

Music

FUNDAMENTALS

ONLINE

STUDENT GUIDE
to accompany

Music

FUNDAMENTALS ONLINE
SECOND EDITION

by David W. Megill
and Donald D. Megill

Edited by Jeffrey Ainis



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**Section
One**

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

GUIDELINES & SUGGESTIONS: HOW TO TAKE THIS COURSE

◇ To the Student

Welcome to *Music Fundamentals Online*. This course has been designed to cover the concepts, vocabulary, and subject matter typical of an on-campus, college-level introductory course in music fundamentals, ear training, and sight-singing. Whether you are planning to pursue additional studies in the field of music or are taking this online course to enhance your understanding and enjoyment of the incredibly rich world of music, we believe that you will find it interesting and enriching.

Music training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul.

—Plato
(427–327 B.C.)

◇ Course Goals

The underlying goal of this course is to increase your understanding of such basic elements of music as pitch, tonality, rhythm, and harmony, along with the way these elements are notated, played, and understood in the Western European tradition.

The authors, academic advisors, and producers of this online course have specified the following goals for students taking *Music Fundamentals Online*. By completing the assignments for this course, you should be able to:

- describe the basic theory of music and its relation to sound and time.
- identify the elements of pitch and tonality, including notes, scales, and key signatures.
- define the elements of rhythm, including meter, time signatures, and note values.
- define the elements of harmony, including intervals and chords.
- sing and identify notes, rhythms, and intervals.
- write out rhythms, notes, intervals, and other fundamental aspects of notation.
- identify your own level of skill and knowledge, and gain a deeper appreciation of music.

◇ Course Components

This course encourages learning through many avenues—reading, writing, copying, listening, singing, and even body movement. It includes such online activities as reading, writing, listening, practice, and online assignments and tests. The course also has key study activities that appear in this guide, including reading, writing, ear training, sight-singing, rhythm exercises, and orientations for each lesson.

The Student Guide

You will start each lesson reviewing the *checklist* for that lesson in this guide. It will be helpful to actually check off each item as you do it, so you are sure you have covered everything for each lesson. Many of the lessons in this guide also have a

list of key terms and other study activities to help you learn and prepare for the quizzes and tests.

Section Three of the guide contains the *Ear Training Sessions* that are part of Lessons Six, Seven, Nine, Ten, Fourteen, and Fifteen. And Section Four contains a glossary of key terms and concepts.

Online Components

The major point of reference online is the Lessons section. The Lessons section corresponds to the lessons in this guide, and has links to everything you will do online, including

- class lectures (with links to the online glossary)
- demonstrations
- practice and skills checks
- writing assignments
- quizzes and tests

All of your tests and writing assignments are submitted online.

You will be able to communicate with your instructor online, in case you have questions or need help on some aspect of the course. There is also an area for *online discussions* if your instructor assigns one.

Go to the Welcome–Introduction section (under Lectures) the first time you go online for this course. This will give you up-to-date information on the course (one of the great features of an online course!). It will also orient you to the course and its philosophy, and will help you make sure your computer is set up for the interactive aspects and demonstrations, which are key components of the course.

◇ Fundamentals in Action: The Concert Reports

Here is the concert assignment that is given in Lesson Eleven and Thirteen. Both reports are due before the final lesson. This is a preview to give you a chance to arrange your nights (or days) out. Your instructor may have some suggestions.

Now that you have acquired new musical understanding and skills, it is time to try these out in a concert situation. For this assignment you are to attend a concert and report back with a description that uses some of your newly attained understanding from this course. You may also want to look up information on the composer(s), conductor, performers, styles, and pieces ahead of time. You can look up these items on the Internet, or in other reference sources, such as those mentioned in the introduction to the Glossary at the back of this guide.

Acceptable Concerts

- A sit-down concert.
- Live performers on more traditional instruments.
- Style of music is less important than the fact that you are there only to listen (no dancing, imbibing, eating, etc.)
- Preferably a concert of music not normally in your usual listening milieu.

