



GRADE ONE · BEGINNER

Theory Pack

Yours to print, write on and keep. Six chapters of rudiments, each with a reference sheet and a worksheet — the building blocks everything else in music is made of.

There are no wrong notes, only surprising ones.



Wikimedia Commons

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Composing at five years old — and even he began with the very same building blocks you are about to learn.

What to expect

Grade 1 covers the rudiments everything else is built on: how music is written on the staff, how long notes and rests last, simple time signatures, your first key signatures, counting intervals, and building the tonic triad. Take one chapter at a time.

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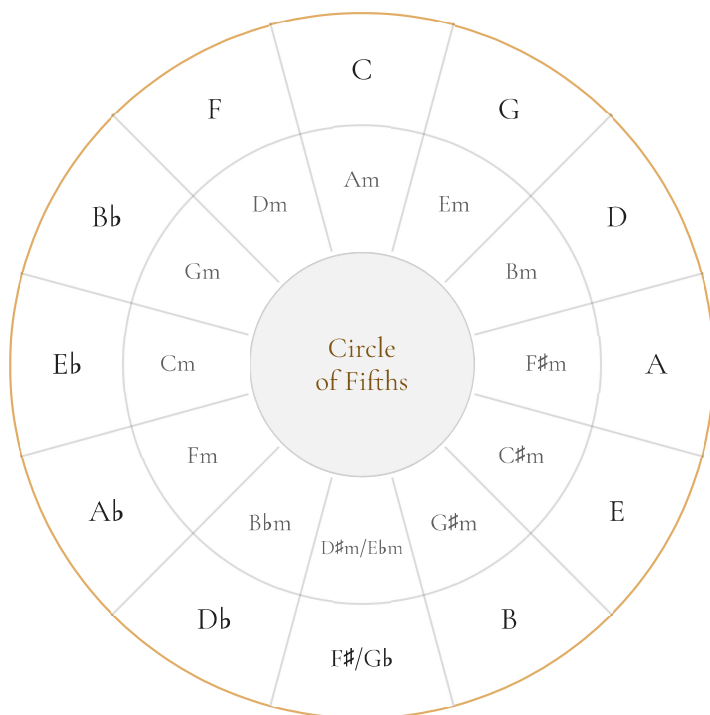
HOW TO USE THIS PACK

Read each reference sheet, then try its worksheet on paper. Tick off chapters as you go, and keep the Circle of Fifths beside you whenever you compose.

KEEP THIS ONE HANDY

The Circle of Fifths

Every key, its relative minor, and how far apart any two of them sit.



HOW IT WORKS

Clockwise from C, each key adds one sharp: C, G, D, A, E, B, F#.

Anticlockwise from C, each key adds one flat: C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db.

The inner ring is each key's relative minor — it shares the very same key signature.

Keys next to each other share nearly all their notes, so moving between them sounds smooth.

USING IT WHILE COMPOSING

Find a key signature fast — count the steps around the circle from C.

Change key smoothly — modulate to a neighbour, which shares the most notes.

Pick a relative minor for a darker version of a major-key idea.

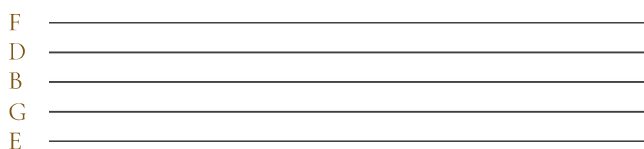
Build progressions like I–IV–V from chords that sit close together.

Staves, clefs & note naming

Music is written on a staff: five lines with four spaces between them. A note sits on a line or in a space to show its pitch — higher on the staff means a higher-sounding note.

The treble clef

Also called the G clef. Used for higher instruments and the right hand at the piano. Its spiral curls around the second line from the bottom, marking that line as G.

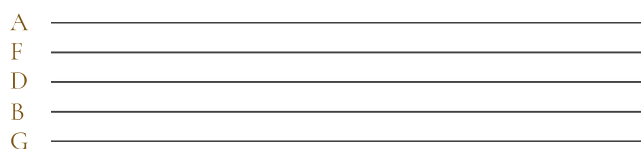


Lines, bottom to top: **E G B D F** — *Every Good Boy Deserves Football.*

Spaces: **F A C E** — they simply spell FACE.

The bass clef

Also called the F clef. Used for lower instruments and the left hand at the piano. Its two dots sit either side of the second line from the top, marking that line as F.



Lines, bottom to top: **G B D F A** — *Good Boys Deserve Fudge Always.*

Spaces: **A C E G** — *All Cows Eat Grass.*

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- The staff has five lines and four spaces, counted from the bottom up.
- The treble clef's spiral centre marks the G line; the bass clef's two dots sit around the F line.
- Notes move up the musical alphabet A–G as they move up the staff, then start again: after G comes A.
- Ledger lines extend the staff for notes too high or low to fit. Middle C sits on the first ledger line below the treble staff, and the first above the bass staff.

Staves, clefs & note naming

Work on paper or straight onto the sheet. Use the staves at the foot where you need them.

1 Name each note written on the treble stave — write the letter under each one.

2 Draw a treble clef, then write the notes C, E, G and B.

3 Circle the note that sits on the middle line of the treble stave.

4 Copy a short line of notes from any piece you like onto the staves below.

YOUR WORKING

Note & rest values

A note's shape tells you how long to hold it, counted in beats. Each value is worth exactly twice its neighbour — that doubling is the key to counting rhythm accurately.

