

# Guidance for digital Performance Grades

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# 1. Introduction

Our Performance Grades ([www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades)) are assessed remotely, by a member of our highly-trained examiner panel, using a video recording of the candidate's performance. This document provides detailed guidance on the procedures you need to follow when booking, recording and submitting a remotely-assessed exam.

In addition to this guidance it is important that you also read following:

- Qualification Specification (syllabus) available at: [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades)
- Exam Regulations available at: [www.abrsm.org/examregulations](http://www.abrsm.org/examregulations)

## Definitions

Applicant:	Anyone who is 18 or over and submits a booking for an ABRSM exam (often the school, music teacher, parent of a candidate or the candidate, if they are 18 or over).
Candidate:	The person taking the exam. Where a candidate is 18 or over and books their own exam, they will also be the applicant.
Contact ID:	Everyone using our online booking service is given a unique Contact ID that allows us to identify individuals in our system. A Candidate's Contact ID is also used on submitted materials.
Responsible adult:	The person who will oversee the exam for candidates under 18. The responsible adult must be aged 18 or over and may be the applicant, teacher or parent/carer.

## 2. Assessment requirements

For candidates taking a digital Performance Grade exam, we require the following:

1. A video recording, which includes:
  - a continuous, unedited, performance of the four pieces/songs
  - a completed programme form shown to the camera before the performance begins
  - the opening of the own-choice piece/song shown to the camera before the performance begins, so that the examiner can see what the music is
  - announcements to the camera before the performance begins
  - candidate photo identification shown to the camera before the performance begins – for candidates taking Grades 6, 7 or 8 only (see below)
2. A declaration completed during the upload process by the candidate or responsible adult (where the candidate is under 18).

## Candidate photo identification

Candidates taking Grade 6, 7 or 8 must show a form of photographic identification to the camera at the start of the exam. We ask for photo ID because these qualifications can be used as a prerequisite for higher grades and diplomas and as part of a university application. See our Candidate Identification Policy ([www.abrsm.org/policies](http://www.abrsm.org/policies)).

## Exam location

The candidate can choose where the exam performance takes place. This can be the candidate's school, home, their teacher's studio, or any other location where appropriate space and instruments are available (including a suitable piano for any accompaniments).

## Booking and submitting an exam

Visit our website 'how to book' page for booking guidance - [www.abrsm.org/en/exam-booking/how-to-book](http://www.abrsm.org/en/exam-booking/how-to-book)

Once you've booked an exam, you have 28 days to submit the exam video. You must do this by the date and time given in your exam booking.

It is not possible to submit a video after the submission deadline (date/time). If we do not receive a submission the candidate will be marked as absent.

A candidate who is marked as absent may be eligible for a partial refund under certain circumstances. See our Withdrawals, Non-attendance and Fee Refund Policy for details: [www.abrsm.org/en/policies/withdrawals-non-attendance-and-fee-refund-policy](http://www.abrsm.org/en/policies/withdrawals-non-attendance-and-fee-refund-policy)

# 3. Recording the exam

## Exam date

Candidates can choose when to record their exam performance.

## Instructions for the responsible adult (where applicable)

The responsible adult oversees the exam for candidates under 18.

If you take on this role you must:

- read this guidance before the exam recording takes place and make sure all requirements are followed
- stay in the exam room for the whole exam
- make sure that the exam is recorded in one continuous take – with no pauses or stopping in the recording
- be present when the applicant of candidate uploads the exam video, as you will need to complete a declaration form

The responsible adult can also:

- act as page-turner
- provide accompaniment
- help with the video recording device
- carry out any of the pre-performance procedures that must be filmed, except showing the candidate's photo ID

## Video recording

### Recording overview

Record the exam as one continuous audio-visual file. Once recording has started, the candidate should:

1. Make their announcements
2. Show their documents to camera
3. Perform all their repertoire in one continuous take

You can find full instructions for recording the exam below.

You don't need to record tuning up before the exam. However, any re-tuning or break during the performance must be included as part of the continuous recording. See the syllabus for further details: [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades)

Do not edit the recording in any way after the exam.

### Video resolution

Most modern smartphones, tablets and laptops will be suitable for the video recording of the exam.

Before recording, set the camera resolution to 720p. A lower resolution (e.g. 480p) may produce an unclear, grainy picture and higher resolutions are likely to result in files that are too large to upload.

You can change the video resolution in the device settings.

- **iOS devices**  
Go to:
  - Settings
  - Camera
  - Record video
  - Select 720p HD at 30fps
- **Android devices**  
(Due to the number of different Android devices routes to camera settings may vary.)
  - Open the Camera
  - Select 'settings' and 'video size'
  - Select the three dots
  - Select 'settings' and 'video quality/video resolution'
  - Set this to 720p

### Camera selection

Most smartphones and tablets have one main rear-facing camera and a lower-resolution front-facing camera for self-portrait and video chat.

