

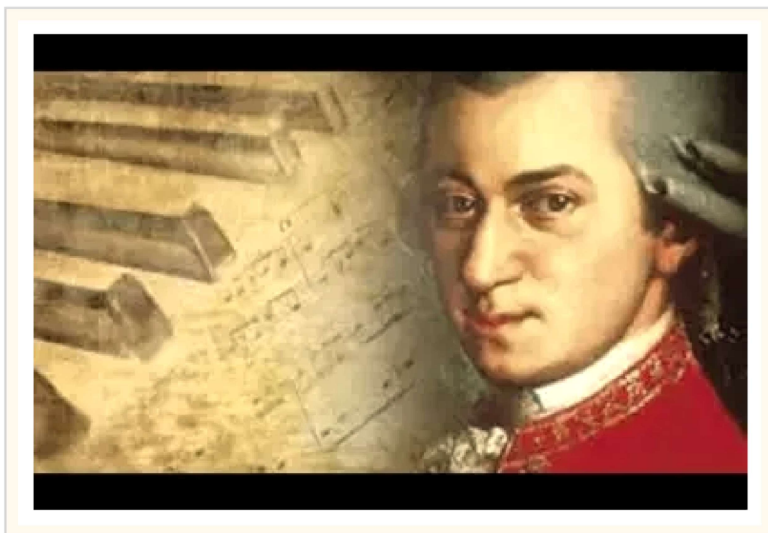


GRADE THREE · INTERMEDIATE

Theory Pack

Yours to print, write on and keep. Six chapters: compound time, exact interval quality, the scale formulas that unlock real composing, and short composition tasks.

There are no wrong notes, only surprising ones.



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Johann Sebastian Bach

He taught himself by copying out the music he loved by candlelight. Curiosity and patience are a composer's best tools.

What to expect

Grade 3 opens up compound time, the exact quality of intervals, and the scale formulas that unlock real composing — the major scale, all three minor scales, and the names of the scale degrees — finishing with short composition tasks.

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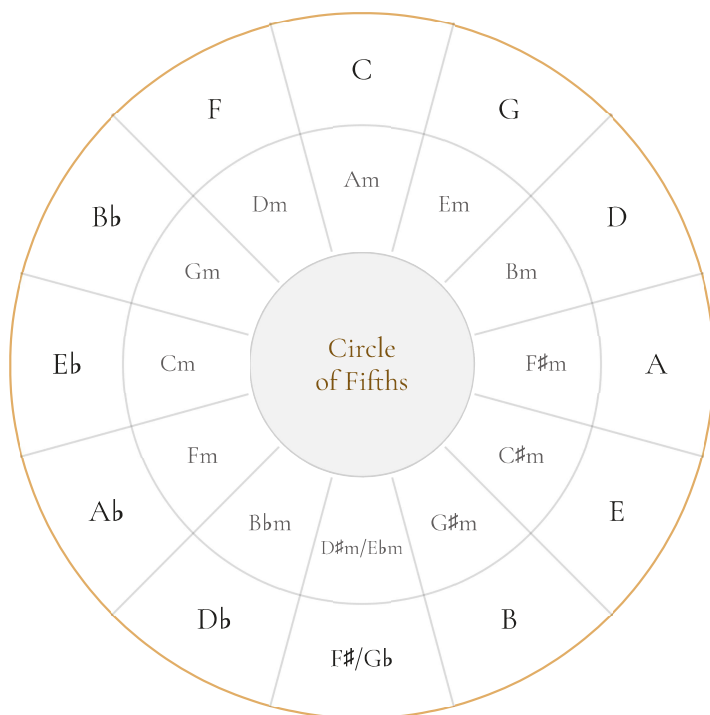
HOW TO USE THIS PACK

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.

Compound time signatures

New for Grade 3. In simple time each beat splits into two; in compound time each main beat splits naturally into three. That one difference changes how a bar is counted, felt and beamed.



Two main beats



Three main beats



Four main beats

Each beamed group is one dotted-crotchet beat, splitting into three quavers.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- The top number in compound time is always divisible by three — 6, 9 or 12. That is your first clue it is compound, not simple.
- Divide the top number by three to find the main beats: 6/8 has two, 9/8 has three, 12/8 has four.
- Each main beat is a dotted note — a dotted crotchet in all three — which divides naturally into three quavers.
- Beam quavers in groups of three, matching each main beat. This is the compound-time version of the Grade 2 beat-grouping rule.

Compound time signatures

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

1 How many quavers are in a bar of 6/8? Of 9/8? Of 12/8?

2 6/8 is felt in how many main beats per bar?

3 Add barlines to a 6/8 rhythm so that each bar is correct.

4 Compose a two-bar rhythm in 6/8 on the staves below.

YOUR WORKING

Interval quality

Grade 3 completes the interval picture. Alongside major and minor from Grade 2, you now need perfect, diminished and augmented. Quality depends on the exact number of semitones, not just the letter-name distance.

The perfect family

Unison

4th

5th

Octave

These do not come in major/minor pairs. They can only be perfect, diminished or augmented.

The major / minor family

2nd

3rd

6th

7th

These can be major, minor, diminished or augmented – but never perfect.

Narrowing and widening

Diminished

One semitone smaller than perfect, or than minor.

Augmented

One semitone larger than perfect, or than major.

Perfect 5th – 1

A perfect 5th narrowed by a semitone becomes a diminished 5th.

Perfect 4th + 1

A perfect 4th widened by a semitone becomes an augmented 4th.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- Work in two separate steps: check the letter-name number first, then work out the quality from the semitone count.
- Unisons, 4ths, 5ths and octaves are never called major or minor.
- 2nds, 3rds, 6ths and 7ths are never called perfect.

Interval quality

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

- 1 Name the quality of these intervals: C–E, C–Eb, C–G, C–F#.

