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Chapter 1. Irregular Time Signatures

An irregular time signature is one where the beats aren't evenly divisible into simple groups of 2 or 3, the way common time signatures (4/4, 3/4, 2/4) are.

A time signature tells you two things: how many beats per measure (top number) and what note value counts as one beat (bottom number). In a “regular” or simple/compound meter, those beats group naturally and evenly – 4/4 splits into two groups of 2, 6/8 splits into two groups of 3, and so on.

Irregular time signatures have a top number that doesn't divide evenly into equal groups – most commonly 5, 7, 11 or 13. Because these numbers are prime or otherwise awkward to split symmetrically, the beats get grouped into uneven clusters, typically combinations of 2s and 3s.

Common examples

- 5/4 or 5/8: usually grouped as 2+3 or 3+2
- 7/8: often grouped as 2+2+3, 3+2+2, or 2+3+2
- 11/8: might break down as 2+2+3+2+2, or other combinations

Why it matters

The grouping isn't just a technicality – it changes how the music actually feels. A measure of 7/8 grouped 3+2+2 has a different rhythmic lilt than one grouped 2+2+3, even though both have seven eighth notes. Composers and performers often mark these groupings above the measure with brackets or numbers to make the phrasing clear.

For example:



or:



Chapter 2. The Tenor Clef

The principle of reading the tenor clef is the same as with the alto clef, however middle C is now positioned on the fourth line of the stave.

Tenor clef is a type of C-clef, meaning the symbol is centered on the line that represents middle C. In tenor clef, that's the fourth line of the staff (counting from the bottom). So middle C sits on the second line from the top.



Who uses it:

- **Cello, bassoon, and trombone:** switch into tenor clef when playing in their upper register, since writing those high passages in bass clef would require a lot of ledger lines.
- **Tenor voice:** in choral music, tenor parts were sometimes written in tenor clef, especially in older scores. Modern tenor parts are more often written in treble clef with an octave-down transposition understood.
- **Double bass:** also uses tenor clef for high passages, alongside bass and treble clef.

Why it exists:

Like alto clef, tenor clef is a practical solution to keep music readable. Rather than stacking ledger lines above or below a staff, moveable C-clefs let composers center the notation around whatever range the instrument is actually playing in at that moment – reducing visual clutter and reading difficulty.

Practice drawing some Tenor Clefs.



Chapter 3. Major and Minor Keys

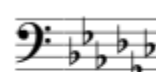
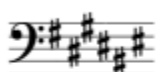
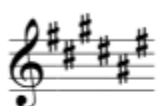
Key signatures now include:

Major	Relative Minor	Accidentals
C Major	A Minor	No Sharps or flats
G Major	E Minor	F sharp
D Major	B Minor	F & C sharp
A Major	F sharp Minor	F, C & G sharp
E Major	C sharp Minor	F, C, G and D sharp
B Major	G sharp Minor	F, C, G, D and A sharp
F# Major	D sharp Minor	F, C, G, D, A and E sharp *
F Major	D Minor	B flat
Bb Major	G Minor	B and E flat
Eb Major	C Minor	B, E and A flat
Ab Major	F Minor	B, E, A and D flat
Db Major	Bb Minor	B, E, A, D and G flat
Gb Major	Eb Minor	B, E, A, D, G and C flat *

Note that in the minor scale if the 7th is a flat in the key signature, it will become raised to a natural.

If the 7th is a sharp in the key signature it will become raised to a double sharp.

The key signatures are written as follows:



Quick tricks for finding the key from a signature

- **Sharps:** take the last sharp in the signature and go up a half step – that's the major key. (e.g. last sharp is C# -> D major)
- **Flats:** take the second-to-last flat in the signature – that's the major key. (e.g. flats are Bb, Eb, Ab -> Eb major). For just 1 flat (F major), this trick doesn't apply since there is no second-to-last flat – just memorize it.

Chapter 4: Transposing

When transposing an octave, the key signature obviously remains the same. When transposing up or down any other interval, the key signature will change accordingly.

For example:

C Major transposed up a major second = D major.



C Major transposed down a major second = B flat major.



C Major transposed up a minor third = E flat major.



C Major transposed down a minor third = A major.



C Major transposed down a perfect fifth = G major.



C Major transposed down a perfect fifth = F major.



