

Musical Equivalence Matching Game

Suitable for a variety of topics. For one player or a group of players. The version presented here was used for a fourth semester music theory course that incorporated orchestration and arranging.

Game by Frank Nawrot, 2025

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- **Card decks** which contain 11 sets of 4 equivalent musical things and a set of 4 example cards, for a total of 48 cards. All decks must be shuffled.
 - Please note, decks could contain any number of sets and any number of equivalent musical pairs greater than two.
- An answer key for the instructor that contains all correct sets.

DESCRIPTION

A matching game for musical things which are equivalent in some manner. The object of the game is to match 11 Sets of 4 things which are essentially equivalent. E.g., A $\flat$ 7, Gr+6 in the key of C, V7 in the key of D $\flat$, and V7/V in the key of G $\flat$ are enharmonically equivalent.

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Distribute Materials:** Give each student or student group one complete card deck. Each deck should contain 48 cards: 11 sets of 4 musically equivalent items and 1 set of 4 example cards. Students should not look through their decks until instructed.
Demonstrate with Example Set: As a class, locate the four *example cards* in each deck (these are: "Sounds like Sea," "I chord in the key of C," "Letter that comes after B," and "C"). Work together to match these four cards and explain why they belong in a set. This serves as a demonstration of how the game works. Afterward, all players must remove these four cards from their decks and set them aside—they are *not* part of the game.
2. **Begin Gameplay:** Students now search their decks to identify and group sets of four cards that represent musically equivalent items. These equivalences may be based on pitch content, function, labeling, or another shared theoretical basis.
3. **Submit and Explain a Set:** When a student believes they have found a valid set, they must raise their hand to signal the instructor. Everyone must pause while the student explains aloud to the class and instructor how the four cards in their proposed set are equivalent.
4. **Evaluate the Set**

- If the instructor confirms that the four cards form a correct set, the student earns 1 point. The instructor then collects those four cards from every student's deck to prevent duplicate sets.
 - If the set is incorrect, the cards are returned to the student, and no points are awarded. In both cases, gameplay resumes immediately after the check.
5. **End of Game:** The game ends when either (a) all 11 correct sets have been found and collected, or (b) the instructor announces that time is up.
 6. **Determine the Winner:** The student with the most correct sets (i.e., the highest number of points) at the end of the game is the winner.

CONSIDERATIONS

- This game facilitates active learning by requiring students to analyze musical concepts and determine their underlying equivalence, rather than relying on surface features. The requirement to justify each set aloud fosters precision in language and reinforces theoretical understanding through peer and instructor feedback. Its competitive, time-bound format also motivates students to think carefully and efficiently under pressure.
- If you teach at an institution with an office for accessibility services, reach out to them for assistance with creating decks for students with visual impairments.
- Rather than using a physical card deck, instructors can use web-based card decks or printed spreadsheets. This will alter how to track complete sets. For example, for printed spreadsheets, students could simply cross off items that are used in successfully constructed sets.
- Checking each proposed set has the potential to become time-consuming and slow down the pace of the game, reducing engagement.

LINKS TO MATERIALS

- https://franknawrot.com/wp-admin/Identity_Crisis_puzzle.html
 - The web-based version of the game used for the aforementioned fourth semester theory course.