Quarter notes can't be the main beat, because there are too many of them (8).
- Whole notes can't be the main beat, because whole notes are never used as the main beat (there are no time signatures with the lower number 1).
- So, half notes are the main beat.
- There are four half notes per measure.
- The time signature is 4/2.

Adding Bar Lines

You might be asked to add bar lines to a melody.
Look carefully at the time signature and write down the following information:

- How many beats
- Type of beats

Take your time – it's easy to make mistakes when you're in a rush!

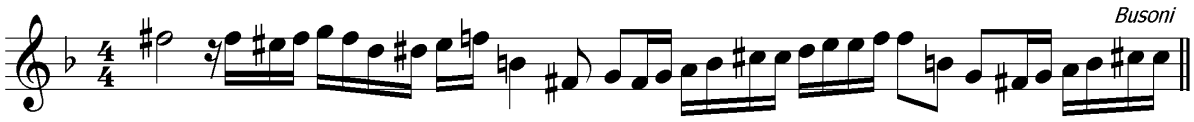
Carefully count the notes, marking off each complete beat.
When you've reached the number of beats you need to make a complete bar, use your ruler and draw a neat bar line quite close to the first note of the next measure.

Continue until you get to the end of the piece.

Pay **very careful** attention to the end of the piece.

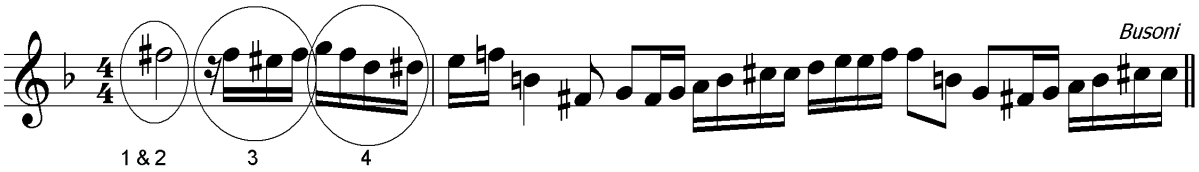
- If there is a bar line after the last note, the last measure **must** be complete.
- If there isn't a bar line, the last measure can contain **any number** of notes, (as long as it's not longer than a normal bar!) It might or might not be complete, so be careful.

Here's an example:

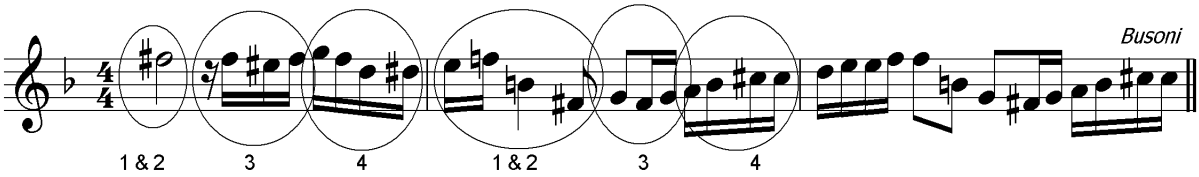


The time signature is 4/4, so each measure needs four quarter note beats.

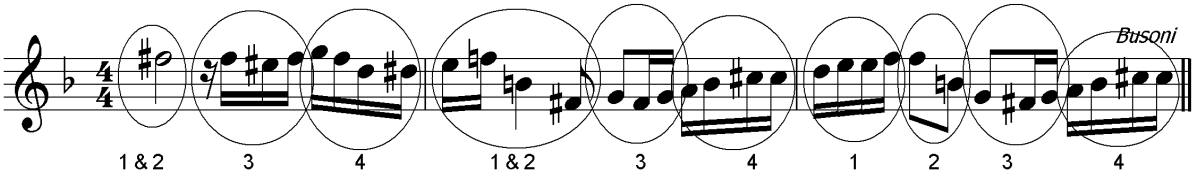
Count and mark off the quarter note beats until you reach four, then draw a bar line:



Repeat:



Double check the last measure – there is a bar line here so it should be a **complete** measure:

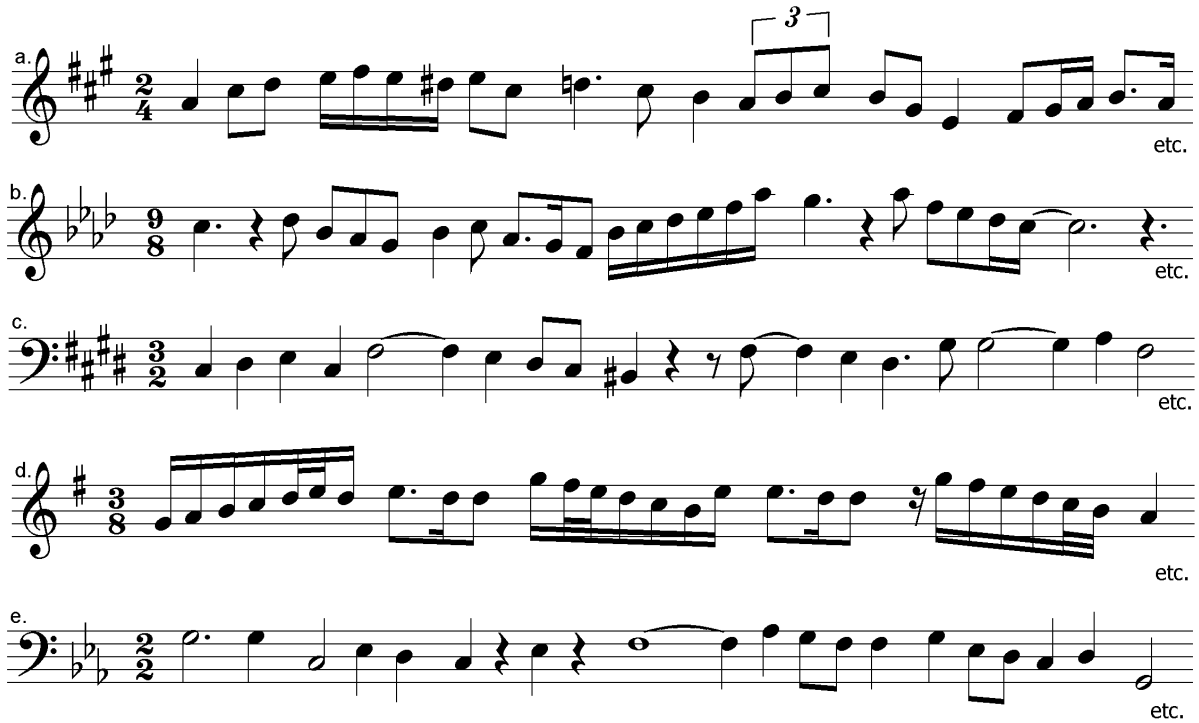


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

7. ADDING BAR LINES OR A TIME SIGNATURE EXERCISES

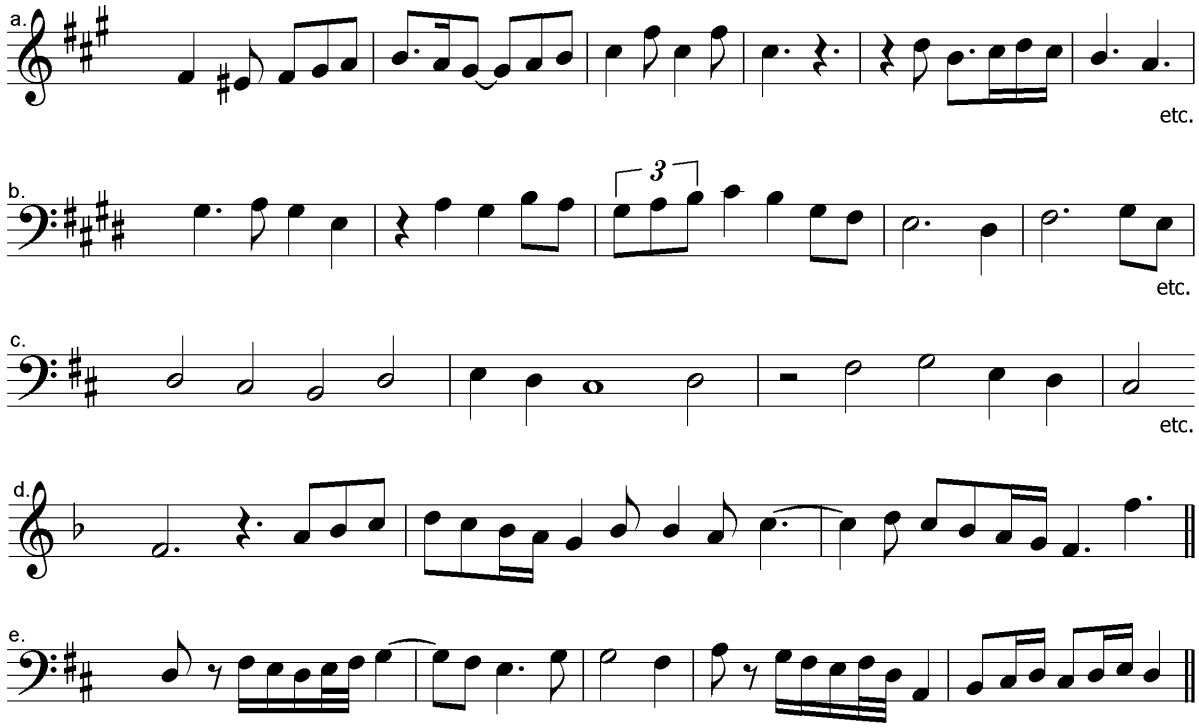
Exercise 1

Add the missing bar lines to these melodies, which all begin on the first beat of the bar.



Exercise 2

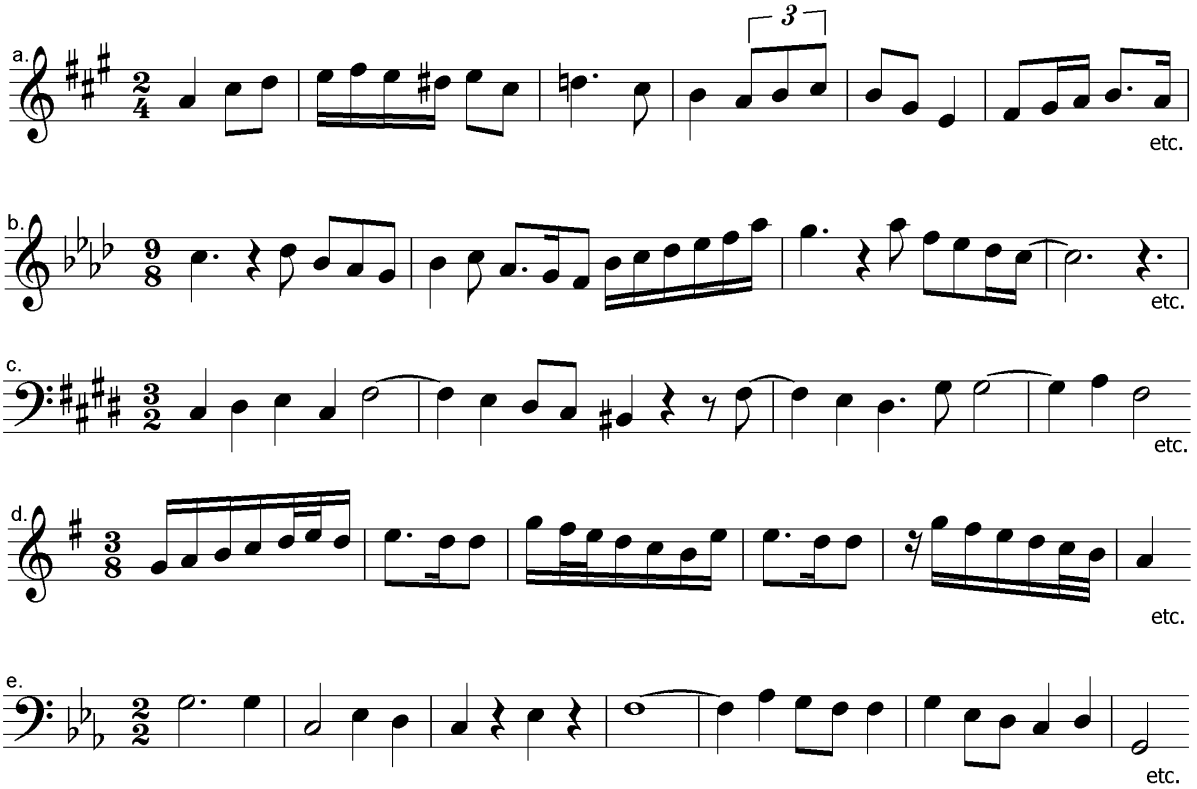
Add the time signature to each of these melodies.



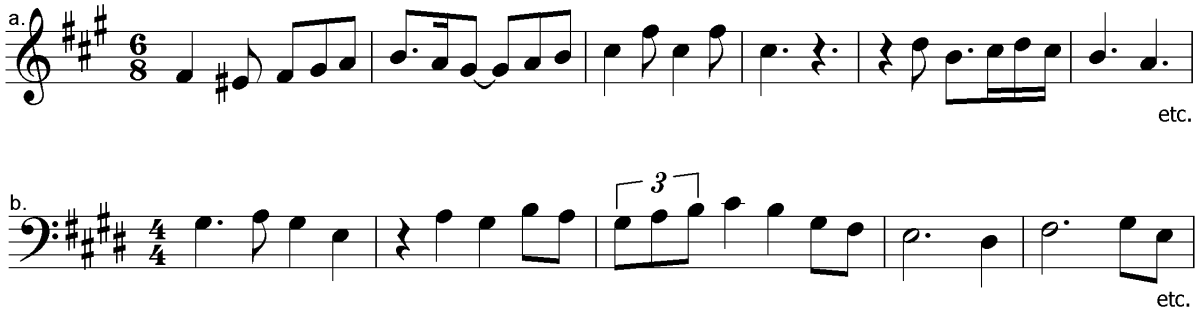
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

7. ADDING BAR LINES OR A TIME SIGNATURE ANSWERS

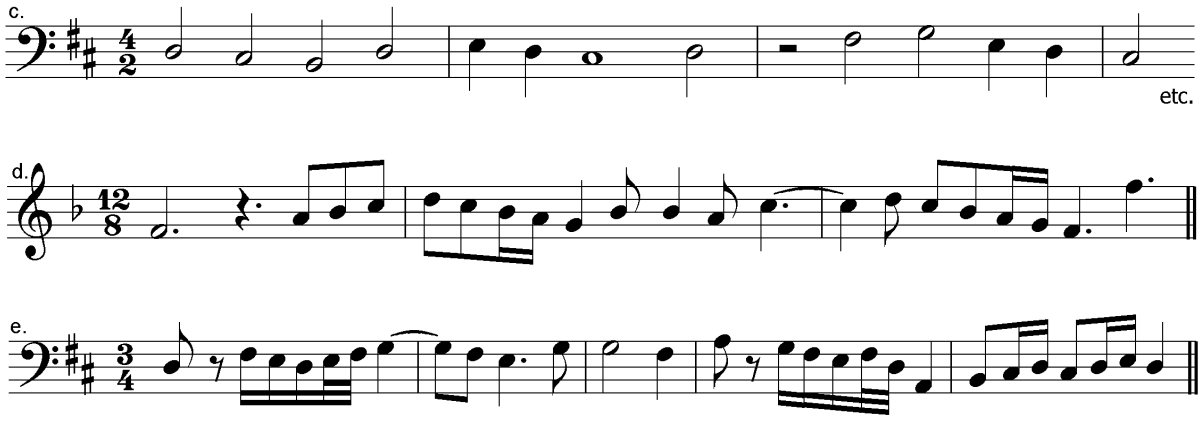
Exercise 1



Exercise 2



2/2 is also correct for b.