Chapter 5. Voices in Score

Short Score

- Soprano and Alto voices share the treble clef.
- Soprano is the upper treble part and note stems always point up.
- Alto is the lower treble part and note stems always point down.
- Tenor and Bass voices share the bass clef.
- Tenor is the upper bass part and note stems always point up.
- Bass is the lower bass part and note stems always point down.

Open Score

- Each voice has its own staff system.
- The Soprano part is written in the treble clef and obeys the normal rules for stems pointing up or down.
- The Alto part is written in the treble clef and obeys the normal rules for stems pointing up or down.
- The Tenor part is written in the treble clef and obeys the normal rules for stems pointing up or down. The tenor voice is written an octave higher in pitch than is actually sung. A figure 8 under the treble clef indicates this.
- The bass part is written in the bass clef and obeys the normal rules from stems pointing up or down.

Chapter 6. Irregular Time Divisions

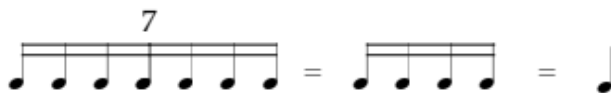
In addition to triplets and duplets, groups of 5, 6, 7, and 9 are now introduced.

Groups of 5, 6 or 7 occupy the same time values as a group of 4.

For examples:



Or

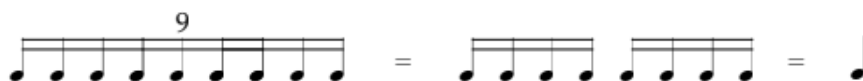


Groups of 9 occupy the same time values as a group of 8

For example:

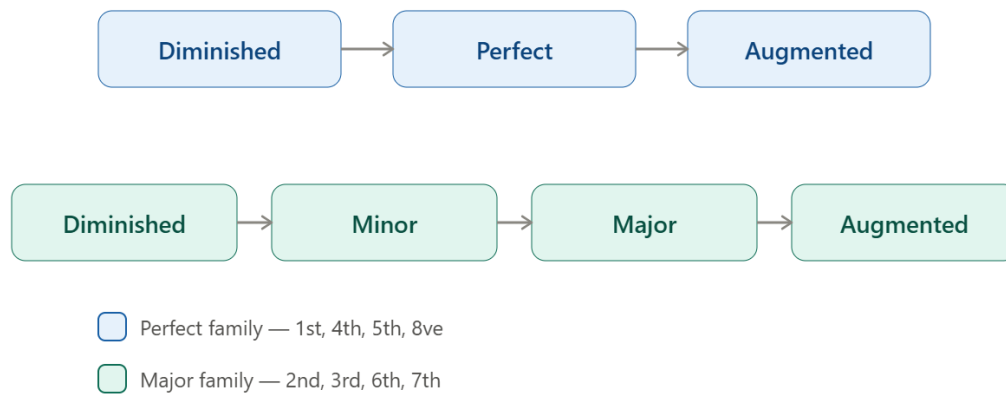


Or



Chapter 7. Intervals

Intervals can be described in the terms as described in Grade 4:



Intervals split into two families based on which scale degrees they apply to:

- Perfect family (unisons, 4ths, 5ths, octaves): the middle size is called perfect rather than major. It can only shrink to diminished or grow to augmented – there’s no “minor perfect”.
- Major family (2nds, 3rds, 6ths, 7ths): these have four possible sizes – diminished, minor, major, and augmented – each a half step apart.

A quick way to remember it: perfect intervals sound the most “stable” or consonant (hence no major/minor distinction), while the rest come in pairs that differ by a half step, with diminished/augmented as the extra-small and extra-large extremes on either end.

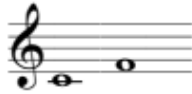
However, intervals given in grade 5 may now exceed an octave. One method of describing such intervals is to continue counting numerically. However it is then necessary to reallocate which intervals are perfect to these new extended intervals.

For example:

$8^{\text{th}} \rightarrow 9^{\text{th}} \rightarrow 10^{\text{th}} \rightarrow 11^{\text{th}} \rightarrow 12^{\text{th}} \rightarrow \dots\dots\dots 15^{\text{th}}$
 (2nd) (3rd) (4th) (5th) (8^{ve})

Instead of reallocating the term “perfect” to the intervals of 11th and 12th and revising in addition to 4th and 5th, it is simpler to just add the term compound to the interval described.

