



Harmonica Syllabus

Free Choice Piece Guidance

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For general information about Free Choice Pieces please see:

<https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces/>

The following guidelines outline features that would normally be found within a piece chosen for harmonica to meet the grade level. These features are indicative and would not all necessarily occur to the same degree within any particular piece. Standards can be measured by making a balanced judgement regarding various musical elements based on these guidelines. For Premiere and Debut, the pieces in the method books can be consulted for a guide.

It is not a prerequisite for free choice pieces to be approved by RSL Head Office, as the examiner will make a judgement about the suitability of the piece in the exam. However, if you are unsure about the eligibility of your piece(s) you can seek approval which incurs a fee of £10 per piece. Please email info@rslawards.com with details of the proposed piece(s) (including a copy of the sheet music) and the grade / instrument you intend to enter for. A full reply will be given no later than 4 weeks after payment of the approval fee, which will be facilitated via an online link that we will e-mail to you.

For more information about the selection and performance of free choice repertoire, including level of demand, provision of sheet music, adaptation and personalisation, backing/accompaniment, and prior approval, please see <https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces/>.

Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Premiere

The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Piece duration | 30 seconds to 1 minute |
| Time signatures | 4/4 |
| Rhythms | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole notes• Half notes• Quarter notes |
| Scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• C major |
| Dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None |
| Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One step changes• One octave leap• Blow to draw |
| Effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None |

Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Debut

The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Piece duration | 30 seconds to 1 minute 30 seconds |
| Time signatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/4 • 3/4 |
| Rhythms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole notes • Half notes • Quarter notes • Dotted whole/half notes • Ties |
| Scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C major |
| Dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forte • Piano |
| Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 step changes • Repeat marks • Leaps (including direction change) |
| Effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed articulation • Extended slurs • Tremelo |

Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 1

The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Piece duration | 1'10" to 2'30" |
| Time signatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/4 • 3/4 |
| Rhythms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole notes • Half notes • Quarter notes • Eighth notes |
| Scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D dorian • D minor pentatonic • G mixolydian |
| Dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piano • Forte • Breath control |
| Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chords (diatonic only) • Chugging (diatonic only) • Tongue blocking for single notes |
| Effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple vibrato • Tonguing the note (ta ta ta) • Staccato • Legato |

Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 2

The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Piece duration | 1'20" to 2'40" |
| Time signatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6/8 |
| Rhythms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole notes • Half notes • Quarter notes • Eighth notes • 16th notes |
| Scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E phrygian • A aeolian |
| Chords | Diads (double stops): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Em • F major • Dm Triads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dm |
| Dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • p • f • mp • mf |
| Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex chugging (diatonic only) • Tongue blocking for single notes |
| Effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wah-wah • Trill |

Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 3

The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Piece duration | 1'40" to 2'50" |
| Time signatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/8 • 12/8 |
| Rhythms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole notes • Half notes • Quarter notes • Eighth notes • 16th notes |
| Scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F lydian • B locrian |
| Chords | Diads (double stops): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bm • F major |
| Dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • p • f • mp • mf • pp • ff • crescendo • diminuendo |
| Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tongue blocking for single notes |
| Effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bending and the button (1 4 and 6) • Db Ab • db Ab |