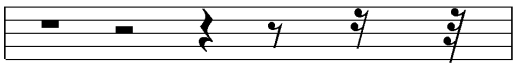


8. ADDING RESTS & BEAMING NOTES IN GROUPS (UK)

Rests

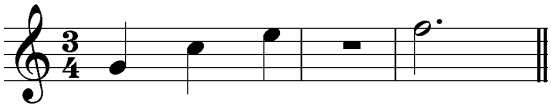
Here are the rests you need to know for the grade 3 music theory exam, in order of length, starting with the longest:

Semibreve - minim - crotchet - quaver - semiquaver - demisemiquaver



Rests can also be dotted.

The semibreve rest is also used as a **whole bar** rest, even when the value is worth less than four crotchets, for example in this 3/4 bar. It is placed in the centre of the bar.



The "whole bar" rest can be used in any time signature except for 4/2, where two semibreve rests are needed for one bar's silence.

Choosing the Right Rests

Although rests show silence, you still need to use the right rests according to the **time signature**, because rests are written to make the **main beats of the bar easy to see**.

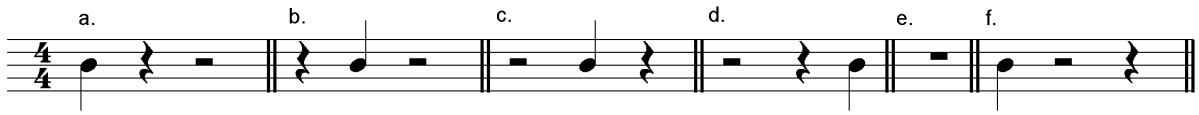
- You will always need to start by working out the **type** and **number** of beats per bar, according to the time signature. Also work out what the next **sub-division** of the beat is.
  E.g. 4/4 = two crotchets per bar, and each beat divides into 2 quavers, 6/8 = two dotted crotchets per bar, and each beat divides into 3 quavers.

- Then use rests worth **one beat** or **two beats**, but two-beat rests may only be used on the **strong** beat of the bar. (In duple and triple time, this means the first beat of the bar only, and in quadruple time it means the first and third beats of the bar). You may also use the **whole bar rest** (see above).
- Don't use **dotted** rests in **simple** time signatures (those with 2, 3 or 4 on top).
- If the rest you need is worth **less than one beat**, use smaller rests to complete the beat or sub-beat, before you do anything else.
- When completing a beat or a sub-beat, always put a longer note/rest before a shorter one, and not the other way round.

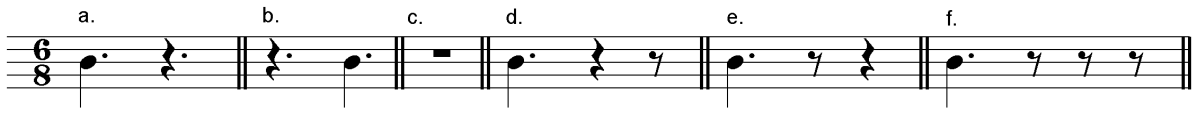
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

Rests worth one or two beats, or a whole bar:

Examples a-e are correct. Example f is wrong, because the two-beat rest has been put on the weak 2nd beat of the bar.

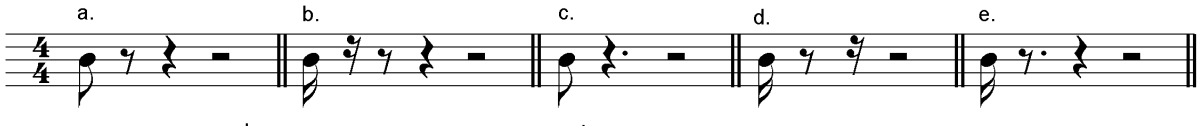


Examples a-c are correct. Example d is acceptable but used more rarely these days. Example e is incorrect, because the shorter rest is before the longer one. Example f is wrong, because we should use a rest worth one complete beat (a dotted crotchet).

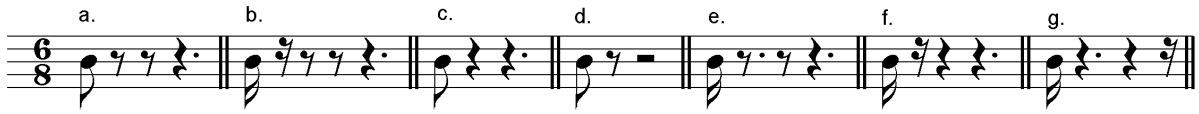


Rests worth less than one beat

Examples a and b are correct. Example c is wrong, because the first crotchet beat must be completed (with a quaver) before anything else, and we don't use dotted rests in simple time signatures. Example d is wrong, because the sub-beat (=quaver) should be completed before anything else. Example e is wrong, because we don't use dotted rests in simple time signatures.

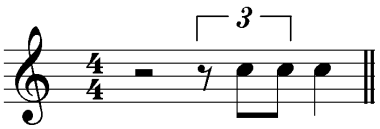


Examples a and b are correct. Example c is wrong, because the beat is balanced with a shorter part before a longer part (quaver note + crotchet rest). Example d is wrong, because a minim rest is never used in 6/8, as it is not worth one or two beats (it's worth one-and-a-third beats!) Example e is wrong, because we need to complete the sub-beat first (to make a quaver). Example f is wrong, because we have a longer rest (crotchet) after the shorter, first quaver sub-beat. Example g is wrong for many reasons!

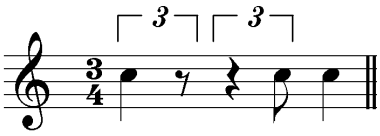


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

Don't forget that rests can also be included as part of triplets.



The first two beats have a minim rest - the minim rest is allowed because it falls on the strong beat. The third beat is a triplet figure, with only two quavers. We need another quaver here to complete the triplet. The rest is written inside the square triplet brackets.



The first triplet figure is completed with a quaver rest. This makes up the first crotchet beat. The second triplet figure is completed with a crotchet rest.

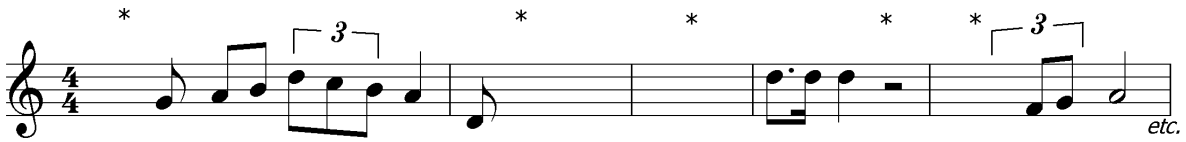
Adding Rests to a Melody

You may be asked to add the correct rest(s) at the places marked * to make each bar complete in a short melody.

First, look at the **time signature**, and make a note of the **number** and **type** of beats per bar.

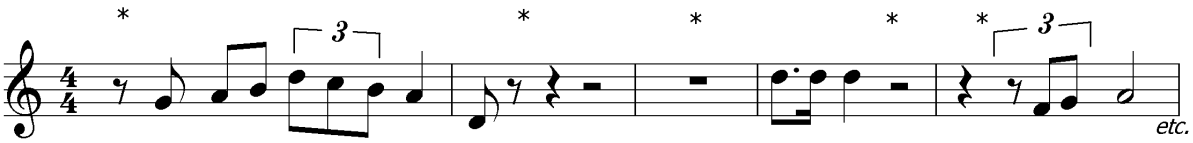
Write in the rests, making sure that you **complete main beats before anything else**, and that you don't write long rests on weak beats.

Here's an example:



- Bar 1: complete the first crotchet beat with one quaver.
- Bar 2: complete the first crotchet beat with a quaver rest, then write a crotchet rest to complete the second beat of the bar. Use a minim rest for beats 3 and 4 (ok because it falls on the strong 3rd beat).
- Bar 3: whole bar rest.
- Bar 4: finish the bar with a minim on the strong 3rd beat.
- Bar 5: crotchet rest to mark the first beat, quaver rest to complete the triplet on the second beat.

Here's the answer:



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

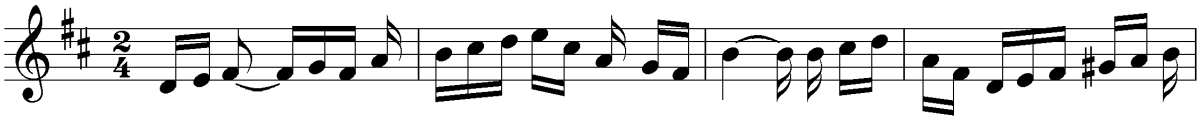
Grouping & Beaming Notes

A beam is the line that joins quavers, semiquavers or demisemiquavers together.

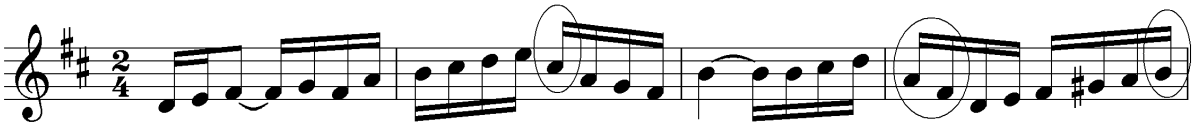
You might be asked to rewrite a passage with the notes correctly grouped, or beamed.

- Beam notes together in **complete beats**.
- Start a new beamed group on each main beat.
- Four quavers can (optionally) be beamed to equal a minim, as long as the group doesn't cross from a weak to a strong beat (e.g. beats 2-3 in 4/4 time).
- You might need to change the **direction of the stems** on some notes in the group.
- If you have several notes in a group where some go up and some go down, use the direction which would be correct for the note furthest from the middle line.
- The angle of beams follows the pattern of the music – if the music is rising in pitch, they slope upwards. If the music is falling in pitch they slope downwards. If the music stays at the same pitch, they are horizontal.

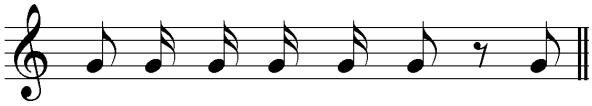
Here is a badly beamed passage:



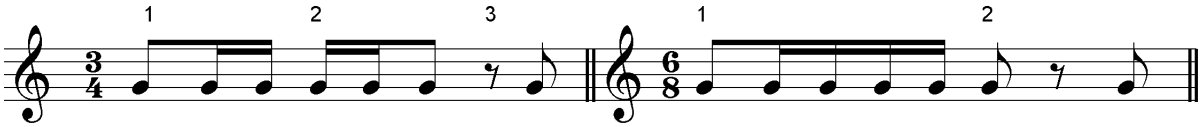
The time signature is 2/4, so we should have two crotchet beats per bar. The groups of quavers and semiquavers need to be beamed together to show this, and we also had to change the stem direction on a couple of notes:



Here is an example of how the **time signature affects beaming**. These notes will be beamed in a different way, depending on the time signature:



In 3/4 time, three beats per bar need to be shown. In 6/8 time, there are two beats per bar. Here is the correct beaming in each time signature:



(You could also beam together the last two quaver notes in the 6/8 bar, keeping the rest in the middle, if you prefer).

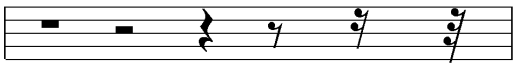
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

8. ADDING RESTS & BEAMING NOTES IN GROUPS (USA)

Rests

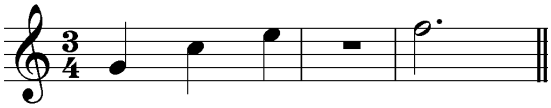
Here are the rests you need to know for the grade 3 music theory exam, in order of length, starting with the longest:

Whole - half - quarter - eighth - sixteenth – thirty-second



Rests can also be dotted.

The whole rest is also used as a **whole measure** rest, even when the value is worth less than four quarter notes, for example in this 3/4 bar. It is placed in the centre of the measure.



The "whole bar" rest can be used in any time signature except for 4/2, where two whole rests are needed for one measure's silence.

Choosing the Right Rests

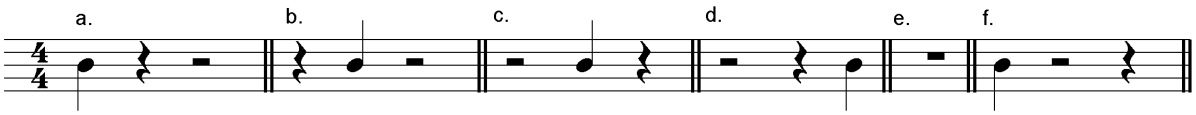
Although rests show silence, you still need to use the right rests according to the **time signature**, because rests are written to make the **main beats of the measure easy to see**.

- You will always need to start by working out the **type** and **number** of beats per measure, according to the time signature. Also work out what the next **sub-division** of the beat is.
  E.g. 4/4 = four quarter notes per bar, and each beat divides into 2 eighths, 6/8 = two dotted quarter notes per bar, and each beat divides into 3 eighth notes.

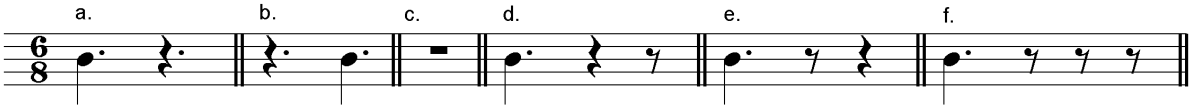
- Then use rests worth **one beat** or **two beats**, but two-beat rests may only be used on the **strong** beat of the measure. (In duple and triple time, this means the first beat of the measure only, and in quadruple time it means the first and third beats of the measure). You may also use the **whole measure rest** (see above).
- Don't use **dotted** rests in **simple** time signatures (those with 2, 3 or 4 on top).
- If the rest you need is worth **less than one beat**, use smaller rests to complete the beat or sub-beat, before you do anything else.
- When completing a beat or a sub-beat, always put a longer note/rest before a shorter one, and not the other way round.

Rests worth one or two beats, or a whole measure:

Examples a-e are correct. Example f is wrong, because the two-beat rest has been put on the weak 2nd beat of the measure.

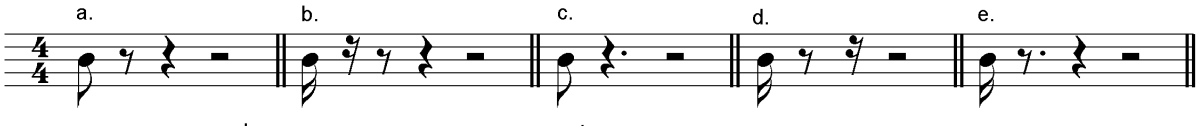


Examples a-c are correct. Example d is acceptable but used more rarely these days. Example e is incorrect, because the shorter rest is before the longer one. Example f is wrong, because we should use a rest worth one complete beat (a dotted quarter).