For example:



Perfect 4th



Compound
Perfect 4th

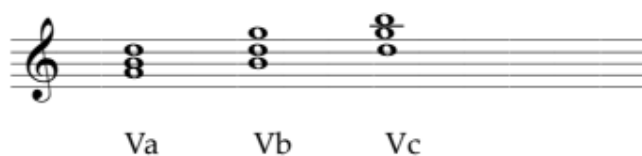
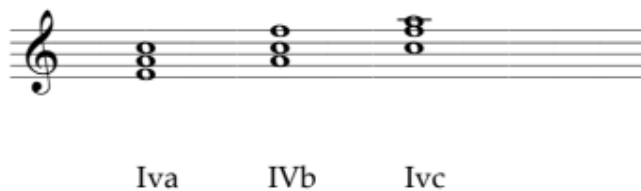
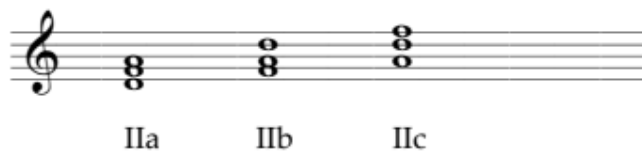
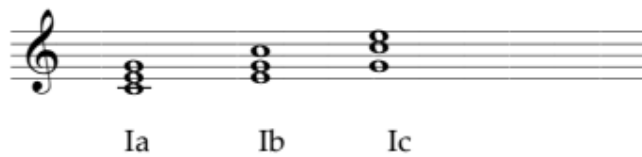
Chapter 8. Naming Chords

Chords can be rearranged into a different order, other than root position, so that any part of the chord can be in the bass.

As there are three notes that make up the triad (plus the duplication of a note of the triad) there are three possible positions of the chord.

These are labelled a, b, or c after the chord symbol.

C major



Chapter 9. Ornaments

Trill (tr)

Rapid alternation between the written note and the note above (or occasionally below).

Marked "tr" or "tr~~~~" above the note.

Turn (gruppetto) ~

A four- or five-note figure that circles around the main note — typically note above, main note, note below, main note. Symbol looks like a sideways "S" or infinity-like squiggle.

Inverted turn ∞

Same idea as the turn but starting with the lower auxiliary note first. Often shown as the turn symbol with a vertical line through it, or simply notated with a specific fingering direction.

Mordent

A quick alternation between the main note and the note *above* it, then back — a single quick "flick."

Inverted mordent (lower mordent)

Same as a mordent but using the note *below*. Symbol: the mordent zigzag with a vertical line through it.

Appoggiatura ♪

A "leaning" grace note, written as a small note before the main note, taking half (or more) of the main note's value and resolving into it. Usually slurred to the main note.

Acciaccatura ♪

A very short "crushed" grace note, played as quickly as possible just before the main note, with a slash through its stem to distinguish it from the appoggiatura.

Double/triple grace notes (compound appoggiatura)

Two or three small grace notes leading into the main note, common in Baroque and Classical ornamentation.

Slide (schleifer)

A quick two- or three-note stepwise run leading into the main note, usually shown as small grace notes in a scalar pattern.

Arpeggio (broken chord ornament) †

Notes of a chord rolled quickly from bottom to top (or occasionally top to bottom) instead of struck together. Marked with a wavy vertical line before the chord.

Glissando

A rapid slide across the keys (usually white keys), producing a sweeping scale-like effect. Marked with a straight or wavy line connecting the start and end notes, labeled "gliss."

Vibrato-like ornaments (less common on piano)

Occasionally notated in some contemporary scores but not a true idiomatic piano ornament since the piano can't sustain pitch bends — more a holdover term from string/vocal writing.

Chapter 10. Cadence Points

A cadence is a music ending, or “mini ending.”

- Chords V – I = a Perfect Cadence. A perfect cadence sounds finished. It sounds like a “Ta Daaaaa” ending.
- Chords IV – I = a Plagal Cadence. A plagal cadence sounds finished. It is a softer ending and sounds like an “Amen” type finish.
- Chords ? – V = an Imperfect Cadence. An imperfect cadence doesn’t sound finished but leaves the music hanging.

These chords can be in any inversion.

Chapter 11. Instruments and Voices

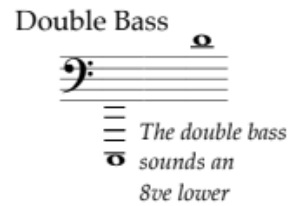
WOODWIND



BRASS



STRINGS



VOICE



The soprano range can go even higher but is dependant upon the skill of the singer



The Counter-Tenor is a classical male voice in the range of alto and mezzo soprano