What to Look For

Review the items below ahead of time, perhaps even bringing them with you. While it is important to be supportive of the performers and allow yourself to continue to simply enjoy the music, some added levels of appreciation and sensitivity can make your experience richer.

Contents of the Report

Be sure to include enough descriptive material to let your instructor know exactly what you heard. Include some discussion of the musical activities that relate to your knowledge of music theory (e.g., how much melody versus harmony versus rhythm was in the concert, and what was the effect on you). How composed versus how improvised was the concert? What kind of listening was required because of this balance? What was surprising, if anything? What was done well? What was done poorly? How did the knowledge from this course affect the experience? Although you were focusing on elements from the course, were you still able to get absorbed in the experience?

Here are some other things to consider and comment on in your paper. They will help you be more specific about your reactions.

- What was your personal reaction to the music and why? Were you more influenced by the music or the extramusical subculture of the concert?
- What were the physical, emotional, or more subtle effects of this concert on you? At what points did you contract or expand?
- A live performance can be a chance for the performer (and composer) to enter into a communication with the audience. To what extent do you feel the performer or performers responded to what was happening in the room during their performance? (Maybe they didn't!) Do you feel they were intimate and giving or simply going through the motions? Did they seem to be in familiar territory or were they “going for it,” digging deep into the material, and discovering something as they played?
- Was there sensitivity and variety in the dynamics? Did the tempo seem satisfying? Was the performer comfortable with periods of silence or very low volume? Did you feel that the music seemed to arise out of silence or was it purely active? If it was an ensemble, were the performers listening or communicating with each other?
- Was there a good balance of repetition and contrast in these pieces? Which elements were inventive, surprising, or attractive—rhythm, harmony, melody, instrumentation? If any of the elements bothered you, why? If you were already familiar with any of the pieces, how did this performance differ from others you have heard? Why do you think the performer chose these pieces?

Both Concert Reports are due before the last lesson. Your paper should be 400 to 500 words, and must be submitted online.

Checklist Items

Each lesson includes the following components, which are outlined in the Lesson Guides in Section Two. There is a Lesson Guide for each lesson.

- *Checklist.*
This is an outline of all activities to be completed for the lesson. You should refer to this checklist before starting each lesson, and at the end, to make sure you complete all readings, assignments, and exercises.
- *Overview and Summary.*
These give you a quick introduction to the topic and help orient you to the direction the course is going for that lesson.
- *What You Will Learn.*
This is a list of what you will know and be able to do after you complete the lesson. On completing each lesson, you should be able to satisfy each of these

learning objectives. (Hint: Instructors often develop test questions directly from learning objectives.)

- *Key Terms & Concepts.*
Much of education is learning the meaning of new words, terms, and concepts. It is important to be able to define each of the key terms and concepts for each lesson. You will find many, though not all, of the terms from the lesson. The lessons themselves have many key terms, and the glossary in Section Four is a further resource. (Read the introduction to the glossary for other resources.)
- *Lecture.*
The lectures for this course are online. The checklist will tell you what to read for each lesson. Some lessons have more than one lecture.
- *Ear Training Sessions.*
Lessons Six, Seven, Nine, Ten, Fourteen, and Fifteen have special lessons that are in Section Three of this guide. They include ear training, sight-reading, and rhythm exercises, and are a primary way that you will really come to own many aspects of the material. Be sure to leave ample time to complete these sessions. Quickly learned, quickly forgotten. Slowly learned, never forgotten. Many of the concepts are demonstrated first online, which makes the exercises much easier.
- *Study Activities.*
Matching exercises are in many of the lessons. These are not graded but help you feel at home with the knowledge and help you get ready for the tests.
- *Writing Assignment.*
Each lesson contains a writing assignment that draws on the content covered in the lesson or asks you to examine your progress and experience. There are two Concert Reports, which are assigned in Lessons Eleven and Thirteen, and are due by the final lesson. The assignments are submitted online and are graded.
- *Answer Key.*
Answers to the review items are conveniently located at the end of each lesson so that you can get immediate feedback. After completing a study activity, be sure to check the Answer Key to make sure you correctly understand the material.
- *Skills Checks.*
Skills Checks are interactive online chances to test your knowledge. They go hand in hand with the ear-training sessions and the lectures.
- *Tests.*
Testing is naturally required for this college-level course, but tests can also be a good incentive to complete tasks you normally would not attempt and help you learn. For this course, there are two types of tests: music theory and aural (listening) tests. Thorough learning of the basics that are presented and repeated practice of the ear-training exercises will be needed to do well. The Lesson Guides alert you when content or listening tests are coming up. Your instructor will give you the test and assignment deadlines. (They may be posted online.)