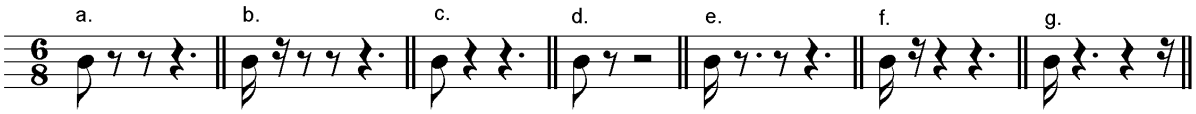


Rests worth less than one beat

Examples a and b are correct. Example c is wrong, because the first quarter beat must be completed (with an 8th rest) before anything else, and we don't use dotted rests in simple time signatures. Example d is wrong, because the sub-beat (=8th) should be completed before anything else. Example e is wrong, because we don't use dotted rests in simple time signatures.

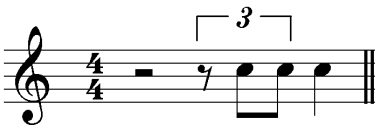


Examples a and b are correct. Example c is wrong, because the beat is balanced with a shorter part before a longer part (8th note + quarter rest). Example d is wrong, because a half rest is never used in 6/8, as it is not worth one or two beats (it's worth one-and-a-third beats!) Example e is wrong, because we need to complete the sub-beat first (to make an 8th). Example f is wrong, because we have a longer rest (quarter) after the shorter, first 8th sub-beat. Example g is wrong for many reasons!

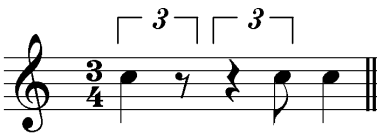


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

Don't forget that rests can also be included as part of triplets.



The first two beats have a half rest - the half rest is allowed because it falls on the strong beat. The third beat is a triplet figure, with only two 8th notes. We need another 8th here to complete the triplet. The rest is written inside the square triplet brackets.



The first triplet figure is completed with an 8th rest. This makes up the first quarter note beat. The second triplet figure is completed with a quarter rest.

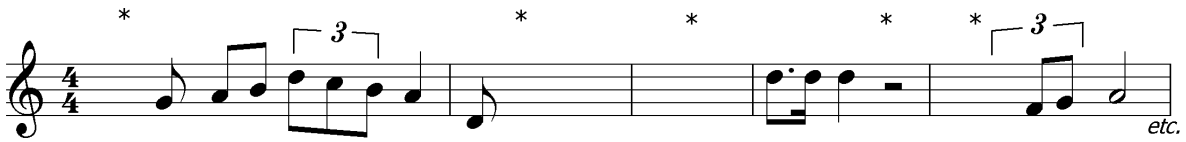
Adding Rests to a Melody

You may be asked to add the correct rest(s) at the places marked * to make each measure complete in a short melody.

First, look at the **time signature**, and make a note of the **number** and **type** of beats per measure.

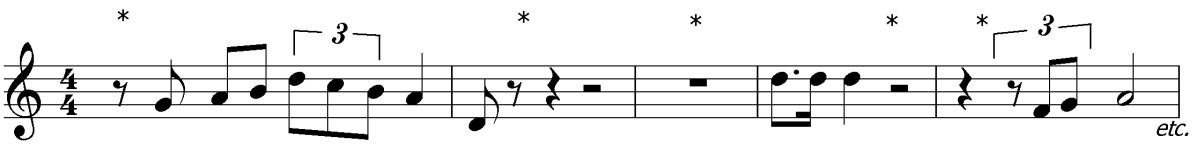
Write in the rests, making sure that you **complete main beats before anything else**, and that you don't write long rests on weak beats.

Here's an example:



- Bar 1: complete the first quarter beat with one 8th.
- Bar 2: complete the first quarter beat with an 8th rest, then write a quarter rest to complete the second beat of the measure. Use a half rest for beats 3 and 4 (ok because it falls on the strong 3rd beat).
- Bar 3: whole measure rest.
- Bar 4: finish the measure with a half on the strong 3rd beat.
- Bar 5: quarter rest to mark the first beat, 8th rest to complete the triplet on the second beat.

Here's the answer:



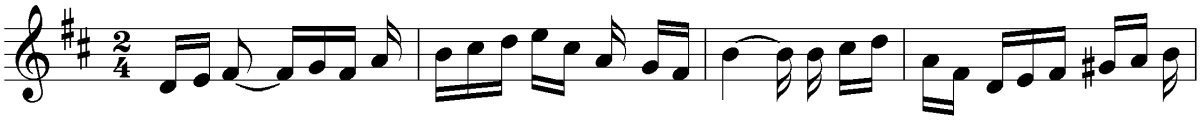
Grouping & Beaming Notes

A beam is the line that joins eighths, sixteenths or thirty-seconds together.

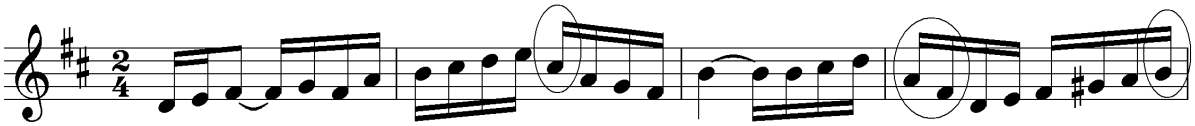
You might be asked to rewrite a passage with the notes correctly grouped, or beamed.

- Beam notes together in **complete beats**.
- Start a new beamed group on each main beat.
- Four eighth notes can (optionally) be beamed to equal a half note, as long as the group doesn't cross from a weak to a strong beat (e.g. beats 2-3 in 4/4 time).
- You might need to change the **direction of the stems** on some notes in the group.
- If you have several notes in a group where some go up and some go down, use the direction which would be correct for the note furthest from the middle line.
- The angle of beams follows the pattern of the music – if the music is rising in pitch, they slope upwards. If the music is falling in pitch they slope downwards. If the music stays at the same pitch, they are horizontal.

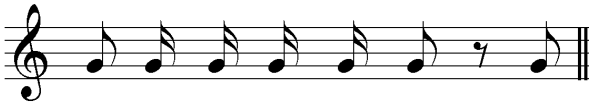
Here is a badly beamed passage:



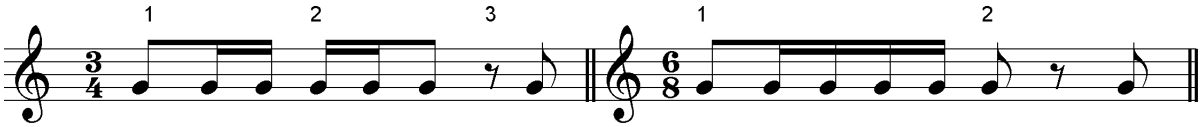
The time signature is 2/4, so we should have two quarter note beats per measure. The groups of eighths and sixteenths need to be beamed together to show this, and we also had to change the stem direction on a couple of notes:



Here is an example of how the **time signature affects beaming**. These notes will be beamed in a different way, depending on the time signature:



In 3/4 time, three beats per bar need to be shown. In 6/8 time, there are two beats per measure. Here is the correct beaming in each time signature:



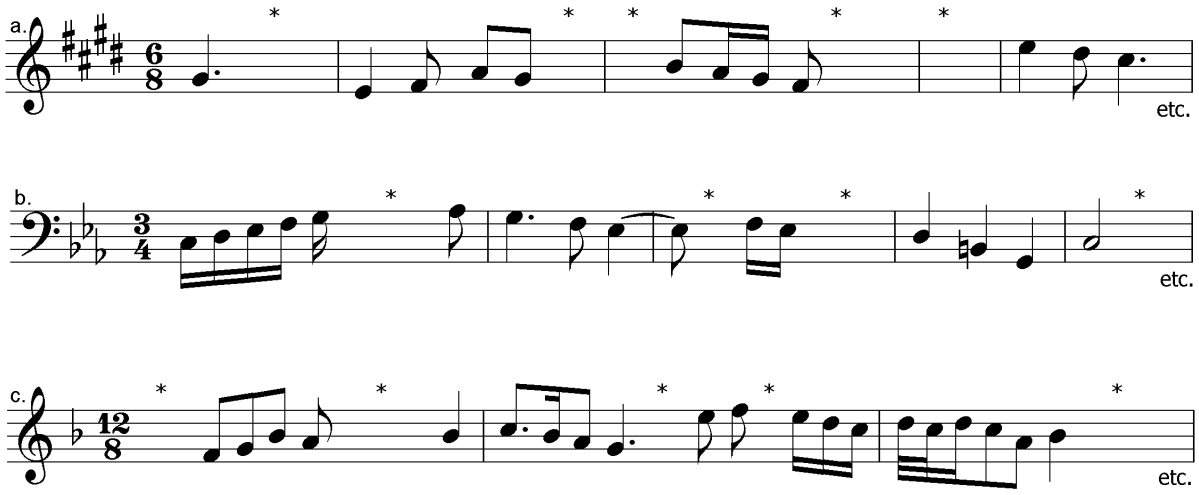
(You could also beam together the last two eighth notes in the 6/8 bar, keeping the rest in the middle, if you prefer).

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

8. ADDING RESTS & BEAMING NOTES IN GROUPS EXERCISES

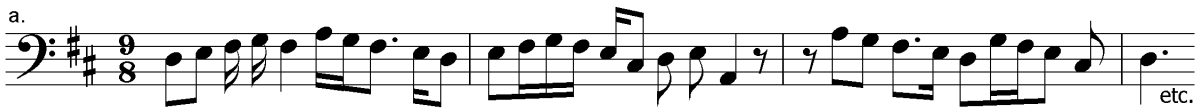
EXERCISE 1

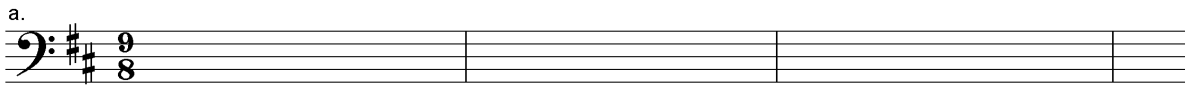
Add the correct rest(s) at the places marked * to make each bar complete.

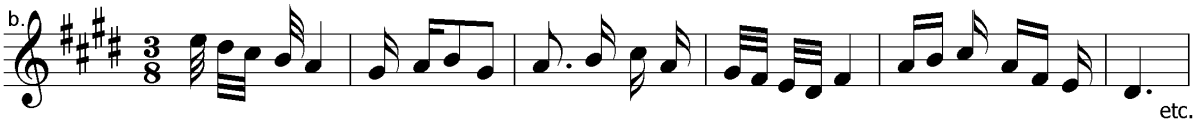


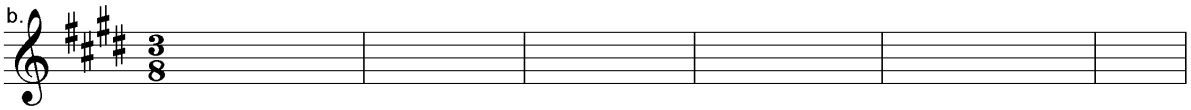
EXERCISE 2

Rewrite the following melodies with the notes correctly grouped/beamed.





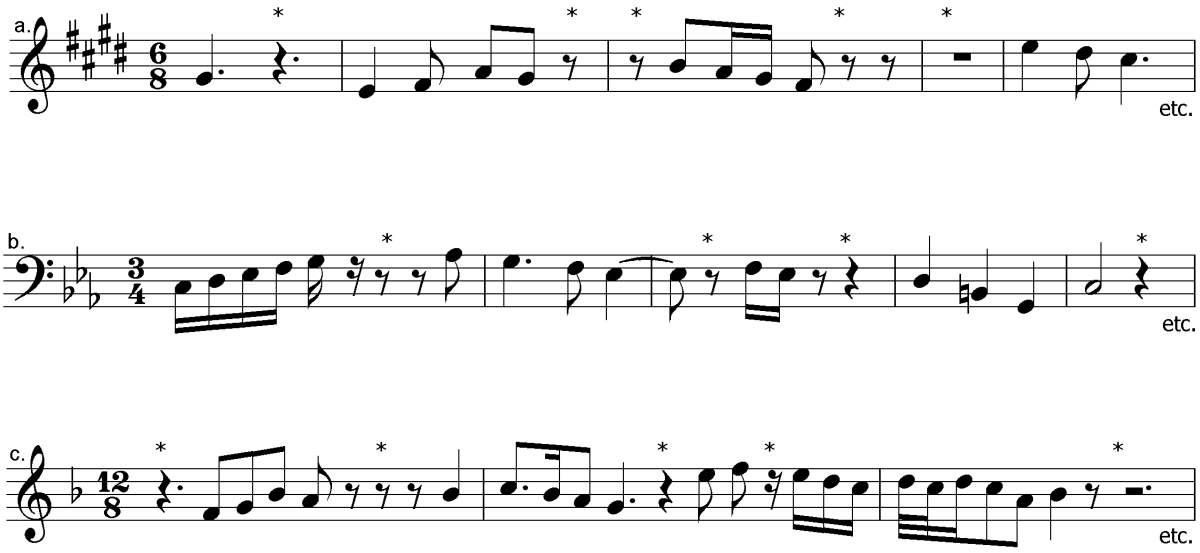




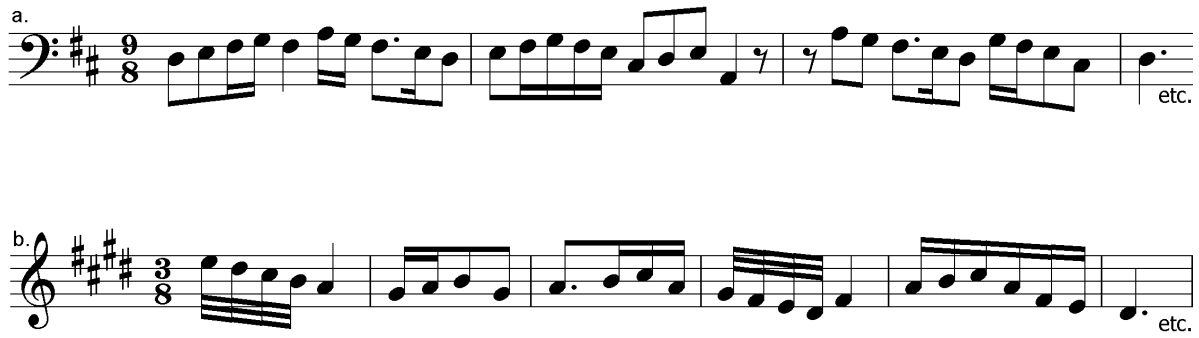
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

8. ADDING RESTS & BEAMING NOTES IN GROUPS ANSWERS

EXERCISE 1



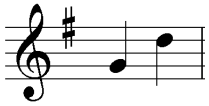
EXERCISE 2



9. INTERVALS

INTERVAL NUMBER AND TYPE

Up to grade two, you learnt how to describe the interval between two notes using a **number**. For example, this interval is a **5th**, because there are five letter names between the lowest and the highest: G-A-B-C-D = 5 letter names



At this grade, the lowest note is always the **tonic** (keynote), or first degree of the scale. (In later grades you'll find that the lower note can be anything at all!) To find the number of the interval, all you need to do is work out the degree of the scale.

D is the 5th degree of the scale of G major.

