

ABRSM Grade 1 Aural Tests

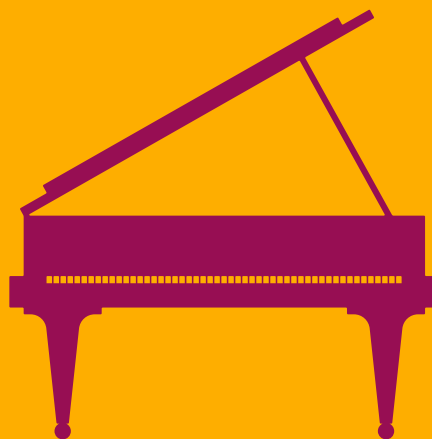
Aural tests are listening tests

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

There are 4 aural tests in grade 1

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.

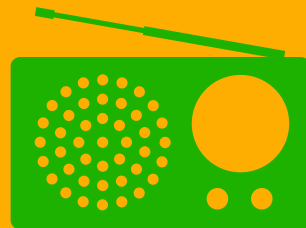
If you clap -
"strong weak weak strong weak weak"
that's 1 2 3 1 2 3
so the piece is in 3 time

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

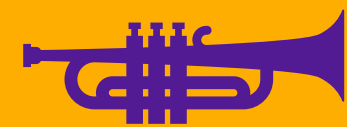
"La" is an easy sound to sing for the echo, but any vowel (or consonant followed by a vowel) is fine!



Test C

Spot the difference!

The examiner will play you a short phrase twice. The 2nd time, the examiner will change one of the notes. You need to listen for it, and then tell the examiner if it changed near the beginning or near the end of the phrase



What the examiner says:

I'll play a phrase twice, but with a change to one of the notes the second time. Tell me whether the change was near the beginning or near the end. 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

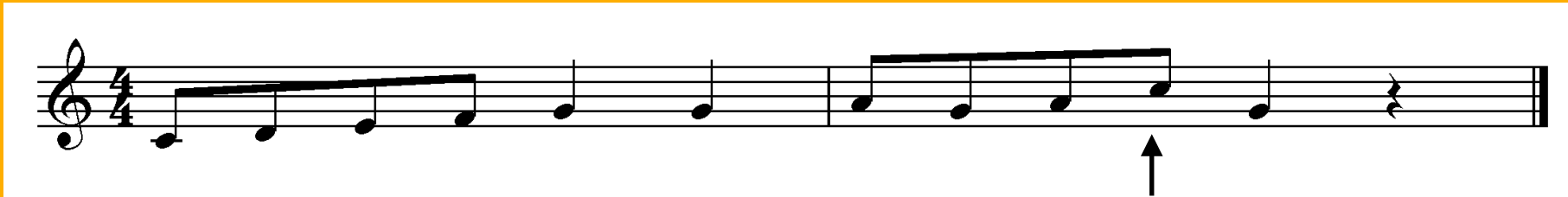
The examiner plays the phrases again but slightly differently
Was the change near the beginning or near the end?

Top Tip!

The change is always near the beginning or near the end. Don't tell the examiner that it changed in the middle!

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.



Change!



Test D

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

Articulation -
smooth and
detached
playing

Dynamics -
loud and quiet
playing

What the
examiner says:

Listen to this piece, then I'll ask you about loud or quiet playing and about smooth or detached notes.

Some example questions
below

*At the beginning, were
the notes smooth or
detached?*

*Where was the quietest
part of the music?*

*Was the playing mainly
smooth or detached?*

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

*Were the loud phrases
played with smooth or
detached notes?*

*The music began
loudly, did it stay loud
throughout?*

Test D - Practice!

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

Slavonic Dance no. 8 by Dvorak

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

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

It's oh so quiet by Bjork

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

The dynamic changes suddenly from quiet to loud

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)

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

