Sing in Thirds: A Harmony Above and Below

Count three letters inside the key, sing the melody first, then add a harmony a **third above** or a **third below** it.

1 · COUNT THREE LETTERS

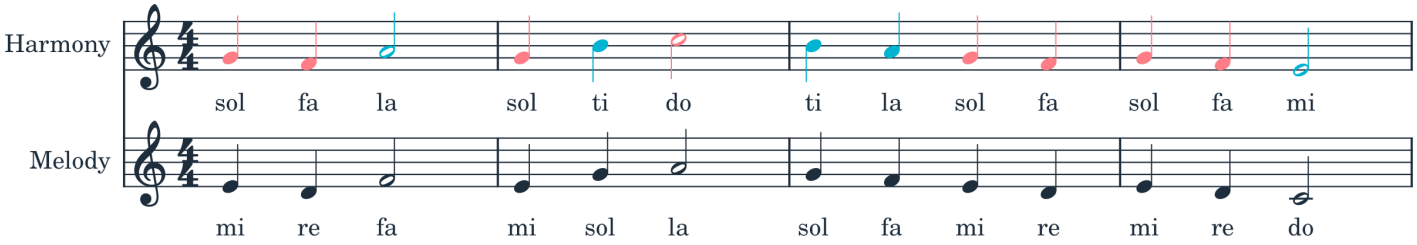
Name the melody note and count up three letters, **counting that note as one**: E–F–G, so the third above E is **G**. Each pair below is a melody note (lower letter) with the note a third above it.

E	F	G	A	B	C	D
C	D	E	F	G	A	B
M3	m3	m3	M3	M3	m3	m3
4 half steps	3 half steps	3 half steps	4 half steps	4 half steps	3 half steps	3 half steps
do–mi	re–fa	mi–sol	fa–la	sol–ti	la–do	ti–re

The key decides: **you never add a sharp or flat in C major**, so 3 thirds are major (M3) and 4 are minor (m3). Both sound good.

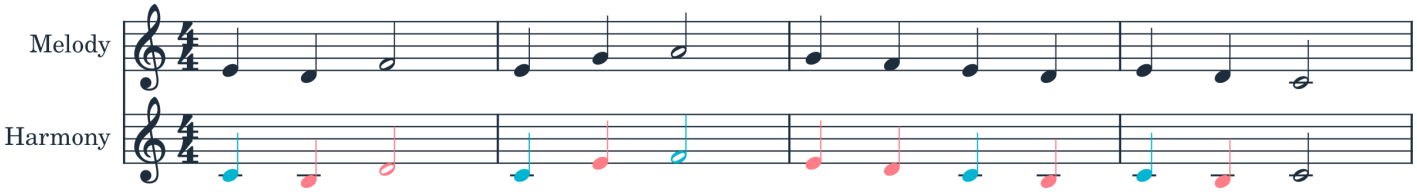
2 · A HARMONY ABOVE

Bottom staff: an original melody. Top staff: a third above every note. Syllables are movable do (do = C): do ('dough'), re ('ray'), mi ('me'), fa ('fah'), sol ('soul'), la ('lah'), ti ('tee'); the high C is do again. Harmony notes: cyan = M3, coral = m3.



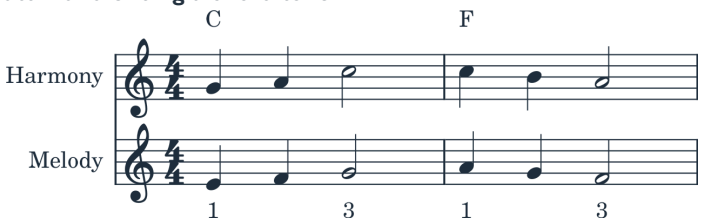
3 · A HARMONY BELOW

Count three letters down: E–D–C, so the third below E is **C**. On the last note the harmony **joins the melody on C** (a unison). The lowest note is B3, just below middle C: if that is too low for you, swap parts and let someone else take the lower line.



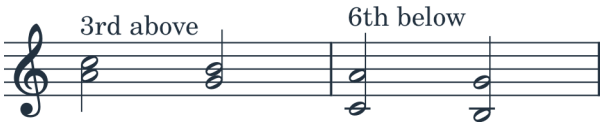
4 · CHECK IT AGAINST THE CHORD

Beats 1 and 3: sing a chord tone



When a song has chords, the harmony notes on **beats 1 and 3** (numbered under the melody) must be in the chord. Bar 1, beat 3: the third above G is B, but a C chord is C–E–G. So the harmony takes the **nearest chord tone, C**, one half step up.

A sixth below



A sixth below uses the same letters as a third above, an octave lower. Above A and G: C and B. Below them: the same C and B, 12 half steps lower.

PRACTICE ORDER

1. Sing the **melody** alone (check it with Track 1).
2. Hear the **harmony alone** as a tune (Track 2), then sing it.
3. Sing the harmony while Track 1 plays the melody.
4. **Swap**: sing the melody while Track 2 plays the harmony.
5. Sing **together** with a partner; Track 3 is the model. Tracks 4 and 5 do the same for the harmony below.

TRY IT

In **G major** (one sharp, F♯), write the third above D, E, F♯ and G: ____ ____ ____ ____

Answer: F♯, G, A, B.

Listen: scan or visit tissimo.co/worksheets/sing-in-thirds-above-and-below. Five tracks at quarter = 72, each after the C major chord and one bar of clicks: a pitch model on piano, not a vocal demonstration.

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