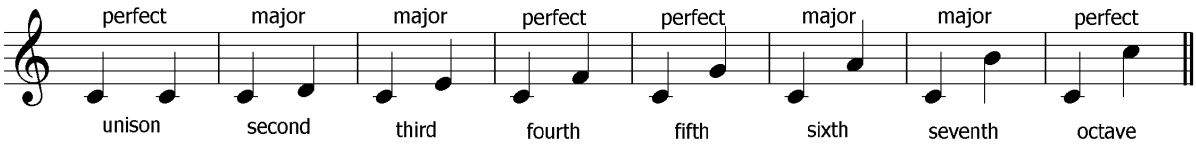
In the grade three music theory exam, you need to describe an interval with its number and also its **type**. You also need to know all the intervals in the new key signatures for this grade too, of course!

We will learn about three types of interval for grade three: **major, minor and perfect** intervals.

Major Keys

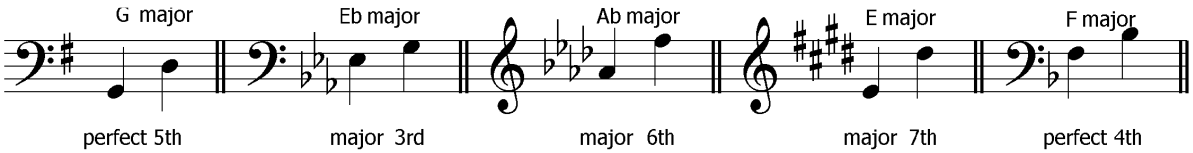
In a major key, all the intervals are either **major** or **perfect**. There are NO minor intervals in a major key (when the lowest note is the tonic).

Here is the scale of C major, showing each interval type when the lowest note is the tonic:



In all major scales, the unison, fourth, fifth and octave are **PERFECT** intervals. All the other intervals are **MAJOR**.

Here are some examples of intervals from other major keys:



Minor Keys

In minor keys you will find major, perfect and also **minor** intervals. Minor intervals are always **one semitone smaller** than the major interval with the same number.

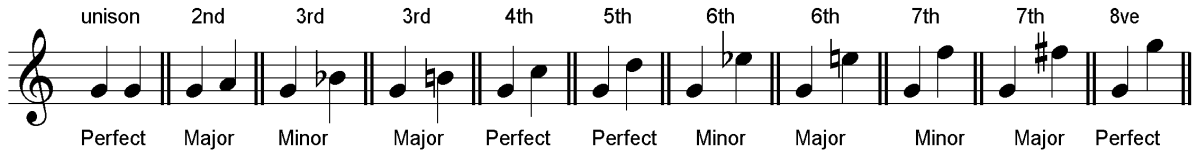
Intervals are based on the **harmonic** minor scale, or the **melodic** minor scale. Don't forget that this means the 6th and 7th degrees of the scale are sometimes raised by a semitone (half step)!

- Perfect intervals are the same in both major and minor keys: all unisons, 4ths, 5ths and octaves are **perfect**, whether the key is major or minor.
- The interval of a 2nd is **major** in both major and minor keys.
- In a minor key, the interval of 3rd is **minor**, whereas in a major key it is **major**.

- The intervals of a 6th and 7th are **major** in major keys, but can be **major or minor** in minor keys.

Intervals at a Glance:

Here are the intervals built from the tonic of the G major and G minor scales.



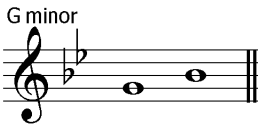
The same pattern of major/minor/perfect intervals can be made from any tonic starting note.

You can see that only three intervals are different, between the major and minor versions of the scale- the 3rd, 6th and 7th.

Number from Tonic	**Major Scale- Type**	**Minor Harmonic - Type**	**Minor Melodic - Type**
Unison	Perfect	Perfect	Perfect
2nd	Major	Major	Major
3rd	***Major***	***Minor***	***Minor***
4th	Perfect	Perfect	Perfect
5th	Perfect	Perfect	Perfect
6th	***Major***	***Minor***	***Major or minor***
7th	Major	Major	***Major or minor***
8ve	Perfect	Perfect	Perfect

Describing Intervals

You will probably get a question asking you to describe some intervals by giving the **type** and **number**, like this:



Type: _____

Number: _____

- Notice that they **key** is given to you – this interval is in G minor.
- The lowest note will always be the tonic.

Starting at the lower note, count how many letter names of notes there are up to the higher one.

G-A-Bb = three notes.

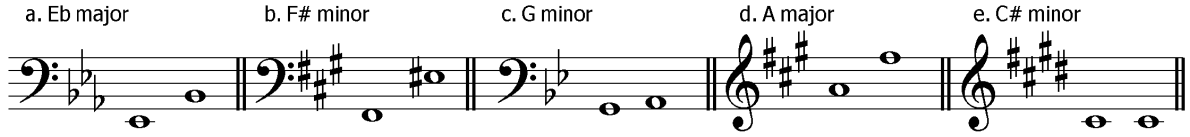
This interval is a **third**. The key is **minor**, so it will be **minor third** (remember that 3rds are minor intervals in minor keys).

Intervals can be written vertically ("harmonic") or horizontally ("melodic").

9. INTERVALS EXERCISES

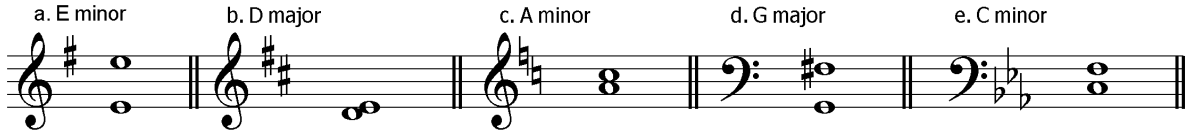
Exercise 1

Describe these melodic intervals by type (e.g. major) and number (e.g. 2nd)



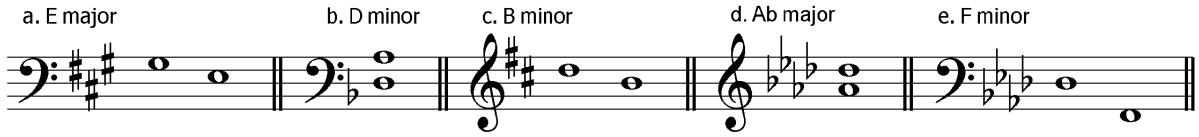
Exercise 2

Describe these harmonic intervals by type and number.



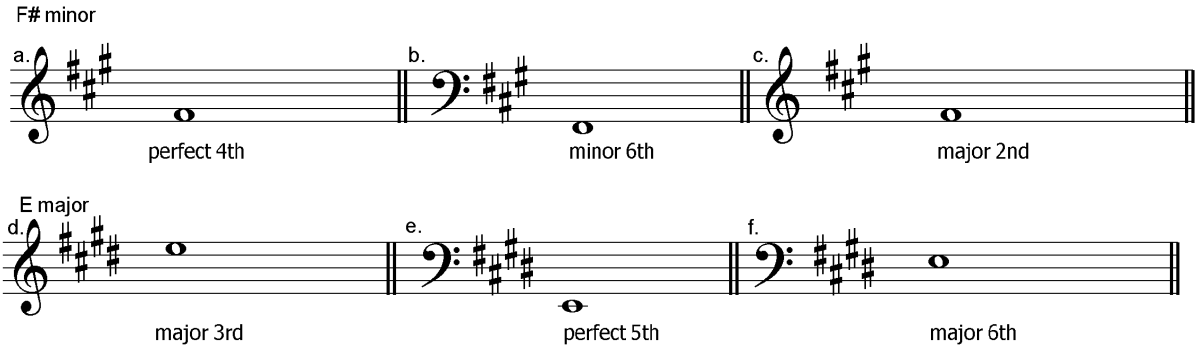
Exercise 3

Describe these intervals by type and number and also say whether they are **harmonic** or **melodic**.



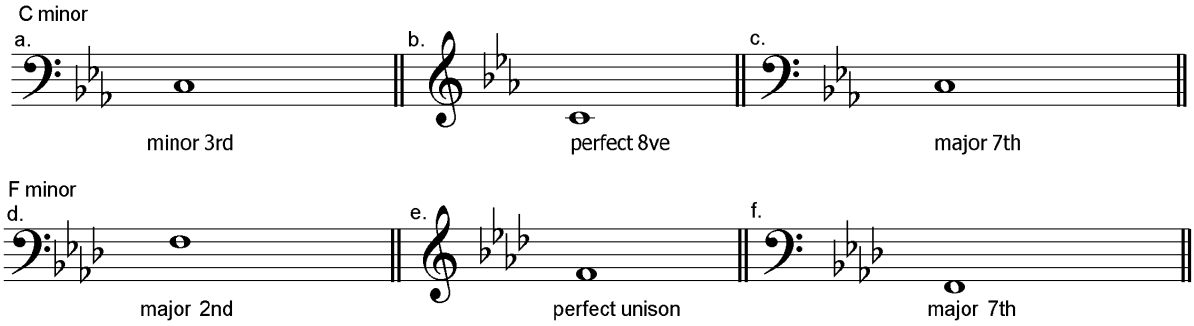
Exercise 4

Write a note **next to** the given note to make the named **melodic interval.**



Exercise 5

Write a note **above** the given note to make the named **harmonic interval**.



9. INTERVALS ANSWERS

Exercise 1

a. Perfect 5th
b. Major 7th
c. Major 2nd
d. Major 6th
e. Perfect unison

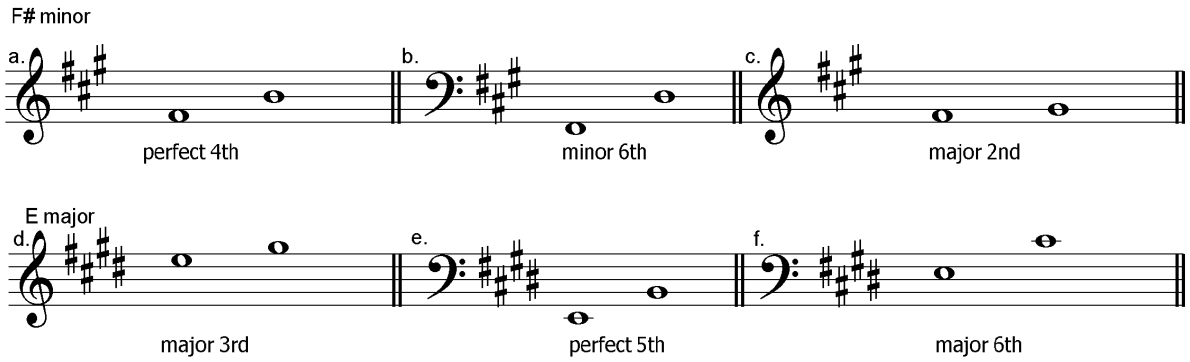
Exercise 2

a. Perfect octave
b. Major 2nd
c. Minor 3rd
d. Major 7th
e. Perfect 4th

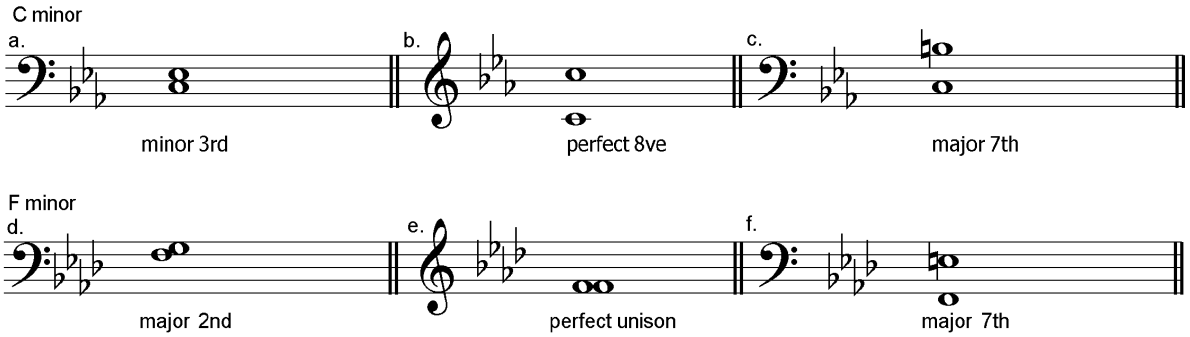
Exercise 3

a. Major third – melodic
b. Perfect 5th – harmonic
c. Minor 3rd – melodic
d. Perfect 4th – harmonic
e. Minor 6th - Melodic

Exercise 4



Exercise 5



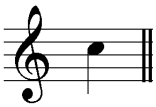
10. TRANSPOSITION

In the grade three music theory exam, you might have to transpose a short melody, **at the octave, between clefs**. What does that mean, exactly?

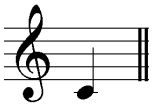
Transpose at the Octave

Transpose means "write in another place". Transposed music can be written in a different clef, different key, or different octave, or any combination of these! But you won't have to transpose music into another **key** at grade 3 - that comes later. At this grade, you need to transpose between **clefs**, **at the octave**.

"At the octave" means that the music is transposed either **up** eight notes or **down** eight notes. For example, we can transpose this C:

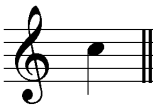


down an octave (8 notes), to this C:

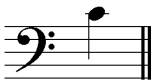


Between Clefs

This means that we change the clef used – from treble to bass or the other way round. For example, we can transpose the same C:



down an octave AND put it into the bass clef:

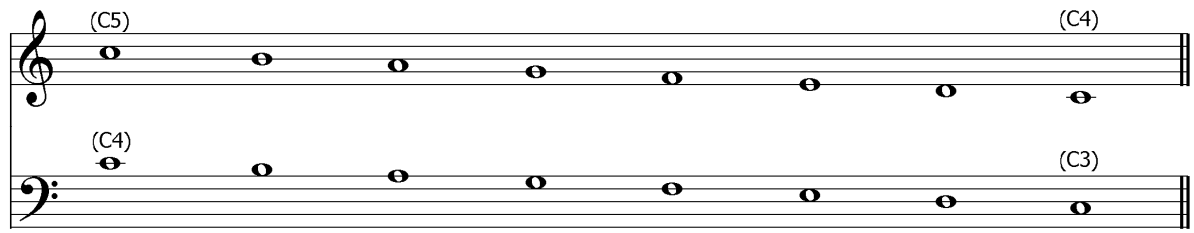


C4

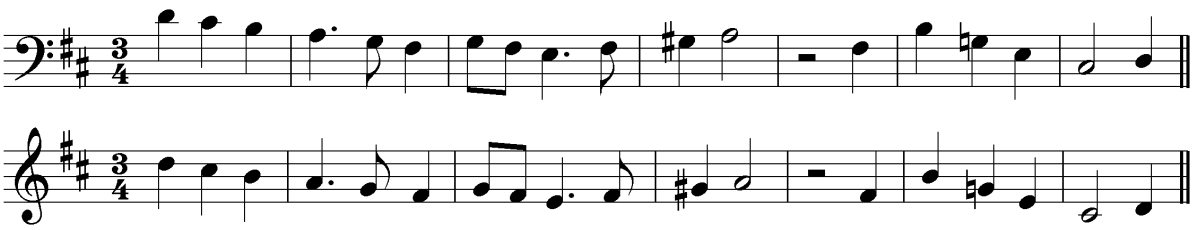
Middle C is known as **C4**. The C above it is C5, and the C below it is C3. You don't need to know this for your grade three music theory exam, but it's a really useful way of referring to notes by octave, when you are talking about them, so it's worth learning!