◇ How to Take a Distance Learning Course

If this is your first experience with a college distance-learning course, welcome. Distance learning courses are designed for busy people whose schedules do not permit them to take a traditional on-campus college course.

This student guide is designed to help you study effectively and learn the

material presented in both the printed reading and online lectures. To complete an online course successfully, you will need to schedule sufficient time to review each lesson, read the online materials and materials in this guide, and complete the writing and listening assignments. In conjunction with your instructor, this guide provides you with:

- directions on how to take this course.
- study recommendations.
- a brief synopsis of each lesson.
- a set of learning objectives for each lesson.
- a list of key terms and concepts for each lesson.
- several types of activities and self-tests for each lesson.

This student guide is a complement to the online lessons. The student guide and the online aspect each contain vital portions of the course. You will not be able to complete this course successfully unless you go online for each lesson and study. By following the instructions in this guide, you should be able to easily master the learning objectives for each lesson.

To complete this course successfully, you will need to:

- contact your instructor about any course requirements, time lines, meetings, and scheduled exams.
- purchase a copy of this student guide.
- read and study this guide and online lessons.
- understand the key terms and concepts presented in this guide.
- be able to satisfy the learning objectives for each lesson.
- complete the Study Activities and Ear Training Sessions in this guide.
- complete the Skills Checks online.
- complete any additional assignments your instructor may require.

Even though you do not have a scheduled class to attend each week, please keep in mind that this is a college-level course. You will not be able to look at some of the online lessons, do a few minutes of the exercises, or just scan the text in this guide and pass this course. It is important that you schedule sufficient time to listen, read, study, and reflect. While taking a distance learning course provides you with the convenience of not having to meet at a prearranged time, do not make the mistake of not scheduling enough time to complete the work and study. All learning demands a good measure of self-discipline. Unless you put in the effort, take the time to study, and think about what you are learning, you will not learn much.

Try your best to keep up with the work. It is very difficult to catch up if you allow yourself to get behind schedule. We strongly recommend that you set aside specific times each week for reading, ear training, writing, and studying. You will do better and will be more likely to succeed if you make a study schedule and stick to your schedule. When you go through the online lessons, try to do so without any interruptions. If you are interrupted during your online time, you may miss an important point. If possible, take some time immediately after going through the online lesson to reflect on what you have just read and experienced. This is an excellent time to discuss the online lesson with a friend or family member. Your active involvement will promote your success.

It is our goal to give you a good, basic understanding of music fundamentals. This course will provide you with all the basic information required for a college-level introductory class.

And, don't forget to check with your instructor. He or she will explain the specific course requirements for your assigned class. We sincerely hope you enjoy this introduction to the understanding of music.

You are always a half-step away from a right note.

—Miles Davis
(1926–1991)

◇ Study Recommendations

Everyone has his or her own unique learning style. Some people learn best by studying alone the first thing each morning, others by discussing ideas with a group of friends, still others by listening to experts and taking notes. While there is no “best” way to learn, psychologists and educators have identified several things you can do that will help you study and learn more effectively.