- 2 Turn a major 3rd into a minor 3rd — which note moves?

- 3 Widen a perfect 5th by a semitone. What is it now called?

- 4 Label the quality and number of each interval on the stave.

YOUR WORKING

The major scale formula

Every major scale, in any key, follows exactly the same pattern of tones and semitones. Learn the formula once and you can build a major scale starting on any note at all.

THE FORMULA, BUILT ON C

T	T	S	T	T	T	S
C–D	D–E	E–F	F–G	G–A	A–B	B–C

On C this gives the white notes of the piano, with no sharps or flats needed. The two semitones always fall between degrees 3–4 and 7–8 — in every major key, without exception.

Using the formula in other keys

- 1 Start on any note and apply the same T–T–S–T–T–T–S pattern.
- 2 Where the formula calls for a tone but the natural note is only a semitone away, add a sharp or flat to correct it.
- 3 That correction is exactly how key signatures are built in the first place.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- The pattern T–T–S–T–T–T–S never changes, no matter which note you start on.
- A major scale uses each of the seven letter names exactly once before repeating the tonic an octave higher.
- If you know a key's key signature, you already know its scale — apply the sharps or flats as you play up the letter names.

The major scale formula

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

- 1 Write out the tone/semitone pattern of a major scale.

- 2 Where do the two semitones fall in a major scale?

- 3 Build a G major scale using the formula.

- 4 Write a D major scale on the staff below.

YOUR WORKING

Minor scales

Natural, harmonic & melodic

Unlike the major scale, minor keys have three related versions. All three share the same key signature — they differ only in which notes get raised, and those changes are written as accidentals.

Natural minor

No alterations

1	2	b3	4	5	b6	b7	8
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Simply the notes of the key signature, straight up and down.

Harmonic minor

Raise degree 7, both ways

1	2	b3	4	5	b6	♯7	8
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A stronger pull back to the tonic — but it leaves a gap of three semitones between degrees 6 and 7.

Melodic minor

Raise 6 and 7 ascending only

1	2	b3	4	5	♯6	♯7	8
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Smooths out that gap going up, then reverts to the natural minor coming down.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- All three share the same key signature — the differences are added as accidentals, never as signature changes.
- Harmonic minor: raise degree 7 only, both ascending and descending.
- Melodic minor: raise degrees 6 and 7 ascending; use the natural minor descending.
- The harmonic minor's raised 7th creates an augmented 2nd between degrees 6 and 7 — that distinctive, slightly exotic sound.

Minor scales

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

1 Write the natural minor scale of A.

2 To make A harmonic minor, which single note is raised?

3 Name the three types of minor scale.

4 Write an A harmonic minor scale on the stave below.

YOUR WORKING

Scale degree names

Each note of a scale has a name describing its role, not just its number. These names are used constantly in harmony and composing, so they are worth knowing by heart.

1	Tonic	C	Home — the note and chord most at rest.
2	Supertonic	D	One step above the tonic.
3	Mediant	E	Midway between tonic and dominant; sets the mood.
4	Subdominant	F	Sits the same distance below the tonic as the dominant sits above it.
5	Dominant	G	The strongest pull back to the tonic — the basis of most cadences.
6	Submediant	A	The relative minor's home.
7	Leading note	B	A semitone below the tonic, and leads the ear strongly up to it.
8	Tonic	C	Home again, an octave higher. Arrival.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- These names apply to both major and minor scales — the position number and name stay the same either way.
- Knowing them makes it far easier to talk about chord progressions later: *the dominant chord resolves to the tonic*.
- The leading note only pulls strongly when it is a semitone away. In natural minor, degree 7 is a whole tone below the tonic — which is part of why harmonic minor raises it.

Scale degree names

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

1 Name scale degrees 1, 4 and 5.

2 In C major, which note is the dominant? Which is the leading note?

3 Which scale degree pulls most strongly towards the tonic?

4 Write a C major scale and label each degree underneath.

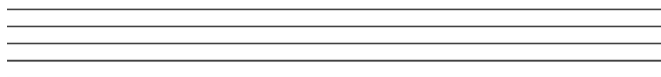
YOUR WORKING

Short composition tasks

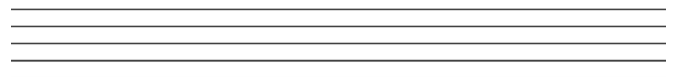
These build on Grade 2's complete-the-melody exercises, now within a chosen key — often minor — and sometimes in compound time. Use everything from this grade to write something that sounds finished and intentional.

A given opening

D minor · 6/8 · two bars



Given — the D natural minor scale



Your completion — rise, then settle on D

A simple approach

- 1 Identify the key and scale — check the key signature, and in minor keys watch for a raised 7th suggesting harmonic minor.
- 2 Keep the same time signature and a consistent rhythmic style, using the beat-grouping rules from Grades 2 and 3.
- 3 Give the melody an overall shape — a rise to a high point, then a fall back toward the tonic, works reliably.
- 4 End on the tonic, often approached from the leading note or the dominant.

KEY RULES TO REMEMBER

- Examiners look for consistency and musical sense, not a correct answer — there is always more than one good solution.
- Stay inside the given key signature unless the task specifically invites chromatic notes.
- A strong final cadence — dominant to tonic, degree 5 to 1 — gives the clearest sense of ending.
- Re-using a rhythm or melodic shape from the opening shows control and unity, rather than introducing unrelated new ideas.

Short composition tasks

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

- 1 Compose a four-bar melody in C major that ends on the tonic.

- 2 Use mostly stepwise motion, with just one leap for interest.

- 3 Give your melody a clear high point — a peak note.

- 4 Add a title and one dynamic marking, such as *mp* or *f*.

YOUR WORKING
