

Music Theory/ Composition:

Confident note recognition of notes on Treble and Bass Clef

Basic Key signatures (1 or 2 sharps and flats)

Major and Minor keys (one or two sharps and flats)

Primary chords in these key signatures

Rhythmic identification of crotchets, quavers, semiquavers, minims, semibreves, triplets

Having composed on GarageBand or similar using loops, as well as creating basic compositions with chords and melody parts

Practical:

Having had lessons for at least two years on an instrument of their choice (Grade 1 / 2 level)

Basic piano /keyboard playing skills: chords, note recognition etc.

Listening Component:

Stepwise movement / disjunct movement of a melody

Basic knowledge of instrument families and main instruments in each family

Basic knowledge of World Music (ie Chinese Music, one or two instruments and Pentatonic Scale / Indian Music and Raga, instruments etc)

Dissonant sounds and Consonant sounds

Basic indications of Tempo, Dynamics, Articulation

I would expect that, by the time students opt for music at IGCSE level, all the theoretical knowledge they have accumulated over time can be translated into practical skills such as the following, to reflect the actual level of understanding they will have achieved in the three areas of assessment. That is to say, component 1, 2, and 3. This is the list of knowledge and practical skills, that I would expect my learners to have prior to their being confirmed as IGCSE music student.

Skills to reflect their component 1 abilities.

Pitch -

- The ability to identify pitches (relative pitch) in relation to an identified root note
- Ability to listen and to write pitches in an identified key.
- Ability to recognize effects such as pitch bend, and vibrato when used in a song.

Dynamics -

- Ability to identify dynamics in a song.

Form /structure -

- Ability to recognize and correctly identify the structure of a song.

Rhythm -

- Ability to identify and write the pattern of a played percussion instrument.

Melody -

- Ability to identify the melodic flow of a played musical line.

Tempo.

- Ability to recognize the change in tempo when listening to a song.

Harmony.

- Ability to distinguish between major and minor chords, Major and minor tonality.
- Ability to identify chords and their inversions by ear.
- Ability to identify chord progressions of a played song.

World music and Genres.

- Ability to distinguish between music from different genres and backgrounds, using the audible characteristics.

Tonality -

- Ability to identify the tonality of different sections of a music piece and cadences at the end of phrases.
- Ability to identify a wide range of musical instruments and to classify them by their sound quality.

Skills to reflect their component 2 abilities.

- Ability to sing in a consistent key and to transpose to the right identified key.
- Ability to play a rhythmic instrument in respect to a specific tempo and apply any instructed tempo variations.
- Ability to write the pattern of a rhythmic pattern after listening to it.
- Ability to comfortably play and improvise on at least one instrument of their choice with a given scope of musical materials.
- Every learner is expected to have overcome stage fright.
- Must be able to explain and demonstrate some basic theoretical knowledge using either a keyboard instrument or their instruments of choice. For example, pitch, melody, intervals, harmony, playing techniques, rhythm, articulation, time signature and dynamics.
- Ability to tune or relate the tuning of their instruments of choice with the keyboard instrument. For example, tuning of a violin or a guitar, and the ability to identify the tonal difference and theoretical knowledge required for a B flat trumpeter or saxophonist to play with a piano accompaniment.

- Ability to fluently interpret sheet music written for their instruments of choice. For example, guitar chords for a guitar, and to interpret and play the basic articulations and techniques that apply to their instrument of choice comfortably.

Skills to reflect their component 3 abilities.

- Must be able to write a simple melody with respect to timing provided the time signature of their choice, whether simple or compound, duple, triple or quadruple time.
- Ability to create their own musical ideas, and to sample them on an instrument or with a voice, before they can be translated into pitches and rhythms on sheet music scores.
- Ability to identify and correct rhythmic errors in a written sheet music piece, in respect to time signature.
- Ability to identify compositional devices used in different songs to borrow a leaf from other composers.
- The knowledge of how sheet music of different tuned instruments relates to that written on the normal key of the piano. For example, the key in which music of a B flat clarinet must be written to match with the piano accompaniment written in a given key.

