

# Music fundamentals module information

Dear musician,

Welcome to music studies at Wichita State University! My name is Dr. David MacDonald. I teach music theory and composition at WSU, and I'll be helping you get started on your course of study.

To enroll in MUSC 127: Music Theory I, you must first score an 90 or better on the WSU Music Fundamentals Exam. You can take the exam as many times as you need, so there's no pressure! It's just our way of making sure that we're all starting from a similar baseline of knowledge.

If you've never taken a music theory course before, don't worry! You're not alone! I didn't have any theory classes until I got to college either. That's why we've assembled the resources here. If you have studied music theory before, you might find these to be a useful form of review as you begin. (For students interested in studying music composition, there is an *optional* second module you may take. Read below for more information.)

If you have any questions about music theory, the fundamentals module, or anything else you're curious about, I am happy to answer them. The best way to get in touch with me is by email [david.macdonald@wichita.edu](mailto:david.macdonald@wichita.edu).

I look forward to meeting you in the fall!

David MacDonald, D.M.A.  
Assistant Professor of Music

## How to sign up for the module

1. Purchase digital access to the ***Music Placement Exam*** for \$15 from Rising Software. In addition to your name and email, you will need the following information to register:
2. School Code: **WSU-EXAM**
3. PIN: **GQ4L**
4. You will then receive an email (subject: WSU Music Placement Exam - access information) that will include a username, password, and school code which you can use to log in at <https://auralia.cloud/> to take the test.
5. Your subscription to the testing service lasts two months, during which time you may take the exam as many times as you want to improve your score. Use the links below to learn more.

If you run into any difficulties with the tech services, you can contact Rising Software at [cloudsupport@risingsoftware.com](mailto:cloudsupport@risingsoftware.com). If you have any questions about the exam content, you can contact me directly [david.macdonald@wichita.edu](mailto:david.macdonald@wichita.edu).

## Learning resources

### Pitch notation, clefs, and the piano keyboard

- from [MusicTheory.net](http://MusicTheory.net)
- [“The Staff, clefs, and ledger lines”](#)
- [“Steps and accidentals”](#)
- from [\*Open Music Theory\*](#)
- [“Basic notation”](#)
- [“Pitches and octave designations”](#)

### Rhythm notation

- from [MusicTheory.net](http://MusicTheory.net)
- [“Note duration”](#)
- [“Rest duration”](#)
- [“Dots and ties”](#)
- [“Rhythmic values”](#) from *Open Music Theory*

### Major scales

- [“The Major scale”](#)- from *MusicTheory.net*
- video: [Monahan: Major Scales](#)

### Major key signatures

- video: [Monahan: Key Signatures](#)
- [“Key signatures”](#) from *Open Music Theory*

## Practice questions

Some excellent free practice drills are available to quiz you on the fundamentals of music reading, scales, and more.

- [MusicTheory.net](http://MusicTheory.net)
- [Teoría](#)

# Information for Music Composition Students

The music composition sequence typically begins with MUSC 259, Introduction to Music Composition. This course is taught in a lecture/workshop setting covering some broad concepts, and is taught by me. Following semesters are taught as one-on-one lessons. The introductory class has a prerequisite of Theory I, so most often, students begin their study of composition formally in their second year. However, in the interest of allowing students to get started right away, I am willing to waive the prerequisite for the course for students who achieve a 90 or better on the “Intermediate Fundamentals” test.

This test covers some—but not all—of the topics addressed in Theory I, so students will still need to take that course concurrently with Intro to Composition. Just like the test above, I have included some learning resources below.

Note: This test is *not* required for incoming composition majors, and you will not be set back in your studies if you don’t take it. This is just provided as an option for students who wish to start their composition track *early*. Also, this test does *not* require a second purchase. Your access to both the fundamentals and intermediate exams is covered by the same subscription.

## Going further

### Minor scales and key signatures

- video: [Monahan: Minor Scales](#)
- [“Scales and scale degrees”](#) from *Open Music Theory*

### Simple meter and compound meter

- [“Meter and time signatures”](#) from *Open Music Theory*
- [“Measures and time signature”](#) from *MusicTheory.net*

### Intervals

- video: [Monahan: Intervals](#)
- [“Intervals”](#) from *Open Music Theory v2*

### Triads

- [“Introduction to Chords”](#) from *MusicTheory.net*
- [“Triad Inversion”](#) from *MusicTheory.net*
- video [Monahan: Triads](#)

## Seventh chords

- Ch. 18, “Seventh Chords”, parts 18.1–18.3 from *Fundamentals, Function, Form* by Andre Mount