

About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] enables willing and academically prepared students to pursue college-level studies — with the opportunity to earn college credit, advanced placement, or both — while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible, in college, to receive credit, placement into advanced courses, or both. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP Music Theory Course Overview

The AP Music Theory course corresponds to one or two semesters of a typical introductory college music theory course that covers topics such as musicianship, theory, musical materials, and procedures. Musicianship skills, including dictation and other listening skills, sight singing, and harmony, are considered an important part of the course. Through the course, students develop the ability to recognize, understand, and describe basic materials and processes of tonal music that are heard or presented in a score. Development of aural skills is a primary objective. Performance is also part of the curriculum through the practice of sight singing. Students understand basic concepts and terminology by listening to and performing a wide variety of music. Notational skills, speed, and fluency with basic materials are also emphasized.

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisite courses for AP Music Theory. Students should be able to read and write musical notation, and it is strongly recommended that the student has acquired at least basic performance skills in voice or on an instrument.

AP Music Theory Course Content

The AP Music Theory course supports mastery of the rudiments and vocabulary of music, including hearing and notating:

- Pitches
- Intervals
- Scales and keys
- Chords
- Meter
- Rhythm

Building on this foundation, the course progresses to include more complex and creative tasks, such as melodic and harmonic dictation; composition of a bass line for a given melody, implying appropriate harmony; realization of a figured bass; realization of a Roman numeral progression; analysis of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and form in repertoire drawn mostly from the Western European Common Practice style, but also including jazz, 20th century works, and world music; and sight singing of simple melodies.

Students learn to identify, both aurally and through score reading, tonal procedures based in common-practice tonality, such as:

- Functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture (with vocabulary including nonharmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants)
- Cadences
- Melodic and harmonic compositional processes (e.g., sequence, motivic development)
- Standard rhythms and meters
- Phrase structure (e.g., contrasting period, phrase group)
- Small forms (e.g., rounded binary, simple ternary, theme and variation, strophic)
- Modulation to closely related keys

AP Music Theory Exam Structure

AP MUSIC THEORY EXAM: 3 HOURS

Assessment Overview

The AP Music Theory Exam evaluates students' understanding of musical structure and compositional procedures through recorded and notated examples. Listening skills are emphasized, particularly those involving recognition and comprehension of melodic and rhythmic patterns, harmonic functions, small forms, and compositional techniques. Most of the musical examples are from standard Western tonal repertoire; some examples of contemporary, jazz, vernacular music, or music beyond the Western tradition are included.

The exam requires fluency in reading musical notation and a strong grounding in music fundamentals, terminology, and analysis.

Format of Assessment

Section I: Multiple Choice | 75 Questions | ~ 80 Minutes | 45% of Exam Score

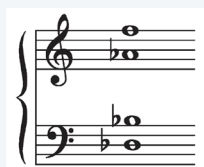
- Questions based on aural stimuli
- Questions based on analysis of printed music scores

Section II: Free Response | 9 Exercises | ~ 80 Minutes | 55% of Exam Score

- Melodic and Harmonic Dictation
- Part Writing from Roman Numerals and Figured Bass
- Composition of a Bass Line/Harmonization of a Melody
- Sight Singing

AP MUSIC THEORY SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Sample Multiple-Choice Question



The correct analysis of the chord above is

- (A) ii_5^6 in A-flat major
- (B) V_5^6 in E-flat major
- (C) ii_2^4 in D-flat major
- (D) V_2^4 in B-flat major

Correct Answer: A

Sample Free-Response Question

Suggested time — 10 minutes

Write the following progression in four voices, following eighteenth-century voice-leading procedures. Continue logically from the spacing of the first chord. Do not add embellishments unless indicated by the Roman and Arabic numerals. Use only quarter and half notes.

D: I V_2^4/IV IV^6 ii_5^6 V^{4-3} I