

Strategies for Harmonic Dictation: FR 3 and FR 4

PREPARING FOR HARMONIC DICTATION

Students often lack confidence when doing harmonic dictation. It does require an advanced level of understanding and the ability to associate and connect several overlapping skills. Harmonic dictation requires knowledge of the function of chords within the tonality and their relationship to each other, as well as skills to aurally identify quality and inversion.

If you have completed the progressive studies in harmonic dictation found in Chapter 15, you are well on your way to successful dictation of four-part harmony.

Let's answer a few remaining questions and then practice with eight more examples.

HOW CAN I PREPARE BEFORE THE FIRST PLAYING STARTS?

The key is given—write the chord menu so you don't have to think of what notes go with which chord while trying to hear, identify, and notate. If nothing else, write the name of the pitch that is the leading tone—*especially* if the key is minor. Notice the similarities between C Major and C minor:

	(C)		(C)	(F)		(A)
	G	A	C	A	D	E
	E	F	A	F#	B	C
	C	D	F	D	G	A
CM:	I	ii ^{o(7)}	IV	V ⁷ /V	V	vi
						vii ^{o(7)}

	(C)		(C)	(F)		(Ab)
	G	Ab	C	A	D	Eb
	Eb	F	Ab	F#	Bb	C
	C	D	F	D	G	Ab
cm:	i	ii ^{o(7)}	iv	V ⁷ /V	V	VI
						vii ^{o(7)}

WHAT STEPS SHOULD I FOLLOW DURING THE AURAL PROMPTS TO ACHIEVE THE MOST SUCCESS?

There are several ways to “listen” . . . there is not just one way to hear harmonic dictation. The best thing to do is determine what works best for *you* and develop your own strategy. Here are two methods that work well.

- **Method 1** is hearing vertically—identifying the function and quality of chords first and then confirming with the bass and soprano line.

PLAYING 1: Listen for “chunks” of the phrase for familiar patterns top to bottom. In other words, listen to the full chord to recognize the sound of tonic moving to dominant and back to tonic, not just linear listening as outlined in Method 2. Fill in the blank with correct Roman numeral chord symbols. You will confirm the inversion when you listen specifically to the bass line. **Identify and notate the cadence.** The cadence will usually be in root position and will have recognizable melodic patterns in both bass and soprano.

PLAYING 2: Listen to the bass line to confirm chord quality and inversion. Notate the bass line.

PLAYING 3: Listen to the soprano—expect contrary motion to the bass line. Listen for recognizable and familiar patterns. Notate as much of the soprano and bass line as possible. Listen for dissonance that may indicate a seventh chord, and in FR 4 anticipate and prepare your ear for the possibility of chromatic harmony with the accidental often occurring in the soprano or bass.

PLAYING 4: Listen specifically for what you have left blank. Review and check your work.

Most students tend to be linear listeners since, unless they are pianists, students who sing soprano, or play the clarinet or cello look at music one line at a time and therefore generally hear music one line at a time.

- **Method 2** is the linear method—listening for the bass line first and then the soprano as separate lines and logically determining the chord symbols (implied harmony) based on the counterpoint. Some students find it easier to hear the soprano or melody line first and then add the bass line and chord quality. Do what works for you.

PLAYING 1: Listen to the bass line. While you are listening the first time try to pick out the bass line and sing the bass notes in your head right after you hear it. As you sing the bass, assign solfege to the pitches. The solfege tells you the placement of the notes within the scale and also implies harmony. **Identify and notate the cadence.** The cadence will usually be in root position and will have recognizable melodic patterns in both bass and soprano.

PLAYING 2: Listen to the soprano. Notice the shape or contour of the soprano compared to the bass. Remember that the bass and soprano most often move in contrary motion. The melody will be mostly steps and skips while the bass tends to be more disjunct. Notate as much of the melody as you can and fill in Roman numeral chord symbols that you have already identified.

