



Royal Academy of Music  
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**ASSOCIATED BOARD  
OF THE ROYAL SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**

A guide to the new

# Piano Syllabus

What's changing for 2009–2010

New set pieces, scales and sight-reading

# Piano Syllabus 2009–2010

## New set pieces, scales and sight-reading

The new Associated Board Piano Syllabus for 2009–2010 is published in July 2008 and takes effect from 1 January 2009. This time, we've not only refreshed the choices of set pieces to include music from many different countries and genres, but we've also updated the scale and sight-reading requirements for all exams taken from 2009 onwards.

This leaflet is essential reading for piano teachers and candidates, as it guides you through the key changes to all aspects of the syllabus, and gives details of the new supporting publications.

## Research and consultation

The changes that we've made to the new Piano Syllabus are the result of collaboration with piano teachers at all levels throughout the world. We reviewed the feedback we've asked for in recent years and have acted on requests for a broader range of music on the syllabus and a more musical approach to sight-reading, and for the gaps between grades to be bridged more effectively.

This review of the Piano Syllabus is one of the most significant and wide-ranging consultations the Associated Board has yet undertaken. It was led by a working party of senior examiners and Board staff who carefully considered questions of progression, both in learning and in the demands at each grade, as well as greater breadth and balance in the repertoire selected.

New specimen sight-reading tests and scale requirements were then created by the Board and trialled by hundreds of piano teachers around the world. Electronic questionnaire software was used for the first time, and the review was further extended as responses were invited from all applicants via the Associated Board's magazine, *Libretto*. After extensive analysis, the feedback results showed teachers overwhelmingly endorsed the proposed changes as a real enhancement of the exam experience.

## About graded exams

Associated Board Grade 1-8 exams are designed to motivate pupils and students at all levels by providing clear, attainable goals. Successful exam candidates are rewarded for their progress and achievement with a certificate. The 'grades' are recognised as international benchmarks and are valued by teachers and institutions all over the world.

The assessment programme is flexible. Candidates can study in their own time and at their own pace, and can begin at the level most appropriate for them – Grade 1 is suitable for beginners who have been learning for about one year, whilst each subsequent grade is positioned broadly as an annual target. It is not necessary for a candidate to be attached to any specific institution or follow a particular course or method of study in order to do their graded exams.

Graded music exams are available in over 35 instruments, singing, music theory and practical musicianship. For further information, please visit [www.abrsm.org/exams](http://www.abrsm.org/exams)



# Changes to the Syllabus Repertoire

- Music from more countries than ever before features on the new syllabus, notably Argentina, Brazil and China, the latter led by Grammy and Academy award-winning composer **Tan Dun**
- The repertoire encompasses a new breadth of musical genres. As well as classical music of all kinds, jazz is represented by the music of **Oscar Peterson** and **Fats Waller**, blues by British pianist/composer **Joanna MacGregor**, and Latin by an infectious salsa from **Errollyn Wallen**
- **Mendelssohn's** bicentenary in 2009 is celebrated with the first-ever inclusion of a movement from one of his piano sonatas. **Haydn's** bicentenary is also marked with a range of his pieces featured across four of the grades
- Grade 8 List B now includes Classical movements in forms other than sonata form, to widen pianists' experience of other structures. Half of the pieces on this list will continue to be in strict sonata form
- Arrangements now appear in the lower grades of the piano syllabus

The inclusion of arrangements is a significant development for the piano syllabus, bringing it into line with the syllabuses for all other instruments.

Arrangements of movements from Classical symphonies, suites and concertos, such as **Vivaldi's** *The Four Seasons*, sit side by side with popular music and the lively TV theme tune, *Top Cat!*

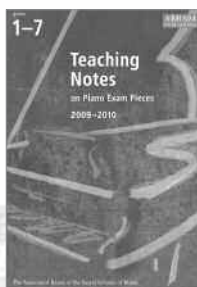
This widens repertoire choices at the lower grades, and more importantly introduces young pianists to the wider world of other non-pianistic genres.

## Supporting Publications

*Selected Piano Exam Pieces 2009–2010*, Grades 1-8 (one volume per grade), are available from July 2008. Teachers and candidates who wish to buy a CD recording of syllabus repertoire pieces can now choose either to buy them separately or as a complete package along with the repertoire book for their grade. As well as offering added flexibility, this package also enables customers who buy both book and CD to make significant cost savings.

*Teaching Notes on Piano Exam Pieces 2009-2010*, Grades 1-7, is also available from July 2008. This invaluable teaching aid explores the skills that students need for each piece, and provides detailed information on what the examiners are looking for and how to achieve a secure and musical performance.

Order your copies from your local retailer from July 2008 or visit [www.abrmpublishing.com](http://www.abrmpublishing.com)



# Changes to Scales, Arpeggios and Broken Chords

## Benefits of scales and arpeggios

Scales and arpeggios develop many aspects of piano technique: posture, balance between the hands and movement of the arm. The sense of key and pattern acquired through familiarity has many benefits: it speeds up the learning of new pieces, develops evenness of line and quality of tone, builds aural awareness, and increases familiarity with the geography of the instrument.

