

Harmonic Dictation: A Sequence and Strategies for Success

<https://www.listen-sing.com/tmea-2020-harmonic-dictation>

Aural training and harmonic study are to a large extent one and the same. If you want to develop your sense of harmony, train your ears; if you want to improve your power of hearing, study harmony and counterpoint—only in the right way. They must be studied as *sound*, not as mathematical equations.

R. O. Morris and Howard Ferguson (1931)

"No job in ear training is more difficult than taking harmonic dictation."

Michael Rogers (1984)

What we have not named
or beheld as a symbol
escapes our notice.

W. H. Auden (1907-1973)

From "I Am Not a Camera," printed in *Epistle to a Godson* (New York: Random House. 1972)

What we have not
sung on a label
escapes
our ability to take in dictation.

What I cannot create,
I cannot understand.

Richard Phillips Feynman (1918-1988)

What we have not internalized through singing,
we can neither sight sing
nor identify and notate correctly in dictation.

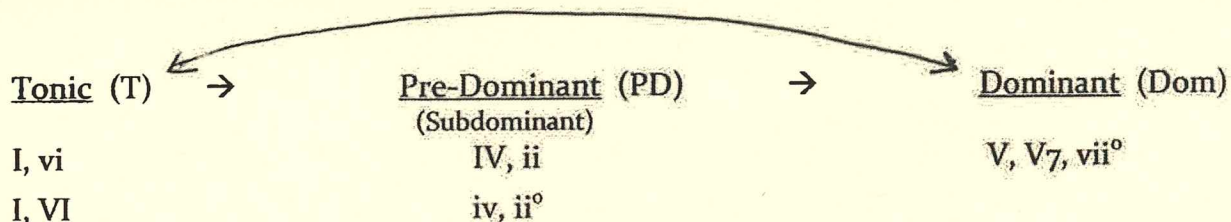
Prerequisite Skills

- Match pitch (both via singing and via audiation)
- Sing scales (pentascales, octave scales, on solfege, on letter names)



- Sing chord arpeggios (on solfege, on letter names)
- Hear multiple pitches as one structure
- Discern one pitch within a chord
- Recognize when a chord change occurs
- Ability to "think in a key" (spell all the chords in a given key)
- Helpful: knowledge of well-formed chord progressions
- Helpful: knowledge of harmonic function
- What else?
- Everything else!

Harmonic Function



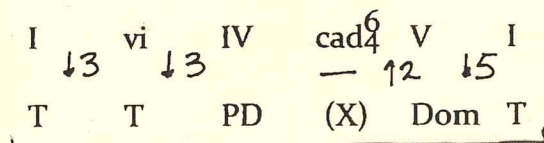
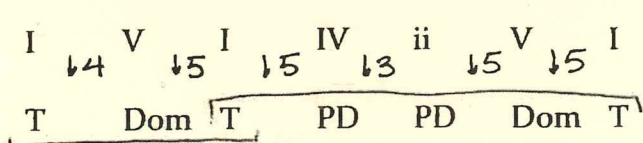
- iii is Tonic Function if before the Pre-Dominant, Dominant function if after
- In minor, VII and III point to the Relative Major
- 2nd-inversion chords do not have the function of their Roman numeral (skip them)

Root Movement

Strongest

Down-by-5 th :	1	4	7	3	6	2	5	1
Down-by-3 rd :	1	6	4	2	7	5	3	1
Up-by-Step:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

- Majority strong root movement in a progression
- Skip over 2nd-inversion chords