ONE BAR OF FOUR BEATS, DIVIDED

Semibreve · 4 beats



Minim · 2 beats



Crotchet · 1 beat



Quaver · ½ beat



Notes

Semibreve — whole note 4 beats

Minim — half note 2 beats

Crotchet — quarter note 1 beat

Quaver — eighth note ½ beat

Rests

A rest is a silence. It uses exactly the same beat values as the notes, but means *don't play* instead of *play* — so every note value above has a matching rest of the same length.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- Semibreve: an open notehead with no stem. Minim: an open notehead with a stem.
- Crotchet: a filled notehead with a stem. Quaver: filled, with a stem and one flag — or a beam, when joined to another quaver.
- One semibreve = two minims = four crotchets = eight quavers.

Note & rest values

Work on paper or straight onto the sheet. Use the staves at the foot where you need them.

- 1 Write how many beats each note lasts in 4/4: semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver.

- 2 Next to each note above, name the rest that matches it.

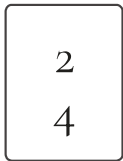
- 3 Add one note to complete each bar to four beats.

- 4 Write a two-bar rhythm of your own in 4/4, then clap it.

YOUR WORKING

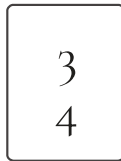
Simple time signatures

A time signature is two numbers stacked at the start of a piece. The top number tells you how many beats are in each bar; the bottom number tells you what kind of note counts as one beat.



Two beats per bar

Two crotchet beats in each bar. Often felt as a march, or an oom-pah.



Three beats per bar

Three crotchet beats in each bar. The classic waltz time signature.



Four beats per bar

The most common signature in Western music — sometimes written as a large C for common time.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- The bottom number 4 means the crotchet gets one beat — true of all three signatures above.
- The top number tells you how many of those beats fit in each bar.
- Bar lines divide the music into equal groups of beats, which makes rhythm far easier to read.
- A time signature is *simple* when its main beat divides naturally into two — one crotchet splits into two quavers.

Simple time signatures

Work on paper or straight onto the sheet. Use the staves at the foot where you need them.

1 How many crotchet beats are in a bar of 3/4? Of 2/4? Of 4/4?

2 Which time signature gives three crotchet beats per bar?

3 Add barlines to a rhythm so that each bar adds up to four beats.

4 Compose a two-bar rhythm in 4/4 on the staves below.

YOUR WORKING

Key signatures

Up to one sharp or flat

A key signature is a set of sharps or flats placed right after the clef, telling you which notes to raise or lower for the whole piece — so you needn't write an accidental every single time.

C

No sharps or flats

The simplest key — every note is played exactly as written on the stave.

G

One sharp — F#

Every F in the piece is played as F#, unless cancelled by a natural sign.

F b

One flat — Bb

Every B in the piece is played as Bb, unless cancelled by a natural sign.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- A key signature applies to every octave of that note, not just the one it is drawn on.
- Sharps and flats in a key signature are always written in a fixed order and position — never at random.
- An accidental written next to a note overrides the key signature, but only for the rest of that bar.
- At a glance: one sharp is G major, one flat is F major, none at all is C major.

Key signatures

Work on paper or straight onto the sheet. Use the staves at the foot where you need them.

1 Which major key has one sharp? Which major key has one flat?

2 Name the sharp used in G major, and the flat used in F major.

3 Draw the key signature for G major, then for F major.

4 Write a C major scale — no sharps or flats — on the stave below.

YOUR WORKING

Intervals by number

An interval is the distance between two notes. At Grade 1 you only need to count the distance by number: ignore any sharps or flats, and count every letter name from the bottom note to the top, including both.

For example, C up to E: count C (1), D (2), E (3) — so C to E is a 3rd.

COUNTING UP FROM C

2nd	C to D	Two letter names — the smallest step.
3rd	C to E	Skip one letter. The sound of a chord.
4th	C to F	Open and fanfare-like.
5th	C to G	The steadiest interval of all.
6th	C to A	Warm and very singable.
7th	C to B	One letter short of home.
8ve	C to C	Eight letter names — an octave, not an 8th.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- Always count both notes — the starting note counts as 1, not 0.
- Ignore sharps and flats when counting by number: C–E and C–E $\flat$ are both 3rds.
- A note to itself is a unison, never a 1st. Eight letter names apart is an octave, never an 8th.

Intervals by number

Work on paper or straight onto the sheet. Use the staves at the foot where you need them.

- 1 Count the interval by number: C to E, D to G, F to C.

- 2 Write a note a 3rd above C, and a note a 5th above G.

- 3 Name each interval marked on the stave.

- 4 Write your own pair of notes a 4th apart.

YOUR WORKING

Tonic triads in root position

A triad is a three-note chord built by stacking two 3rds. The tonic triad is built on the first note of a scale — the home chord of the key. In root position the tonic sits at the bottom, with the 3rd and 5th stacked above it.

C major triad

G	5th
E	3rd
C	Root

G major triad

D	5th
B	3rd
G	Root

F major triad

C	5th
A	3rd
F	Root

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- A triad is the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of a scale, played together.
- Root position means the tonic is the lowest note. Any other note at the bottom makes it an inversion.
- Each note is a 3rd from the next — that stack of 3rds is what makes a triad a triad.
- The tonic triad is the chord a piece in that key usually starts and ends on. It is the chord most at rest.

Tonic triads

Work on paper or straight onto the sheet. Use the staves at the foot where you need them.

- 1 Build the tonic triad of C major — write its three notes.

- 2 Write the tonic triad of G major, and of F major.

- 3 Name the three notes of the C major tonic triad.

- 4 Draw a tonic triad in root position on the stave below.

YOUR WORKING