Here is a list of key knowledge and skills that I believe are helpful for learners to have beforehand:

1. **Basic musical terminology** – such as tempo, dynamics, pitch, timbre, and texture. A confident grasp of these terms allows students to respond accurately to listening questions.
2. **Basic score reading skills** – being able to follow short passages of printed music, especially in treble and bass clefs. For students who play instruments like the drum kit or guitar (where staff reading may not be common), this can be a particular challenge at the beginning.
3. **Instrument recognition** – a general awareness of different instruments and their families (strings, woodwind, brass, percussion, keyboard, and traditional/ethnic instruments).
4. **Descriptive music vocabulary** – having the language to describe music in writing, beyond just saying it “sounds nice” or “fast.” This is essential for the short descriptive question on the listening paper.

asic musical experience:

- Previous exposure to music through **instrumental or vocal practice**, school music lessons, or ensemble participation.
- Experience **talking about music** and expressing opinions, even informally.

Understanding of musical elements:

- **Melody** (e.g. steps, leaps, phrases)
- **Rhythm and metre** (simple time signatures, basic note values, steady beat)
- **Tempo and dynamics** (e.g. allegro, lento, loud/soft changes)
- **Texture** (e.g. solo vs. ensemble, layered sounds)
- **Timbre and instruments** (basic recognition of orchestral, pop, or world instruments)

Introductory knowledge of notation:

- Reading **basic staff notation**, especially in the treble clef
- Recognising **note values, rests, time signatures, and key signatures**

- Familiarity with **musical symbols** (e.g. crescendo, staccato, repeat signs)

Willingness to explore diverse musical styles:

- Interest in music from different cultures and eras, such as:
 - Baroque, Classical and Romantic styles
 - Music for dance, stage, and screen
 - Traditional music from China, India, and the Arab world
 - Pop, salsa, tango, and EDM

Musical Skills Learners Should Begin Developing:

Listening skills:

- **Attentive listening** to pick out details like instruments, rhythms, and changes in texture or dynamics
- Identifying **musical features** such as cadences, chords, or intervals
- Comparing and commenting on different musical examples

Descriptive and analytical skills:

- Using **appropriate musical vocabulary** to describe what they hear (e.g. staccato, syncopation, minor key)
- Following and interpreting a **printed score** while listening
- Describing **style, genre, and structure** using correct terminology

Aural and theoretical awareness:

- Recognising musical **intervals, chords, and keys**
- Understanding how to **transpose short melodies**
- Analysing the **form or structure** of a piece (e.g. binary, ternary, rondo)

1. Consider the requirement for Topic 1: General Listening Skills

Topic 1 focuses on developing students' ability to listen to music attentively and identify musical elements such as pitch, rhythm, texture, dynamics, timbre, structure, and style. Learners need to analyse, describe, and compare what they hear using appropriate musical vocabulary. This forms the foundation for success in the IGCSE Music listening component.

2. Knowledge and Skills Learners Should Have Previously Gained (or Ideally Bring to the Course)

At the start of their IGCSE Music studies, I hope my learners will already:

- Recognize changes in **pitch, tempo, and dynamics**
- Identify a **steady beat** and simple **rhythmic patterns**
- Know basic **instruments** and their families (e.g. strings, brass, percussion)
- Distinguish between **solo, unison, and layered textures**
- Understand simple **melodic shapes** (e.g. rising, falling) and basic **chord changes**
- Recognize common **musical structures** like binary, ternary, or verse-chorus
- Be familiar with a range of **musical genres and styles**

- Use basic **musical vocabulary** to describe what they hear
- Show the ability to **listen with focus** and attention
- Have some **practical music experience** (e.g. singing, instrument playing), which helps support listening skills
- Reflect on my IB MYP students in year 2 and 3, they should have the knowledge and skills:
- (However, while putting together the following list, I realised that some of the knowledge and skills should ideally be taught during MYP Years 4 and 5.)
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- **Knowledge Learners Should Have Gained (in MYP Music)**
 - -Understanding of basic music elements: tempo, dynamics, pitch, duration, texture, timbre, articulation, and structure
 - -Familiarity with different world music traditions and musical styles (linked to MYP Global Context and Inquiry-Based Learning)
 - -Basic knowledge of instrument families and common ensemble combinations (orchestral, band, vocal)
- **Awareness of music notation and symbols, including:**
 - -Simple and compound time signatures
 - -Common dynamic, tempo, and articulation markings
 - -Experience with music analysis vocabulary for describing texture, form, instrumentation, and expressive features
- **Introduction to digital and/or acoustic music composition tools**
 - -Music maker (Chrome music lab)
 - -GarageBand
 - -Bandlab
 - -Musescore
- **Skills should have:**
 - -Identifying key musical elements aurally
 - -Describing how music conveys mood or narrative
 - -Basic aural identification of instrument families and ensemble types
 - -Reflecting on and evaluating different musical performances or works
- **Skills on the performance:**
 - Developing confidence in solo and ensemble performance (vocal or instrumental)
 - Understanding rehearsal techniques and basic stage etiquette
 - Interpreting simple scores, including dynamics and articulation
 - Recording and evaluating own performances through self-assessment
- **Skills on the composing:**
 - -Creating short original compositions using musical elements purposefully
 - -Experimenting with texture, rhythm, melody, and harmony
 - -Using digital audio workstations (DAWs) or notation software (e.g. GarageBand, Soundtrap, Sibelius, MuseScore)
 - -Reflecting on the creative process and refining work based on feedback
- **Skills on music literacy:**
 - -Understanding rhythmic values, including dotted notes and rests
 - -Recognising and using scales (major, minor, pentatonic, etc.)
 - -Applying key musical terms in discussions and written work