Transposition Examples

Here is the scale of C major in the treble clef, transposed **at the octave and to the bass clef**:



Here's a short melody transposed **at the octave and to the treble clef**:



How to Transpose

If you get a transposition question in the exam, you'll be told which clef you need to transpose into.

The new clef will already be in place.

You will sometimes have to add the key signature, time signature and bar lines, (but sometimes they are already written for you).

Then you need to add the **notes** and **rests**, as well as any **accidentals**, and also any other things such as **dynamics**, **articulation** (e.g. staccato) and **phrasing** marks.

- Don't rush the first note. Triple check you've got the first note right, and all the others will follow naturally.
- Look at clef and the first note – make sure you're not thinking in treble clef, when in fact it's bass (and vice versa!) What note is it?
- Work which octave the first note is in. **Is it above or below middle C?**
- Carefully write the new first note, one octave higher (or lower, depending on the question), immediately below the original.
- Continue with the rest of the notes.
- Write all the notes and rests **directly** below the original ones. This will make sure that you don't run out of space and that the notes are aligned properly.
- Use a ruler to draw the stems and beams.
- Make an effort to be neat. You will lose marks if the examiner can't read what you've put.
- Make sure you haven't forgotten to copy any of the phrasing or dynamics markings.

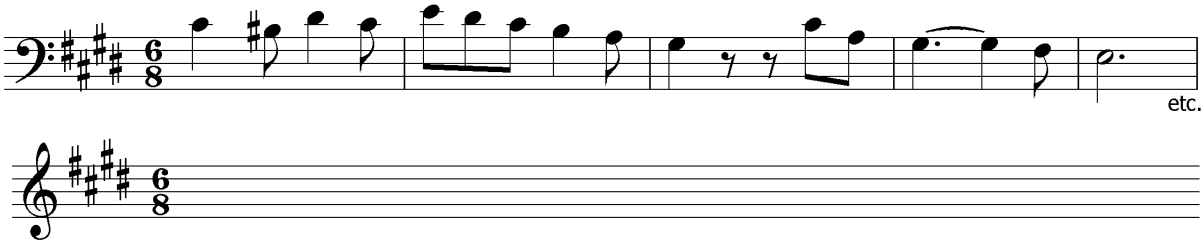
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017

10. TRANSPOSITION EXERCISES

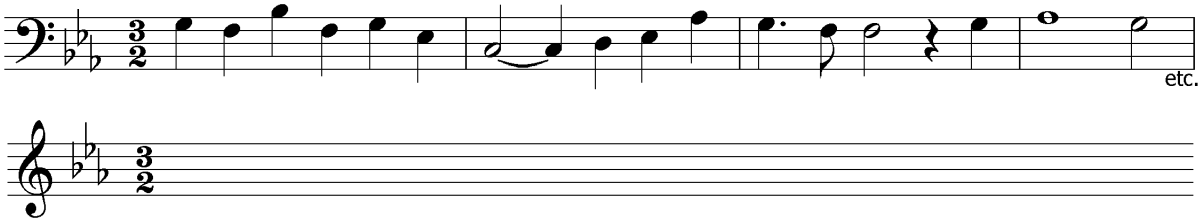
Exercise 1

Transpose these melodies **up** an octave, using the treble clef as shown. Include the key signature and time signature.

a.



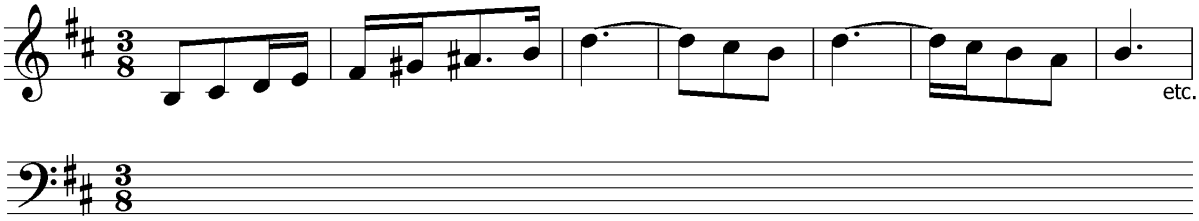
b.



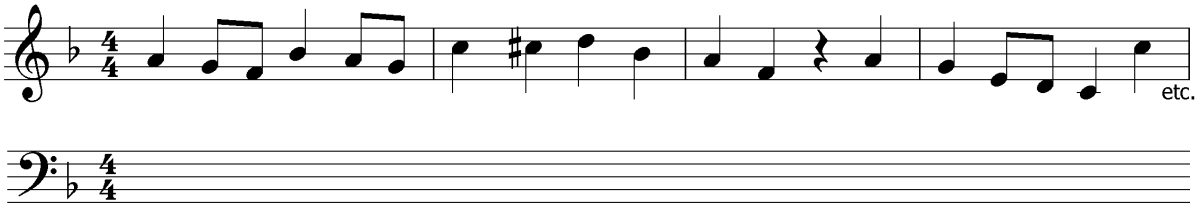
Exercise 2

Transpose these melodies **down** an octave, using the treble clef as shown. Include the key signature and time signature.

a.



b.

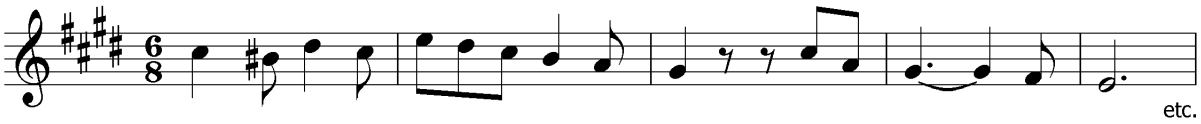


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

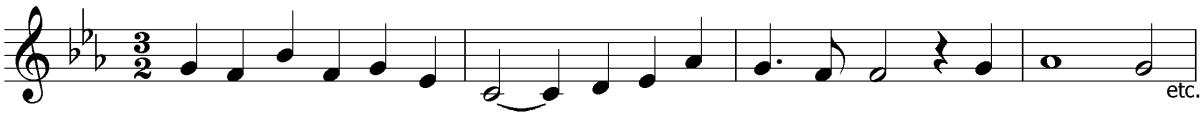
10. TRANSPOSITION ANSWERS

Exercise 1

a.

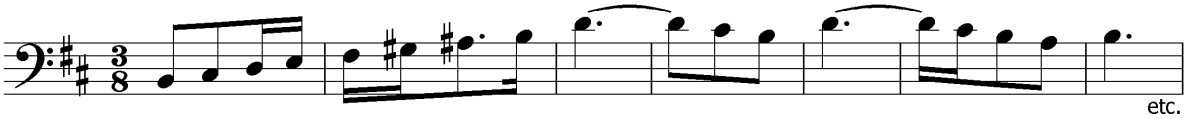


b.

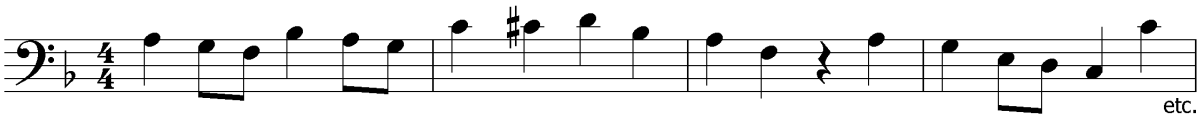


Exercise 2

a.



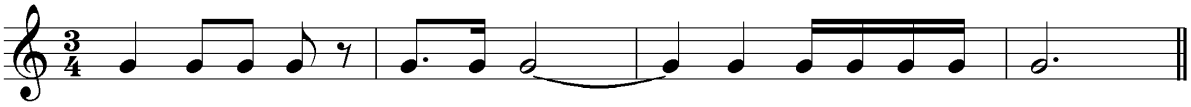
b.



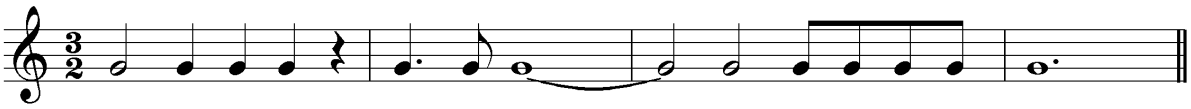
11. REWRITING WITH DIFFERENT TIME VALUES

WHAT IS REWRITING?

We can rewrite a melody using different value notes, without changing the rhythm. For example, here's a rhythm in 3/4:



And here's the same rhythm in 3/2:



The rhythm itself hasn't changed - only the type of note used as the **main beat** has changed.

The time signature changes – but only the **lower number**. This is because we have kept the same **number** of beats per bar (3), and we have only changed the **type** of beat from a crotchet (quarter note) in the first example, to a minim (half note) in the second example.

A minim (half note) is worth two crotchets (quarters), so all the notes in the second example are **twice the value** of those in the first one. The notes in the first example are **half the value**.

Rhythms written at **twice** the value use **slower** note values.

Be careful! If we write a rhythm in notes of **half** the value, we **double** the bottom number. If we write a rhythm in notes of **twice** the value, we **halve** the bottom number. This might seem a little strange at first!

TABLE OF TIME SIGNATURES

For the grade three exam, you only need to know about these time signatures for this question:

Twice the Value	Original Time Signature	Half the Value
3/4	3/8	-
2/2	2/4	-
3/2	3/4	3/8
4/2	4/4	-
-	2/2	2/4
-	3/2	3/4
-	4/2	4/4

(Compound time signatures will not come up in this part of the exam.)

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

Table of Note Durations for Rewriting in a New Time Signature

Twice the Value	Original Note	Half the Value
𝅘𝅥𝅰	𝅘𝅥𝅱	-
𝅘𝅥𝅯	𝅘𝅥𝅰	𝅘𝅥𝅱
𝅘𝅥	𝅘𝅥𝅯	𝅘𝅥𝅰
𝅗𝅥	𝅘𝅥	𝅘𝅥𝅯
𝅝	𝅗𝅥	𝅘𝅥
-	𝅝	𝅗𝅥

Dotted notes don't need any special treatment. Just copy the dot over to the new note value.

Table of Rest Durations for Rewriting in a New Time Signature

Twice the Value	Original Note	Half the Value
𝄿	𝄾	-
𝄽	𝄿	𝄾
𝄼	𝄽	𝄿
𝄻	𝄼	𝄽
𝄺	𝄻	𝄼
-	𝄺	𝄻

How to Rewrite with New Note Values

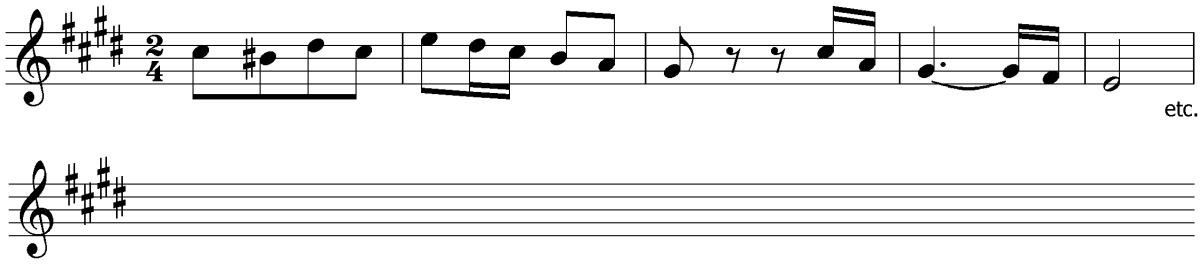
- Put the new time signature in first. Remember "notes of half the value" means the lower number is doubled, and vice versa.
- On a piece of rough paper, draw a table showing the new note values you'll need. (For example, if you are rewriting at half the value, write). Use this for reference as you do the question – it will help to avoid mistakes.
- Write each new note **directly** under each original note, so that you don't run out of space.
- Draw note stems and bar lines with a ruler.
- Don't forget to add any accidentals.
- Don't forget to beam quavers (eighth notes) and semiquavers (sixteenth notes) together.
- Check your work by carefully counting up the beats in each bar.

11. REWRITING WITH DIFFERENT TIME VALUES EXERCISES

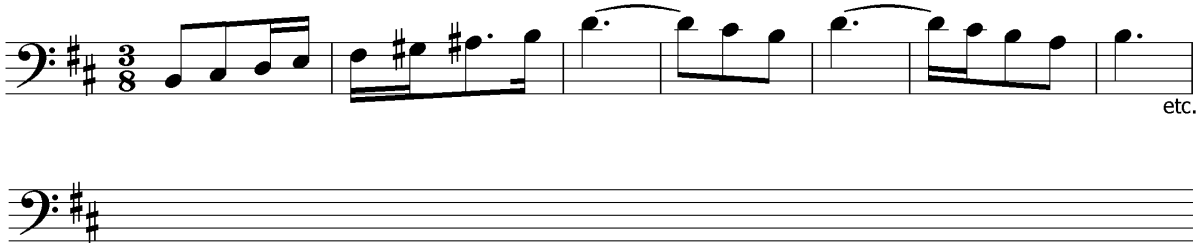
Exercise 1

Write out these melodies in notes and rests of **twice the value**. Remember to put in the new time signature.

a.



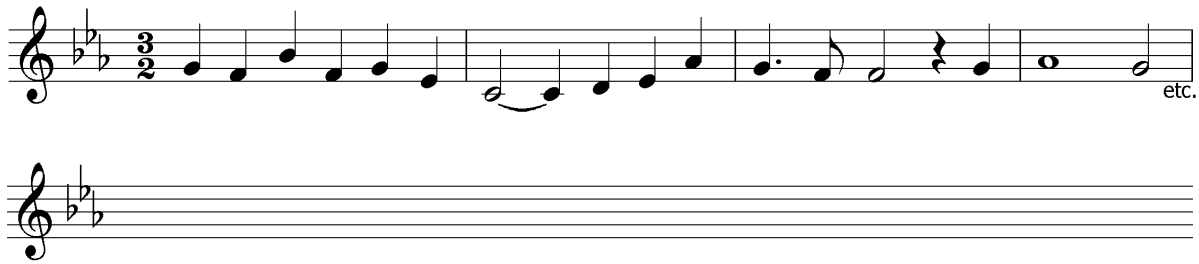
b.



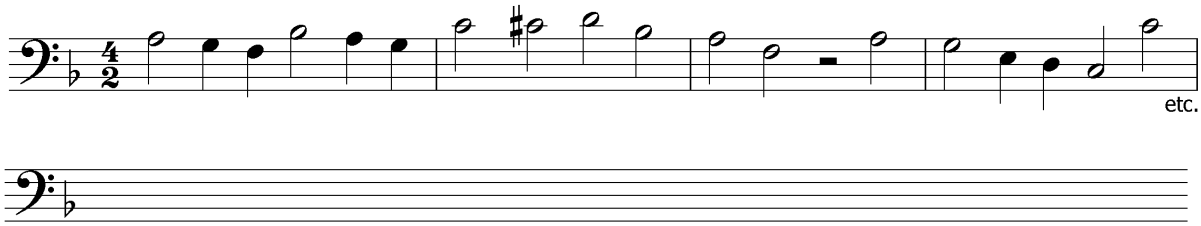
Exercise 2

Write out these melodies in notes and rests of **half the value.** Remember to put in the new time signature.

a.



b.

