

d.

Preliminary Lesson

Alphabets: The musical alphabet consists of the first seven letters of our normal alphabet with the first letter repeated, making a total of eight letters. (Yes, we are talking about scales!)

A B C D E F G A
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (the eighth letter name is called the octave of the first letter name)

More alphabets may be created by starting on each successive letter name:

A B C D E F G A (forward order)
 B C D E F G A B
 C D E F G A B C
 D E F G A B C D
 E F G A B C D E
 F G A B C D E F
 G A B C D E F G

G F E D C B A G (Backwards)
 F E D C B A G F
 E D C B A G F E
 D C B A G F E D
 C B A G F E D C
 B A G F E D C B
 A G F E D C B A

The majority of people can probably rattle their way, quite fluently, through the alphabet, starting on the letter "A", but are then somewhat stymied when they have to begin on another letter. Furthermore, total chaos tends to ensue if they have to recite the alphabet in reverse order. Luckily, in music, we have a very short alphabet, but even that can sometimes pose some problems. I would suggest that the first course of action is to simply learn to recite the musical alphabet forwards and backwards, beginning on any letter as shown here. Only then will you be prepared to begin the thinking drills that follow. Return to this task on a daily basis.

The following drills are designed, not only to help you think your way forward and backward through the complete alphabets, but also to acquaint you with some of the possible permutations.

1. The capital letter names, should be spoken on the down beat.
2. The small letter names, rather than being audible, should be a thought process.
3. Sustain the capital letter names through the beat while thinking forwards or backwards. Repeat as needed. Only you will know when you have succeeded in this endeavour.

Drills for thinking:

One letter forward and backward: Ab Bc Cd De Ef Fg Ga
- Gf Fe Ed Dc Cb Ba Ag.

Two letters: Abc Bcd Cde Def Efg Fga Gab
- Gfe Fed Edc Dcb Cba Bag Agf

Three letters: Abcd Bcde Cdef Defg Efga Fgab Gabc
- Gfed Fedc Edcb Dcba Cbag Bagf Agfe

Four letters: Abcde Bcdef Cdefg Defga Efgab Fgabc Gabcd
- Gfedc Fedcb Edcba Dcbag Cbagf Bagfe Agfed

Five letters: Abcdef Bcdefg Cdefga Defgab Efgabc Fgabcd Gabcde
-Gfedcb Fedcba Edcbag Dcbagf Cbagfe Bagfed Agfedc

Six letters: Abcdefg Bcdefga Cdefgab Defgabc Efgabcd Fgabcde Gabcdef
-Gfedcba Fedcbag Edcbagf Dcbagfe Cbagfed Bagfedc Agfedcb

The above drills are shown as always beginning on the letter "A" in forward motion and the letter "G" in backward order. Remember that the musical alphabet can begin on any letter. The value of these drills will become more evident as you proceed through this book.

A most common mistake is that students will skip this preliminary lesson. Even the ones who do look at it soon forget it and never return to practice these mental skills. You may not be dooming yourself to failure but you may be close to it.