



Incoming Freshmen's Guide to Music Theory and Functional Keyboard

What is the Online Fundamentals Entrance Exam and how/when do I take it?

All freshmen will register for Theory I, Aural Skills I, and Keyboard I. However, in order to stay registered for those courses at the beginning of the Fall semester, all students will need to complete the Online Fundamentals Entrance Exam anytime **before 8:00 AM the first Friday of classes**. The purpose of the exam is to make sure that you have the necessary fundamental knowledge to succeed in your classes. In particular, you need to understand the layout of the piano keyboard and be able to read notes on both treble and bass clef. We recommend that you start early on this so you have plenty of time to learn and practice the material, if necessary--the exam website offers helpful resources. The exam (and preparation) can be conveniently completed online any time in advance of the deadline—even during the spring and summer months. Those who do not submit passing exam results will be required to drop these courses and will have the option of adding Musicianship I to their schedule instead.

To take the exam, go to the Music Department website, select “Current Students”, then “Online Fundamentals Entrance Exam (for Fall 2023)”. You will also receive an email during the summer (at the address used to register for Racer Nation Orientation) with all of the exam information. If you have any further questions or concerns, feel free to contact Dr. Mike D’Ambrosio at mdambrosio@murraystate.edu.

Is there anything I can do before I come to MSU to better prepare for the theory diagnostic exam and my theory classes in general?

We encourage our incoming music majors and minors to enter the program with the following skills:

- **Basic literacy of musical notation, particularly that which describes pitches, rhythms, time signatures, and key signatures**
- **Ability to read notes in *both* treble and bass clef**
- **General knowledge of the layout of a piano keyboard**
- Ability to aurally differentiate between upward and downward melodic motion
- Ability to aurally differentiate between stepwise motion (C to D) and leaps (C to E)
- Ability to use your singing voice comfortably**

If you have access to a computer, you can learn and practice the first three of these skills at the following free website: <http://www.musictheory.net/>

*** The functional use of your singing voice (for instrumentalists as much as vocalists) is important to your success as a music student at MSU, and later as a music teacher in private lessons, ensemble rehearsal, or the classroom. If you have not recently had experience singing, then you are encouraged to find a place in a school or community choir or another musical venue where you can develop your skill and comfort level.*

You can also purchase your theory textbook in advance. The Murray State Department of Music uses *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* by Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin (4th ed. textbook/workbook/anthology/online access, Norton, ISBN: 978-0-393-86955-2).

Can I test out of my theory courses?

For those of you taking the AP Music Theory Exam, scoring a 5 gives you credit for both Theory I and Theory II (MUS 170 and 173), giving you the option of taking Theory III as a freshman. Scoring a 3 or 4 gives you credit for Theory I only.

For those of you who are pianists or who took a non-AP theory course in high school, you might consider taking a “challenge exam” for Theory I (and possibly Theory II) just before the fall semester begins. Please contact Dr. Mike D’Ambrosio at mdambrosio@murraystate.edu for more information and to indicate your interest. Sitting for the challenge exam(s) costs \$75 per course.

What can I do to prepare for Functional Keyboard classes?

Since the first few weeks of Functional Keyboard move at a brisk pace, *it is very important for incoming freshmen to become fluent in basic note and rhythm reading as soon as possible.* Students with access to a piano or a keyboard are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the layout of the piano keyboard at the same time that they are mastering their note-reading skills. The easiest way to do this is to practice with music flash cards. (You can find them online to print, or make your own using 3x5 cards.) Twenty minutes of flash card practice per day will have students reading better in about two weeks.

Below are a few books and online resources to practice your piano reading skills:

- <http://www.musictheory.net/exercises>
- <http://www.soundswell.co.uk/pages/swsightr.htm> (The exercises in the “First Steps” section will work.)
- <https://www.sightreadingfactory.com> (Try the Demo for free.)
- Bastien, James. *Sight Reading, Level 1* (Kjos Music Company)
- Bastien, Jane Smisor. *A Line a Day Sight Reading, Level 1* (Kjos Music Company)
- Johnson, T.A. and Caroline Evans. *Right@Sight, Grade 1* (Edition Peters)
- Kember, John. *Piano Sight Reading, Volume 1* (Schott)
- Marlais, Helen and Kevin Olson. *Sight Reading & Rhythm Every Day, Book 1A* (FJH Music Company)

