

ABRSM Grade 2 Aural Tests

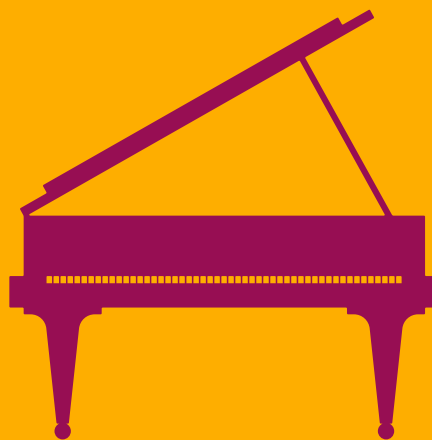
Aural tests are listening tests

Everyone does the same tests, no matter what instrument they play

There are 4 aural tests in grade 2

They are usually the final section of the exam

The examiner will tell you where to stand and where to place your instrument



Give your answers confidently and clearly

The examiner probably won't tell you whether you get the answer right or wrong! They usually just say "thank you" after you've answered

Test A

The examiner will play a piece of music on the piano.

Listen first, then clap along with the beat of the music.

Give a louder clap on the strong beats.
This will help you to work out whether the music is in 2 time or 3 time.

At the end of the music, the examiner will ask you whether the piece was in 2 time or 3 time.

Top Tip!

When you're listening to the radio, clap along or tap your foot in time - it's great practice for this test.

What the examiner says:

First, clap in time while I play. Join in as soon as you can and give a louder clap on the strong beats.

After the piece has finished:

Is it in two time or three time?

How to tell if it's in 2 or 3 time

Listen for a strong beat or accent, this will indicate the start of a new bar.

The strong beat is beat number 1 of the bar.

If you clap -
“strong weak strong weak”
that's 1 2 1 2
so the piece is in 2 time.

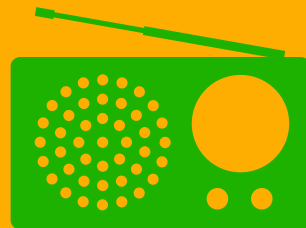
If you clap -
“strong weak weak strong weak weak”
that's 1 2 3 1 2 3
so the piece is in 3 time

Test A - Practice!

Listen to these pieces, clap along and think about whether they are in 2 time or 3 time. They're a lot longer than the tune the examiner will play in the exam, but it's good practice!

1. Que Sera Sera - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcWbZUgymkw>
2. Amazing Grace - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sire_XjCQjl
3. Radetsky March - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eab_eFtTKFs

Listen to the
radio and try to
clap or tap
along



Answers
on the last
page!

Test B



What the examiner says:

I'd like you to sing three phrases as echoes. Here is the key-chord (plays) and your starting note (plays)

The examiner then counts in two bars

The examiner will play a short, simple phrase on the piano. You need to listen carefully, and then sing it straight back to the examiner, like an echo.

Once you've finished singing, the examiner will play another phrase for you to echo. Then another! So there are three phrases altogether.

The examiner is not looking for you to be a pop star or opera singer! They're just listening for the accuracy of the notes and rhythm and not the quality of your voice.

Top Tip!

Don't just listen to the notes (pitches) that the examiner plays. Listen to the rhythm and articulation (accents, slurs and staccato) as well

"La" is an easy sound to sing for the echo, but any vowel (or consonant followed by a vowel) is fine!



Test B - Practice!

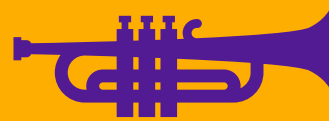
Play these phrases on your instrument and then try to sing them back.
If you have someone else that plays a musical instrument at home, you could ask them to play the phrases to you

The image shows a musical staff in 2/4 time with a treble clef. It contains three distinct musical phrases, each followed by an 'Echo' section. The first phrase consists of four measures: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The second phrase consists of four measures: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5, with a slur under the last three notes. The third phrase consists of four measures: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5, with a slur under the last three notes. Each phrase is followed by an 'Echo' section consisting of two measures of whole rests.

Test C

Spot the difference!

The examiner will play you a short phrase twice. The 2nd time, they will either change the pitch or rhythm. You need to listen for it, and then tell the examiner how it was different



What the examiner says:

I'll play a phrase twice, but with a change in either the pitch or rhythm the second time. Tell me what the difference was. Here is the key-chord (plays) and the tonic (plays).

The examiner then counts in two bars and plays the phrase for the first time.
and now with the change

The examiner plays the phrases again but slightly differently
How was it different?



Model Answer

The change was near the beginning / end.

It was a pitch / rhythm change.

Pitch:
One of the notes was higher / lower

Rhythm:
The 1st time the rhythm went *clap*
And the 2nd time it went *clap*



Test C - Practice!

These are the kind of changes that you might hear in the exam.
If you have someone else that plays a musical instrument at home, you could ask them to play the phrases to you so you can listen for the change.

Example 1



The change was near the end.
It was a pitch change.
One of the notes was higher.

Example 2



The change was near the beginning.
It was a rhythm change.
The first time it went (clap first 3 notes).
The 2nd time it went (clap first 3 notes of change).

Test D

The examiner will play a piece of music to you on the piano and then ask you about the tempo and either articulation or dynamics

Articulation -
smooth and
detached
playing

The music began loudly, did it stay loud throughout?

At the beginning, were the notes smooth or detached?

Was the playing mainly smooth or detached?

Where was the quietest part of the music?

Dynamics -
loud and quiet
playing

Was there any change in the speed of the music, or did it always stay the same?

Were the loud phrases played with smooth or detached notes?

Did the change from loud to quiet playing happen suddenly or gradually?

Tempo - speed

What the examiner says:

Listen to this piece, then I'll ask you about (loud or quiet playing)

OR *(smooth or detached notes) and about tempo change*

Some example questions below

Test D - Practice!

Listen to these pieces and pay close attention to the dynamics and articulation and tempo

Slavonic Dance no. 8 by Dvorak

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlywT8fKVZA>

This starts loud and detached.
Listen for the sudden dynamic changes

In the Hall of the Mountain King by Greig

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCsV7EIhoMU>

This piece gets faster and louder!

Bittersweet Symphony by the Verve

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oa5h5AyoNVA>

This starts with smooth playing on the strings which then changes to detached playing. The music starts quietly and gradually gets louder (a crescendo)

It's oh so quiet by Bjork

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

The dynamic changes suddenly from quiet to loud

Assessment criteria

The aural tests are worth 18 marks

Give your answers confidently and clearly

Think about Test A
Is the piece in 2 time or 3 time?

If you don't know the answer - guess!
You've got a 50/50 chance of getting it right!

If you seem unsure or hesitate too long you could lose marks, even though you might have the correct answer.

It's the same for all the tests - give confident answers, even if you don't feel confident!

Distinction:
18 marks

Quick and accurate answers

Merit:
15-17 marks

Good responses

Minor errors or hesitations

Pass:
12-14 marks

Approximately half of the tests answered correctly.
Some hesitation or error

Below Pass:

Slow, uncertain responses
Inaccuracy in all parts of the test

Practice!

The ABRSM have an app for practising the Aural Tests.
You can find out about it and download it here:
<https://gb.abrsm.org/en/exam-support/apps-and-practice-tools/aural-trainer/>



Answers to Test A

1. 3 time
2. 3 time
3. 2 time

