

## Composition Project, Step 1: Improvise a Melody

Many melodies start by elaborating the tonic triad.

To improvise a melody of this sort, start by choosing a mode (major or minor) and then two or three scale degrees from the tonic triad.

Singing, improvise some music that starts by elaborating the scale degrees you have chosen and then moves on to a half cadence (probably resting on scale-degree 2 or scale-degree 7).

When you find a melody that you like, sing it back to yourself a few times until you have it memorized.

Often, following our musical intuitions will result in a melody that can be notated with a length of four bars; assuming that this is true of your melody, figure out what measure size would result in a length of four bars. Having figured out how many notes fit in each measure, pick note values that seem appropriate (this will give you your meter signature).

Next, sing your melody in scale degrees, and choose a key. The melody should sit comfortably in the middle of the treble staff, and the key should be easily playable.

Finally, notate the melody.

Here are two examples:

Major:

Scale degrees: 3, 5, and 3

Improvisation:

3 4 5 3 4 3 2 4 3 2 1 7 1 2  
L S L S L S L L S S S L S L

Measures:

3 4 5 3 | 4 3 2 | 4 3 2 1 7 1 | 2  
L S L S | L S L | L S S S L S | L

Note values: rhythm of first measure is quarter-eighth twice, time signature is 6/8.

Key: G major

