

HIGHER MUSIC COMPOSITION 101

Name _____

Class _____

Higher Music Composition 101

What do you think a piece of music should contain to make it successful?

Where can you find inspiration?

#1 Most Important Tip!!!!

When writing your music **PLEASE** don't be afraid of experimenting with **RHYTHM**, **MELODY** and **HARMONY**. They are what makes music great!

RHYTHM

- Rhythm is about the timing of notes that are played.
- Rhythms can be varied in many different ways and add interest and excitement to the music.
- Think of the rhythm in the music from Jaws. How did it portray what happens in the film? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BX3bN5YeiQs>

Try to clap these rhythms. If you have access to a Music Notation programme like Sibelius, type them in on one note to check you are accurate. Try to make up some silly sentences to help you clap them in time. Write them underneath e.g.

$\frac{4}{4}$ I like groo- vv groo - vv rhv- thms thev are so great
 $\frac{4}{4}$
 $\frac{4}{4}$
 $\frac{4}{4}$
 $\frac{4}{4}$

Make up your own silly rhythm sentence and see if you can notate it here:

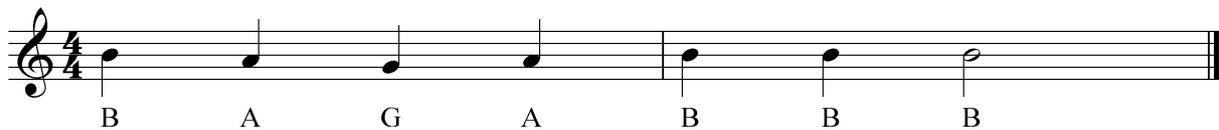
$\frac{4}{4}$

Use the reminder on the next page to help you ensure it adds up to 4.

Reminder

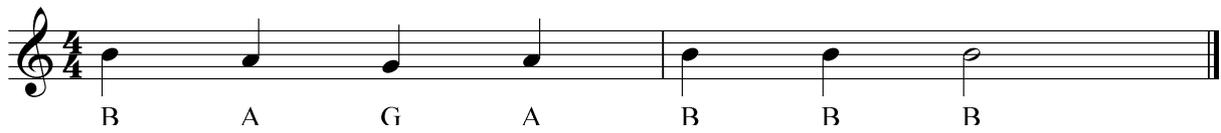
Notes	Name		Value
	Semibreve	Whole note	4 beats
	Minim	Half note	2 beats
	Crotchet	Quarter note	1 beat
	Quaver	Eighth note	½ beat
	Semi-quaver	Sixteenth note	¼ beat
	2 Quavers	2 Eighth notes	1 beat
	4 Semi-quavers	4 Sixteenth notes	1 beat

Another way of experimenting with rhythm is to use **augmentation** and **diminution**. Here is the opening melody of 'Mary had a little lamb'.

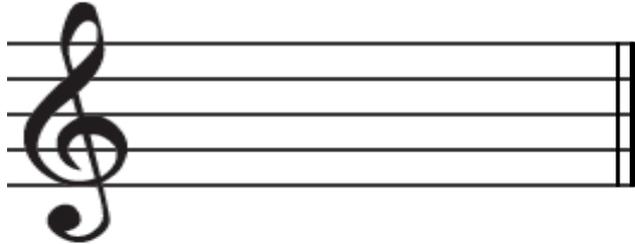


Can you double the note values to augment the rhythm? (The crotchets should become minims and the minim a semibreve). You will need double the amount of bars as each bar still needs to add up to four.





Now can you halve the note values to create diminution? You can fit these two bars into one once you have divided each note by two!



