

SCALE DEGREE REFERENCE

The emotional character of each solmization note — in order of stability

← MOST STABLE ←				→ MOST TENSE →		
DO 1 OF 7 · TONIC HOME Home base. Arrival. Rest. The note that says "we're here." Phrase endings, chorus peaks, moments of resolution	SO 2 OF 7 · DOMINANT STRONG Open and stable but not closed. Confident, forward-facing, not quite home. Power phrases, pre-arrival resting points, masculine strength	MI 3 OF 7 · MEDIANT SWEET Warm, clear, emotionally bright. The most "musical" resting tone after DO. Gentle arrivals, emotional warmth, classic singable melodies	LA 4 OF 7 · SUBMEDIANT WARM On the border. Emotional, slightly floating — stable enough to linger on, just restless enough to feel feeling. Soulful phrases, emotional verses, bittersweet moments	RE 5 OF 7 · SUPERTONIC OPEN Forward-moving, unresolved. Feels like a question waiting for an answer. Rising phrases, forward motion, pre-chorus build, questions	TI 6 OF 7 · LEADING TONE LEADING High tension — strongly pulls upward toward DO. The note that most urgently wants to resolve. Climactic phrases, suspension build, dramatic tension	FA 7 OF 7 · SUBDOMINANT TENSION The strongest friction note. Creates a tritone against TI — maximum dissonance inside the key. Ache, blues moments, maximum harmonic color, modern edge

WHY IS THIS THE STABILITY ORDER?

The order **DO** **SO** **MI** **LA** **RE** **TI** **FA** comes from acoustics and harmonic tension. **DO** is the tonic — the key's center of gravity. **SO** is the dominant, the strongest harmonic partner to DO. **MI** is the third — the note that defines major vs. minor. As you move right, notes create more friction against the tonic and dominant, making resolution feel increasingly urgent.

THE DO-FA TRITONE: WHY FA IS THE TENSEST

FA and **TI** together form a **tritone** — an interval of three whole steps, the most dissonant interval in Western tonality. This is why FA (from below) and TI (from above) both exert such strong gravitational pull toward resolution: FA wants to fall to MI, and TI wants to rise to DO. They are the two "active" tones that define harmonic tension within the key.

WRITING WITH SCALE DEGREES

For arrival and resolution

Land on *DO*, *SO*, or *MI* at phrase endings. DO = full stop. SO = open but strong. MI = warm and melodic. These three form the major triad — the most stable home base.

For forward motion and tension

Let phrases lean toward *RE*, *TI*, or *FA*. RE asks a question. TI pulls urgently upward. FA creates ache. End on these only when you want the listener leaning forward.

LA as the emotional wildcard

LA sits in the middle and earns its "warm / emotional" label by floating between stability and tension. Soul, gospel, and blues melodies use LA heavily — it feels open enough to hold emotion without resolving it.