One of the advantages of distance learning is that you have many choices for how you learn and study. You can tailor this course to fit *your* best way to learn. Below are several study tips. These are proven methods that will help you learn and retain what you are studying. Please take the time to read through this list. You will discover that by using one or more of these techniques you can significantly improve your ability to learn and remember new information. (This is an extra bonus for this course!)

Open your mind. One of the major obstacles to learning new information is that new information often differs from what we already “know.” To learn, you need to have an open mind. We are not suggesting you simply believe everything you are told. We want you to think critically about what you are told. However, be cautious and guard against letting old beliefs or opinions stop you from learning something new.

Reduce interference. One of the major reasons for forgetting information is that new information interferes with other information. When you are studying more than one subject at a time, you are increasing the likelihood of interference occurring. If possible, try to study one thing at a time. If you must take multiple subjects, try to take courses in very different subjects, such as art and psychology or math and history. Of course, visiting with friends, watching television, listening to the radio, or any distraction while you are studying will also interfere with your ability to learn new information. When you engage in these types of activities during or just after studying, you risk letting the information you have just learned interfere with other information. Give yourself time to absorb new information.

Don’t cram. You probably already know that staying up all night cramming for an exam the following morning is not a good way to study. The opposite of cramming is, in fact, one of the best ways to study. Spacing out your studying into smaller and more frequent study periods will improve retention. Instead of studying for six hours in one evening, you will learn more and retain more if you study one hour per night for six nights.

Reduce stress. In addition to being bad for your health, stress is bad for learning. Stress and anxiety interfere with learning. You will learn more and enjoy it more if you are relaxed when you study. One of the most effective ways of relaxing that does not interfere with learning is exercise. A good brisk walk or run before you settle in to study is a good prescription for success. Ideally, you would study some, take a break, and then get some exercise while you think about what you have just learned. And later, when you are relaxed, return and study some more. Some form of regular meditation or breathing exercise also may be helpful.

Be a Smart Student. Most top students have one thing in common: excellent study habits. Students who excel have learned or were fortunate enough to have someone teach them how to study effectively. There is no magic formula for successful studying. However, there are a few universal guidelines.

- Do make a commitment to yourself to learn.
- Don't let other people interrupt you when you are studying.
- Do make a study schedule and stick to it.
- Don't study when you are doing something else, like watching television.
- Do create a specific place to study.
- Don't study if you are tired, upset, or overly stressed.
- Do exercise and relax before you study.
- Don't study for extended periods of time without taking a break.
- Do give yourself ample time to study.
- Don't complain that you have to study.
- Do take a positive approach to learning.

Make the most of your assignments. You will master this material more effectively if you make a commitment to completing all of the assignments. The lessons will make more sense to you, and you will learn more, if you follow these instructions:

- Set aside a specific time to go review, read, listen, and study each lesson.
- Complete the assigned reading, both online and in this student guide, for the lesson you are studying.
- Listen to or review the musical selections that accompany each lesson several times.
- Review the Key Terms and Concepts. Check your understanding of all unfamiliar terms in the glossary, reading, or Lesson Guides.
- Complete the Study Activities for each lesson.

Think about what you have learned. You are much more likely to remember new information if you use it. Remember that learning is not a passive activity. Learning is active. As soon as you learn something, try to repeat it to someone or discuss it with a friend. If you think about what you just learned, you will be much more likely to retain it. The reason we remember certain information has to do mostly with (1) how important that information is to us, and (2) whether or not we actively use the information. What do you do, however, when you need to learn some information that is not personally valuable or interesting to you? The best way to remember this type of information is to reinforce it—and the best reinforcer is actively using the information.

Get feedback on what you are studying. Study alone, learn with others. You need feedback to help reinforce learning. Also, feedback helps make sure you correctly understand the information. The study activities and exercises in this guide are specifically designed to give you feedback and reinforce what you are learning. The more time and practice you devote to learning, the better you will be at remembering that information. When you take a self-test, make sure you immediately check your answers with the answer key. Don't wait to check your answers later. If you miss a question, review that part of the lesson to reinforce the correct understanding of the material.