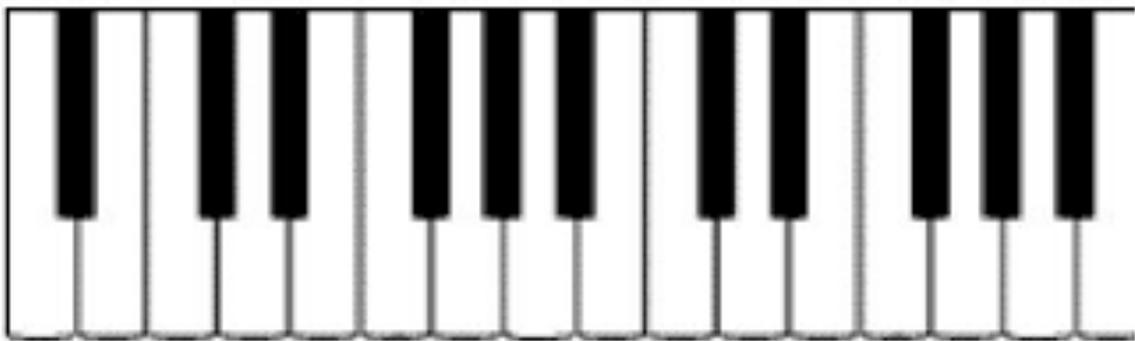
Augmentation and diminution are brilliantly easy ways to effectively develop the rhythm in your composition. Don't be afraid to experiment!

MELODY

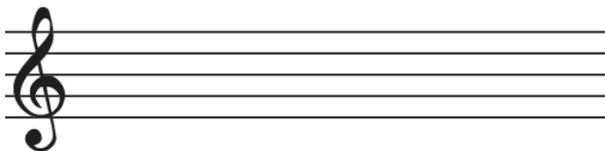
Once we have established our rhythms, we need to think about adding pitch.

Write down all of the types of scales you know e.g. major, blues etc.

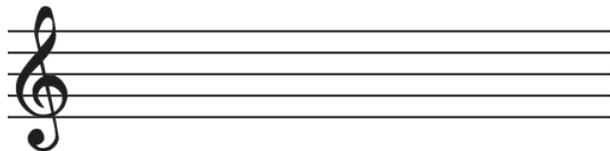
Let's write out the notes of each scale that you know starting on a C. Write the note names underneath.



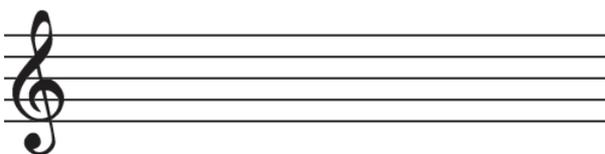
This is a _____ scale.



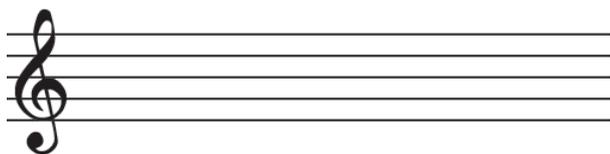
This is a _____ scale.



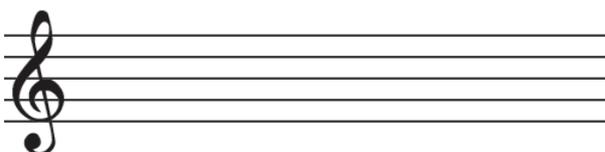
This is a _____ scale.



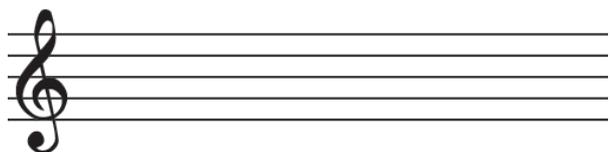
This is a _____ scale.



This is a _____ scale.



This is a _____ scale.



Here are some additional scales you may not be aware of:

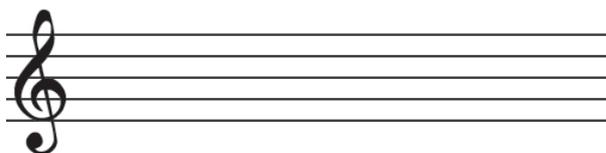
<https://blog.landr.com/music-modes/>

PLEASE
LOOK!

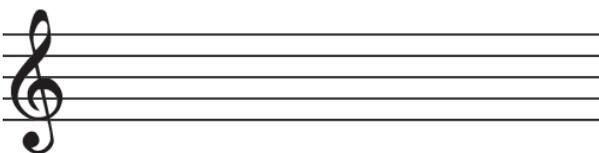
These are called **modes**. They are a type of early scale used before major and minor keys were developed. Modes are used in jazz and pop music for improvising. They can also be used in modern Scottish Music. Each mode is said to have a different character/mood. An easy way to hear that for yourself is to play Mary had a Little Lamb using the notes B A G...now move it to C B A... now D C B etc. It does change the feel of the music!

