

# Oak Bay Band



## MUSIC THEORY LEARNING GUIDE LEVEL IA

## Oak Bay Band

### MUSIC THEORY PROGRAM - LEVEL IA

The Level IA Program is intended for students in Band 9. The program focuses on very simple skills of reading, notation, and language of music.

Activities are noted in each section of this program guide and additional resources will be available at <https://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/>

Tutorial sessions are available in focus block

Examinations for Level IA will take place on June 6<sup>th</sup>

**Students must write the exams until they have completed Level IIIB.**

#### Topics for Level IA

1. Pitch Naming
  - a. Enharmonic Names
  - b. Whole tones vs. Semitones
2. Major Scale Writing
3. Scale Degree Identification
4. Major Triads
5. Rhythm
  - a. Note & Rest Values
  - b. Time Signatures
  - c. Counting System
6. Italian Terms
  - a. tempo
  - b. dynamics
  - c. general use

## 1. Pitch Naming

Each key on the piano keyboard will sound a different pitch. Similarly, string, brass, woodwind, and pitched percussion instruments can sound numerous pitches across a broad pitch range.

The pitch names in the 'musical alphabet' are:

A B C D E F G

Each of these pitch names can be modified by adding a sharp or flat sign. The sharp sign will raise the pitch by one semitone from its natural pitch. The flat sign will lower the pitch by one semitone from its natural pitch. To cancel either of these symbols, a natural sign is used. All three of these signs are known, collectively, as **accidentals**.



FLAT NATURAL SHARP

It is important to note that when written in text, we say the pitch name followed by the accidental (i.e. B flat or F sharp). When written on the staff, the accidental will always appear before the actual note.

Each pitch has a place on the **staff**. A staff must include a **clef** to indicate the range in which the pitch should sound. Placing a note on the staff tells a performer which pitch should be played. In our school ensembles, four different clefs are used. Below is a list of the instruments which use each clef, along with a graphic of the clef itself.

### **Treble Clef**

Flute (and piccolo)  
Oboe  
Clarinet  
Saxophone  
Trumpet  
French Horn  
Violin

### **Bass Clef**

Bassoon  
Trombone  
Euphonium  
Tuba  
Cello

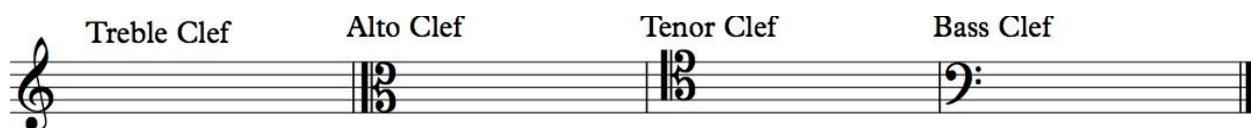
### **Alto Clef**

Viola

### **Tenor Clef**

Bassoon\*  
Trombone\*  
Cello\*

\*These instruments only use the tenor clef when the written pitch remains in a range above the bass clef.



## A. Enharmonic Names

Every pitch has the possibility of more than one name. Even though the sound of pitch doesn't change, its additional name(s) are called **enharmonic names**. For example, using the piano keyboard we would easily see that between the white keys called G and A, there exists a black key. That black key could be named G# or Ab because of its distance relative to the white keys.

## **B. Whole Tones vs. Semitones**

The smallest distance between two pitches is a **semitone**. The distance of two semitones is called a **whole tone**. On a piano keyboard, you can identify a semitone by playing two immediately adjacent keys. Playing a semitone will sound like the famous opening to the theme song from *Jaws*. A whole tone will sound like the first two pitches of *Happy Birthday*.

### **Activity**

1) Visit the website below and follow the links to the online lesson. Once you've completed the lesson, you can test yourself using the exercise trainer. **Be sure to customise the exercises to only include the clef you will use when playing your instrument.**

[www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net) > LESSONS > The Staff, Clefs, and Ledger Lines

[www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net) > EXERCISES > Note Identification