## New scale requirements

The changes are very much a refinement of the existing syllabus. Octave-range requirements for similar-motion scales and arpeggios now match at all grades. The duplication of patterns and keys has been addressed with the intention of making the progression as logical and coherent as possible.

Features of the new syllabus include:

### Grade 2

- G minor replaces B minor

G minor conforms to the standard left-hand fingering, whilst maintaining the stance of having a minor scale with two accidentals in the key signature.

### Grades 3–8

- Harmonic A minor contrary-motion replaces E flat major at Grade 3
- Chromatic scale on B is deleted from Grade 3
- Two replacement keys appear among the contrary-motion scales at Grade 4
- Grade 5 contrary-motion scale groups lose an example each
- Grade 6 loses two examples in each scale group, and there is a replacement contrary-motion chromatic
- The whole-tone scale is introduced at Grade 8

Introducing the whole-tone scale at Grade 8 is the only significant addition to the technical requirements, widening the scalic vocabulary and relating to the kind of repertoire that pianists are likely encounter at this level.

## New arpeggio and broken chord requirements

### Grades 1–3

- Broken chords occur in the first two grades only
- Arpeggios appear from Grade 2
- Two examples of arpeggios with hands together are introduced at Grade 3

Triadic figures are encountered more frequently than arpeggio figures in early repertoire, therefore the introduction of arpeggios is now delayed until Grade 2 when the triadic pattern has been fully established by means of broken chords. There are reduced arpeggio requirements to counterbalance the incorporation of broken chords, with the keys carefully distributed between both groups.

Grade 1 broken chords remain unchanged. Grade 2 adopts the current broken chord exercise 'pattern 1' set for Grade 3 to encourage a flexibility of hand position at an earlier stage. This provides a logical and progressive approach to the learning of the extensions to the five-finger position.

### Grades 4 & 5

- All Grade 4 arpeggios will now be required both hands together and separately
- The range of arpeggios at Grade 5 is increased to three octaves

By requiring all arpeggios to be prepared both hands together and separately at Grade 4, the potential confusion of the current requirements is removed. The range of Grade 5 arpeggios now matches the similar-motion scale range.

### Grades 6–8

- Two diminished 7ths are removed from Grade 6
- Grade 7 arpeggios are now also required in root position, and two diminished 7ths are introduced

The changes at Grade 7 bridge the gap between Grades 6 and 8 more effectively.

## Supporting Publications

New editions of *Piano Scales and Arpeggios*, Grades 1–8 (one volume per grade), are available from July 2008. These reflect the changes in requirements from January 2009. The new scale, arpeggio and broken chord requirements are presented fully in the new Piano Syllabus, available from July 2008.

Order your copies from your local retailer from July 2008 or visit [www.abrampublishing.com](http://www.abrampublishing.com)

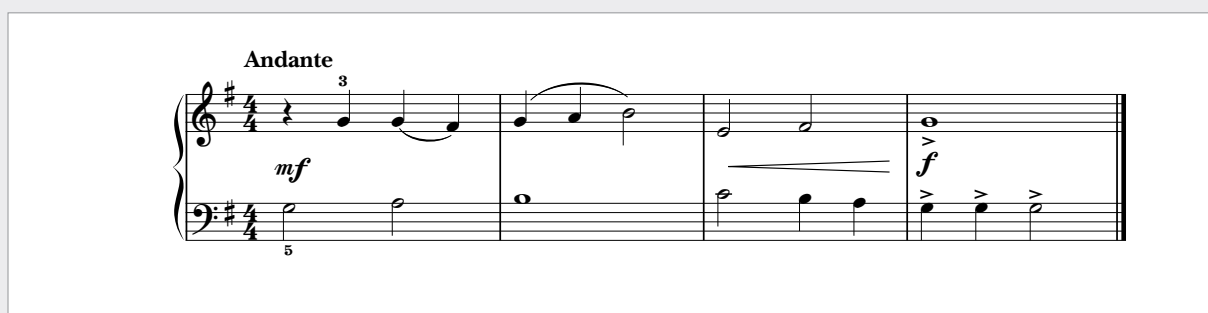


# Changes to the Sight-Reading Tests

Our research has shown that a proportion of candidates, particularly in the early grades, struggle with sight-reading tests if they feel unable to make coherent pieces of music from them. New tests have been commissioned for 2009 onwards, which are slightly shorter in length in the early grades and in attractive, approachable styles.

- Grade 2 tests stay within the five-finger position

The current step from Grade 1 to 2 was felt to be particularly taxing, due to the combination of having to play hands together *and* beyond a five-finger position at Grade 2.



The image shows a musical score for a Grade 2 sight-reading test. It is titled "Andante" and is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a quarter rest followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) marked with a "3" above them. The bass staff starts with a half note G3 marked with a "5" below it. The piece includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*, and a fermata over a measure in the treble staff.

Grade 2 sight-reading

- Tests at **all** grades will contain guideline fingering

Suggested fingering will be given for potentially awkward areas at all grades, and for the starting notes in both hands for all tests in Grades 1-5.



