

Music Theory Prerequisites

The following is a list of knowledge and skills we are expecting you to have before taking Music Theory I (MUSC 108), a course required by all music majors and minors. (Topics marked with a ★ are particularly important.) Incoming freshmen interested in studying music will be given an entrance exam for MUSC 108 during their Passport Orientation Session the summer before they come to Calvin. Students already at Calvin interested in taking the course should take the test as soon as possible after planning to take the course, preferably the spring semester before they take MUSC 108.

Those who do not pass this entrance exam will be asked to take Music Theory Fundamentals (MUSC 100, a 2-credit course) during the fall semester to prepare them for MUSC 108. If you are not already familiar with the material listed below, and you do not wish to take MUSC 100, you may consider studying on your own or with a tutor before coming to Calvin or before taking the course (see resources below). You may take the test a second time if you do not pass on your first try.

Any questions about the test can be directed to Dr. Benita Wolters-Fredlund (bw24@calvin.edu; 616-526-6909).

Basic Knowledge of Notes and Staves

- Ability to **read and write pitches** in both the **treble and bass clefs** fluently, including the use of accidentals, ledger lines, etc.
- Basic understanding of **C-clefs** (fluency not required)
- Understanding of where pitches can be found on a **keyboard**
- Understanding of the difference between **half steps and whole steps**
- Understanding of **enharmonic equivalents** (eg. G# = Ab)
- Familiarity with basic **dynamic markings** (eg. *forte*, *crescendo*)

Basic Knowledge of Rhythms and Meter

- Ability to read and write basic **time signatures** (eg. 4/4, 6/8)
- Understanding of the difference between **simple and compound meters**
- Fluency with notes of different **rhythmic values** (eg. eighth vs. sixteenth notes; half vs. dotted half note; triples and duples; etc.)
- Ability to **draw notes of different rhythms on the staff** correctly: note heads, stems, flags and beams as well as rests, dots and ties
- Familiarity with basic **tempo markings** (eg. *allegro*, *a tempo*, *rubato*)

★ Scales and Keys

- Ability to write and recognize **scales** on any pitch—major and minor (natural, melodic and harmonic)
- Ability to write and easily recognize all **key signatures**—major and minor
- Understanding of the theoretical relationship between keys, including **relative keys**, **parallel keys**, and the **circle of fifths**

★ Intervals and Triads

- Ability to recognize and write **intervals of all sizes and qualities from a unison (P1) to an octave (P8)** (major, minor, perfect, diminished, augmented).
- Ability to recognize and write **all basic triad types** (major, minor, diminished, augmented)

Suggested Resources

This material can be found in most music theory texts, but we specifically recommend using the textbooks used in our theory curriculum for Theory I and II, *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* and *Workbook for the Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* by Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin (W. W. Norton, 2005). It is assumed that students coming into MUSC 108 will have already covered the material in Unit I (Chapters 1-7) of this text: "Building a Musical Vocabulary: Basic Elements of Pitch and Rhythm."

Much of this material is also covered in Ricci Adams' free Music Theory resource online: <http://www.musictheory.net/>