A good gauge of how well you understand something is your ability to explain it to someone else. If you are unable to explain a term or concept to a friend, you probably need to review and study that term or concept further.

Contact your instructor. If you are having an especially difficult time with learning some information, contact your instructor. Your instructor is there to help you. Often a personal explanation will do wonders in helping you clear up a misunderstanding. Your instructor wants to hear from you and wants you to succeed. Don't hesitate to call, write, e-mail, or visit your instructor.

Study groups and partners. As mentioned in the course, some of the exercises are enhanced when done with a partner. However, some students do better studying alone. If study groups are helpful to you or you would like a partner to practice the exercises with, let your instructor know. However, study groups can turn into friendly chats and not much may actually get learned. So remember that study groups are not a substitute for individual effort.

Learn it well. Retention is the key to long-term knowledge. One of the best methods for increasing retention is to overlearn the material. It is a common mistake to think that just because you can answer a question or give a brief definition of a term or concept, you really know and will remember that term or concept. Think back about how many things you have already “learned.” How much do you really remember? Much of what is learned is quickly forgotten. If you want to really learn something, why not learn it in a way that you will not forget it—overlearn it.

Overlearning is simple. After you have learned a fact or new word, spend an additional ten or fifteen minutes actively reviewing that fact or word. You will be amazed how much this will increase your long-term retention.

Enjoy learning. You do not need to suffer to learn. In fact, the opposite is true. You will learn more if you enjoy learning. If you have the attitude that “I hate to study” or “schoolwork is boring,” you are doing yourself a disservice.

You will progress better and learn more if you adopt a positive attitude about learning and studying. Since you are choosing to learn, you might as well enjoy the adventure!

We are sure you will enjoy ***Music Fundamentals Online***.

Lesson Three

MUSICAL ELEMENTS & TONALITY

Here is the Checklist for this Lesson

- Read the *Overview* and *What You Will Learn* sections below or online.
- Study and review the *Key Terms and Concepts* section below.
- Read the online Lecture on *Musical Elements & Tonality: Scales, Harmony, and Melody*.
- Complete the Study Activities section for this lesson in this guide. (Answers are at the back of this section.)
- Complete the Writing Assignment online in the Lessons section. (A copy of the Writing Assignment is also printed in this guide for your reference, but the Writing Assignment must be submitted online.)
- If your instructor has assigned an online discussion, go to the Lounge (Discussions) section for this lesson.
- Take Test #1 online (under Tests).

◇ Overview

This lesson builds on what you learned in the previous lesson. It shows how those sounds are combined and structured to create the familiar musical elements: scales, harmony, melody, and rhythm.

◇ What You Will Learn

After successfully completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe the relationship of melody, harmony, and scales.
- explain the role of rhythm in melody and harmony.
- define the concepts of tonality, consonance, and dissonance.

◇ Key Terms and Concepts

chord—the simultaneous sounding of three or more notes. In tonal music, chords have specific harmonic relationships to one another; chords are used to accompany melodies.

chromatic scale—A scale made up of all the half-steps in an octave. (The use of half-steps that are outside of the major or minor scale in melodies and harmony suggests movement from one key to another and can be used for dissonance or color; hence the name.)

consonance—the pleasing sound of two or more notes. Consonant sounds are stable and do not create tension.

dissonance—a combination of notes that seems unrelated or harsh;

too many dissonant sounds may make most listeners uncomfortable.

harmony—the result of sounding two or more different notes at the same time to build chords. Also refers to the progression of chords and their relationship to one another.

melody—a series of notes that expresses a musical thought. It is made of both rhythm and pitch. There are two basic types of melodies: *conjunct* melodies move by step and small intervals, *disjunct* melodies move by larger skips. Both angular melodies, which are not very singable, and tuneful melodies, common to simple folk songs, are considered melodic.

