

Designing Effective and Engaging Music Fundamentals Resources for Online Teaching

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Suggested Fundamentals Topics

Each collegiate music theory program treats fundamentals a little differently. However, the following topics are generally agreed upon as belonging in a music fundamentals course.

Pitch

- Reading treble and bass clefs quickly
- Reading alto and tenor clefs
- Ledger lines
- Accidentals
- Properly writing and identifying noteheads, stems, beams, flags, etc.
- Location of notes on a piano keyboard
- Aural skills: matching pitch

Rhythm and Meter

- How rhythms relate to each other and what each rhythmic value is called
- Rests
- Dots
- Ties
- Measures and bar lines
- Simple vs. compound meter
- Duple, triple, and quadruple meter
- How to read time signatures
- Conducting in 2, 3, and 4
- Aural skills: hearing the difference between simple and compound meter
- Aural skills: basic rhythmic dictations

Scales and Key Signatures

- Whole and half steps
- Writing major scales with accidentals
- Writing minor scales with accidentals – natural, harmonic, and melodic
- Major key signatures, memorized – recognition and writing
- Minor key signatures, memorized – recognition and writing
- Scale degrees – numbers, solfege, and function names (tonic, supertonic, etc.)
- Aural skills: hearing the differences between scale types
- Aural skills: basic stepwise pitch patterns and/or melodic dictation
- Aural skills: ability to find and sing tonic, sing diatonic scales, and sing simple stepwise patterns

Intervals

- Interval numbers and qualities – major, minor, perfect, diminished, and augmented
- Consonance and dissonance
- Recognizing intervals
- Writing intervals above and below a given pitch.
- Aural skills: interval identification up through an octave

More Advanced Fundamentals Topics

In general, the topics below are considered to belong to a beginning music theory course, instead of fundamentals. Much of the early study of music theory in college coursework focuses on triadic harmony, so the topic of triads points students in this direction. However, some fundamentals courses do cover these topics, and they are appropriate for more advanced students.

Triads

- Triad qualities – major, minor, diminished, and augmented
- Triad inversions
- Figured bass (especially as it relates to triad inversions)
- Aural skills: triad quality identification

Seventh Chords

- Seventh chord qualities – major-minor, major-major, minor-minor, half diminished, fully diminished
- Seventh chord inversions
- Figured bass (especially as it relates to seventh chord inversions)

Harmonic Analysis

- Labeling triads and seventh chords in a key with proper Roman numerals
- Using capital and lowercase Roman numerals to show chord quality
- Using figured bass with Roman numerals to show chord inversions