

Aural Tips - Grade 8

- Some tests allow for a second attempt or for an additional playing by the examiner, if necessary.
- The examiner may prompt if needed, although this may affect the assessment.
- Marks are not awarded for each individual test or deducted for mistakes; instead they reflect the candidate's overall response in this component.

I cannot stress this enough - get confident at naming intervals - you will have learnt them in grade 5 theory. Recognise them by ear and you will find this advice so much more accessible.

A. Repeat THE Lower part of a 3 part phrase. (sing or play)

- It will be within the range of an octave and in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats.
- If necessary, the examiner will play the phrase again and allow a second attempt (although this may affect the assessment).
- When given the key chord, sing an arpeggio in your head to remember the overall tonality.
- Focus on the lower part, which will likely form the harmonic progression. It won't be as obvious as the melody.
- Sing along in your head on the 2nd playing to gauge accuracy and familiarise yourself with notes and rhythm.
- You can sing any sound (such as 'La la' or 'Do do') or you could hum or whistle if you prefer.
- Try to copy articulation and dynamics also
- Try to complete the phrase, even if you can't remember every note! Just don't stop.

Aii. Identify the cadence at the end of a phrase as perfect, imperfect, interrupted or plagal. (root position)

Listen to many and follow the tips given in the above section. You will begin to recognise them in time by ear.

Perfect V-1

- Sounds finished/final/complete
- Bottom note will go from the dominant to the tonic

Imperfect ?-V

- sounds incomplete or suspended / unfinished
- The bottom note will hang in suspense at the dominant.

Interrupted - V-Vi

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- Sounds unfinished.
- A surprise - you will be expecting the tonic at the end
- The bottom/root notes will move in a stepwise direction
- One chord will be major, one will be minor.

Plagal: IV - I

- Because of the start on the subdominant, plagal cadence sounds like a weaker version of the perfect cadence.
- Sounds like "Amen" at the end of a hymn
- Bottom notes will be the subdominant then the tonic. Sing both bottom notes of the cadence and count stepwise.

Aiii: Identify the 3 chords in the above cadential progression (including their positions) forming the above cadential progression.

Here are some steps to follow in your daily practice to become familiar with naming chords. A strong ear when coming to name intervals and the relation of notes to the tonic is essential.

- The chords will be limited to
 - I / Ib / Ic
 - II / IIb / IIc
 - IV / IVb / IVc
 - V / Vb / Vc
 - V7 / V7b / V7c
 - VI / VIb / VIc
- This will be much easier if you can recognise intervals by ear.
- This way you can sing the notes in the chord, identify the tonic and place it. Getting the cadence correct will give you less work to do here.
- Practice listening to chord progressions and singing the notes of each chord.

REMEMBER

- A **perfect cadence** always ends with chords **V-I** or **V7-I**. Chords which often precede this are Ic-V-I
- An **imperfect cadence** will end with chord **V** or **V7**. This is often preceded by chords I, IIb or IV.
- An interrupted cadence always ends with chords V-VI.
- A **V7** chord sounds more jazzy/smooth than a simple V chord and will always be in root position

B. To sing the *lower* part of a two-part phrase from the score

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- Prepare well in advance - practice sight singing at every opportunity!
- [Practise HERE!](#)
- When given the key chord, sing an arpeggio in your head to remember the overall tonality.
- Note the key and take time to work out tricky intervals before you begin. Use your theoretical knowledge to spot intervals such as arpeggios, the tonic, cadences etc.
- The test will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. Try to include articulation and dynamics also
- Use the time given to read through the score and have a go.
- begin as confidently as possible, aiming to keep a steady pulse and a sense of key.

C. (iii) Identify whether the modulation at the end of a different passage is to the dominant, subdominant or relative minor.

The passage, played once by the examiner, **will begin in a major key**. First the examiner will name and play the starting key-chord.

