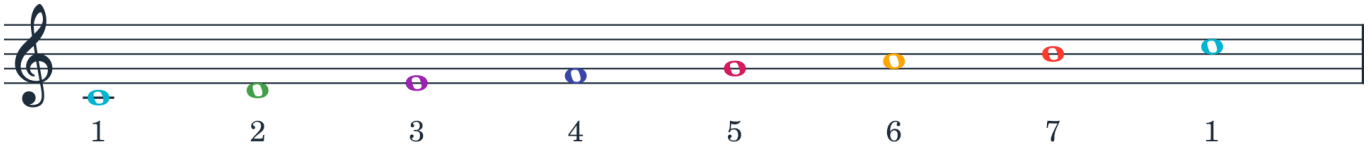Scale Degree Names

every step of the scale has a title — tonic, dominant, and the five in between

You already know three: tonic (1), subdominant (4), dominant (5). Meet the whole royal court. Each degree's name explains its job: the **dominant** dominates from a 5th above home; the **subdominant** mirrors it a 5th below; the **mediant** sits midway between tonic and dominant, the **submediant** midway below; the **supertonic** perches just above home — and the **leading tone** leans so hard toward the tonic it practically falls in.



1 Tonic — home	**2** Supertonic — just above home	**3** Mediant — midway up to 5	**4** Subdominant — a 5th below home
5 Dominant — a 5th above home	**6** Submediant — midway down to 4	**7** Leading tone — leans into home	**8** Tonic — home again

Try it Quiz by feel, not just by name: play 1-2-3-4-5-6-7… and STOP on the leading tone. Feel the itch? Only the tonic scratches it. Then play 5→1 (dominant home), 4→1 (subdominant home) and hear why those two got the big titles. The names work in every key — degree 5 is the dominant whether the scale starts on C, G or F♯. Practice: Exercise 59. Hear the degrees in a tune: Handout 376.

© 2026 Tissimo. All rights reserved.