meter—the number of beats grouped in each measure. For example, 3/4 meter means three quarter notes per measure, 6/8 means six eighth notes, and so on. Various meters form the bases of dance forms. For example, a waltz is written in groups of three (3/4 time), cha-cha is in groups of four (4/4 time).

octave—the distance (in terms of pitch) between two notes with the same letter name. It is the interval between the first and eighth note of a major or minor scale. (There are only seven of these notes inside the octave, the eighth being called by the same letter name. For example, a note C up to the next note named C is one octave.)

phrase—the musical equivalent of a spoken phrase, clause, or sentence; a melodic statement with a recognizable beginning, middle, and end.

pitch—the highness or lowness of a note, dictated by the speed of its sound vibrations.

resolution, resolve—certain sounds that seem unstable tend to move (or resolve) to more stable sounds.

rhythm—pulses or beats that are arranged into regularly recurring groups that establish a pattern or meter (usually consisting of multiples of two or three pulses). Rhythm can also refer to the frequency of chords and/or the activity of the melody (harmonic rhythm and melodic rhythm).

scale—any of several sequences of pitches dividing an octave into whole-steps and half-steps. The octave has 12 half-steps, which is the chromatic scale. Major and minor scales are built by using specific combinations of whole-steps and half-steps.

semi-tone—the distance between any two adjacent keys on the piano. The smallest distance between notes in traditional Western European music. Natural semi-tones are those white keys on the piano that have no black key between them.

sonority—the quality of a sound or group of pitches.

◇ Summary

Having looked at the basic elements of sound in the previous lesson, this lesson examines how these elements combine to create such common aspects of music as scales, harmony, and melody. Scale tones that are played simultaneously are the basis of harmony; scale tones that are arranged in a creative linear pattern are the basis of melody. Tones outside the scale add color to both harmony and melody.

◇ Study Activities

This is a chance to make the knowledge your own. An answer key is at the end of this lesson, but you may also want to refer to the lecture as a way of becoming more familiar with the material. (Note: This is not an online activity.)

Matching Exercise

Match the corresponding definition with each term below.

1. ____ rhythm	5. ____ sonority
2. ____ chord	6. ____ pitch
3. ____ phrase	7. ____ resolution, resolve
4. ____ chromatic scale	8. ____ semi-tone

- a) the highness or lowness of a note, dictated by the speed of its sound vibrations.
- b) the distance between any two adjacent keys on the piano, such as any white keys on the piano that have no black key between them.
- c) a scale made up of all the half-steps in an octave. The use of half-steps outside the major or minor scale in melodies and chords suggests the movement from one key to another and is considered colorful (hence the name).
- d) the quality of a sound or group of pitches.
- e) certain sounds that seem unstable tend to move to more stable sounds.
- f) pulses or beats that are arranged into regularly recurring groups that establish a pattern or meter (usually consisting of multiples of two or three pulses). It can refer to the frequency of chords (harmonic) and/or the activity of the melody (melodic).
- g) the musical equivalent of a spoken phrase, clause, or sentence; a melodic statement with a recognizable beginning, middle, and end.
- h) the simultaneous sounding of three or more notes. In tonal music they have specific harmonic relationships to one another and may be used to accompany melodies.

◇ **Writing Assignment**

After you finish reading the online lecture,

- 1) Submit a short discussion of what you consider to be the differences between musical and nonmusical sounds.
- 2) Do you think music is a purely human activity?
- 3) Why do you think a very young child dances to obviously rhythmic music without much encouragement but a pet dog doesn't?
- 4) Can you think of other questions like these that might also address the line between musical and nonmusical sound?
- 5) Connect your argument to the lecture topics.

The Writing Assignment is submitted online.

Answer Key

1. f	5. d
2. h	6. a
3. g	7. e
4. c	8. b