

8 Solemn Tones Corrected: Explanatory Notes

The solemn psalm tones are used for the Introit and Communio verses of the Mass.

The parts of the psalm tone:

Note that psalm texts are conventionally given in pairs of two lines;
the first line of text is sung to A-B-C; and the second line of text is sung to D-B-(F-B-)G.
Sometimes the end of the first line of text is indicated in liturgical books with an asterisk *.

A – Intonation

- used for the first 2 syllables (I, III, IV, V, VII) or the first three syllables (II, VI, VIII) of the first line of text.

B – Tenor or Reciting Tone

- used for as many syllables as needed for the first line of text except the cadence (C).

Optional: if the text is long, one might freely insert on accented syllables of important words an articulation pes as given for the second half of the psalm tone at (E).

C – Mediant Cadence

- used for the end of the first line. One counts backward from the last syllable, noting either the last (and second last) accented syllable, or simply counting all the syllables backward in order, as required by the formula of a given mode.

D – Re-intonation

- used for the beginning of the second line of text, exactly as A.

B – Tenor or Reciting Tone

- same as in the first line of text, for as many syllables as needed.

(E) – Optional articulation pes

- may be used to break up a long text; on accented syllable of important word(s).

B – If the optional articulation pes (E) is used, the text resumes on the Tenor or Reciting Tone.

G – Termination or Final Cadence, as in C at the half cadence.

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Notes on each psalm tone:

Mode I

C: Second-last accented syllable from end is always on pes; then use the optional tractulus only if there are two unaccented syllables following; otherwise use just the second tractulus.

If last accented syllable is third from end, use tractulus-clivis-pes;

if last accented syllable is second syllable from end, use clivis-pes.

F¹ and F² are identical except that F² has five pitches on last syllable where F¹ has one pitch.

Mode II

C¹ and C² are two options for the Mediant Cadence.

D¹ and D¹ are two options for the Re-intonation.

Mode III

C¹ and C² are two options for the conclusion of the Mediant Cadence. In either case, C precedes the conclusion. In either case, C falls on the second-last accented syllable from the end.

The last accented syllable then falls on C¹ or C².

Thus, the Mediant Cadence is either C + C¹ or C + C².

C² is treated like C in Mode I above, depending on whether the accented syllable is followed by one or two unaccented syllables.

The Termination or Final Cadence is similar to the Mediant Cadence: either F + F¹ or F + F².

In either case, F begins on the fifth syllable from the end (without regard to accentuation).

Mode IV

F¹ and F² are identical except that F² has four pitches on last syllable where F¹ has one pitch.

Mode V

C begins one syllable before the last accent, and the last accent always falls on RE.

If two unaccented syllables follow, the last three syllables fall on RE – DO – DO/TI.

If only one accented syllable follows, the last two syllables fall on RE – DO/TI.

D¹ and D¹ are two options for the Re-intonation.

F¹ and F² are identical except that F² has six pitches on last syllable where F¹ has one pitch.

In either case (F¹ or F²), the Termination or Final Cadence begins on the second-last accented syllable.

In either case (F¹ or F²), the parenthetical pitches DO and TI are used if there are two unaccented syllables after the accented syllable, but these parenthetical pitches are not used if there is only one unaccented syllable after the accented syllable.

Mode VI

The blank measure between B and C is included to indicate that there is not a SO pitch before the TI-flat, as there is in the modern (uncorrected) chant books.

B and B* are unique to Mode VI. This mode is unique in not having a Re-intonation (hence the blank measure at D), and the second line of the psalm verse is sung to a new Tenor or Reciting Tone (B*). This second line of the psalm verse, if it is lengthy, may be broken up with any one of, or any combination of, (E) or (E*) or (E).

F¹ and F² are identical except that F² has four pitches on last syllable where F¹ has one pitch.

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Mode VII

C is treated like C in Mode I above.

F¹ and F² both begin with a quilisma-pes on the fifth-last syllable, without respect to accentuation. F² has two possible endings for the last syllable.

There are three possible Terminations or Final Cadences: F¹ with clivis on last syllable; F² with porrectus on last syllable; or F² with tractulus on last syllable.

Mode VIII

F¹ and F² differ in that F² has six pitches on the last syllable where F¹ has one pitch.

F¹ always begins on the fifth-last syllable, and always ends with SO on the last syllable. The two variants of F¹ have on the second-last syllable either a virga or a clivis.

F² always begins on the fifth-last syllable, and like the first variant of F¹, has a virga on the second-last syllable.

How to select from the options in a given mode:

For the introit of the Mass, the early neumes of the Graduale Triplex generally indicate which option is used by the Saint Gall scribe (usually from Einsiedeln).

For the Communio, no psalm verses are given in the Graduale Triplex. When, after the psalm verses listed in GT, the Differentia is given (Differentia = Termination or Final Cadence), this Termination or Final Cadence should be used. The Differentia given in GT indicates the final pitch of the Termination, and the correct Termination can be found on p 822 with the Gloria Patri tones. (These tones may be corrected from SG 381). Note that some Terminations in GT are not found in SG 381, and some Terminations in SG 381 are not found in GT. One may decide in such cases which Termination is preferred. In all other cases, one is free to select the termination which best leads back to the beginning of the antiphon.

One might note (and take consolation in the fact) that the scribe of ms. SG 381 took considerable freedom in adapting the formula to his text, and he wasn't always consistent. In the case of brief psalm texts, he felt free to slur together individual pitches of the formula to make it fit the text.