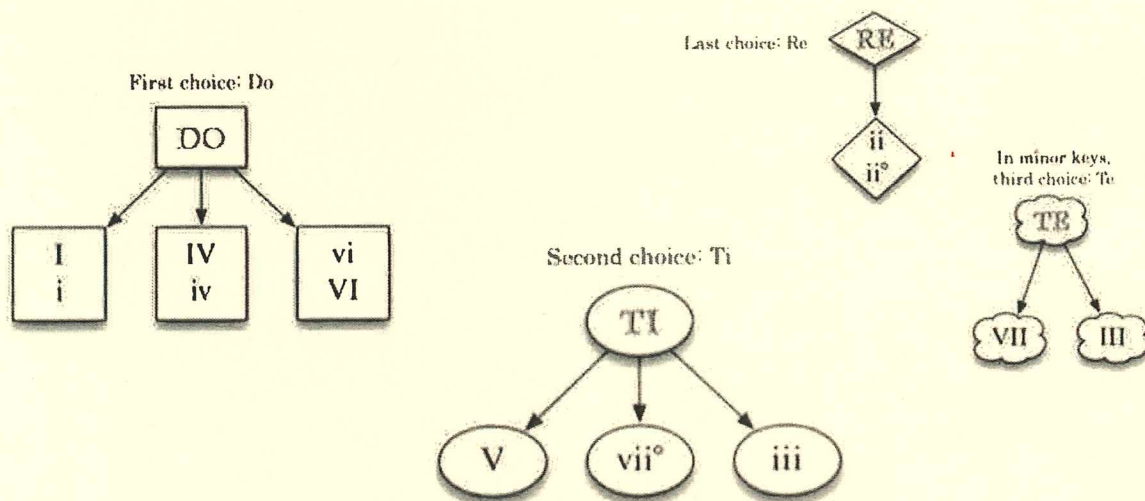


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsYsP4g_idE&t=80s

Root Movement Down-by-5th

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FURdcArGLMc>

		La/Le	La/Le		La/Le	La/Le		
	So			So			So	So
		Fa	Fa			Fa	Fa	
	Mi/Me			Mi/Me	Mi/Me			Mi/Me
			Re			Re/Ra	Re	
	Do	Do		Do	Do			Do
			Ti/Te	Ti/Te			Ti	
Major Key	I	IV	vii° vii [♯]	iii	vi	ii ii ₇	V V ₇	I
minor key	i	iv	VII VII ₇	III	VI	ii° ii [♯]	V V ₇	i



Root Movement Down-by-3rd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hk6igR2J0BM&t=73s3>

		La/Le	La/Le	La/Le	La/Le		
	So					So	So
			Fa	Fa	Fa	Fa	
	Mi/Me	Mi/Me					Mi/Me
				Re/Ra	Re	Re	
	Do	Do	Do	Do			Do
					Ti	Ti	
Major Key	I	vi	IV	ii ii ₇	vii° vii [♯]	V V ₇	I
minor key	i	VI	iv	ii° ii [♯]	vii° vii [♯]	V V ₇	i

Transcription #100A

<https://youtu.be/FhWYOu86bBY>

Initial Hearings :: Listen for the pulse. Count beat numbers aloud with the music. Determine the rhythmic placement of missing notes.

Next Hearings :: Sing. Sing. Sing.

Sing the counting numbers. Listen for "do" and sing solfege. Sing the pitch letter names.

Remaining Hearings :: Notate the missing pitches (stems up for the melody and stems down for the bass line). Sing along to confirm the association between what you hear and its notation.

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a Melody staff (treble clef) and a Bass Line staff (bass clef). The key signature has one flat (Bb). The time signature is common time (C). The score is numbered 1 through 30.

System 1 (Beats 1-7):

- Melody:** Beat 1: quarter note G4; Beat 2: quarter note A4; Beat 3: quarter note B4; Beat 4: quarter note C5; Beat 5: quarter note B4; Beat 6: quarter note A4; Beat 7: half note G4.
- Bass Line:** Beat 1: quarter note G2; Beat 2: quarter note F2; Beat 3: quarter note E2; Beat 4: quarter note D2; Beat 5: quarter note C2; Beat 6: quarter note B1; Beat 7: quarter note A1.

System 2 (Beats 8-15):

- Melody:** Beat 8: quarter note G4; Beat 9: quarter note A4; Beat 10: quarter note B4; Beat 11: quarter note C5; Beat 12: quarter note B4; Beat 13: quarter note A4; Beat 14: quarter note G4; Beat 15: half note F4.
- Bass Line:** Beat 8: quarter note G2; Beat 9: quarter note F2; Beat 10: quarter note E2; Beat 11: quarter note D2; Beat 12: quarter note C2; Beat 13: quarter note B1; Beat 14: quarter note A1; Beat 15: quarter note G1.

System 3 (Beats 16-23):

- Melody:** Beat 16: quarter note G4; Beat 17: quarter note A4; Beat 18: quarter note B4; Beat 19: quarter note C5; Beat 20: quarter note B4; Beat 21: quarter note A4; Beat 22: quarter note G4; Beat 23: half note F4.
- Bass Line:** Beat 16: quarter note G2; Beat 17: quarter note F2; Beat 18: quarter note E2; Beat 19: quarter note D2; Beat 20: quarter note C2; Beat 21: quarter note B1; Beat 22: quarter note A1; Beat 23: quarter note G1.

System 4 (Beats 24-30):

- Melody:** Beat 24: quarter note G4; Beat 25: quarter note A4; Beat 26: quarter note B4; Beat 27: quarter note C5; Beat 28: quarter note B4; Beat 29: quarter note A4; Beat 30: half note G4.
- Bass Line:** Beat 24: quarter note G2; Beat 25: quarter note F2; Beat 26: quarter note E2; Beat 27: quarter note D2; Beat 28: quarter note C2; Beat 29: quarter note B1; Beat 30: quarter note A1.