



New College A Level Music: Summer Independent Learning Pack

Welcome to your Summer Independent Learning (SIL) pack for A-Level Music! This pack is your essential guide to kickstarting your A-Level journey. It's designed to consolidate your current musical knowledge, introduce you to exciting new concepts, and ensure you're fully prepared for the challenges and rewards of Year 12. Remember, developing your independent learning skills now will be key to your success at A-Level. Dive in, explore, and let your passion for music lead the way!

Task 1: Your Personal Performance Showcase – Elevate Your Artistry!

Objective: To refine your performance skills, explore new repertoire, and prepare a polished musical piece for assessment in the first two weeks of college.

Instructions:

You have three exciting options for your summer performance task. You can choose to focus on one, or combine elements if you're feeling ambitious!

1. Polish & Perfect:

- Select a piece you are **already working on** or have performed recently.
- Dedicate time to polishing it, paying meticulous attention to **dynamics, tempo markings, and phrasing** for a truly musical interpretation.
- **Record a video of your performance.** Consider finding a recorded accompaniment on YouTube if your piece commonly uses one (e.g., for graded exams).

2. Resurrect a Favourite:

- Choose an **older piece that you genuinely enjoyed playing** in the past.
- Revisit it! You'll likely find that with your improved skills, you can play it even better now.
- **Listen to various professional performances** of the piece on platforms like Apple Music, Spotify, or YouTube.
- **Analyse:** What specific elements do you like about these performances? Are there any interpretations, nuances, or techniques you can **incorporate** into your own rendition?
- **Record a video or audio of your performance.**

3. Learn Something New (Grade 5+ Challenge):

- Browse the **graded lists** (e.g., ABRSM, Trinity) for your current playing level.
- Listen to various pieces within these lists and **choose one to learn from scratch.**
- **Crucially, this piece must be of Grade 5 standard or higher.**
- Utilise recorded performances as a learning tool to guide your practice and help you decide on your interpretation.

Important Reminders for ALL Options:

- The most important thing is to **play an easier piece well, rather than a more difficult piece poorly**. Focus on musicality!
- You are encouraged to **share your recording** with friends and family. You can also send it to your teacher at mark.abbott@nclt.ac.uk if you'd like early feedback.
- You may use a **backing track** if appropriate for your piece.
- **You must perform this piece in front of your teacher during the first two weeks of college**. Be ready!

Why this is interesting: This task is all about *you* and your passion for performing! It's a fantastic opportunity to showcase your talent, push your boundaries, and develop your interpretative skills. Whether you're refining a favourite or tackling something new, you'll gain confidence and make a strong start to your A-Level Music journey.

Task 2: Music Theory Foundations – Build Your Musical Superpower!

Objective: To solidify your foundational music theory knowledge, ensuring you have a strong base for A-Level composition and analysis tasks.

Instructions:

When we begin the A-Level course, we'll dive straight into reviewing basic theory through practical composition tasks. While we will cover core concepts like keys, triads, and dissonance, we presume some existing fundamental knowledge. This task will ensure you're confident from day one.

1. **Explore Musictheory.net:** Visit the excellent external resource, musictheory.net. You need to be thoroughly familiar with the topics in the following sections:
 - **The Basics** – *all sections*
 - **Rhythm and Metre** – *all sections*
 - **Scales and Key Signatures** – *all sections*
 - **Intervals** – *all sections*
 - **Bonus Challenge (Highly Recommended!):** The first two lessons from the 'Chords' section ('Diatonic Chords') and the first lesson from 'Chord Progressions'. Mastering these will give you a significant head start!
2. **Take Comprehensive Notes:** As you work through each section, make sure you write **detailed, comprehensive notes** about all these areas. These notes will be an invaluable revision tool. You can download free manuscript paper from: http://www.musictheory.org.uk/manuscript_paper.php
3. **Test Your Understanding:** Utilise the interactive tests available on musictheory.net/exercises to help you grasp key signatures, scales, and other concepts. Practice, practice, practice!

