

Grade 7 Aural Notes

7A: sing (or play) the lower part of a 2-part phrase played twice by the examiner.

Hints:

- Hum the starting note when it is played.
- Even if you're unsure of the pitches, try to follow the shapes and rhythms.
- If in doubt, guess – but try to sing with a sense of rhythm and beat.

7B: sight-sing the upper part of a two-part phrase, with the lower part played by the examiner.

It may be in a major or minor key and won't have any accidentals apart from sharpened 6th or 7th notes in a minor scale.

15 seconds' preparation time is given, so use this to work out any awkward intervals.

You can sing at a different octave than that written.

You will be asked which clef you'd like to read.

Hints:

The examiner is looking for accurate rhythm and musical flow, so keep it moving in time. Even if you're not totally confident with the pitches, at least try to follow the general pitch-shapes.

Practice exercises:

It will remain in one key, so practise singing a major and minor scale (both harmonic and melodic), along with the arpeggios.

Then practise singing different intervals. Sing up and down scales, but missing notes out or try writing out a scale and singing notes from it at random.

7C (i): Identify a cadence as perfect, imperfect or interrupted

The phrase will be in a major or minor key.

Perfect: sounds complete.

Imperfect: sounds as if it wants to repeat, or needs an answering phrase.

Interrupted: sounds as if it's going to end with a perfect cadence... but then takes an unexpected turn. In a major key, it finishes on a minor chord; in a minor key it finishes on a major chord. The bass part (V-VI) goes up a tone in a major key or up a semitone in a minor key.

7C (ii): name the cadence chords:

Perfect: V-I or V7-I

Imperfect: I-V or IV-V

Interrupted: V-VI or V7-VI

NB. the key chord will be given before test 7C (ii) so this is your chance to correct yourself if you got the cadence wrong (e.g. if you said 'imperfect' but the key chord given before this test is the same as the final chord of the cadence, this is your chance to say 'actually it was a perfect cadence'). Don't just perpetuate the mistake by naming the chords that fit into your previous answer. They're called Aural tests for a reason - keeping listening!

The chords will be in root position so listen carefully to the lowest note in the chords. Listen to whether the dominant chord has a 7th.

7C (iii): Modulations: to identify whether a piece starting in a major key modulates to the Dominant, Subdominant or Relative Minor.

The easiest approach is to quietly hum the tonic all the way through. Covering one ear with your finger helps you to hear the pitch more clearly. Make sure you hold the note firm and don't be influenced by the piece: you might end up changing the note you hum to fit the new key.

If the tonic fits with the final chord, check whether it finishes in the major or minor.

If major, it has modulated to the subdominant (the tonic becomes the 5th in the new key)

If minor, it has modulated to the relative minor (the tonic becomes the 3rd in the new key)

If the tonic doesn't fit, it has modulated to the dominant and the tonic will want to move down a semitone (to become the 3rd in the new key).

This approach isn't the purists' way. The alternative is listening for the accidental (or chromatic note) which sets off the modulation. If you hear a note sharpening it will be leading to the dominant (eg. in C major, an F# indicates a modulation to G major; a note flattening indicates a move to the subdominant (eg. a B flat will indicate a modulation to F major).

7D (i) Musical Features. To answer questions about two features of a piece. Before playing, the examiner will tell the candidate which two features to listen out for: dynamics, articulation, tempo, tonality, character, style and period texture, structure.

Hint:

See separate sheet: 'Notes on Style and Period'. There is no easy way to identify different periods in music; it just comes from the experience of listening to lots of music in different styles. Try listening to music on ClassicFM: listen critically rather than as 'background' music; try to identify the period and look up the composer on Wikipedia to see when it was written.

7D (ii) Clap the rhythm in an extract from the same piece and identify whether it is in 2, 3, 4 or 6/8 time.

Hints: when you hear the piece in test 7D (i), listen out for the time signature, since it's much more obvious when heard in context.

Always tap the beat when listening: this helps to organise the rhythm in your mind.