

THE STABILITY LADDER

Seven notes. Seven levels of tension. The further up the ladder, the stronger the pull back to home.

7
RUNGS

↓ **DESCENDING = RESOLUTION**
Moving down the ladder toward DO releases tension

ASCENDING = TENSION ↑
Moving up the ladder toward FA builds urgency ↑

▼ MOST TENSE

7

FA

TENSION PEAK
Maximum dissonance. Forms a tritone with TI — the most unstable interval in the key. The strongest ache in the scale.
SUBDOMINANT · RANK 7 OF 7

6

TI

LEADING URGENCY
Strong magnetic pull upward to DO. Tritone partner with FA. Together they are the most active tones in the key — the harmonic engine of dominant tension.
LEADING TONE · RANK 6 OF 7

5

RE

OPEN YEARNING
A question without an answer. Wants to fall back to DO or rise to MI. Forward-moving energy — perfect for verse phrases that keep listeners leaning in.
SUPERTONIC · RANK 5 OF 7

4

LA

WARM BORDER
Moderate tension with emotional warmth. Can linger without full resolution. The soul and gospel note — holds feeling without forcing an answer.
SUBMEDIANT · RANK 4 OF 7

3

MI

SWEET STABILITY
Warm and settled. The 3rd partial of the overtone series — naturally consonant with DO. Emotionally bright and singable. Rest here feels earned and pleasant.
MEDIANT · RANK 3 OF 7

2

SO

STRONG CONFIDENCE
The dominant — acoustically the closest partner to DO. Strong, forward-facing, and fully supported. Not home, but near it and confident. Power and resolve without full arrival.
DOMINANT · RANK 2 OF 7

1

DO

HOME BASE
The tonic — maximum stability. The key center. Every other note in the key is defined by its relationship to DO. Landing here feels like arriving.
TONIC · RANK 1 OF 7 · START HERE

▼ MOST STABLE

THE TRITONE PAIR

FA ↔ TI

FA + TI = Tritone. The most dissonant interval in the key. FA pulls down to MI; TI pulls up to DO. Together they define the strongest harmonic tension available.

START HERE — HOME BASE
DO is the tonal center — the note every other scale degree is measured against. A melody that returns to DO feels resolved. Verse endings on RE or TI; chorus endings on DO or SO.

MAXIMUM TENSION — USE WITH INTENT
FA at the top of the ladder isn't a mistake — it's a power tool. Blues, soul, and gospel use FA constantly for its ache. But FA needs resolution. It cannot be a resting point without creating listener fatigue.