Before recording, make sure that the mirror image option is not selected in your camera settings to avoid the video being in reverse.

### **Camera position**

You can use landscape or portrait view. The camera should be static with candidate, instrument and music stand (if used) clearly in view.

The candidate's face (either facing the camera or in profile) should be visible throughout the performance. Accompanists (if used) should also be in view. However, the candidate should be the main focus if viewing both is not possible. It is also important for the examiner to be able to hear the candidate and any accompaniment in appropriate balance.

Keyboard instruments – the whole of the keyboard(s) should be visible and, where applicable and possible, the pedals should also be in view.

Percussion - each instrument being played in the exam should be visible throughout (as the camera will be static).

In certain circumstances, for example in Organ exams, the recording device may need to be set at a distance from the candidate in order to secure a balanced sound. In these instances, we understand that a clear picture of, for example, manuals and/or pedal board may not be possible; the candidate must, however, be clearly visible.

### **People present**

If a responsible adult, or any other person not involved in the performance, is in the room they should remain still and silent during the recording and be out of the camera view. They should not disrupt or direct the candidate's performance, or interfere with the recording in any way.

### **Testing and trialling**

Test the recording device and do a trial recording before the exam – to make sure the recording will be of good quality, with clear, undistorted sound and vision. Other things to check include, suitable lighting levels, camera position and the legibility of the written programme form on screen (see below).

Before recording, check that audible or distracting notifications are disabled on the device, that it is charged and has enough storage space.

The recording must be of a good enough quality to allow assessment of all aspects of the performance, including tone quality and dynamic range. Examiners mark based on what they hear and see and cannot take poor quality recording into account.

### **File format and size**

Recordings must be in one of the following formats: MP4, WMV, MOV or MPG. The file size must not be more than 2GB.

If the resolution of the video is too high, the file may be too large or slow to upload. In these circumstances, you can compress the file so that it uploads successfully. (See 'After recording' below.)

## At the start of the recording

### Show the programme form to the camera

Candidates should complete a programme form and show it to the camera at the start of the recording for approximately 5 seconds. The responsible adult can show this to the camera if preferred.

The programme form must include the following information, in the order the pieces/songs will be performed:

- Full piece/song information – title and larger work title, movement/ section and catalogue number (e.g. Opus, BWV etc.) if applicable
- Composer
- List and number (e.g. A3) for the three pieces/songs chosen from the syllabus repertoire lists
- List and number for the own-choice piece/song if this is from the syllabus repertoire lists
- If the own-choice repertoire is not from the syllabus repertoire lists, include the following:
  - Name of the arranger/transcriber, where applicable
  - Details of the score used:
    - publication title and publisher, if a print publication
    - publication title, publisher and/or website information, if an online publication
    - if the piece/song is an unpublished composition or arrangement
- Syllabus year(s) that pieces/songs have been chosen from, for example '2021 & 2022' or 'from xxxx'
- Any related instrument(s) to be used, if applicable

Blank forms to print and complete are available at:

[www.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/performancegrades/key-information](http://www.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/performancegrades/key-information)

Choose from portrait or landscape, to match the set-up of your recording device.

Alternatively, you can write the information on a blank piece of paper.

### Show the opening of the own-choice music to the camera

The candidate or responsible adult must also show the opening of the own-choice piece/song to the camera with the following visible:

- Title
- Opening clef(s), key and time signature, tempo marking and other performance indications
- A few lines of music from the beginning of the piece/song

### Make the announcement

The candidate or responsible adult should announce the following information before beginning their performance:

- The candidate's name
- Exam subject (instrument)
- Grade
- Title, composer and list information (where applicable) for each piece/song, in the order they will be performed

### Show the candidate photo identification – Grades 6, 7 and 8

Candidates taking Grade 6, 7 or 8 must show their photo ID to the camera at the beginning of the exam. They must do this themselves with their face in full view of the camera.

## After recording

### File names

Your file name must only include letters, numbers, underscores (\_) or dashes (-). If it includes spaces or any other characters it will not be accepted.

It must not be blank as we cannot process and assess files without a name

### Compressing videos

If you have a large video file and/or slow broadband speed, you may want to compress the file to reduce the video upload time. This reduces the file size while maintaining the quality and ratio of the audio and video.

For high grade exams videos are likely to be 20-30 minutes long. Even set on 720p HD video at 30 fps, a 30-minute video may be up to 1 GB. In such instances we recommend you compress your video so that it uploads more quickly.

Before you upload a compressed video, always watch the whole recording to make sure you are happy with how it looks and sounds.

