

12-Week Schenkerian Analysis Study Plan

This study plan is designed to help you learn and practice Schenkerian analysis over a structured 12-week period. It moves step by step from foundational concepts to complete background graphs, with exercises, readings, and repertoire suggestions.

Weeks 1–2: Foundations

Goal: Learn Urlinie, Bassbrechung, and prolongation.

Readings: Cadwallader & Gagné (Chs. 1–2); Salzer, Introduction.

Exercises: Reduce Bach chorales to melody + bass; identify Urlinie shapes.

Keyboard drill: Play soprano + bass only.

Weeks 3–4: Foreground Reductions

Goal: Simplify surface detail into basic voice-leading.

Readings: Cadwallader & Gagné (Chs. 3–4).

Exercises: Reduce 2–4 bars of Bach Inventions; mark structural vs. embellishing tones.

Sketch first small graphs with stems/beams.

Weeks 5–6: Middleground Practice

Goal: Hear prolongations across longer spans.

Readings: Cadwallader & Gagné (Chs. 5–6).

Exercises: Sketch full Bach Invention; trace I–V–I in bass; show neighbor-note harmonies.

Weeks 7–8: Cadences and Voice-Leading Patterns

Goal: Recognize cadential 6–4s and dominant prolongations.

Readings: Rothstein (Ch. 1); Cadwallader & Gagné (Ch. 7).

Exercises: Reduce cadences from Mozart sonatas; label cadential 6–4s and resolutions.

Weeks 9–10: Larger Ternary and Binary Pieces

Goal: Analyze small complete works.

Readings: Cadwallader & Gagné (Chs. 8–9).

Exercises: Analyze Chopin preludes; identify Urlinie, bass arpeggiation, and expansions.

Compare with published Schenkerian graphs.

Weeks 11–12: Integration and Reflection

Goal: Attempt full background graphs.

Readings: Begin Schenker, Free Composition.

Exercises: Analyze full Bach Prelude & Fugue or Mozart Sonata.

Produce layered sketch: foreground → middleground → background with commentary.

Ongoing Habits

- Always play reductions at the keyboard to train your ear.
- Keep a sketchbook of reductions (2–3 per week).
- Compare your sketches with published Schenkerian graphs.
- Move gradually from short phrases to full pieces.