Write the modes below. No need for sharps or flats!

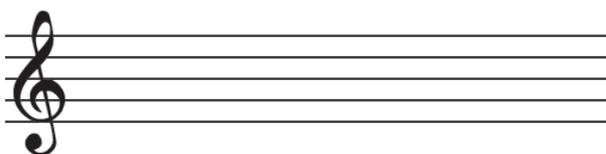
This is the _____ mode.



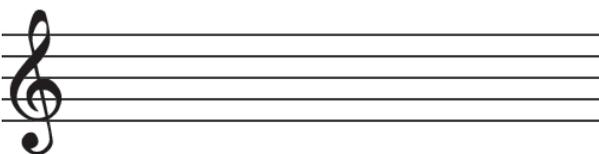
This is the _____ mode.



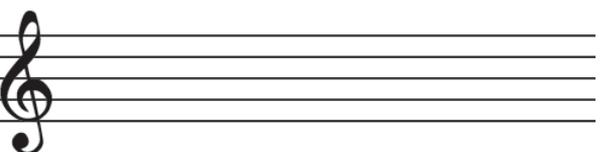
This is the _____ mode.



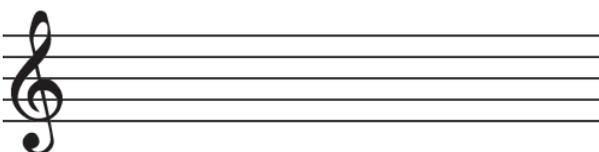
This is the _____ mode.



This is the _____ mode.



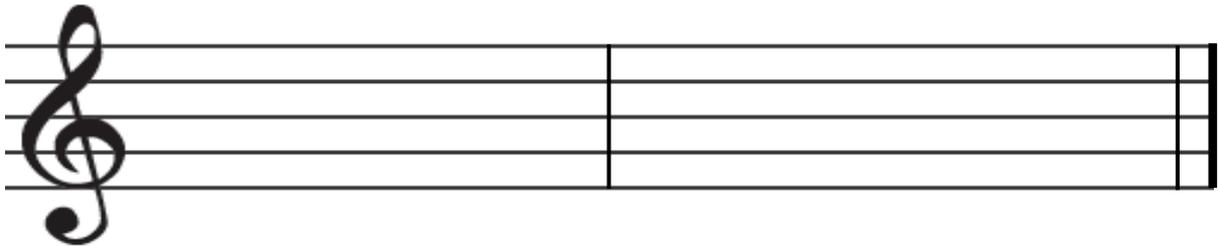
This is the _____ mode.



I would strongly recommend experimenting with modes for your Higher composition.

It can create some interesting harmonies and is an easy way to bag a Higher concept!

Once you have picked a mode you like, play around with the notes till you find an order that sounds good and write it down using the rhythm from your silly sentence below.



HARMONY

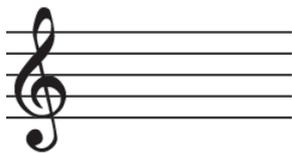
Once we have a melody, we can begin to layer up the harmony using chords. We can be as adventurous as possible here to create interesting and different sounds.

A basic chord has a root, 3rd and 5th and is known as a **triad**.

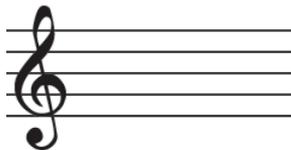
<https://www.musictheoryacademy.com/understanding-music/triads/>



Let's draw the triad of C major below. Start on middle C (the 1st note of the scale). Now add the 3rd and 5th note of the scale. Use the alphabet to help you work it out. Remember C is 1, D is 2 etc...



Now let's flatten the 3rd note to create the triad of C minor:

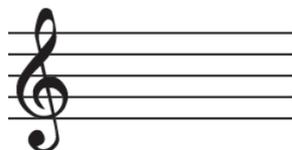


Rather than always using the triad in its 'root' position we can change to using the 3rd in the bass e.g. E at the bottom and C and G above. This is called a 1st inversion. We can also use a 2nd inversion which would have the 5th in the bass.