PLAYING 3: Listen vertically for the chord quality. Determine the chord symbols as you review both bass line and soprano. Listen for identifiable patterns in both melody and bass line. By now, many two-chord progressions such as V to I should be easily recognizable. Remember the progression usually returns to tonic on the third or fourth chord and that you may hear V-I in places other than the cadence. Listen for dissonance that may indicate a seventh chord, and in FR 4 anticipate and prepare your ear for the possibility of chromatic harmony.

PLAYING 4: Listen specifically for what you have left blank. Review and check your work.

REVIEW

Understand what harmonies are implied from knowing the bass line.

When the bass is:	The implied harmony is:	Or possibly:
<i>Do</i>	I	$IV\frac{5}{4}$
<i>Ti</i>	V^6 or $V\frac{5}{3}$	vii^{o7} or vii^{o7}
<i>La</i>	vi	IV^6
<i>So</i>	V	$I\frac{5}{4}$
<i>Fa</i>	IV	ii^6 or $ii\frac{5}{3}$ or $V\frac{4}{2}$
<i>Mi</i>	I^6	
<i>Re</i>	ii	$V\frac{5}{4}$ or vii^{o6}

Common Bass Lines = Implied Harmonies that *Begin* a Phrase:

1. <i>Do-Ti-Do</i>	=	$I-V^6-I$
2. <i>Do-Ti-Do</i>	=	$I-V\frac{5}{3}-I$
3. <i>Do-Re-Mi</i>	=	$I-V\frac{5}{4}-I^6$
4. <i>Do-Re-Mi</i>	=	$I-vii^{o6}-I^6$
5. <i>Do-Do-Do</i>	=	$I-IV\frac{5}{4}-I$
6. <i>Do-Fa-Mi</i>	=	$I-V\frac{4}{2}-I^6$ (resolution in the bass)
7. <i>Do-Fa-Mi</i>	=	$I-IV-I^6$
8. <i>Do-Mi-So</i>	=	$I-I^6-I\frac{5}{4}$

Common Bass Lines	+	Implied Harmonies that <i>End Phrases</i>	=	Type of Cadence
<i>So-So-Do</i>	+	I_4^6-V-I or i_4^6-V-i	=	Authentic
<i>So-So-Do</i>	+	$V-V-I$ or $V-V-i$	=	Authentic
<i>Fa-So-Do</i>	+	$IV-V-I$ or $iv-V-i$	=	Authentic
<i>Fa-So-Do</i>	+	$ii^6(ii_5^6)-V-I$ or $ii^{o6}(ii_5^6)-V-i$	=	Authentic
<i>Fa-So-La</i>	+	$IV-V-vi$	=	Deceptive
<i>Fa-So-Le</i>	+	$iv-V-VI$	=	Deceptive
<i>So-So-La</i>	+	I_4^6-V-vi	=	Deceptive
<i>So-So-Le</i>	+	i_4^6-V-VI	=	Deceptive
<i>Fa-Do</i>	+	$IV-I$ or $iv-i$	=	Plagal
<i>Fa-So</i>	+	$IV-V$ or ii^6-V $iv-V$ or $ii^{o6}-V$	=	Half
<i>Le-So</i>	+	iv^6-V	=	Phrygian half

Common Bass Lines = Implied Mid-Phrase Harmonies

<i>So-Fa-Mi</i>	=	$V-V_2^4-I^6$
<i>Mi-Fa-So</i>	=	$I^6-ii_5^6-V$
<i>Do-La-Fa</i>	=	$I-vi-IV$ or $I-vi-ii^6$
<i>La-Fa-Mi</i>	=	$vi-IV-I^6$ or IV^6-IV-I^6
<i>Fa-Mi</i>	=	$IV-I^6$ or $V_2^4-I^6$
<i>Fa-Re</i>	=	$IV-ii$
<i>Fa-Fa</i>	=	$IV-ii^6$ but not ii^6-IV
<i>Fa-\overline{Fi}-So</i>	=	$IV-\overline{V_3^6/V}-V$ or $ii^6-V_3^6/V-V$
<i>Fa-So-\overline{Si}-La</i>	=	$IV-V-\overline{V_3^6/vi}-vi$
<i>Me-\overline{Mi}-Fa</i>	=	$i^6-\overline{V_3^6/iv}-iv$ (in minor)