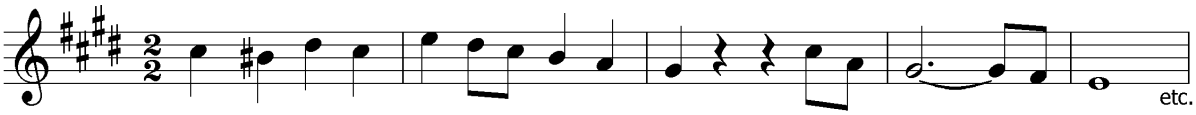


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

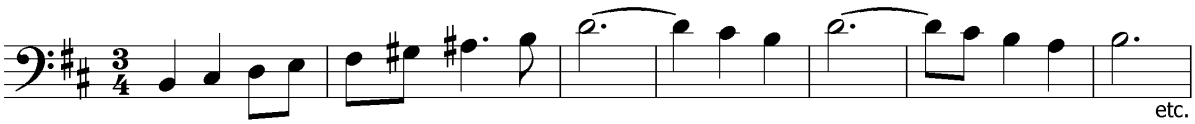
11. REWRITING WITH DIFFERENT TIME VALUES ANSWERS

EXERCISE 1

a.

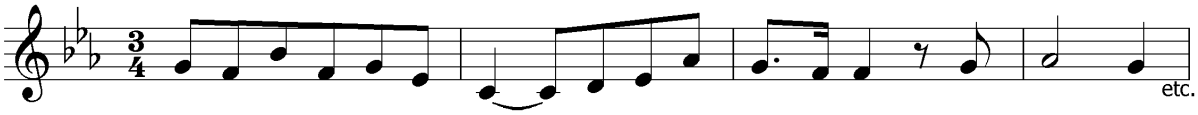


b.

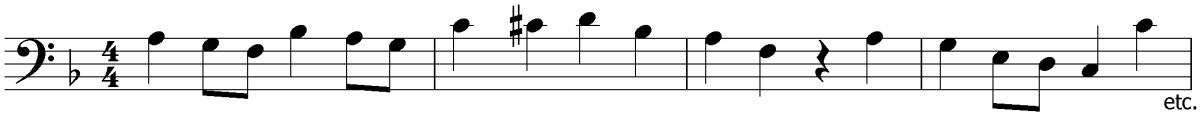


EXERCISE 2

a.



b.



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

12. QUESTIONS ABOUT A SCORE

In the grade three ABRSM music theory exam you will have a question based on a **musical score**. You'll be given some music to look at – usually about 8 bars of a single line of music. It could be in treble or bass clef.

You'll be asked several questions about the score. The kinds of question you might see include:

- Explain Italian terms
- Explain symbols
- Give the time name of notes or rests
- Say how many notes are equivalent of each other (e.g. how many semiquavers (16th notes) there are in a minim (half note)
- Describe the time signature
- Add the time signature
- Find bars which contain the notes of the tonic triad
- Say which degree of the scale certain notes are
- Name the relative minor/major key
- Find notes which are/aren't in the key of the piece
- Find notes which are an octave apart
- Describe intervals marked with a bracket
- Find similarities and differences
- Count the number of times a certain pattern occurs
- Mark the phrases with a curved phrase mark

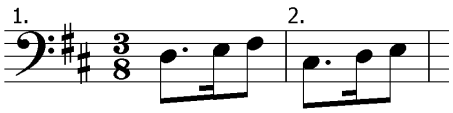
Many of these topics are covered in other lessons in this grade three course.
In this lesson we'll look at the rest of them:

Finding Similarities and Differences

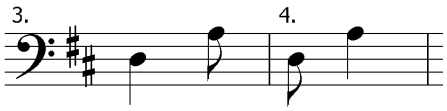
You might be asked to describe the similarities or differences between two sections of the music. You need to look at:

- The melody
- The rhythm
- The dynamics and phrasing

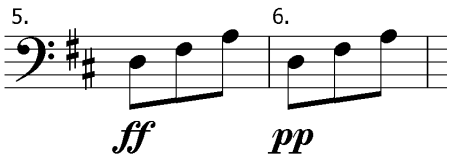
For example, you might see two bars which have the same rhythm, but a different melody:



the same melody notes, but a different rhythm:



the same melody and rhythm, but different dynamics:



You should try to describe with a little bit of detail what the similarities and differences are.

For example:

Bars 1-2
Similarity: Both bars use a rhythm of dotted quaver (8th note), semiquaver (16th note), quaver (8th note).
Difference: In bar 2 the melody is a scale step lower.

Bars 3-4
Similarity: Both bars use a leap of a perfect 5th D-A as the melody notes.
Difference: The rhythm is reversed in bar 2.

Bars 5-6
Similarity: Both bars have the same melody and rhythm.
Difference: The dynamics change from fortissimo in bar 5 to pianissimo in bar 6.

Counting Patterns

You might have to count the number of times you see:

- a certain rhythm
- bars which contain all the notes of the tonic triad
- a certain note (e.g. 3rd degree of the scale)

This is a very easy question! Just make sure you don't rush it and miss something.

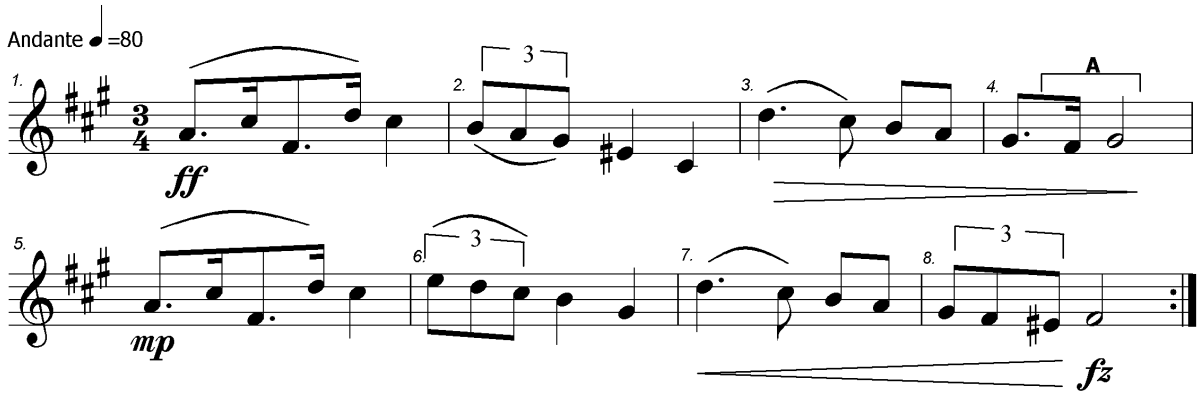
Marking Phrases

You might have to mark out the phrases in the score with a square bracket. The first one will be done for you.

- Phrases will normally (but not always) be the same number of bars in length (often four times two-bar phrases in an 8 bar piece).
- Phrase marks don't include rests (unless they are in the middle of the phrase)
- Use a ruler to draw the brackets.
- Use clues like crescendos to help you understand which notes would be kept together in the same phrase.

12. QUESTIONS ABOUT A SCORE EXERCISES

This melody is by V. Williams. Look at it and then answer the questions below.



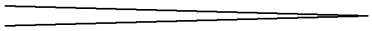
Give the meaning (in English) of each of these:

a) *ff*

b) *fz*

c)

d) *Andante*

e) 

f) =80

g) *mp*

h) Describe the time signature as:

i. simple or compound?

ii. duple, triple or quadruple?

i) Describe the melodic interval (e.g. major 3rd) between the notes marked with bracket A in bar 4.

j) The key is F# minor. On which degree of the scale does the melody begin?

k) How many demisemiquavers (32nd notes) is the first note of the melody worth?

l) Name one difference between bars 1 and 5.

m) How many bars contain all three notes of the tonic triad?

n) Name another key with the same key signature as F# minor.

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

12. QUESTIONS ABOUT A SCORE ANSWERS

a) *Fortissimo* = very loud

b) *Forzando* or *forzato* = with a sharp accent

c) Repeat from the beginning

d) At a walking pace

e) *Decrescendo* or *diminuendo* = gradually getting softer/quieter

f) Tempo is 80 crotchets (quarter notes) per minute

g) *Mezzo piano* = moderately soft/quiet

h)

i. simple

ii. triple

i) Major 2nd

j) Third

k) 6

l) Bar 1 is very loud (*ff*) whereas bar 5 is moderately soft (*mp*)

m) 2 (bars 1 and 5)

n) A major

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

13. FINDING DELIBERATE MISTAKES

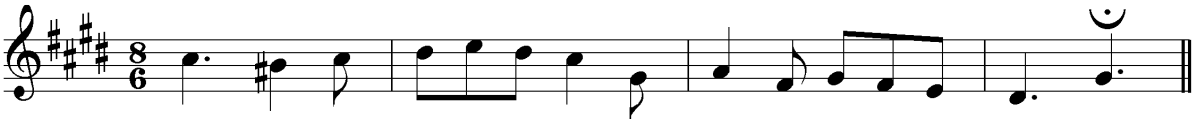
In the ABRSM grade 3 music theory exam, you might be given a short piece of music with about 5 deliberate mistakes in it. You need to rewrite the whole melody correctly on the given stave.

The kinds of mistake you need to look for include:

- Wrongly placed clef
- Wrongly placed sharps/flats in the key signature
- Upside down time signature
- Upside down symbols, e.g. pause mark
- Accidentals placed on the wrong side of the note
- Accidentals placed on the wrong line/space
- Stems pointing in the wrong direction

Here's an example:

The following passage contains **five** deliberate mistakes. Rewrite it correctly on the given stave.

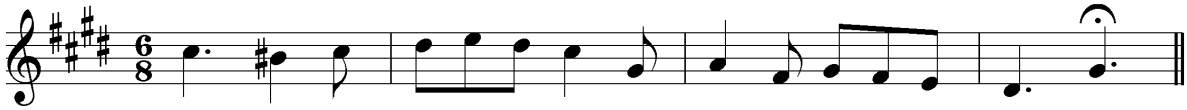


- Find all the mistakes BEFORE you start writing out the melody!
- Write the notes directly underneath the originals, so that you don't run out of space.
- Use a ruler to draw note stems and beams.

The five mistakes in this passage are:

- The clef is in the wrong position (the curly middle bit needs to circle the G line)
- The time signature is upside down
- In bar 1, the sharp is on the space for A, instead of on the line for B.
- In bar 2, the quaver G should have its stem pointing upwards (because it's below the middle line of the stave).
- In bar 4, the pause symbol is upside down. (Pauses are written that way up if they are written **under** the stave.

Here is the same melody, rewritten with the mistakes corrected:

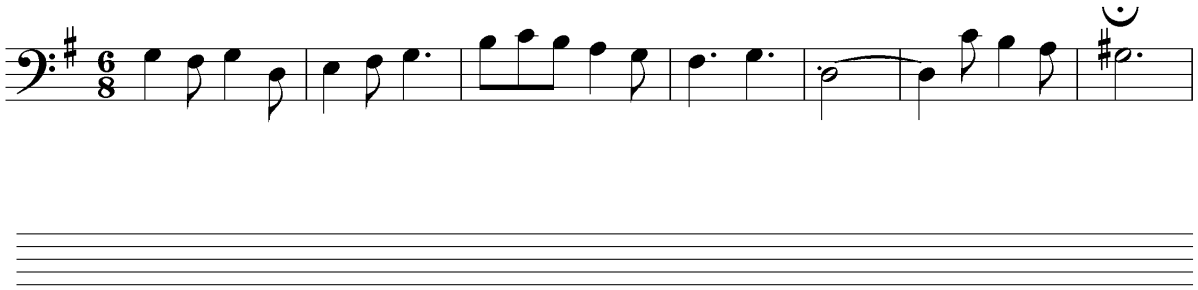


© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

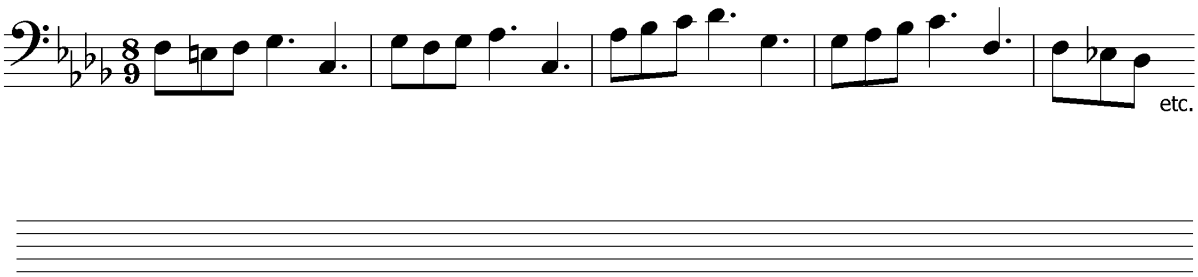
13. FINDING DELIBERATE MISTAKES EXERCISES

Each passage below contains 4 deliberate mistakes. Rewrite the melody correctly on the given stave.

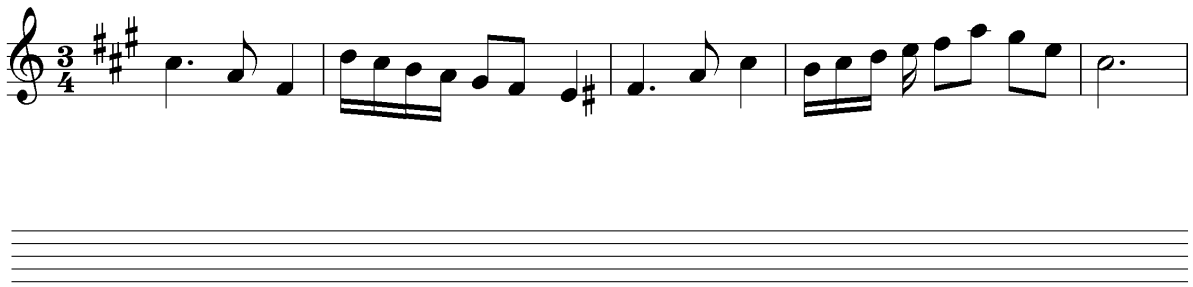
a.



b.



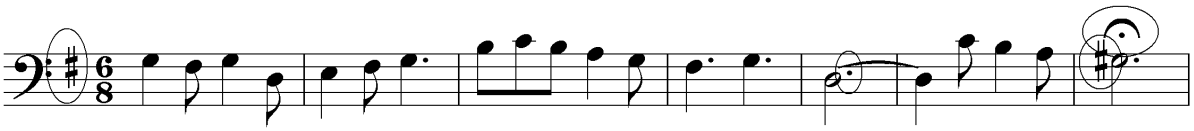
c.



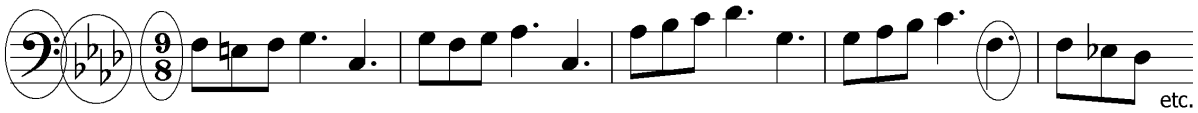
13. FINDING DELIBERATE MISTAKES ANSWERS

The melodies are rewritten below, with the location of each error circled.