There are various free (third-party) internet sites that can help with video compression. Here are some examples:

Free compression software: <https://www.freeconvert.com/video-compressor>

- Upload your video and click compress (using the site default settings)
- Let the site run its processes
- Download the compressed file back to your computer.

Downloadable software (rather than an online convertor): <https://handbrake.fr>

- A free program that can compress any video files and works on all platforms

We do not endorse particular products and recommend that you make your own choices when using third-party software. There are many other options available.

## 4. Submitting the video recording and declarations

The candidate or applicant can upload the video recording via their ABRSM account as soon as the exam has been booked. They have 28 days to do this from the date the booking was made. The upload function will only be available during this time. Please leave plenty of time to upload the video in case there are any problems.

When you are ready:

- Log in to your account
- Select 'submit recordings'
- Select the candidate and start the upload process

You will only be able to submit your recording once, so make sure the file you are selecting is the correct one.

## **Declaration**

A declaration must be completed to confirm that the recording was made in accordance with our Exam Regulations (see Appendix 1).

If the candidate is under 18, this declaration must be made by the responsible adult who was present during the recording, so the responsible adult must also be present when the video is uploaded.

## **Loss of internet connection**

If you lose your internet connection while the video is uploading, the upload will automatically pause and then resume when the connection returns. If the internet connection is lost for 30 minutes or more, then the upload will stop completely and you will see the following error message: 'There has been an error with your video upload. Please try again.'

## **Use of the video recording**

We keep Performance Grade exam videos for 120 days after upload. We then destroy them.

The recording of the exam is made for the sole purpose of ABRSM's assessment and must not be shared or used for any other purpose. During recording and submission only, you are allowed to share the recording with anyone directly involved with the exam, such as the applicant or teacher.

You must not share the recording with any other person or upload it to file sharing or social media websites such as Facebook or YouTube. Sharing the recording may also risk infringing the rights of composers and/or their publishers, for which the candidate could be liable.

If the exam recording is shared with anyone other than ABRSM (for assessment purposes) or the people directly involved with the exam (as outlined above), the candidate may be disqualified.

You can only submit a recording as evidence for a qualification once. If you try to submit a previously submitted video a second time (for any qualification) we will not accept or assess the recording and the candidate will be disqualified from the second assessment.

## **Status of the video recording (for data protection purposes)**

A video recording of an exam has the status of an exam script and is therefore exempt from subject access requests made under data protection law. However, candidates are allowed to keep a copy of their video recording after submitting it to ABRSM.

# 5. Appendices

## Appendix 1: Declaration content

### Candidates over 18

The screenshot shows the ABRSM website's declaration page for candidates over 18. The header includes the ABRSM logo and navigation links: DASHBOARD, PUBLIC VENUE BOOKING, PRIVATE VISIT, SUBMIT RECORDINGS, and ALTO. A breadcrumb trail reads: Log in or register -> Select exam -> Declaration -> Upload recording -> Confirmation. The main heading is "Declaration". Below it, a note states: "This should be completed by the person submitting the recording. If a candidate is under 18, this must be a responsible adult. See our [website](#) for a definition of 'responsible adult'". The candidate information is "Candidate: Definitely Over18, Baritone Performance Grade 4". A checkbox is labeled "By ticking this box, I confirm the following: \*". To the right, a text box is labeled "For safeguarding and security purposes, please list everyone present in the room during the recording of the exam and their reason for being present". The confirmation list includes: "the video being submitted is the work of the candidate named above", "the exam was conducted under the [conditions specified](#) by ABRSM", and "the video of the exam will not be shared with any other person, or uploaded to any file sharing or social media website, such as Facebook or YouTube". At the bottom, there are "Back" and "Upload recording" buttons.

### Candidates under 18

The screenshot shows the ABRSM website's declaration page for candidates under 18. The header and navigation are identical to the previous page. The breadcrumb trail is: Log in or register -> Select exam -> Declaration -> Upload recording -> Confirmation. The main heading is "Declaration". Below it, a note states: "This should be completed by the person submitting the recording. If a candidate is under 18, this must be a responsible adult. See our [website](#) for a definition of 'responsible adult'". The candidate information is "Candidate: Eve Mulcahy3, Piano Performance Grade 1". A checkbox is labeled "By ticking this box, I confirm the following: \*". To the right, a text box is labeled "For safeguarding and security purposes, please list everyone present in the room during the recording of the exam and their reason for being present". The confirmation list includes: "the video being submitted is the work of the candidate named above", "the exam was conducted under the [conditions specified](#) by ABRSM", and "the video of the exam will not be shared with any other person, or uploaded to any file sharing or social media website, such as Facebook or YouTube". Below this, there are two additional text boxes: "Name of responsible adult \*" and "Relationship to candidate \*". At the bottom, there are "Back" and "Upload recording" buttons.