You can answer using technical names (dominant, subdominant, relative minor) or the letter name of the new key.

Focus on the **original tonic** note, and keep it in your head as long as possible. You can compare it with the final tonic note and work out the interval and have your answer.

Relative Minor

- Going from major to minor should be pretty easy to hear.

Subdominant

- A subdominant modulation will stay in the major and sound as though the tonic has moved up by a 4th or down a 5th. The end chord will also contain the original tonic note \
- You might feel a 'downwards' effect
- Might make you think of a perfect or plagal cadence.

Dominant

- Has a brightening effect
- It might remind you of an imperfect cadence, but stronger.
- will stay in the major and sound as though the tonic note has moved up by a 5th or down a 4th. The end chord will not contain the tonic note and will clash.

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d. (i) Answer questions about 2 features of a piece played by the examiner.

Before playing, the examiner will say which two of the following features the questions will be about: dynamics, articulation, tempo, tonality, character, style and period, texture, structure.

- **Texture or structure**

- Texture is basically a way to describe how the music or sound is organised.
- It describes Tempo, melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre.
- **A thick texture** is if there are many layers, or a lot of melodies and harmonies being played at the same time.
- **Thin texture** is one where there is a more sparse, simple sound. Less layers.
- An **open texture**, or a spacious texture, is when a piece of music has a large gap between the highest and lowest notes.
- A **closed or tight texture** is where all of the singers or instruments are playing notes that are really close together.
- **Monophonic** - single line melody. No harmonic accompaniment
- **Homophonic** - multiple different notes playing, but they're all based around the same melody. Could be a melody and accompaniment for example
- **polyphonic** - when there are multiple independent melodic lines occurring at once.
- **Comment on things like a chordal base, single melody lines, arpeggio accompaniment, alberti bass, a contrapuntal melody and so on**

Dynamics

Note any sudden or gradual changes in dynamics, extremes of either, interaction of dynamics between hands and any subtle changes

Articulation,

Is it consistent throughout? Is it the same in each hand, does it change a lot or even once? How does this affect the overall feel of the piece?

Tempo

As above

Tonality

As above

Character

What gives the music its overall character, how does it make you feel?

Style & Period

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The four periods you may need to recognise are

Baroque

- Energetic / lively rhythm / strong/ spirited
- Polyphonic - interweaving melodies
- Regular cadences
- May modulate to related keys
- 18th century dance character melody (minuet, gigue, courante);
- Limited range of pitch (harpsichord was smaller than a piano)
- Limited use of dynamics (the harpsichord is not possible to play louder or softer);
- Use of ornamentation: trills, turns, mordents
- Possibly a detached articulation.
- Imitation between voices

Listen to J.S. Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Couperin, Rameau

Classical

- Regular, clear phrases/stepwise melodies, scale passages (2/4 bars is common)
- Repeated themes
- Elegant and refined melody
- Simple texture: melody with accompaniment, simple harmony, melody with chords or Alberti bass / broken chord accompaniment.
- Simple chords and cadences
- Little to no pedal
- Simple dynamics such as crescendo and diminuendo.

Some composers to listen to: Mozart, Beethoven (early period), Clementi, Haydn.

Romantic

- Flexible tempo;
- Use of rubato
- Lyrical & expressive
- dramatic melodies;
- Dramatic modulations
- Use of pedal;
- Thicker texture with extensive use of chords and melodic lines moving through the voices;
- Tonal but harmonically complex

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- Wider use of dynamics and different nuances eg: pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff and so on.

Some composers to listen to: Brahms, Chopin, Grieg and Schumann

20th Century.

- Rhythmical - use of syncopation and jazzy themes
- Angular, unusual melodies
- Irregular phrases
- Discordant harmonies and unusual, clashing chords & chord progressions
- Sudden dynamics /rhythmic changes
- unpredictable

Some composers to listen to: Bartók, Debussy, Prokofiev, Ravel, Stravinsky.