- I'm not sure what the students should know before they start but this is a small thought about basic stuff that they should at least have an idea about:
- • Steps, leaps.
- • Major, minor, chromatic modes.
- • Simple, compound time.
- • Tempos (A general idea not every single one).
- • Tonality: Major, Minor.
- • Cadences (perfect, imperfect)
- • Texture (monophonic, unison, doubled in octaves)
- • Music devices: Repetition, ascending/descending sequence, imitation.
- • Some of the articulations (legato, staccato)
- • Instruments, ensembles & voices (chamber music ensembles, common orchestral instruments, piano, some idea about SATB)
- • Structure: Binary, ternary, rondo, intro, verse, chorus.
- • Some DAW experience (Cubase or any other DAW)
- • Bass & treble clef notation.
- • A few sharps and flats knowing how to calculate.
- • Intervals (P1, P4, P5, P8) at least these.
- • A general idea about artists in the baroque, romantic, classical eras.
- • To be familiar with modern and electronic music at least listened to a few before.
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- I'm not sure if this is considered a lot or they should know more I would love to know if this would be enough before starting the course.

As I consider the level of the IGCSE Music program and its examination demands, these are my thoughts on what students should ideally know before they begin. While this list may seem ambitious, I believe it would greatly benefit both teachers and learners over the two-year course, helping to reduce the risk of students (or teachers) feeling overwhelmed.

1. Music Theory & Rudiments

- Understand staff notation (treble & bass clef)
- Understand note values and rests
- Be familiar with simple and compound time signatures
- Recognize key signatures and understand how they function
- Know major, minor, chromatic and pentatonic scales
- Identify intervals (2nd to octave)
- Chords
- Recognize cadences and basic chord progressions
- Have a general idea of articulation and dynamic markings
- Know common tempo and expression terms

2. Aural and Listening Skills

- Identify melodic shapes (stepwise/leaping, ascending/descending)
- Recognize changes in tempo and dynamics
- Recognize common rhythmic features (e.g. syncopation, triplets, dotted rhythms)
- Matched audio to a score visually (e.g. following a melody while listening)

- Distinguish different textures (homophonic, polyphonic)
- Aware of major/minor tonality
- Identify basic instrument/instrument families
- Have some awareness of Western Classical music and period
- Have basic exposure to world and popular music

3. Musical Vocabulary

- Use key terms: melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, structure, dynamics, tempo
- Describe music using simple musical vocabulary
- Understand commonly used Italian terms (e.g. legato, staccato, forte, andante)

4. Practical Experience

- Have basic skills in playing an instrument or singing
- Be able to follow a simple score or melodic line
- Have participated in a group performance (e.g. ensemble, choir, band)

5. Other Musical Exposure

- Some experience with notation software (e.g. Sibelius, Musescore, Noteflight)
- Tried a basic DAW

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This list was created as a realistic hope based on my prior experiences of what knowledge/skills students are actually coming into G9 with.

1. Melody and rhythm

- Identify all pitch letter names on both the F clef and G clef
- Play basic rhythms including syncopated rhythms, triplets, and eighth/sixteenth combinations
- Be able to identify a whole step vs. half step

2. Harmony

- Identify the difference between major and minor keys aurally
- How a key signature changes (the tonic shifts) based off of the number of sharps or flats
- Basic knowledge of the piano

3. Ensembles and instruments:

- Be proficient on a primary instrument
- Have basic vocal technique and tonal awareness
- Basic knowledge of the orchestra and voice parts (SATB)

4. Structure

- Identify the verse-chorus-bridge form of pop music
- Identify an A-section versus a B-section and describe it

5. Compositional devices

- Be able to write a rhythm with the appropriate number of beats based on a time signature
- Previous experience composing on GarageBand/Logic or MuseScore/Sibelius

1. Listening Component (Understanding Music)

Skills Required:

- **Aural recognition** of musical features such as:
 - Instruments and voice types
 - Texture, dynamics, tempo, tonality
 - Rhythmic and melodic patterns
- Basic **music vocabulary** (terms like crescendo, staccato, etc.)