The image shows a musical score for a Grade 5 sight-reading test. It is titled "Sadly" and is in 3/8 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a quarter note G4 marked with a "1" above it, followed by eighth notes. The bass staff starts with a half note G3 marked with a "3" below it. The piece includes dynamic markings of *p*, *mf*, *dim.*, and *pp*, and performance instructions such as *espressivo*, *rit.*, and a fermata over the final measure.

Grade 5 sight-reading

## Changes to the Sight-Reading Tests

- Evocative titles have been added to tests at Grades 6-8

The addition of titles helps candidates quickly connect to the mood and style of the music.

**Ragtime**

The musical score for 'Ragtime' is presented in three systems. The first system is marked 'Relaxed' and begins with a piano (*f non legato*) dynamic. The second system features a piano (*p più legato*) dynamic. The third system includes a piano (*p*) dynamic with a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, eighth notes, and a pedaling instruction (*Ped.*) at the end.

Grade 7 sight-reading

All changes are to allow candidates to pay more attention to the musical detail contained in the tests, and so gain a greater degree of satisfaction and sense of achievement and enjoyment.

### Supporting Publications

New editions of *Piano Specimen Sight-Reading Tests*, Grades 1-8 (one volume per grade), are available from July 2008. These reflect the changes in requirements from January 2009.

Order your copies from your local retailer from July 2008 or visit [www.abrsmpublishing.com](http://www.abrsmpublishing.com)



# When do these changes take effect?

The new Piano Syllabus is published in July 2008, and includes full details of the new set pieces (valid for 2009 and 2010) as well as the revised technical requirements (valid from 1 January 2009).

## Overlap information

### Set pieces

- Candidates may play pieces from the previous syllabus as follows:
  - UK & Republic of Ireland** – until the end of Period A (spring examinations) 2009 only
  - All other countries** – until 31 December 2009
- All the pieces must be from the same syllabus – candidates may not perform a mixture of pieces from old and new syllabuses

### Scales and sight-reading

- There is no overlap period for scales and sight-reading; the new requirements take effect for all candidates worldwide from 1 January 2009

For more information on the syllabus and regulations see [www.abrsm.org](http://www.abrsm.org)

## Our service to you

The Associated Board is committed to offering you a high standard of service at the exam centre and during the exam.

We monitor our exams closely to ensure consistency, fairness and efficiency. If you have any concerns about the conduct or conditions of an exam please contact us.

# Contact us

## UK & Ireland

Our offices are open on weekdays from 8am to 5.30pm. You can also get information from the website ([www.abrsm.org](http://www.abrsm.org)) or from your Honorary Local Representative, who is listed at the website and in the *Examination Information & Regulations* booklet.

Alternatively, contact our UK and Ireland Operations team:

### Northern Region, Scotland & Wales Exams

t: 020 7467 8261

e: [londonandnorth@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:londonandnorth@abrsm.ac.uk)

### London Region Exams

t: 020 7467 8261

e: [londonandnorth@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:londonandnorth@abrsm.ac.uk)

### Southern Region Exams

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e: [midsandsouth@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:midsandsouth@abrsm.ac.uk)

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### Ireland Exams

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### Music Medals

t: 020 7467 8853

e: [musicmedals@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:musicmedals@abrsm.ac.uk)

## Outside of the UK & Ireland

Representatives and contacts are listed at [www.abrsm.org/regions](http://www.abrsm.org/regions) and in the International edition of the *Examination Information & Regulations* booklet.

Alternatively, contact the International Department:  
t: +44 20 7467 8240  
e: [international@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:international@abrsm.ac.uk)

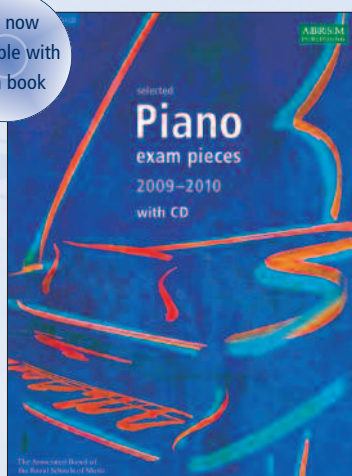
Copies of this leaflet are also available to download from [www.abrsm.org/downloads](http://www.abrsm.org/downloads)

The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music  
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# Piano Exam Pieces

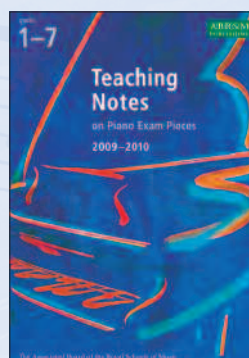
for the new Associated Board Piano Syllabus

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available with  
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## Teaching Notes on Piano Exam Pieces

Valuable advice on every piece in the piano syllabus at grades 1 to 7

New



## Scales and Arpeggios

**New editions** of *Scales and Arpeggios* and *Specimen Sight-Reading Tests* reflect changes in technical requirements to piano exams



New

## Specimen Sight-Reading Tests

Available from 3 July from good music retailers worldwide