
For new Schwob School of Music undergraduate students

Entering Fall 2021

Welcome to the Joyce and Henry Schwob School of Music! We can't wait to see you in August. In the meantime, there are a few things that you can do to help prepare for a successful school year, particularly in important core areas that all music majors study.

The four core areas, each of which includes a sequence of coordinated courses, are:

- Music Theory
- Music Skills
- Music History
- Keyboard Skills

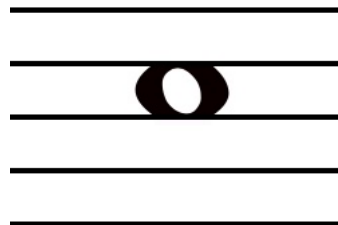
You may have studied in some or all of these areas in high school, private lessons, music camps, youth ensembles, etc. The difference in college is that you will be working toward professional mastery in these areas, so that you are prepared with the knowledge and skills to serve your lifelong study of music.

Learn these things so thoroughly that you don't have to remember them.
—Nadia Boulanger

Music Theory = Music Fundamentals, at least at first

When musicians talk about music theory, about half the time they are talking about a deep knowledge of the fundamentals of musical sound, notation, and improvisation. What can you do to improve skills in these areas prior to arriving in the fall?

1. Note reading: This is the basic skill for understanding musical notation. If you read music well in one clef, but not so well in the others—yes, that's plural—then practice reading in the “non-dominant” clef daily. By that, we mean read music in treble clef if you customarily read only bass clef, and vice versa. Violists, take your pick :) One easy way to begin practice: Make flash cards that look like the example below, with a card that has a single note on at least every line and every space. Then run through them with a given clef. For two rounds, turn the cards over once you have got through them the first time. Eventually use ledger lines too. Eventually use alto clef and tenor clef too (look them up if you're not sure what notes are where). And once you can recognize notes instantly, reading note names in



move to actual music and begin rhythm.

2. Practice recognizing, in notation and by sound, the following **intervals**: Major and minor seconds, thirds, sixths, and sevenths; perfect fourths, fifths, and octaves; and the tritone. Flash cards work well for these too!

3. Learn to spell triads by letter name (in any language you prefer): There are only seven generic triads, and they are:

A C E
B D F
C E G
D F A
E G B
F A C
G B D

Treat these like seven new vocabulary words, and say them out loud several times a day.

4. Then learn to spell generic seventh chords (only seven of these, too)

A C E G
B D F A
C E G B
D F A C
E G B D
F A C E
G B D F

4. Then learn to spell generic triads in solfege, which you will use in music skills courses: (once you spell them easily and quickly, you get to sing them; see below.)

Do Me Sol
Re Fa La
Mi Sol Ti
Fa La Do
Sol Ti Re
La Do Mi
Ti Re Fa

5. Practice spelling major and minor scales—Using a keyboard as a visual aid is helpful here, and it helps to be really proficient at recognizing half steps and whole steps before you start spelling scales.

6. Learn key signatures—memorize them! Flash cards again, with from 0 to 7 sharps and from 0 to 7 flats. Also practice writing them so that the flats or sharps are in the correct order and in the correct position. Need guidance? See [music theory.net](http://musictheory.net)

7. Review the basics of music notation with regard to rhythm and meter. Drill and practice materials for this and many other skills can be found (for free) at musictheory.net.

Music Skills = Sing and Imagine

Every music major takes skills courses, where the primary areas of instruction are:

Sight Singing—singing music, usually a single melodic line, that you have never seen before

Ear Training—imagining sounds that you haven't heard before, or transcribing music into notation from sound, or improvising within set parameters.

To prepare, sing every day, Get comfortable using your voice, particularly if you have never sung in a choir or with other musicians before.

Read music, starting with very simple examples like folk songs, away from your instrument or any instrument. Can you image what the music sounds like from reading the notes? Can you imagine a melody that you make up on the spot? Practice these skills just a couple of minutes a day, every day, and you'll get better!

Sing sequence patterns in major and minor. A basic sequence pattern in music would look like this in solfege:

Do Re Mi Re Do
Re Mi Fa Mi Re
Mi Fa Sol Fa Mi
Fa Sol La Sol Fa
Sol La Ti La Sol
La Ti Do Ti La
Ti Do Re Do Ti
(Do)

And look like this in the key of C major:



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Take any basic pattern, even as simple as DO-RE, and practice singing it as a sequence up and down the scale with solfege syllables. Start with major, and move to minor once you are comfortable in major.

Finally, practice writing music down that you know. Think of a pop tune that runs through your memory banks a lot—can you write it down in notation? Try, then try to do this once a day with a new tune for practice.

Music History = Listen and Learn

To prepare for music history, listen to as much music in as many different genres and from as many historical periods as possible. There has never been a richer variety of music available in recorded form. Some of it is now a thousand years old, and some of it was produced last week. The amazing variety is all yours to explore. Here are some specific suggestions about how to prepare for studies in music history:

1. Make listening to many different kinds of music a habit. As a place to start, listen every day to the two-minute daily (M-F) podcast *Composers Datebook* or one of these web sites:

<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/381443926/composer-s-datebook>

<https://www.yourclassical.org/composers-datebook>

The shows are archived, so you can dig deeper by going back and listening to shows from previous dates.

2. Learn your way around the CSU Music Library web site: spend about an hour looking around the web site and finding all the cool things available to you for free. You have access to books—not just the ones in our campus libraries but books from all over the world, using either George sharing or Inter-Library Loan; streaming services for music and video programming; in addition you can learn about checking out computers, phone chargers, and other useful things.

3. Discover IMSLP, a site you should get to know as a resource for printed music that is in the public domain (i.e. not under copyright). It's not truly user-friendly, *and don't click on the large ads that appear on the page—they lead you out of IMSLP, not to any useful music site.*

Here's the link: https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page

To practice finding scores, use the search bar at the top of the page. To begin your exploration, try: "J. S. Bach" and "Scott Joplin."

3. Learn your way around the CSU Music Library web site: spend about an hour looking around the web site and finding all the cool things available to you for free. You have access to books—not just the ones in our campus libraries but books from all over the world, using either George sharing or Inter-Library Loan; streaming services for music and video programming; in addition you can learn about checking out computers, phone chargers, and other useful things.

4. Music History = history + music. The more general history you know, the better. Review your high school history notes :)

Keyboard Skills=ten-finger exercises

If you've never played keyboard before, now's the time to start. It's another tool skill every musician finds useful at some point. You're not developing virtuoso chops, just using the keyboard as a tool to produce harmonies, melodies, counterpoint, etc. so that you can develop

facility in handling these things through tactile and spatial learning. Also you'll be able to accompany your students (eventually)! And improvise with harmony (a bit)! Get a keyboard—even a used Casio on Ebay will do, and start practicing playing the same patterns you are spelling and singing (see above). If you've got some basic keyboard skills already, practice playing scales and simple two-hand pieces and you may be able to test into a higher level of keyboard class.