



Lance Russell Theory

Music Training for Every Level

Introduction to Solfege

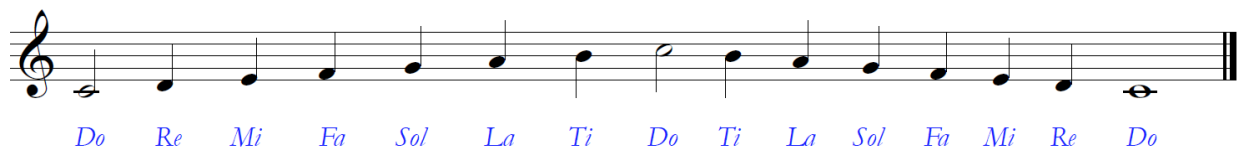
What is Solfege?

Do you find yourself struggling to learn new songs? Maybe the melody doesn't seem that hard, but it feels like you forget how it goes the second after you hear it? It can be quite frustrating, and can cause maybe people to give up after a dozen repetitions of the song with little retention.

Overcoming this obstacle is what solfege is all about. It was invented around 1000 AD in Italy by a man named Guido D'Arezzo in order to help choir boys learn chant music for church more easily. Notably, it was invented long *before* musical notation (the notes on the page) was invented like we know it today.

The purpose of solfege was to help people memorize new music by learning the musical relationships between a collection of sounds.

So what is it then, exactly? You have probably heard examples of it before. Solfege is a collection of syllables that can be used to track musical relationships during a song. The basic syllables for most music look like this:



Each syllable is linked to a particular note on a musical "scale," like the one shown above. So in a C-major scale like this one, the note C is "Do" (sounds like "dough"), the note D is "Re," and so on. Most music largely sticks to playing or singing notes chosen from a particular scale. That music then, is said to be in the "key" of that scale.

Why Use Solfege?

The great thing about solfege is that you don't have to know how to read music in order to notice the musical relationships. All you need to know is the syllable pattern. "Re" is the one above "Do," "Sol" is the one below "La," etc. You don't have to worry about which note is called what letter name. Music is about relationships between notes, and not so much about what each note is, and those relationships is what solfege helps people hear. Solfege is also a "movable" system, which means that you can use it no matter what "key" the music is using. This makes music easy to translate to a key that best fits your voice or instrument.

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Is Solfege Just For Singers?

No! Solfege is a useful tool for all musicians, not just singers. Learning those musical relationships is important for memorizing new music in any instrument. It is also incredibly helpful for more advanced musicians that are trying to do things like transpose a melody into a new key or to write harmonies that go well with their melodies. Knowing the solfege is also quite useful for improvisation for things like jazz solos.

How Should I Practice Solfege?

The best way to develop this important musicianship skill is to begin by **singing through simple songs that you already know using solfege**. For example, the tune from “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

Mi re do re mi mi mi, re re re, mi sol sol.

5

Mi re do re mi mi mi mi re re mi re do.

Or the tune for learning the ABCs:

Do do sol sol la la sol, fa fa mi mi re re re re do.

5

Sol sol fa, mi mi re, sol sol sol fa, mi mi re.

9

Do do sol sol la la sol, fa fa mi mi re re do.

I'm learning a new song: Which note is “Do”?

In solfege, “Do” is used as the home-base note. It is what musicians call the “tonic” note. When you’re listening to a song, “Do” is the part of the melody that sounds the most relaxed, like it is completing something. That’s why songwriters almost always end their music with it. **If the note sounds like it finishes the musical thought, then it is probably “do.”**

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