OTHER TIPS TO MAXIMIZE SUCCESS

- If you have left several blanks on the exam, start to make note of what you can positively identify, and write a reminder in the margin or near the answer blank and when in doubt make an educated guess. **Do not leave any blanks.**
- Does your progression move in **T-S-D-T** fashion? It should. Check for retrogression.
- Have you written parallel fifths or octaves between the soprano and bass? If so, one or possibly both are wrong. If you change your bass you've changed your chord symbol too.
- Is the last note the correct value?
- Have you used stems and filled in note heads where necessary?
- The perfect authentic cadence is used most often *and* the most common PAC is $I_4^6-V^7-I$.
- In the perfect authentic cadence V^7 is used more often than V .



To avoid running out of time, use the facing page of staff paper for writing the chord menus and for scratch paper only. **Do all your work on the question page.** If you do use the staff paper, remember to allow yourself enough time to transfer information to the question page.

You are now ready for more practice of four-part harmonic dictation. The following twelve exercises are the same length and approximate difficulty as on the AP Music Theory exam.

Practice Exercises



Directions: For each of these questions, you will hear a four-part harmonic progression. Because this is not an exam unit, the aural prompts are recorded **only one time each**. Allow yourself 30 seconds after the first playing and a **1-minute pause** after each subsequent playing. **Play each track only four times**. Allowing yourself unlimited time to notate the example, or listening over and over to the same question, will not prepare you for the exam.

Each question number will be announced, followed by the example played once. You are to notate only the soprano and bass voices. Do not notate the alto and tenor. On the line provided under each staff, write the Roman and Arabic numerals that indicate the chords and possible inversions. Each progression has nine chords; the Roman numeral and notes of the first chord are given.

1. Harmonic Dictation in A Major



AM: I _____

2. Harmonic Dictation in G minor



gm: i _____

3. Harmonic Dictation in B \flat Major

A grand staff with two staves. The key signature has two flats (B \flat Major) and the time signature is 4/4. The first measure contains a whole chord in the right hand (F \flat 4, A \flat 4, B \flat 4, C5) and a whole chord in the left hand (B \flat 3, D4, F4, B \flat 4). The rest of the staff is empty.

B \flat M: I _____

4. Harmonic Dictation in D minor

A grand staff with two staves. The key signature has one flat (D minor) and the time signature is 2/4. The first measure contains a whole chord in the right hand (F \flat 4, A \flat 4, B \flat 4) and a whole chord in the left hand (D3, F3, A3). The rest of the staff is empty.

dm: i _____

5. Harmonic Dictation in E minor



A grand staff with two staves. The key signature has one sharp (E minor) and the time signature is common time (C). The first measure contains a whole chord in the right hand (G4, A4, B4) and a whole chord in the left hand (E3, G3, B3). The rest of the staff is empty.

em: i _____

6. Harmonic Dictation in C Major



A grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is C major (no sharps or flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first measure contains a C major triad (C4, E4, G4) in the treble clef and a C2 octave bass note in the bass clef. The remaining three measures are empty.

CM: I _____

7. Harmonic Dictation in F minor



A grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is F minor (three flats: Bb, Eb, Ab) and the time signature is 4/4. The first measure contains an F minor triad (F4, Ab4, Cb5) in the treble clef and an F2 octave bass note in the bass clef. The remaining three measures are empty.

fm: i _____

8. Harmonic Dictation in C minor



A grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is C minor (two flats: Bb, Eb) and the time signature is common time (C). The first measure contains a C minor triad (C4, Eb4, Gb4) in the treble clef and a C2 octave bass note in the bass clef. The remaining four measures are empty.

cm: i _____

9. Harmonic Dictation in A \flat Major

Musical notation for exercise 9. It consists of a grand staff with two staves. The key signature has three flats (B \flat , E \flat , A \flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The first measure shows a chord in the right hand (A \flat major triad: A \flat , C \flat , E \flat) and a single note in the left hand (A \flat). The rest of the staff is empty.

