

Modulation

Modulation means to change key during a composition. In simple pieces there may be no modulation e.g. a piece may begin, continue, and end in C major. This is fine for short pieces. In longer pieces, the audience's interest needs to be sustained. This can be done through modulating.

Even pop songs tend to modulate towards the end for a climatic effect!!

How does modulation come into my GCSEs?

Very simply, you may come across modulation in two areas of your GCSE music:

1. If you want to gain better marks in your composition, you need to modulate somewhere.
2. A piece may be presented to you in your listening exam and you need to identify that it has modulated and possibly where to.

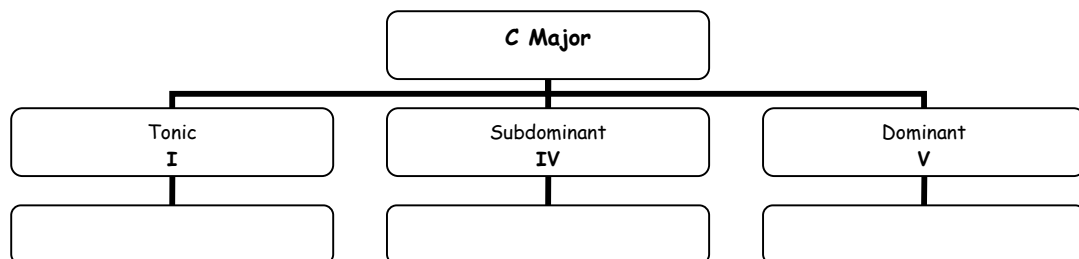
How does a piece of music modulate ?

This is in fact very simple. Pieces of music always modulate to closely related keys.

You will remember that the primary chords in any key are **I, IV, V**. The first, fourth, and fifth degrees of a scale have other names as well:

I	Tonic
IV	Subdominant
V	Dominant

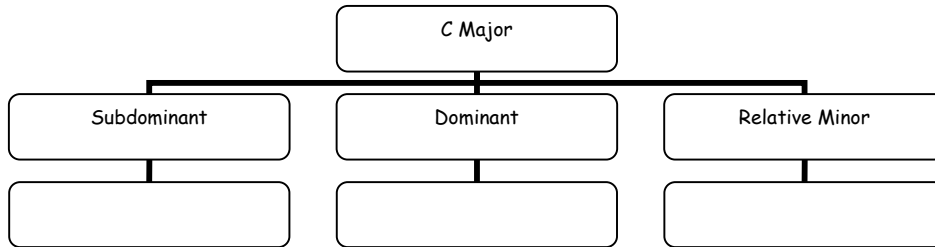
Let's assume that a piece is in the key of 'C major', therefore the following table would read:



Now that you know these three terms, we can discuss the related keys that you can modulate to.

The close related keys of any key are the **subdominant, dominant, and relative key** (major/minor).

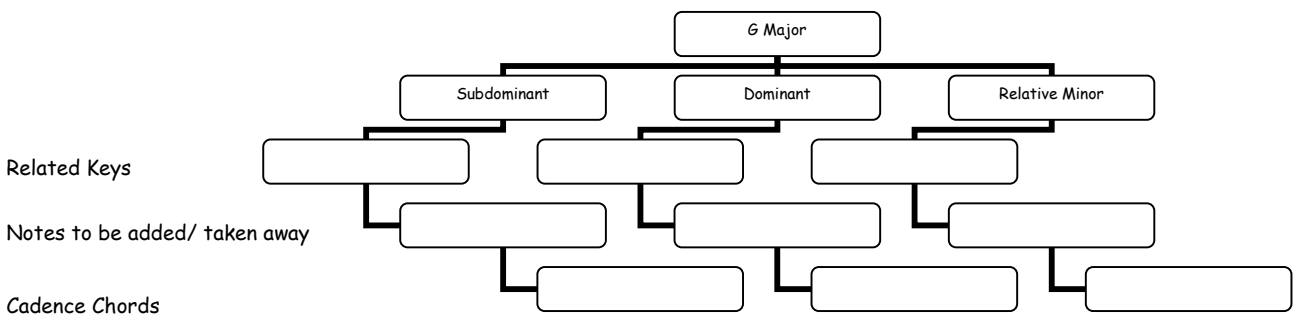
Therefore, if we are in 'C Major' we can modulate to the subdominant, dominant or relative minor of C major. Fill in the following table.



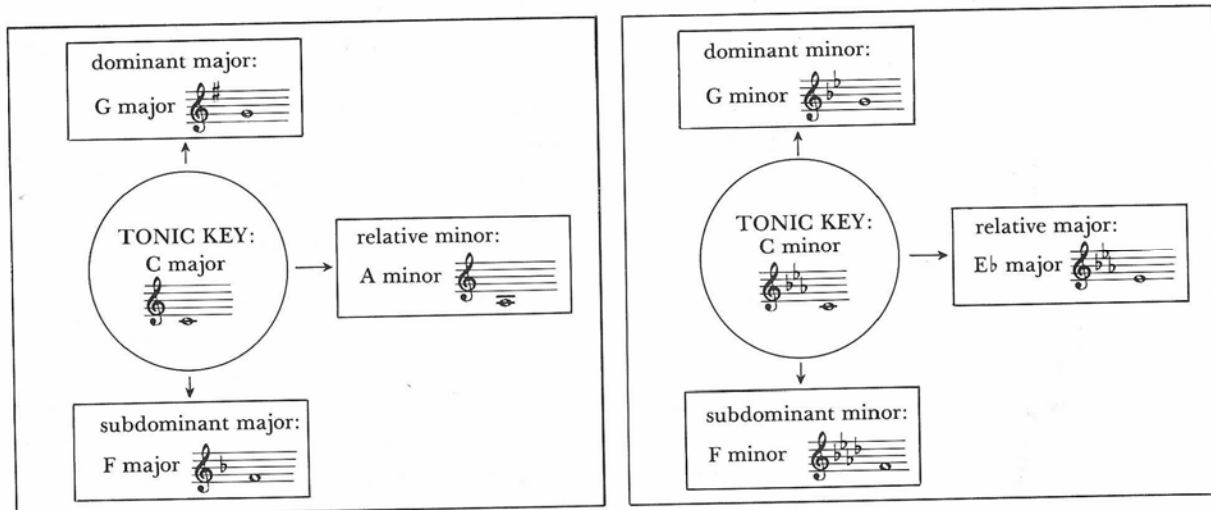
When I have decided what key to modulate to, how do I go about it?

1. Start by using notes that belong to the key you want to modulate to. It is a good idea to use the notes that don't belong to the key you started in.
2. Play a perfect cadence in the new key.

If your piece started in G major, what would the keys be that you could modulate to? Also fill in the notes you would have to begin adding (or taking away) and the chords of the cadence you would need to use to establish the new key.



The table below helps define modulation further.



Listen to this piece by Bach and be prepared to discuss it.

J. S. Bach

The image displays a musical score for a piece by J.S. Bach, consisting of four systems of music. Each system contains a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 are indicated in small boxes above the treble clef staff. The score shows a complex melodic line in the treble and a supporting bass line. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

1. What is the form of this piece ?
2. What period of music is it from and why ?
3. What key is the piece in at the beginning ?
4. What bar does the music begin to modulate?
5. What note is introduced to begin the modulation ?
6. What key is the music modulating to at this point ?
7. What is required to complete the modulation ?
8. What bars can this be found in ?
9. The piece modulates again towards the end. Which bar sees the beginning of this modulation ?
10. What key is the piece in by bar 32 ?