



NORTHERN ARIZONA  
UNIVERSITY  
*College of Arts & Letters*

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**School of Music**

## UNDERGRADUATE MUSIC THEORY PLACEMENT TEST INFORMATION

The theory placement test is designed to determine whether you are ready to enroll in MUS 121 (Music Theory I) or whether you must first take MUS 120 (Theory Preparation). For the test, you need to be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge listed below on page 2. To give you a clearer idea of what the test will be like, a sample test (followed by answers) is included starting on page 3. The actual placement will be similar, but about twice as long. Finally, in order to help you prepare for the test, we recommend the following resources:

### People

Ask for help from a music teacher, whether it be your band director, orchestra director, choir director, or a private teacher.

### Books

We recommend either of the following books to help you prepare for the placement test:

- Paul O. Harder and Greg A. Steinke: *Basic Materials in Music Theory: A Programmed Course*.
- John Clough, Joyce Conley, and Claire Boge: *Scales, Intervals, Keys, Triads, Rhythm, and Meter: A Programmed Course in Elementary Music Theory*, (Chapters 1-29 only.)

### Internet Resources

You might also try the following web sites:

- [www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net)
- [www.teoria.com](http://www.teoria.com)

## SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE NAU MUSIC THEORY PLACEMENT TEST

### Rhythm

- Write and identify the basic duration symbols for notes and rests, from a thirty-second note up to a whole note.
- Understand the use of other basic rhythmic symbols, such as dots, ties, and beams.
- Understand how note values relate to each other. (For example, a half note is equivalent to two quarters, four eighths, eight sixteenths, etc.)
- For any standard time signature, state the number of the beats in the measure and the value of the beat. (For example, a measure of 6/8 contains two beats and the value of the beat is a dotted quarter note.)
- Given a measure of notated rhythm, identify which time signature best corresponds to it.

### Pitch

NOTE: For the test, you need to know both BASS and TREBLE clef. Therefore, the test will ask you to demonstrate the following skills in BOTH of these clefs.

- Write and identify pitches.
- Write and identify key signatures.
- Write and identify major scales and the three forms of minor, starting on any note.
- Identify intervals up to the size of a perfect twelfth.
- Write intervals (up to a perfect twelfth) both UP and DOWN from a given note.
- Identify the quality of a triad.
- Given a triad in any position, identify its root and position (i.e., root position, first inversion, or second inversion).
- Write a root position triad of a specified quality, starting with any given note as the root.

## Sample NAU Music Theory Placement Test

The NAU Music Theory Placement Test is designed to determine whether you are ready to enroll in Music Theory I or whether you should first take Theory Preparation. The following sample is meant to give you an idea of what the test will be like. The actual test will be similar but about twice as long, and you will have one hour to complete it.

1. Each of the following lines contains a rhythmic pattern on the left and a series of note values on the right. For each rhythmic pattern, **CIRCLE** the note value that represents the same total duration.

a.  = 

b.  = 

2. For each excerpt below, write the correct **TIME SIGNATURE** in the box provided. Note that each excerpt begins with a complete measure, but may spill over into an incomplete measure. Choose from the following time signatures:

$\frac{2}{2}$     $\frac{3}{2}$     $\frac{2}{4}$     $\frac{3}{4}$     $\frac{4}{4}$     $\frac{6}{8}$     $\frac{9}{8}$     $\frac{12}{8}$





3. For each of the following time signatures, **CIRCLE** the note value that represents the beat.

a. **C** beat = 

b.  **$\frac{6}{8}$**  beat = 

4. Identify each PITCH notated below by writing its LETTER NAME in the blank provided.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Identify the following key signatures.

a.

\_\_\_\_\_ major  
 \_\_\_\_\_ minor

b.

\_\_\_\_\_ major  
 \_\_\_\_\_ minor

6. Write the following key signatures.

a. B $\flat$  major

b. f $\sharp$  minor

7. Add accidentals as necessary to produce the requested scales. In each case, the first (and lowest) note given is the first note of the scale. DO NOT USE A KEY SIGNATURE. INSTEAD, ADD ACCIDENTALS IN THEIR PROPER POSITIONS. DO NOT ALTER THE FIRST NOTE WITH AN ACCIDENTAL.

a. Major

b. Harmonic minor



11. For each of the following triads, indicate its QUALITY in the space provided. Use the abbreviations M for major, mi for minor, A for augmented, and d for diminished.

\_\_\_\_\_

12. For each of the following triads, indicate its ROOT in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_

13. For each of the following notes, build a triad of the specified quality in ROOT POSITION, using the given note as the root.

Example:

Major

Major

Minor

Diminished

## Answers to the Sample Test

1.

a.  = 

b.  = 

2.

$\frac{4}{4}$

$\frac{6}{8}$

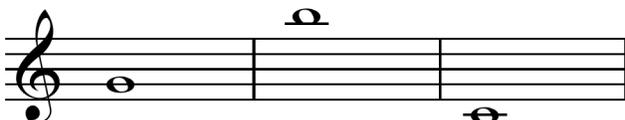



3.

a. **C** beat = 

b.  **$\frac{6}{8}$**  beat = 

4.



G            B            C



A            D            C

5.

a.      D major

    b minor

b.      D $\flat$  major

    b $\flat$  minor

6.

a. 

b. 

7.

a.



b.



8.



d5      M7      m6      M3

9.



P5      mi3

10.



M3      M7

11.



M      A      m

12.



F#      A      C

13.



Major      Minor      Diminished