A \flat M: I _____

10. Harmonic Dictation in D minor

Musical notation for exercise 10. It consists of a grand staff with two staves. The key signature has one flat (B \flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The first measure shows a chord in the right hand (D minor triad: D \flat , F \flat , A \flat) and a single note in the left hand (D \flat). The rest of the staff is empty.

dm: i _____

11. Harmonic Dictation in E minor



A grand staff with two staves (treble and bass clefs) and a common time signature (C). The first measure contains a half note chord consisting of G4 (treble) and E4 (bass). The rest of the staff is empty for dictation.

em: i _____

12. Harmonic Dictation in B \flat Major

A grand staff with two staves (treble and bass clefs) and a common time signature (C). The first measure contains a half note chord consisting of F4 (treble) and B \flat 3 (bass). The rest of the staff is empty for dictation.

B \flat M: I _____

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

1. Harmonic Dictation in A Major

AM:	I	IV ⁶ ₄	I	V	vi	ii ⁶	I ⁶ ₄	V ⁷	I
Function:	T	T	T	D	T	PD	D	D	T

PEDAL



What you heard.

AM:	I	IV ⁶ ₄	I	V	vi	ii ⁶	I ⁶ ₄	V ⁷	I
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Same note in the bass = pedal $\frac{3}{4}$ and, as we learned, the upper neighbor in the soprano. The melodic ending is *Do-Ti-Do* ($\hat{1}-\hat{7}-\hat{1}$) and *So-So-Do* in the bass—the most common bass ending. If we back up one chord we have *Fa* in the bass with the ii^6 —very common *predominant* harmony.

Notice that there is a leap between measures 1 and 2. Remember that leaps often occur between *Do* and *So* (as it is here) and a leap in the bass often indicates function change. The first measure is all about tonic, but the second measure leaps into dominant function with the root position V.

2. Harmonic Dictation in G minor

gm: i iv i^6 V_4^6 i ii^{o6} i_4^6 V^7 VI

PASSING

What you heard.



gm: i iv i^6 V_4^6 i ii^{o6} i_4^6 V^7 VI

This exercise begins with *Do-Fa* in the bass and then descends by step. Note the use of the passing $\frac{3}{4}$ chord (we have often used this progression to create the ascending *Do-Re-Mi*—here it is descending *Mi-Re-Do*). A classic deceptive cadence occurs as the bass line concludes with *Do-Fa-So-So-Le*; your ear anticipates the tonic but there is a cadence on VI instead.

3. Harmonic Dictation in B \flat Major

B \flat M: I V_5^6 I V_4^6 I^6 IV I_4^6 V^7 I

PASSING



What you heard.

BbM: I V₅⁶ I V₄⁶ I⁶ IV I₄⁶ V⁷ I

In this example, we have a very common beginning paired with a very common ending; however, you must hear that the last note in the soprano is *not Do* in order to get the cadence correct. Connecting these two is a stepwise passage using the passing V₄⁶ chord. As you listen to the aural prompt, notice the shape (contour) of the outside voices; or if you are not able to hear both at the same time, note the shape of just the melody. This is a clue as it continues to descend *past* the tonic. If you hear the tonic chord but not *Do* in the melody, it can only be *Mi* or *So* Work backward from what you know to help you determine what you don't know. When in doubt, GUESS!

4. Harmonic Dictation in D minor

dm: i V₄⁶ i⁶ V₂⁴ i⁶ V VI iv⁶ V



What you heard.

dm: i V₄⁶ i⁶ V₂⁴ i⁶ V VI iv⁶ V

When you know you are in minor, it is wise to anticipate what *might* be played and think about what that implies. Always consider the leading tone and realize it is often in the soprano or the bass because it requires writing the accidental, *and* realize that where there is $\hat{7}$ there should be a $\hat{1}$ right after it. The Phrygian half cadence occurs only in minor. Although it is not frequently used, it has appeared in harmonic dictation examples. Listen for the half-step *Le-So* in the bass at the cadence.