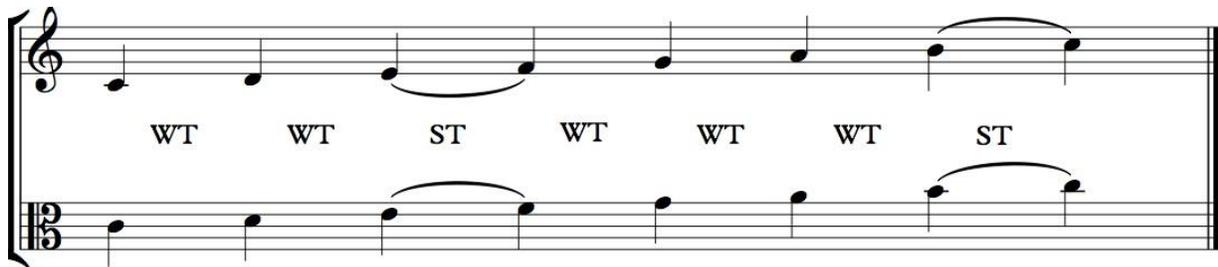
2) Visit <https://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/> and download the Whole Tones vs. Semitones worksheet. If you play viola, be sure to download your instrument-specific worksheet. To check your work, ask a friend or attend one of the Friday *Theory Club* tutorials.

## 2. Major Scale Writing

A scale is a sequence of pitches, ascending or descending, that follow a pattern of semitones and whole tones. In this section, you are only required to demonstrate knowledge by writing Major and natural minor scales. Both of these scales require no modification to the sequence of pitches.

A **Major scale** will contain 8 pitches, exactly one octave in range. If the scale starts on C, it will continue up (or down) until you reach the next C.

Using your knowledge of semitones (ST) and whole tones (WT), you will be able to identify that a pattern of these exists in all Major scales. The pattern is shown below.



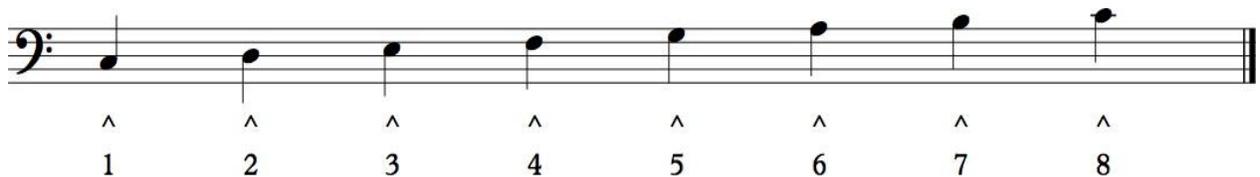
The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The notes of a C major scale are written on the staff. Below the notes, the intervals between them are labeled: WT (Whole Tone) between C and D, WT between D and E, ST (Semitone) between E and F, WT between F and G, WT between G and A, WT between A and B, and ST between B and C. Brackets are used to group the notes for each interval.

### Activity

Visit <https://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/> and download the Scale Writing Activity. To check your work, ask a friend or attend one of the Friday *Theory Club* tutorials.

## 3. Scale Degree Identification

There are two ways of identifying where a certain pitch fits into the scale of a given key. For our purposes, we will only learn the modern system using **scale degree numbers**. In the example below, you'll see a C Major scale with the scale degree number identified below. To ensure that others will understand how you use the numbers, you must always place a **caret (^)** above the number.



The image shows a musical staff with a bass clef. The notes of a C major scale are written on the staff. Below each note, a scale degree number is written with a caret (^) above it: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

To identify the first scale degree, you need to look at the name of the key. For example, in C Major, the first scale degree is C. This information will be useful in the next lesson, when you learn about triads.

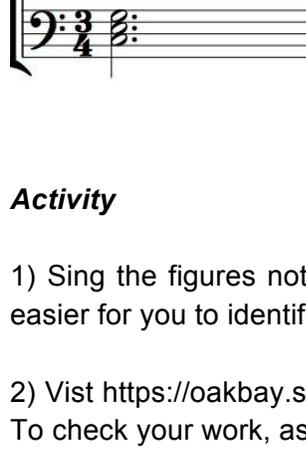
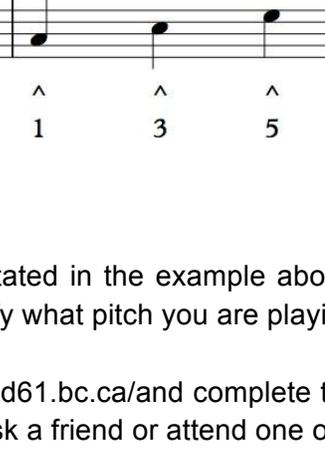
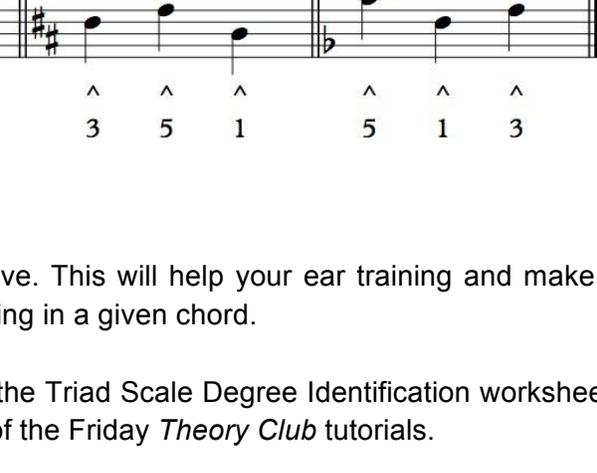
## Activity