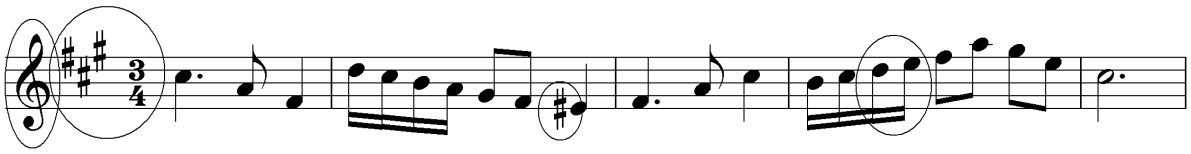
a.



b.



c.



GRADE 3 MUSIC THEORY PRACTICE TEST

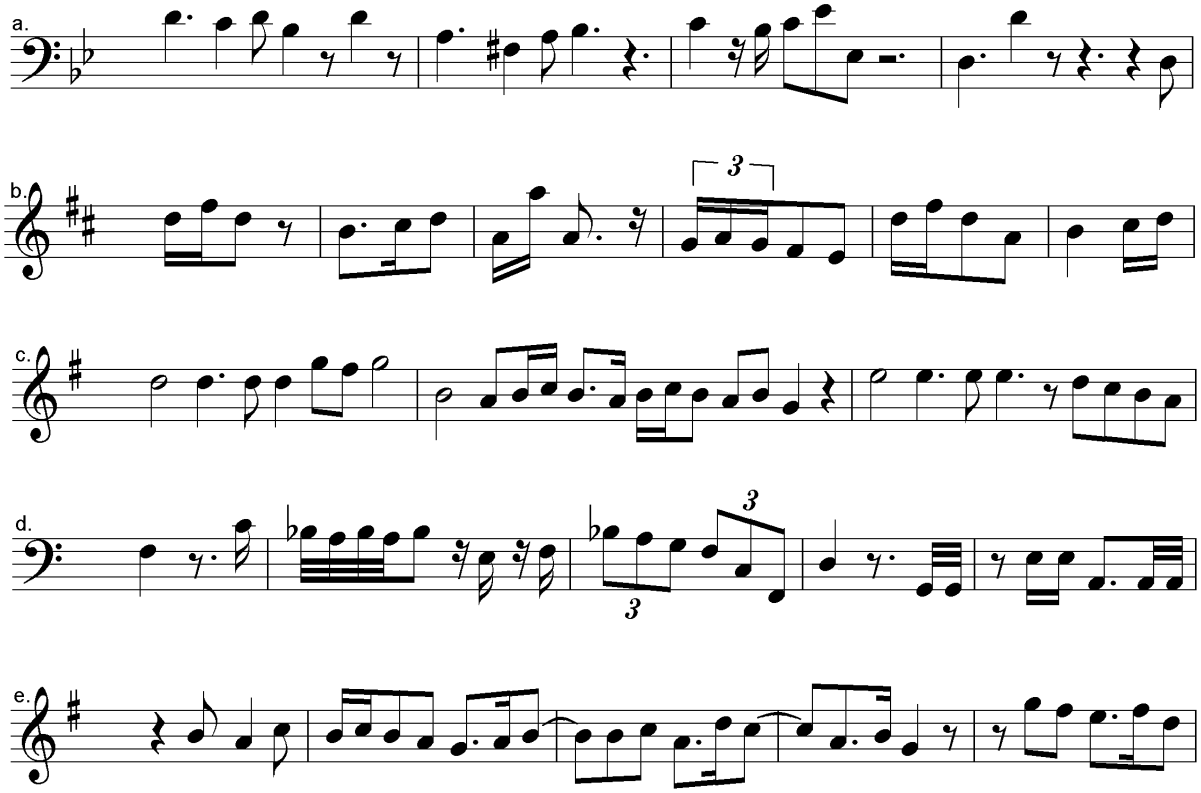
Answer all questions. Write your answers neatly and clearly, otherwise you may lose marks.

You have 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Scoring: 66/100=Pass, 80/100=Merit and 90/100=Distinction

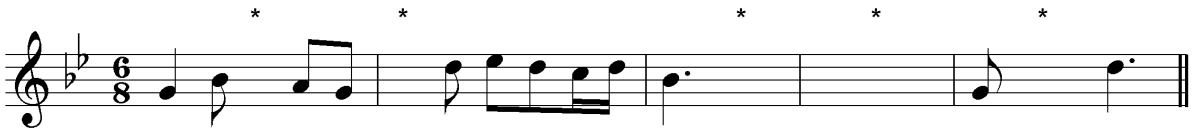
EXERCISE 1

Add the time signature to each of these five melodies. (10 points)



EXERCISE 2

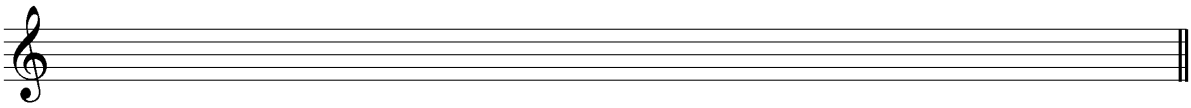
Add the correct rest(s) in the places marked with a star. (10 points)



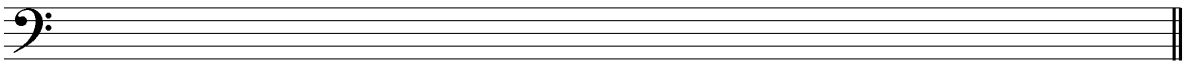
Exercise 3

Write as semibreves (whole-notes) the scales named below. (10 points)

a. E major, descending, with key signature

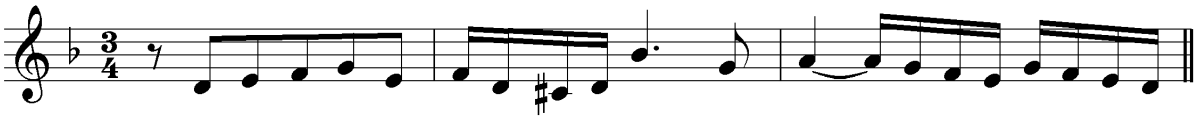


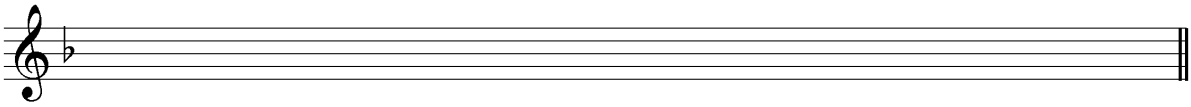
b) F# melodic minor, ascending, without key signature but including any necessary sharp or flat signs.



Exercise 4

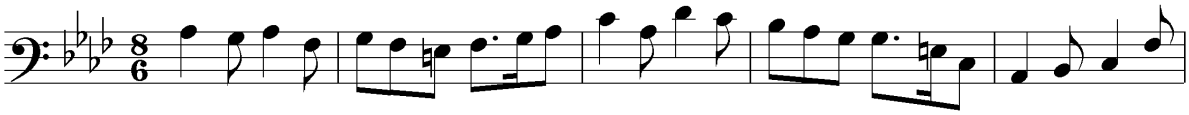
Rewrite this melody using notes and rests of twice the value. Remember to include the new time signature. (10 points)

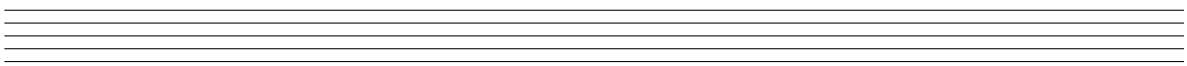




Exercise 5

a. The following passage contains **five** deliberate mistakes. Circle the mistakes, then rewrite it correctly on the given stave. (8 points)



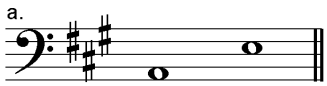


b. Name the degree of the scale (e.g. 4th, 5th) of the highest note. The key is F minor. (2 points)

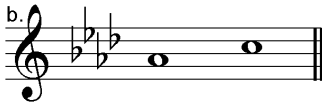
Exercise 6

Describe each of these melodic intervals, giving the **type** and **number** (e.g. minor 3rd, perfect 5th). The keys are named, and in each case the lower note is the key note (tonic). (10 points)

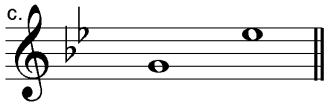
a. A major. Type: _____ Number: _____



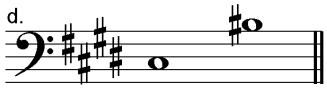
b. Ab major. Type: _____ Number: _____



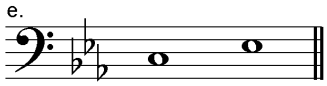
c. G minor. Type: _____ Number: _____



d. C# minor. Type: _____ Number: _____

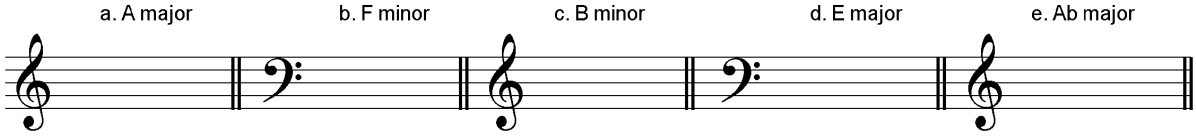


e. C minor. Type: _____ Number: _____



Exercise 7

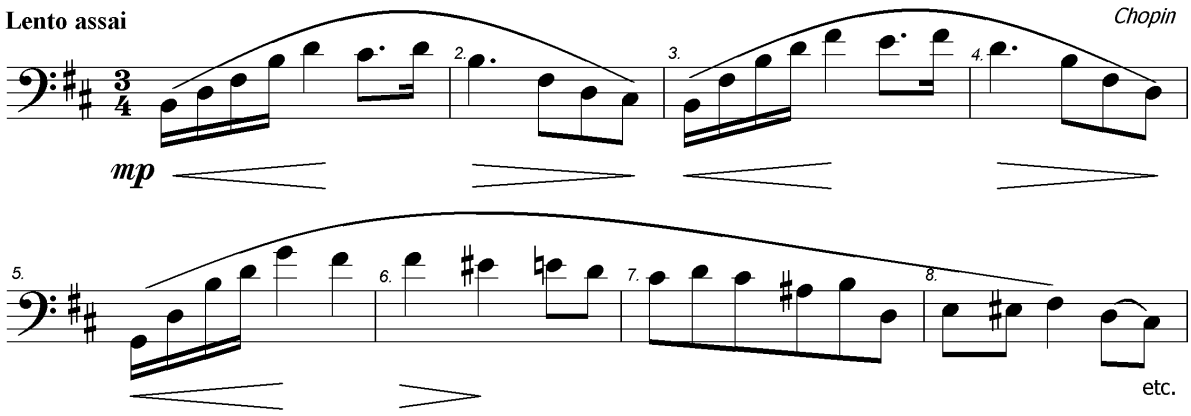
Write the key signature and tonic triad of each of these keys. (10 points)



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

Exercise 8

This melody is by Chopin. Look at it and answer the questions below. (2 points per question)



a. Choose the correct meaning of each of these. (6 points)

i. *Lento assai*	☐ Suddenly loud	☐ Quite quickly	☐ Very slowly	☐ Slowly & smoothly
ii.	☐ Accented	☐ Up bow	☐ Phrased	☐ Getting louder
iii. *mp*	☐ Very quiet	☐ Very loud	☐ Pedal	☐ Moderately soft

b. Is the time signature **simple** or **compound**? Is it **duple**, **triple** or **quadruple**? (2 points)

c. How many times does the rhythm occur? (2 points)

d. Name a minor key in which all the notes of bar 8 can be found. (2 points)

e. Name one similarity between bars 1 and 3. (2 points)

f. Name one difference between bars 1 and 3. (2 points)

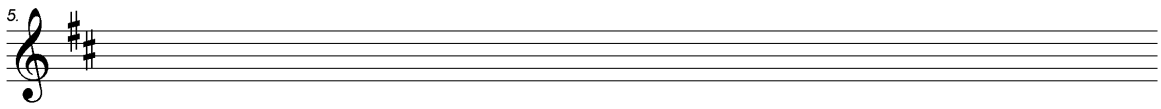
g. Answer TRUE or FALSE to the following sentence:

"Every bar contains at least one note belonging to the tonic triad of B minor". (2 points)

h. The key is B minor. Which other key uses the same key signature? (2 points)

Exercise 9

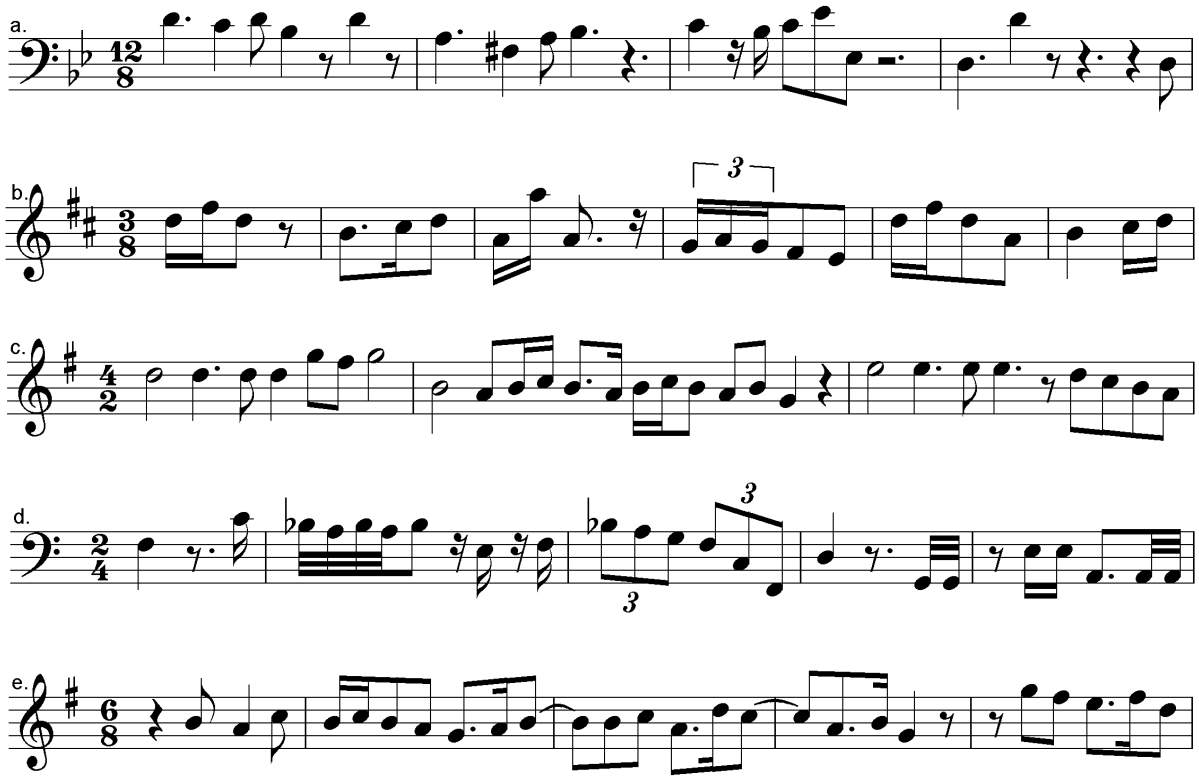
Write out the melody of the Chopin extract above, from bar 5 to the end of the music **an octave higher**, using the treble clef as shown. (10 points)



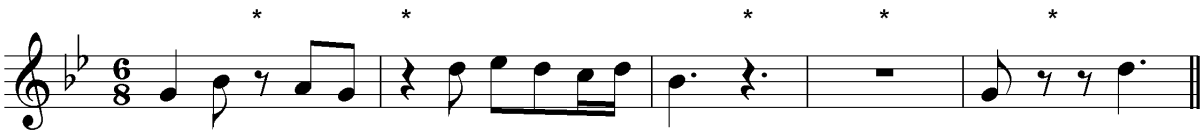
© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

GRADE 3 PRACTICE TEST ANSWERS

Exercise 1



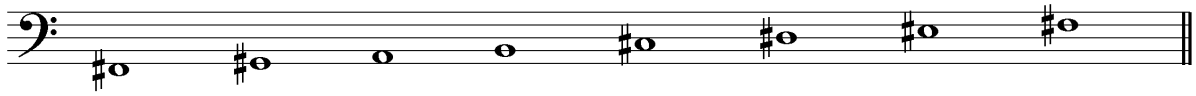
Exercise 2



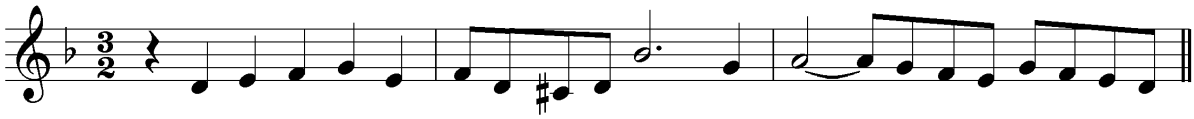
Exercise 3

a.

b.