Assessment:

- **You will be tested on these areas of music theory when you come to college.** It is **vital** that you fully understand and learn this material.

Why this is interesting: Music theory is the language of music! By mastering these fundamentals, you'll unlock a deeper understanding of how music works, empowering you in both composition and analysis. This isn't just about passing a test; it's about building your musical superpower, allowing you to speak, read, and write music with confidence.



Task 3: Introduction to the Symphony – Charting a Musical Giant!

Objective: To gain a foundational understanding of the symphony as a musical form, its general characteristics, and typical structures.

Instructions:

1. **Watch & Learn:** Watch the following insightful videos and make **detailed notes** from each. These will provide an excellent initial overview of the symphony:
 1. **Good basic introduction to the symphony by Howard Goodall** (from the BBC)
 2. **A much longer video on the symphony by Howard Goodall** (this is the first of a series, providing a deeper dive)
2. **Research & Respond:** Following your video observations, conduct further research into the symphony and answer the following questions **in detail**:
 1. **What is a symphony?** (Define its purpose and general characteristics)
 2. **How many movements does a symphony generally have?**
 3. **Describe the typical features of each movement** (e.g., tempo, character) and **explain the typical structures they employ** (e.g., sonata form, theme and variations). **Diagrams** may be highly beneficial to illustrate these structures!

Why this is interesting: The symphony is one of the most monumental and expressive forms in Western Classical music. This task will introduce you to its rich history and evolution, helping you appreciate how composers used this structure to tell vast, dramatic musical stories. Understanding the "rules" of the symphony will make listening to these incredible works even more rewarding!

Task 4:

Haydn's Symphony No. 104 "London" – Your First Set Work Deep Dive!

Objective: To begin your in-depth study of Haydn's Symphony No. 104, a core set work for your A-Level course, by engaging actively with its score and recording.

Instructions:

1. **Access the Score:** Print a copy of the score for **Haydn's Symphony No. 104 "London" (Movement 1 only)** from the link below:
 - [IMSLP Score Link]
[https://imslp.org/wiki/Symphony_No.104_in_D_major%2C_Hob.I:104_\(Haydn%2C_Joseph\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Symphony_No.104_in_D_major%2C_Hob.I:104_(Haydn%2C_Joseph))
 -
2. **Active Listening & Score Following:**
 - Listen to the music using the provided YouTube link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OitPLlowJ70&list=PLViZJfW4UpefGYPxlmdmCasOqgvqrSWks&index=3&t=1026s>
 -
 - **Follow the score carefully as you listen.** Try to identify key themes, changes in texture, prominent instrumentation, and any interesting harmonic or dynamic shifts.
 - **Repeat this process multiple times.** The more you listen with the score, the more familiar you will become with this essential set work.

Why this is interesting: This is your first direct encounter with a crucial A-Level set work! By actively listening with the score, you're not just hearing music; you're learning to read and understand the composer's intentions on the page. This is the foundation for all your future analysis and will allow you to appreciate the genius of Haydn's "London" Symphony on a much deeper level.

General Tips for Success: Your A-Level Music Toolkit

- **Pace Yourself:** Don't try to do everything at the last minute! Break these tasks down into smaller, manageable chunks throughout the summer. Consistency is key.
- **Active Engagement:** Don't just passively read or listen. Take detailed notes, make connections between concepts, actively annotate your scores, and constantly ask yourself "why?" and "how?".
- **Utilise All Resources:** The links provided are fantastic starting points. Don't be afraid to delve deeper into other reputable musical resources online or in your local library.
- **Stay Curious:** Music is an endless realm of discovery. If a concept or composer particularly piques your interest, follow that curiosity – it will enrich your understanding immensely!
- **Bring Your Best Work:** Your meticulously completed notes, timelines, and prepared performance pieces will be absolutely essential for your first lessons and your progression assessment in Year 12. They are your proof of independent learning and dedication!

Good luck, and have a truly productive and musically enriching summer!