Visit <https://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/> and complete the Scale Degree Identification worksheet. To check your work, ask a friend or attend one of the Friday *Theory Club* tutorials.

### 4. Major Triads

A **triad** is a collection of three pitches played simultaneously (harmonic) or in sequence (melodic). A **Major triad** is comprised of the first, third, and fifth scale degrees. We call this “spelling a chord”. Triads can also be called **chords** and are used by composers to add musical interest accompanying a melody.

In the example, you will notice that melodic sounding of the triad does not always have to be in ascending or descending sequence.

| Harmonic  | Melodic, ascending  | Melodic, with a modified sequence  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|---|---|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|   |   |   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|   | ^<br>1  | ^<br>3   | ^<br>5 | ^<br>3 | ^<br>5 | ^<br>1 | ^<br>5 | ^<br>1 | ^<br>3 |
|   |   |   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|   | ^<br>1  | ^<br>3   | ^<br>5 | ^<br>3 | ^<br>5 | ^<br>1 | ^<br>5 | ^<br>1 | ^<br>3 |
|  |  |  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|   | ^<br>1  | ^<br>3   | ^<br>5 | ^<br>3 | ^<br>5 | ^<br>1 | ^<br>5 | ^<br>1 | ^<br>3 |

## Activity

1) Sing the figures notated in the example above. This will help your ear training and make it easier for you to identify what pitch you are playing in a given chord.

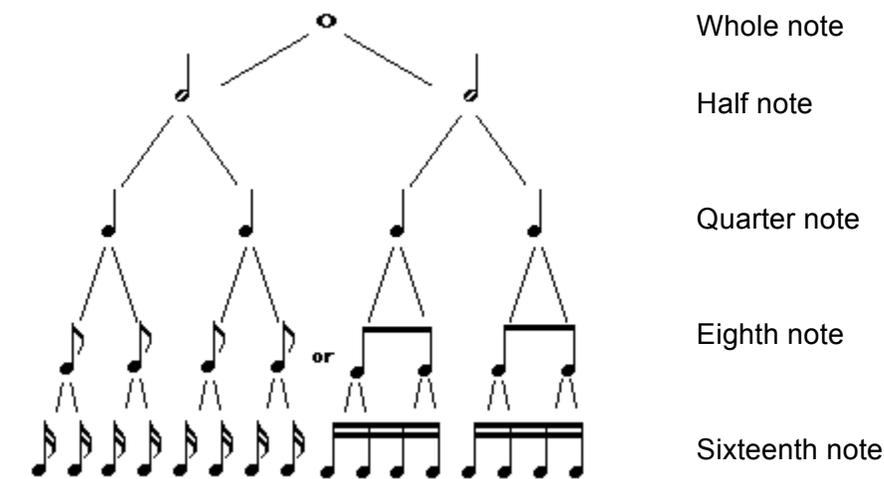
2) Visit <https://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/> and complete the Triad Scale Degree Identification worksheet. To check your work, ask a friend or attend one of the Friday *Theory Club* tutorials.

## 5. Rhythm

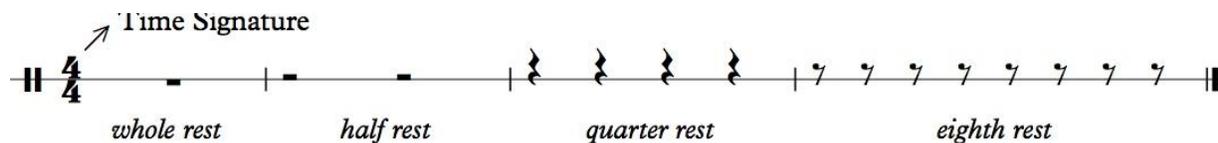
Rhythm is the manner in which sounds are organized. The **duration**, or value, of each note or rest must reflect **rhythmic accuracy** by individuals so that different musicians performing different parts maintain strong **rhythmic integrity**.