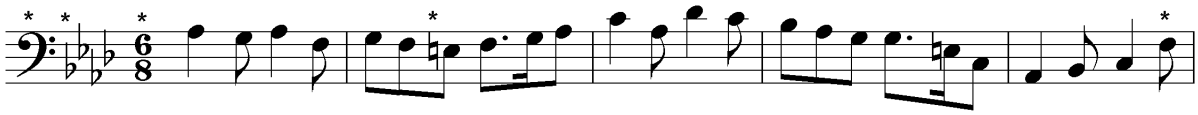


Exercise 4



Exercise 5

a.



b. 6th

Exercise 6

a. Perfect 5th

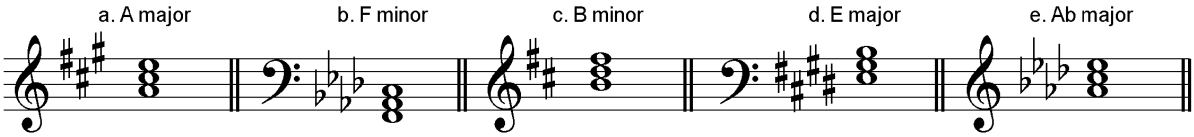
b. Major 3rd

c. Minor 6th

d. Major 7th

e. Minor 3rd

Exercise 7



Exercise 8

a.

i. Very slowly.

ii. Getting louder.

iii. Moderately soft.

b. Simple triple.

c. Three.

d. F# minor.

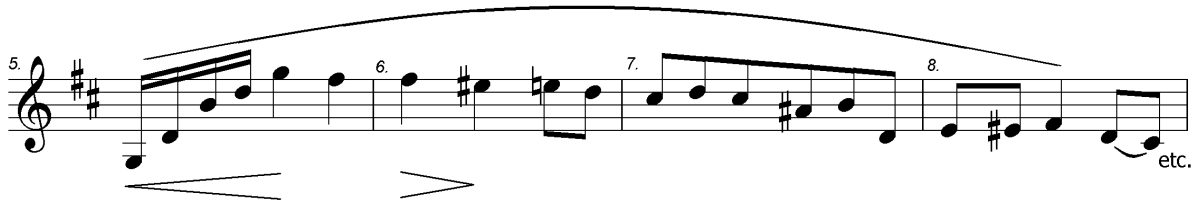
e. The rhythm is the same.

f. The melody rises higher in pitch.

g. True.

h. D major.

Exercise 9



© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

ANNEX

In this section you will find older material that has been removed from the ABRSM grade 3 syllabus since January 2018. I am keeping the material available here as an annex section, as it should prove useful to anyone keen to learn about the craft of composition, or who aspires to take music theory beyond grade 5, where composition is still a large part of the exam.

COMPLETING A RHYTHM

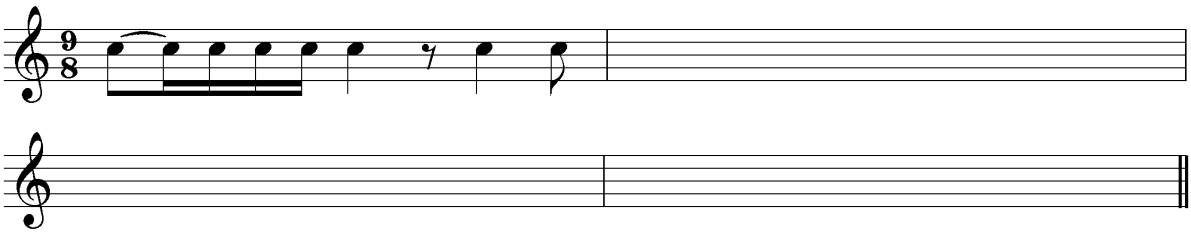
You need to write a **complete** four-bar rhythm using the given opening.

You'll be given one complete bar including the time signature, so you need to write **three** more bars.

You don't need to write a tune, only the rhythm.

Here's an example:

Write a complete four-bar rhythm in 9/8 time using the given opening.



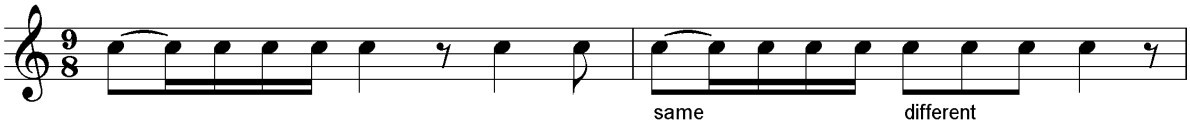
TIPS

1. Notice the time signature and make sure that each bar you write has the right number of beats.
2. Check that beamed notes (quavers, semiquavers and demisemiquavers) (8ths/16ths/32nds) are grouped correctly.
3. Don't just repeat exactly what you already have in any bar.
4. Don't write something that's completely different to any other bar.

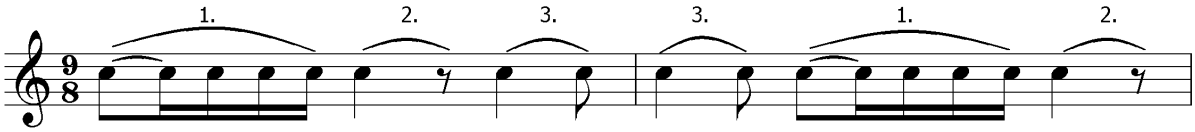
Tips one and two are straightforward, but tips three and four are a little bit more difficult to get right. You need to write something which is **similar** to bar one, but not **the same** and not **very different**. It can be hard to get that right, so make sure you do lots of practice!

Some ways you can achieve this:

- As you write each bar, keep **some** of the rhythmic patterns from the previous bar, but not all of them. You can change half to three quarters of the bar, for example:



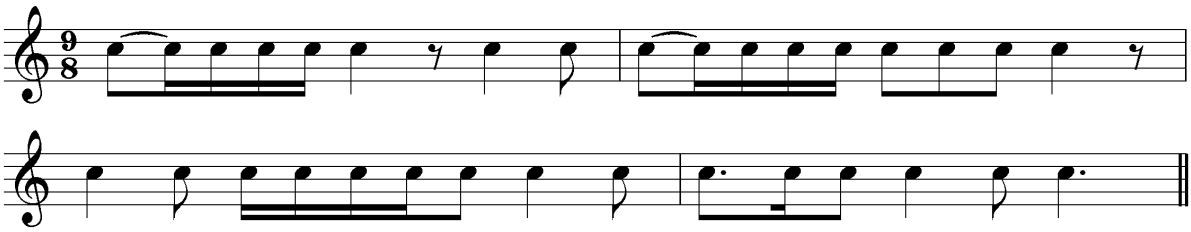
- Change the order of some of the groups of notes:

- 

  (The groups are numbered to show you how the order has changed.)

- Don't write things like lots of triplets, dotted/tied notes or syncopation **UNLESS** there were some in the first bar. You need to keep the character of the rhythm the same all the way through.
- Don't feel that you have to "show off" by writing every single different note value/rests, or anything else. It's more important to **keep the character** of the rhythm.
- Make sure any long notes fall **on the beat** (see lesson 8 for more on this).
- Use a reasonably long note to end the composition: don't end on a quaver, semiquaver or demisemiquaver (8th, 16th or 32nd note).

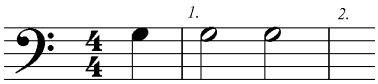
Here's a possible answer to the above question:



Notice how the same patterns get reused, but not in exactly the same way. We used a dotted note in the 4th bar, but it's not a "new" rhythm – it's the same value as the tied quaver (8th) + semiquaver (16th) in bars 1 and 2.

Dealing with Upbeats

An "upbeat" is a part of the rhythm which occurs before bar 1. If the piece starts on an upbeat, the first bar will **not** be complete. For example, this rhythm in 4/4 starts on an upbeat - there is just one crotchet (quarter note) in the first bar:



The second G falls on the strong beat - the first beat of bar 1. It is played with a stronger stress than the first G. Think of the word "po***ta***to" - the stress falls on the second syllable of the word. If you set the word "potato" to music, you'd use an upbeat for the syllable "po-", so that "-ta-" falls on the strong beat of the bar. Even when there are no words set to music, rhythms still contain stresses in the same way.

If there is an up-beat, you must make sure the last bar of your piece is also **incomplete.**

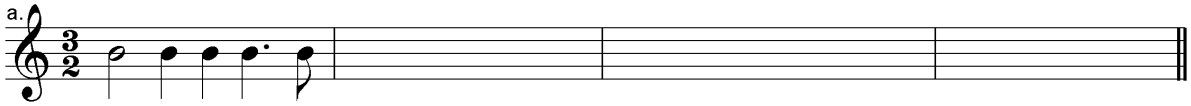
- The first bar and the last bar **added together** should make one complete bar. In our example, our last bar should contain 3 beats (not 4).

© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018

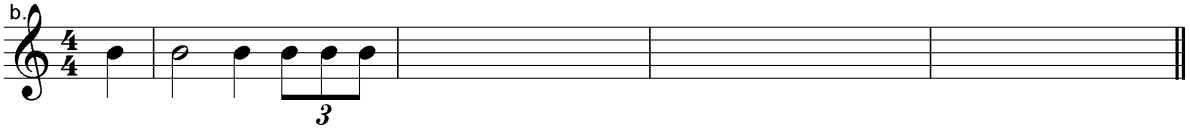
COMPLETING A RHYTHM EXERCISES

Write a complete 4-bar rhythm using the given openings.

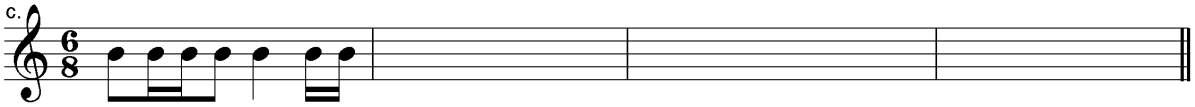
a.



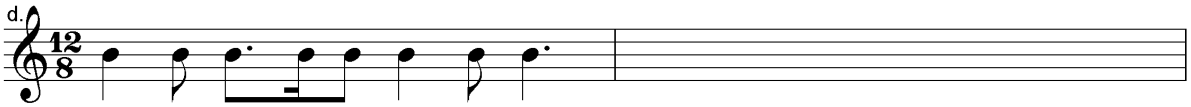
b.

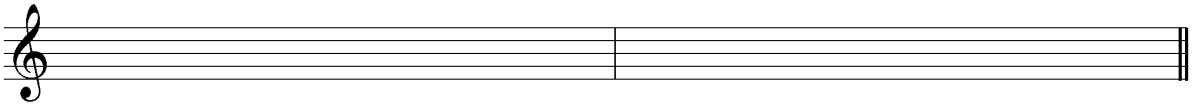


c.



d.

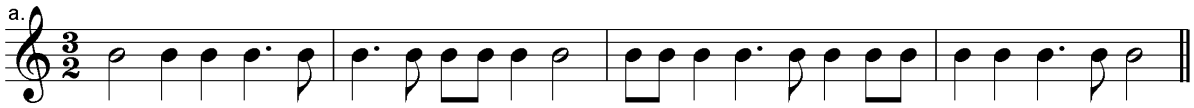


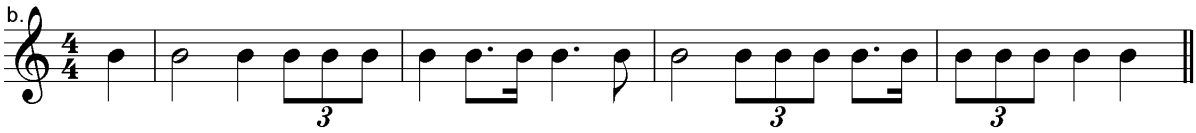


COMPLETING A RHYTHM ANSWERS

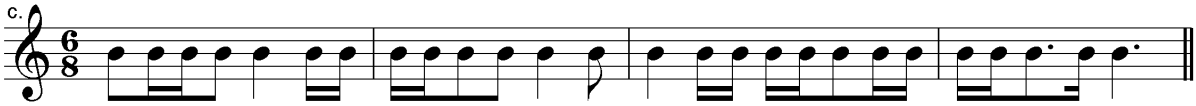
Answers will vary. Suggested answers are given on this page - many different answers are possible though!

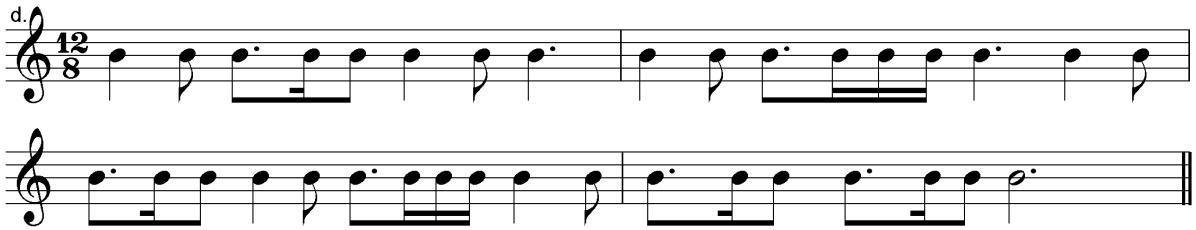
We can mark your work for you. Email us at info@mymusictheory.com for more information.





(Don't forget, the last bar should only contain three beats, because of the upbeat.)





© Victoria Williams – www.mymusictheory.com 2017
G3C 2018