Knowledge Required:

- Familiarity with major **musical elements**: pitch, rhythm, dynamics, texture, timbre, and form.
- Understanding of **Western classical notation** (e.g., time signatures, note values, key signatures)

2. Performing Component

Skills Required:

- Ability to:
 - Play/sing with accurate pitch and rhythm
 - Maintain steady tempo
 - Interpret dynamics and articulation markings
- Ensemble skills (if performing in a group): timing, listening, blending

Knowledge Required:

- Understanding of **music notation** (able to read and interpret written music)
- Awareness of **performance etiquette** (presentation, tuning, stage presence)
- Ability to **prepare, practice, and evaluate** performance pieces

3. Composing Component

Skills Required:

- Ability to create original **melodies, rhythms, and harmonies**
- Use of **repetition, contrast, and development** in musical ideas
- Basic knowledge of **form/structure**
- Ability to notate compositions clearly using staff notation (or digital software)

Knowledge Required:

- Understanding of **chords and harmonic progressions**
- Familiarity with **instrument ranges and capabilities**
- Understanding of **texture and timbre** for arranging instruments/voices
- Use of **music software** (e.g., MuseScore, Sibelius, or DAWs like GarageBand)

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I. Fundamental Musical Literacy and Aural Skills

- **Identify, describe, or comment on any feature of the music or its performance.** This is a broad foundational skill applicable across all areas of study.
- **Compare passages within an extract** of music.
- **Follow a printed score.** This is particularly emphasized for Areas of Study 1–3, which cover the Western classical tradition, to enable candidates to learn score reading and simple analysis.
- **Identify missing sections of melody or rhythm** from multiple-choice options.

II. Knowledge of Musical Elements and Concepts Students are expected to understand and apply concepts related to:

- **Melody:** Including melodic movement (ascending, descending, stepwise, leaps), scalar and broken chord patterns, arpeggios, countermelody, phrases, improvisation, leitmotifs, range, fanfares, hooks, riffs, and non-Western melodic features such as rāga and quarter-tones.
- **Scales and Modes:** Such as major, minor, chromatic, modal, pentatonic, rāga, and maqam.
- **Rhythm and Metre:** Understanding of duple, triple, quadruple, and irregular metre; simple and compound time signatures; syncopation, hemiola, anacrusis, cross-rhythm, polyrhythm; and non-Western rhythmic patterns like habanera, marcado, forward clave, reverse clave, tāla, and iqa.
- **Tempo:** Recognition of common Italian tempo markings (e.g., Allegro, Andante, Adagio), changes in tempo (e.g., accelerando, rallentando, rubato), and the use of BPM (beats per minute).
- **Tonality:** Knowledge of major and minor keys, modulation to related keys (dominant, subdominant, relative major/minor), and tonic major/minor.
- **Harmony:** Understanding of primary and secondary chords, dominant seventh and diminished seventh chords; perfect, imperfect, and interrupted cadences; consonant and dissonant harmony; diatonic and chromatic harmony; suspensions; tonic and dominant pedal notes.
- **Texture:** Ability to identify monophonic, unison, doubled in octaves, homophonic (melody and accompaniment), polyphonic, heterophonic, imitative, parallel motion, solo, tutti, antiphonal, cluster chords, and drone textures.
- **Musical Devices:** Including repetition, ascending/descending sequences, imitation, ostinato, riffs, and Alberti bass.
- **Dynamics:** Recognition of various dynamic levels (pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff), crescendo, diminuendo, and terraced dynamics.
- **Articulation and Ornaments:** Understanding of legato, staccato, accent, sforzando, slur, trill, mordent, turn, appoggiatura, and acciaccatura.
- **Structure:** Familiarity with forms such as binary, ternary, rondo, ritornello, episode, sonata form (including exposition, development, recapitulation, first/second subject, transition, codetta, coda), introduction, cadenza, minuet and trio, theme and variations, strophic, through-composed, popular song structures (intro, verse, chorus, bridge/middle eight, outro), EDM structures (breakdown, build up, drop), call and response, and Hindustani classical structures (alāp, jōr, gat, jhāla).