### A. Note & Rest Values

Notes have relationships to each other in the same way as fractions. For example, eight 'eighths' OR four 'quarters' OR two 'halves' will make one 'whole'. We use the same words to describe note and rest values.



Similarly, rests have the same relationship as illustrated above. Observe in the example below the rests shown in sequence from whole rest to eighth rest. You aren't required to demonstrate knowledge of the sixteenth note or sixteenth rest in this level.



### B. Time Signatures

The **time signature** identified in the example above is an important aspect of organizing music. The two numbers provide different information for us. The top number (*numerator*) tells us how many beats are in a single bar or measure. The bottom number (*denominator*) tells us what note value gets one beat.

To easily read a time signature, simply say it like a fraction. For example, a measure with a time signature of 3/8 consists of *three eighths*.

### C. Counting System

Different musicians rely on different systems of counting their music. As a developing musician, you may have organized a way to count that brings you success. For the purpose of being able to communicate consistently amongst student-musicians at Van Tech, the following are examples of the counting system we will use to represent:

- duration of notes that sound
- duration of rests
- subdivision of each beat

It is absolutely true that the first beat in any measure of music will be represented by '1'. Look at the following examples as you come to understand the rules listed below.

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#### Rule 1 - Duration of Notes that Sound

- Use a regular (or larger) sized number or '+' symbol to identify beat or part of a beat on which the note begins to sound.
- Use smaller numbers or '+' symbols to identify that the note continues to sound until the end of its value.

#### Rule 2 - Duration of Rests

- Use parentheses to surround numbers or '+' symbols to identify the full duration of a rest.

#### Rule 3 - Subdivision of Each Beat

- In every measure, each eighth must be indicated by a number of '+' symbol to ensure that no part of a measure was left out.
- If a passage of music uses sixteenth notes or sixteenth rests, you must use the '1 e + a' pattern of counting.

### Activity

Vist <https://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/> and complete the Rhythmic Analysis worksheet. To check your work, ask a friend or attend one of the Friday *Theory Club* tutorials.

## 6. Italian Terms

Communicating in a common language is an important aspect of musicianship. Composers and performers use an efficient system of expressive terms when describing music or providing instructions for how the music should be interpreted. Most often, these terms are provided in Italian. Some composers like Mahler, Grainger, or Debussy are known to use German, English, and French terms. The list below will be tested on the Level IA Examination.

### A. Tempo

| <b>Italian Term</b>    | <b>English meaning</b> |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Grave</i>           | slow and solemn        |
| <i>Lento</i>           | slowly                 |
| <i>Largo</i>           | broadly                |
| <i>Adagio</i>          | slow and stately       |
| <i>Andante</i>         | at a walking pace      |
| <i>Moderato</i>        | moderately             |
| <i>Allegro</i>         | lively and quick       |
| <i>Vivace</i>          | fast                   |
| <i>Presto</i>          | very fast              |
| <i>L'istesso tempo</i> | the same tempo         |
| <i>Accelerando</i>     | gradually faster       |
| <i>Ritardando</i>      | gradually slower       |
| <i>Rallentando</i>     | suddenly slower        |
| <i>Mosso</i>           | motion                 |

### B. Dynamics

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>pianissimo</i>  | very soft          |
| <i>piano</i>       | soft               |
| <i>mezzo piano</i> | medium soft        |
| <i>mezzo forte</i> | medium strong      |
| <i>forte</i>       | strong             |
| <i>fortissimo</i>  | very strong        |
| <i>crescendo</i>   | gradually stronger |
| <i>decrescendo</i> | gradually softer   |
| <i>diminuendo</i>  | diminishingly      |

### C. General Use

|                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| <i>meno</i>        | less             |
| <i>piu</i>         | more             |
| <i>poco a poco</i> | little by little |
| <i>subito</i>      | suddenly         |
| <i>da capo</i>     | the beginning    |
| <i>coda</i>        | ending           |
| <i>fine</i>        | the end          |