FUNCTIONAL KEYBOARD CHALLENGE EXAMS

General Guidelines

- Challenging a Functional Keyboard class assumes that a student already knows (or has been taught) the materials presented in any given semester. Exams will be evaluated accordingly.
 - Challenge tests are only offered in the first two weeks of the semester, by appointment.
 - Students must register online to take the Challenge Exam before contacting the Keyboard Unit Coordinator to pick up materials. Materials will not be given out otherwise.
 - Materials must be picked up no later than the end of the first week of class.
 - If a student is unsure which Challenge Exam(s) to take, consult the Keyboard Unit Coordinator for a short diagnostic evaluation.
 - Students will have 5 days to prepare exam materials once they are distributed (7 days for the MUS 275 Exam).
 - Challenge Exams may not replace a grade of “D,” “E,” or “W” earned in a previous semester.
 - Challenge Exams may only be taken once.
 - Once students have entered the keyboard course sequence, they may not Challenge a subsequent class unless they have written permission from their current piano instructor.
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MUS 172: Functional Keyboard I

- Repertoire: 1-page piece at an appropriate level. Attention to musical details (dynamics, articulation, pedal, etc.) is expected.
 - Scales: Group I Majors (C, G, D, A, E Majors) and Group II (B, C#, F# Majors). Play two octaves, hands together, in parallel motion. Correct fingerings are expected.
 - Arpeggios: C, G, D, A, E, B Majors. Play two octaves, hands together, in parallel motion. Correct fingerings are expected.
 - Harmonization: Harmonize a given melody using I, IV and V7 chords. You will play the RH melody, plus the LH chords you choose. The LH chords must logically fit the RH melody.
 - Transposition: You will transpose the harmonization exercise to a different key, up to a 3rd above or below the original key.
 - Sight Reading: level appropriate to MUS 172 Final Exam, TBA.
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MUS 175: Functional Keyboard II

- Repertoire: 1-page piece at an appropriate level. Attention to musical details (dynamics, articulation, pedal, etc.) is expected.
- Scales: Group I (C, G, D, A, E Major & harmonic minor) and Group II (B, C#, F# Majors), Group III (Ab, Eb, Bb majors), and Group IV (F major/minor). Play two octaves, hands together, in parallel motion. Correct fingerings are expected.
- Arpeggios: Group “C” and “Db”. Play two octaves, hands together, in parallel motion. Correct fingerings are expected.

- Harmonization: Harmonize a given melody using primary (I, IV and V7) and secondary (ii, vi) chords. You will play the RH melody, plus the LH chords you choose. The LH chords must logically fit the RH melody.
 - Transposition: You will transpose the harmonization exercise to a different key, up to a 3rd above or below the original key.
 - Sight Reading: level appropriate to MUS 175 Final Exam, TBA.
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MUS 272: Functional Keyboard III

- Repertoire: 1-page piece at an appropriate level. Attention to musical details (dynamics, articulation, pedal, etc.) is expected.
 - Scales: You are expected to know all the major and harmonic minor scales, 2 octaves, hands together, parallel motion, with correct fingerings.
 - Arpeggios: You are expected to know all the major and minor arpeggios, 2 octaves, hands together, parallel motion, with correct fingerings.
 - Harmonization: Harmonize a given melody using primary (I, IV and V7) and secondary (ii, vi) chords, as well as a secondary dominant (V7/IV or V7/V). You will play the RH melody, plus the LH chords you choose. The LH chords must logically fit the RH melody.
 - Transposition: You will transpose the harmonization exercise to a different key, up to a 3rd above or below the original key.
 - Open Vocal Score: a short excerpt with three staves (SAB). You will play all three voices together.
 - Instrumental Score: a short excerpt containing two instruments, one transposing and one non-transposing. You will play the two instruments together in the correct “sounding” key.
 - Sight Reading: level appropriate to MUS 272 Final Exam, TBA.
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MUS 275: Functional Keyboard IV

Students wishing to challenge this course are expected to demonstrate proficiency at all of the concepts that are listed on the Final Exam for MUS 275. Therefore, permission from the Keyboard Unit Coordinator is required before registering to take this exam.

- Repertoire: 1-page piece at an appropriate level. Attention to musical details (dynamics, articulation, pedal, etc.) is expected.
- Scales: You are expected to know all the major and harmonic minor scales, 2 octaves, hands together, parallel motion, with correct fingerings.
- Arpeggios: You are expected to know all the major and minor arpeggios, 2 octaves, hands together, parallel motion, with correct fingerings.
- Harmonization: Harmonize a given melody using primary (I, IV and V7) and secondary (ii, vi) chords, as well as a secondary dominant (V7/IV or V7/V). You will play the RH melody, plus the LH chords you choose. The LH chords must logically fit the RH melody.
- Transposition: You will transpose the harmonization exercise to a different key, up to a 3rd above or below the original key.
- Open Vocal Score: a short excerpt with four staves (SATB). You will play all four voices together.

- Instrumental Score: a short open score, containing about six different band instruments (Flute, Bb Clarinet, Eb Sax, Bb Cornet/Trumpet, F Horn, and Trombone). You will be asked to play any two adjacent instruments together in the correct “sounding” key.
- Sight Reading: level appropriate to MUS 275 Final Exam, TBA.