

Interval identification drill

An interval's name has two halves — a number and a quality — and each is found a different way. Count letters for one, semitones for the other, in that order.

THE TWO HALVES OF THE NAME

NUMBER FIRST, ALWAYS

The number — count letter names. Include both ends. C up to G is C D E F G: five letters, so a fifth. Accidentals never change the number, so C# up to Gb is still some kind of fifth.

The quality — count semitones. Seven semitones makes that fifth perfect; six makes it diminished; eight makes it augmented. The number tells you which set of qualities is even available.

Seconds, thirds, sixths and sevenths come in *major* and *minor*; unisons, fourths, fifths and octaves are *perfect*, never major or minor. Any of them can be diminished (a semitone smaller) or augmented (a semitone larger).

THE TABLE TO KNOW BY HEART

LEARN THE SEMITONE COLUMN

INTERVAL	SEMITONES	ON C	INTERVAL	SEMITONES	ON C
Perfect unison	0	C – C	Diminished 5th	6	C – Gb
Minor 2nd	1	C – Db	Perfect 5th	7	C – G
Major 2nd	2	C – D	Minor 6th	8	C – Ab
Minor 3rd	3	C – Eb	Major 6th	9	C – A
Major 3rd	4	C – E	Minor 7th	10	C – Bb
Perfect 4th	5	C – F	Major 7th	11	C – B
Augmented 4th	6	C – F#	Perfect octave	12	C – C

Inverting an interval. Move the lower note up an octave. The two numbers always add to nine — a third inverts to a sixth, a fourth to a fifth. Major and minor swap, diminished and augmented swap, perfect stays perfect.

Compound intervals. Anything wider than an octave. Take seven off the number and you have the simple interval inside, same quality: a major 10th is a major 3rd plus an octave.

WORKING METHOD

THREE STEPS, EVERY TIME

- 1 Count the letter names aloud, both ends included. Write the number down before anything else.
- 2 Ignore the accidentals and ask what that interval is between the plain letters — then adjust for each accidental, one semitone at a time.
- 3 Say the whole name: quality then number. "Minor sixth", not "sixth".

The trap. Enharmonic notes sound alike but make different intervals. C up to F# is an augmented fourth; C up to Gb is a diminished fifth. Same key on a piano, different answers on paper — only the letter names decide.

Interval identification drill

Answers overleaf

NAME _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____

A · NAME THE INTERVAL

QUALITY AND NUMBER · ALL ASCENDING

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 1 C up to E | _____ | 7 B up to F# | _____ |
| 2 D up to A | _____ | 8 Eb up to Ab | _____ |
| 3 E up to Bb | _____ | 9 F# up to A | _____ |
| 4 F up to D | _____ | 10 Bb up to E | _____ |
| 5 G up to F | _____ | 11 C# up to B | _____ |
| 6 A up to F# | _____ | 12 Ab up to F | _____ |

B · WRITE THE LETTER NAME

MIND THE ACCIDENTAL

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 13 A major 6th above D | _____ | 17 An augmented 4th above F | _____ |
| 14 A minor 3rd above F | _____ | 18 A minor 6th below C | _____ |
| 15 A perfect 4th above B | _____ | 19 A perfect 5th below G | _____ |
| 16 A major 7th above Eb | _____ | 20 A major 3rd below Ab | _____ |

C · INVERT IT

NINE MINUS THE NUMBER

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| 21 Major 3rd | _____ | 24 Augmented 4th | _____ |
| 22 Perfect 4th | _____ | 25 Major 6th | _____ |
| 23 Minor 7th | _____ | 26 Diminished 5th | _____ |

D · REDUCE THE COMPOUND

NAME THE SIMPLE INTERVAL INSIDE

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 27 Major 10th | _____ | 29 Minor 9th | _____ |
| 28 Perfect 12th | _____ | 30 Major 13th | _____ |

E · WRITE IT ON THE STAVE

THE ARROW GIVES THE DIRECTION

Draw the second notehead, adding an accidental if it needs one, and write its letter name below.

M3 ↑	P5 ↑	m6 ↑	M7 ↑	P4 ↓	m3 ↓
					
31	32	33	34	35	36
M6 ↑	m7 ↑	d5 ↑	A4 ↑	M3 ↓	P4 ↓
					
37	38	39	40	41	42

Answer key

One point a question · forty-two in all

A · NAME THE INTERVAL

1 major 3rd · 2 perfect 5th · 3 diminished 5th · 4 major 6th · 5 minor 7th · 6 major 6th.

7 perfect 5th · 8 perfect 4th · 9 minor 3rd · 10 augmented 4th · 11 minor 7th · 12 major 6th.

3 is a diminished fifth and not an augmented fourth, because E up to B $\flat$ counts five letters. 10 is the other way about: B $\flat$ up to E counts four.

B · WRITE THE LETTER NAME

13 B · 14 A $\flat$ · 15 E · 16 D · 17 B · 18 E · 19 C · 20 F $\flat$.

14 must be A $\flat$, not G $\sharp$ — the third above F has to be some kind of A. In 20, a major third below A $\flat$ counts down three letters to F, and F to A $\flat$ is only a minor third, so the lower note must drop a semitone: F $\flat$.

C · INVERT IT

21 minor 6th · 22 perfect 5th · 23 major 2nd · 24 diminished 5th · 25 minor 3rd · 26 augmented 4th.

D · REDUCE THE COMPOUND

27 major 3rd · 28 perfect 5th · 29 minor 2nd · 30 major 6th.

E · ON THE TREBLE STAVE

The printed notes are G4, D4, E4, F4, C5, A4.

31 major 3rd above G — B · 32 perfect 5th above D — A · 33 minor 6th above E — C · 34 major 7th above F — E · 35 perfect 4th below C — G · 36 minor 3rd below A — F $\sharp$.

36 needs the sharp written in: A down to F natural is a major third.

E · ON THE BASS STAVE

The printed notes are G2, A2, B2, F2, D3, E3.

37 major 6th above G — E · 38 minor 7th above A — G · 39 diminished 5th above B — F · 40 augmented 4th above F — B · 41 major 3rd below D — B $\flat$ · 42 perfect 4th below E — B.

39 and 40 are the same two keys on a piano and different answers on paper. 41 needs the flat: D down to B natural is a minor third.

MARKING GUIDE

WHERE THE MARKS ARE LOST

SCORE OUT OF 42	WHAT TO DO NEXT
38 – 42	Secure. Move on to hearing intervals rather than working them out — try the aural training pack.
30 – 37	The qualities are slipping. Re-learn the semitone column, then redo sections A and B.
20 – 29	Count letter names aloud, both ends included, every question.
Under 20	Work through page one again with a keyboard in front of you, then attempt section A alone before the rest.

LANDMARKS FOR THE EAR

HUM THE TUNE, THEN THE INTERVAL

- **Minor 2nd** — the two lowest notes of the *Jaws* theme
- **Minor 3rd** — the opening of *Greensleeves*
- **Perfect 4th** — the opening of *Amazing Grace*
- **Augmented 4th** — restless, unresolved; the tritone
- **Perfect 5th** — the first leap of *Twinkle, twinkle*
- **Major 6th** — the opening of *My Bonnie*

Half marks are not given. An interval has one name. "Sixth" is not an answer and neither is "minor" on its own — an examiner needs both words, and the quality is the half that is usually missing. Say the full name out loud each time and the habit sticks.