Transposition: moving a tune to a new key

To **transpose** is to play the same tune starting on a different note. Every note moves by the same amount, so the tune keeps its shape — it just sounds higher or lower. Here is how to do it with any tune.

TWO WAYS TO WORK OUT THE NEW NOTES

1 · The interval method

Measure from the old home to the new one, then move **every** note by that interval. C to F is **up a perfect 4th**, so:

C → F | D → G | E → A | F → B♭ | G → C

Careful: F up a perfect 4th is **B♭**, not B. Counting letters is not enough — count the half steps too (5 for a perfect 4th).

2 · The scale-degree method

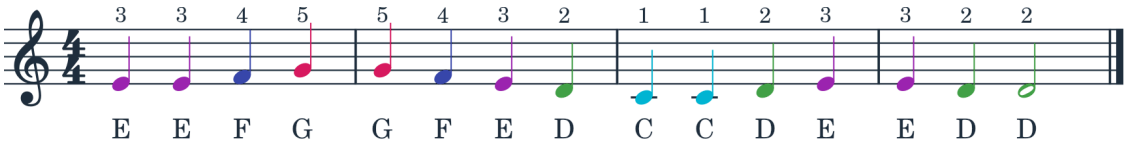
Turn the tune into **degree numbers** (3 3 4 5 …), then read the same numbers in the new key's scale.

	1	2	3	4	5
C MAJOR	C	D	E	F	G
G MAJOR	G	A	B	C	D
F MAJOR	F	G	A	B♭	C

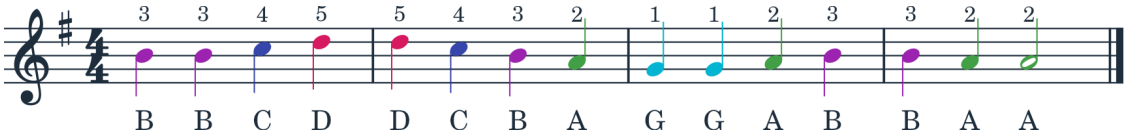
The key's scale takes care of the B♭ for you. Both methods give the **same notes**.

"ODE TO JOY" IN THREE KEYS

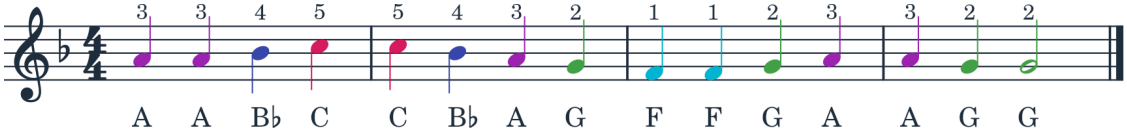
C major
C position (Handout 02). No sharps or flats.



G major
G position (Handout 11). Key signature F♯ — this tune never lands on F.



F major
F position (Handout 12). Key signature B♭ — every B is B♭.



Numbers above are fingers — in a five-finger position they are also the scale degrees, and they never change. The letter names below do. Colors follow the degree (Handout 71). Beethoven, public domain; rhythm simplified.

BEFORE YOU PLAY — FOUR CHECKS

1. **Find the new home.** Put finger 1 on the new tonic — G or F here.
2. **Read the key signature.** One sharp = G major, one flat = F major. They sit next door to C on the circle of fifths (Handout 56).
3. **Keep the fingering shape.** Same numbers, same hand shape, new keys under it.
4. **Listen.** The transposed tune must sound like the same song. A wrong note jumps out — usually a forgotten sharp or flat.

Try it Transpose the tune to **D major** (Handout 15) with both methods: degree 3 in D is **F♯**, so the tune starts F♯ F♯ G A. Write the letter names first, check them against the D scale, then play with the same fingers.

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