5. Harmonic Dictation in E minor

em: i vii^{o7} i VI Fa iv Fi V⁶/V So i⁶₄ V⁷ Do i

What you heard.

em: i vii^{o7} i VI iv V⁶/V i⁶₄ V⁷ i

In this example, we have *Do-Ti-Do* at the beginning, with the leading tone in the bass (accidental required) and the seventh of the chord in the soprano—both imperative resolutions. Notice that the mid-phrase progression descends in thirds, leading to the secondary dominant—*Fa-Fi-So*. What's the ending pattern in the melody? That's right—connect the dots—“put it together and what have you got . . . ?”

6. Harmonic Dictation in C Major

CM: I V⁶₄ I⁶ IV V⁶/V V I⁶ ii⁶ V



What you heard.

CM: I V_4^6 I^6 IV V_5^6/V V I^6 ii^6 V

Here we have an ascending stepwise pattern similar to Question 4, this time in major, utilizing a secondary dominant chord and ending with a half cadence. Once again a leap, this time in the melody, is *So* to *Do*. Hearing the leading tone in the melody on the last note is automatically a half cadence. The dominant chord is the only chord that includes $\hat{7}$ that is used at the end of a cadence.

7. Harmonic Dictation in F minor

fm: i V_2^4 i^6 V_5^6/iv iv ii^{o6} i_4^6 V^7 i



What you heard.

fm: i V_2^4 i^6 V_5^6/iv iv ii^{o6} i_4^6 V^7 i

This example begins *Do-Fa-Me* in the bass, which is the seventh of the V^7 resolving downward in the bass, leading to a chromatic chord that intensifies the subdominant (iv). The chromatic pattern is *Me-Mi-Fa*. The melody is a pattern we have often seen in minor using the leading tone on beat 2 (*Do-Ti*) followed by the natural minor descending pattern—*Do-Te-Le*.

8. Harmonic Dictation in C minor

cm: i vii^o₅ i⁶ ii^o₅ V i⁶ ii^o₅ V⁷/V V

What you heard.

cm: i vii^o₅ i⁶ ii^o₅ V i⁶ ii^o₅ V⁷/V V

This example begins with an ascending pattern using the fully-diminished leading-tone seventh chord in first inversion. The leading-tone seventh chord is often in first inversion and, as it does here, it moves frequently to the i^6 . The progression ends with a half cadence preceded by the V^7 of V in root position.

9. Harmonic Dictation in A \flat Major

A \flat M: I V⁴₃ I⁶ V vi ii⁶ I⁶₄ V⁷ I



What you heard.

AbM: I V_3^4 I^6 V vi ii^6 I_4^6 V^7 I

This example has a passing chord between the I and I^6 , in this case a V_3^4 , a deceptive progression in measure two, and by now a familiar PAC cadence.

10. Harmonic Dictation in D minor

dm: i V_2^4 i^6 VI ii^6 V_5^6/V i_4^6 V^7 VI



What you heard.

dm: i V_2^4 i^6 VI ii^6 V_5^6/V i_4^6 V^7 VI

This exercise requires the use of three accidentals, all in the outside voices and all leading tones. The V_5^6/V does not resolve to the dominant as you might expect, but does resolve to the substitute (I_4^6) which also has *So* in the bass. It ends with a deceptive cadence.

11. Harmonic Dictation in E minor

em: i V₅⁶ i vii^{o6} i⁶ iv i⁶₄ V⁷ i

What you heard.



em: i V₅⁶ i vii^{o6} i⁶ iv i⁶₄ V⁷ i

The example in E minor has one tricky chord in the second measure – the vii^{o6} triad. It is acting as a passing chord between the i and i⁶.

12. Harmonic Dictation in B \flat Major

B \flat M: I V₄⁶ I⁶ V⁷/IV IV ii V V⁷ I



What you heard.

B♭M: I V₄ I⁶ V/IV IV ii V V⁷ I

This last example in B \flat Major has a circle progression from the fourth chord to the end. This particular example is easier to hear since all the chords are in root position. You must recognize that this *So-So-Do* ending is not the I₄⁶, but the V followed by the V⁷.