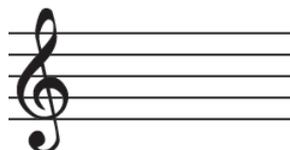
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkHSt7YkFzY>

Let's draw them below:

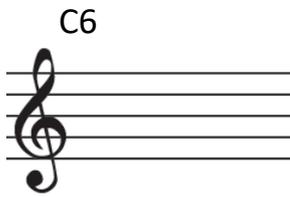
C maj 1st inversion



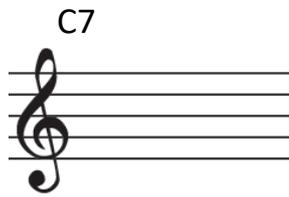
C maj 2nd Inversion



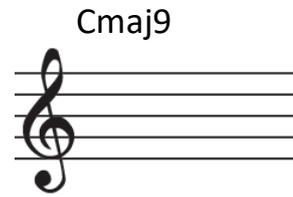
Now let's experiment with adding the 6th, 7th and 9th note to a C major triad. Write the C major triad again and add the 6th note for C6. Add the 7th note with a **b** for C7, and add the 9th note for Cmaj9.



An **added 6th** chord is commonly used in jazz music.



A triad with a flattened 7th is called a **dominant 7th** chord.

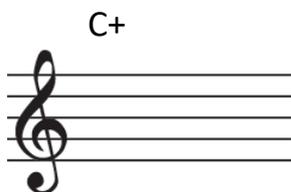


This can give a dream-like sound and is a nice way to end a piece.

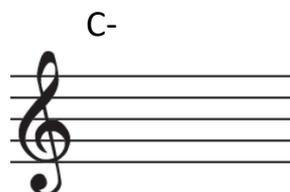
Another way of altering a chord is to **augment** or **diminish** it. Think back to when we looked at rhythm. What did the words augment and diminish mean?

Let's write in an augmented and diminished chord now:

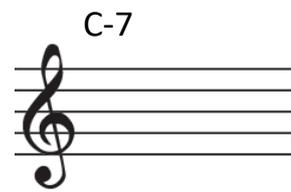
<https://www.musictheoryacademy.com/understanding-music/triads/>



An **augmented** chord has the 5th raised by a semitone.



A **diminished** chord has the third and fifth lowered by a semitone.



A **diminished 7th** chord adds in the flattened 7th note.

Chords also do not need to sound 'nice' together all the time. Sometimes the composer will deliberately use **clusters** or **dissonance** to make the music sound a certain way.

E.g. F, F# + G all played at the same time to sound scary.

Cadences

You already know two cadences from National 5 Music.

A **perfect cadence** is formed by the progression:

Chord 5 (V) to chord 1 (I).

It always sounds finished.

E.g. G to C



An **imperfect cadence** is formed by the progression:

Any chord to chord 5 (V).

It always sounds unfinished.

E.g. C to G



There are also two new cadences you need to know at Higher level:

A **plagal cadence** is formed by the progression:

Chord 4 (IV) to chord 1 (I).

It always sounds 'amen'.

E.g. F to C



An **interrupted cadence** is formed by the progression:

Chord 5 (V) to chord 6 (vi).

It always sounds like a surprise. E.g. G to Am



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S00Lhqe57qw>

Rhythm, melody and **harmony** can really help tell a story in your music and provide purpose for your piece.



Listen to a very famous piece of music '[Mars – the Bringer of War](#)' by Gustav Holst and answer these questions:

- Describe the use of **dynamics** in the piece

- How are they effective? What do they convey?

- What **rhythmic** feature is used throughout?

- Which instruments suggest war?

- Can you work out how many beats are in a bar?



Let's listen to a [TV theme tune](#) now:

- Would you have been able to guess what kind of show this was written for just by the music?

- Why?

- What concepts can you hear?

Hopefully this booklet has been of some use showing you some more possibilities in composing your own music and being creative. Remember you always have it to refer back to for inspiration or guidance!

The Listening and Composition elements of Higher Music total 50% of the course so it is worth putting in some effort to develop your skills in these areas!

If you are stuck for ideas, start with one or two of the concepts covered in here as a starting point.



Be as adventurous as you can when you start to compose and get whatever ideas you have onto a page. They can always be adapted at a later point if they are not exactly right the first time.

Composition is all about **experimenting** with what you like!

Good luck!