III. Understanding of Instruments, Ensembles, and Vocal Techniques

- **Knowledge of diverse instruments and ensembles** from various musical traditions, including ripieno, concertino, basso continuo, common orchestral instruments, piano, harpsichord, organ, vocal ranges (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), pop and rock instruments, and specific instruments found in global music styles like tango (e.g., **bandoneon**), salsa (e.g., **cuatro, clavés**), Silk and Bamboo (e.g., **dizi, sheng, erhu, pipa, yangqin, ban, bangzi**), Hindustani Classical (e.g., **tambūrā, sitār, sarōd, sārangi, bānsurī, tablā**), and Arab Takht ensembles (e.g., **ud, violin, qanun, nay, riqq**).
- Understanding of **instrumental and vocal techniques** such as pizzicato, arco, glissando, portamento, pitch-bending, tremolo, double stopping, roll, melisma, syllabic setting, rap, and **word-painting**.

IV. Historical and Cultural Contextual Understanding

- **Western Classical Tradition:** Understanding the repertoire and developments of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods, including specific 'focus works' and 'wider listening' examples from composers like Vivaldi, Handel, Mozart, and Smetana. Candidates are expected to apply their knowledge to related extracts in the examination.
- **Music and Words:** How musical features are used to enhance the meaning of words in art songs and choral music, and the common processes and structures in popular song and songs from musicals.
- **Music for Dance:** Familiarity with the musical features, specific instruments, use of music technology in EDM, and the social/performance contexts of Tango, Salsa, and EDM.
- **Music for Small Ensemble:** Understanding the musical features, specific instruments, transmission methods, and performance contexts of Silk and Bamboo, Hindustani Classical, and Arab Takht ensembles.
- **Music for Stage and Screen:** How musical features highlight actions and create scenes or emotions in ballet music, film music, and computer game music. This includes understanding elements like leitmotifs in film scores.
- General knowledge of **transmission of music** (e.g., oral/aural, written notation, conservatories) and diverse **performance contexts** (e.g., courts, temples, teahouses, clubs, concert halls, broadcast media, streaming).

V. Analytical and Descriptive Skills

- Ability to **write a short description of the features of the music**.
- Ability to **comment on the context or the style** of the music.
- Ability to **identify the structure of the music** using appropriate terminology or letters (e.g., AABA).

VI. Specific Technical Skills and Notation Knowledge

- **Identify the key of a printed passage of music.**
- **Identify chords and cadences.**
- **Transpose short passages of music written for transposing instruments to concert pitch.** This specifically includes instruments like trumpets in B flat, clarinets in B flat and A, and horns in F and E flat at sounding pitch.
- Knowledge of **notation elements** such as staff notation, clefs (treble, bass, alto), key signatures (up to four sharps or flats), all rhythmic note values (including triplets, dotted rhythms, and rests), simple and compound time signatures, common signs and symbols (e.g., articulation, ornamentation, pause), and major, minor, and perfect intervals.
- Familiarity with **music technology and production** concepts including sampling, looping, effects (chorus, reverb, delay, filtering), overdubbing, multi-tracking, double-tracking, and drum machines.

List of the knowledge and skills for topic 1 General listening skills

1. Basic Music Theory

- Understanding staff notation (treble and bass clef)
- Knowledge of note values and rests
- Understanding time signatures (simple and compound)
- Knowledge of key signatures (up to 4 sharps/flats)
- Scales and modes (major, minor, pentatonic, chromatic)
- Intervals and basic chords
- Familiarity with musical terms in Italian

2. Listening & Aural Skills

- Identifying instruments (orchestral, world, and pop)
- Recognizing textures (monophonic, homophonic, polyphonic)
- Detecting tonality (major/minor, modal)
- Recognizing rhythmic patterns (syncopation, triplets, dotted rhythms)
- Note-taking on musical elements (melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre, dynamics)

3. Music History & Analysis

- Awareness of Western classical periods (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th Century)
- Knowledge of popular music genres (jazz, blues, rock, pop, electronic)
- Understanding world music (African, Indian, Latin American, etc.)
- Ability to analyze pieces (form, instrumentation, stylistic features)

This is my list of skills for students beginning the IGCSE course, based on what they have learned over three years in middle school. I would appreciate any suggestions if you notice any important skills missing that could be added to the middle school program. Naturally, all of these skills will be explored in greater depth during the IGCSE course.