

TMTA SA Theory Test and World of Music Test Guidelines and Teaching Tips for Special Needs Students

TMTA offers additional accommodations for students with special needs wishing to participate in the TMTA SA Theory and World of Music Programs. Teachers must notify their Local Theory or World of Music Chair at least three weeks in advance if they wish to request special accommodations for a student and include documentation of the type of special need. The local chair will make arrangements with the Theory or World of Music Coordinator.

Types of special needs include but are not limited to students with:

- Vision impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Autism spectrum
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Down Syndrome
- Dyslexia
- English as a second language
- Limited physical ability to write or hold a pencil (partial fingers, poor motor skills, etc.)

As with every student, the teacher should use good judgment as to whether it is appropriate to send the child with special needs to take the state Theory or World of Music Test or if it is in the best interest of the child to take a practice test in their studio. It is recommended that students take multiple practice tests with their teachers prior to the official TMTA test to prepare the students for what to expect.

Guidelines and Accommodations:

1. For vision impaired students, descriptive wording of the test (alternate descriptions of the musical examples and symbols) shall be determined before the test is administered.
2. A teacher may not administer the test to his own special needs student, but may be present during the test.
3. Sight impaired students and those with limited physical ability may have a teacher/monitor write their answers for them (this cannot be their own teacher).
4. The test may be read aloud to the student.
5. The student may be tested in a separate room with a monitor.
6. Students who will be disruptive to others should be allowed to test in a separate room.
7. The test may be printed on a different color paper or enlarged with permission from the Coordinator.
8. Special grading modifications for a dyslexic student may be given by the Coordinator.
9. For theory students with vision impairment, a string or tactile staff may be used for all questions requiring the answer to be drawn on a staff. The student will indicate to the test recorder their answer using the string or tactile staff for clarity. The monitor will record the student's answer on the paper test.
10. Theory students with vision impairment may test in a room with a piano and play back the ear training. The monitor will record the student's answer on the paper test.
12. Documented special needs students may take the Level 4 Theory Test each year to fulfill all theory eligibility requirements.
13. For World of Music questions that pertain to instrument identification, test administrators are allowed to play a recording of the different instruments and ask the student to identify the instrument.
14. If a student regularly uses a testing shield (colored transparent cover), they will be allowed to use it.
15. Students, who have dyslexia or other similar problems, may have the vocabulary and the definitions written (ahead of time) on 3 x 5 cards so that the student can manipulate the cards rather than try to work out the answers using only the test. The monitor may record the student's answer on the paper test.

Teaching Tips:

To assist students who have special needs in regard to taking the TMTA Theory tests, we offer the following suggestions to help students be successful.

TEST AIDS: TMTA provides testing aids on the website which may be printed and given to every student to use as an aid during testing. Students may write all over the keyboards and label the staff lines during the test.

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NAMING NOTES: For questions asking about whole steps, half steps, etc., (i.e. Level 5, question 3), students may write the names of the notes above each note before they identify the size (half, whole, etc.). Student sometimes, especially students with ADD or dyslexia, will forget which clef they are reading. Naming the notes first, then identifying the size between the notes may help keep the focus on one step at a time. There is no deduction for naming the notes first, even though the answer is not requested.

BREAKS: In the tests for the revised syllabus, the tests are intended to be ordered in such a way that students are working with rhythms, note values, and time signatures in a section, and another section of questions deals with scales, key signatures, order of sharps and flats, etc. For students with ADHD or test anxiety, a break between sections for a minute or two may help to refocus efforts in the next section.

USE THE TEST TO HELP WITH ANSWERS: For the scales, key signatures, etc., have the student complete the bonus question about the “linear circle of 5ths” (levels 3 and above) on the last page prior to working in this section of the test. Remind them to use their own answers to help them answer the questions in the section on scales, chords, key signatures, etc. In level 5, the answers to all of the scales is given within the test answers of successive questions. For instance, Question 14 asks for a scale beginning on E. The student can flip to the last page bonus question, recognize that E is the 4th sharp key signatures, so it has 4 sharps, then flip to question 12, part A, where the student listed F#, C#, G#, D# as the first 4 sharps. The student can use this information to complete the scale. It is okay for the student to write “4 sharps” and “F#, C#, G#, D#” beside the scale to help them as they complete the scale. No deduction for writing this information on the test will be made. In level 5, question 15, the same can be done with the key signatures for each of the measures. The student can write the number of sharps or flats in a key signature, then the names of the sharps or flats. The last step would be for the student to write the sharps or flats on the lines/spaces as they named them. No deduction for writing this information on the test will be made.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS: For many special needs students, the most difficult portion of the test is the term and definition matching section. This section can be difficult for any student; however, if students work by reading a definition first, then find the term that goes with the definition, it can be a little less overwhelming. For students who need tactile manipulation, a student could provide cards or slips of paper on which they can write the definitions. By moving the definitions into the same order as the terms so that they align, students may be more successful than by just reading or hearing the terms and definitions. To save time, the monitor may be provided with the cards with the terms preprinted and cards with the definitions preprinted. This can be done by copying this small portion of the test and cutting it into individual definitions and terms.

EAR TRAINING: Ear training sometimes allows the mind to wander a bit between hearings. Here are some suggestions to maintain focus: *Rhythmic and melodic dictation:* Have the student place their pencil on each note as it is played in the first measure. As students write in their own notes, have students touch each note during the replaying. *Intervals, scales, chords:* Be certain student keeps their pencil on the same example until the next example is announced.

These are just some suggestions for assisting students with their test. No points will be deducted for any marks mentioned above made on the test. On the theory tests, so much of what we write is either right or wrong that grading concessions are difficult, though we do our best to take into consideration as much as possible.

Anecdote: There was a student who was working a Level 2 practice test. All of the notes she had drawn were one line or one space off from where it was supposed to be drawn. The teacher said, “Mary, did you know that you drew these notes one line away from where they are supposed to be drawn?” The student responded, “Well, I should get at least partial credit because they are close.” The teacher replied, “Well, Nbsz, that is not how it works.” The student asked, “Why did you call me Nbsz?” “It is only one letter off from your name, so I think I’ll just call you Nbsz,” responded the teacher. The student understood the importance of accuracy and she scored a 100 on the next theory test.