

“Ordinary” Temperament Strategy

Bradley Lehman, © 2013

Reference pitch

Ideally, this should be C, or a second choice of F. The use of A as a reference is both less historically sound, and more problematic in practice.

Go through the compositions for the entire performance.
Assess the named notes that are required.
List the naturals, sharps, and flats separately: for example, if the composition needs both F-natural and E-sharp, these are two different notes.

Although other instruments will not be matching the keyboard's placement of every note exactly, some attempt should be made in tuning the keyboard to accommodate the schemes of the other instruments that will be played with it. Other instruments do not play "in temperaments".

1/4 comma or 1/5 comma in the naturals might work OK.

Will the keyboard be played with other instruments, especially fretted or unfretted string instruments?

Lean toward 1/6 comma in the naturals, rather than 1/4 comma. 1/4 comma may be too tight for the fretted instruments, especially.

1/4 comma or 1/5 comma in the naturals might work OK.

Does the music have many major 10ths or 17ths above the bass, where the bass note has a flat?

Lean toward 1/6 comma in the naturals, rather than 1/4 comma. The differences between sharps and flats will be less severe, and easier to handle gracefully.

1/4 comma or 1/5 comma in the naturals might work OK.

Do the keys for the entire performance stay near D minor, G minor, F major, C major, and G major?

Lean toward 1/6 comma in the naturals, rather than 1/4 comma.

Reset naturals

The core of a temperament is the set of naturals C-G-D-A-E, tuned "regularly" with the same amount of slight narrowing each. The above questions, and other musical experience, have helped to determine what that regular size ought to be: somewhere in the range of 1/4 to 1/6 comma, or occasionally as lightly as 1/8 comma.

This is a continuum of tasteful adjustment, not necessarily hitting any given comma size exactly.

There is no expectation yet that Eb and G# will connect with one another, or ever be used together.

By default, the remaining notes are generated with the same regular size that was used in the core naturals. C-F-Bb-Eb and E-B-F#-C#-G#.

Adjustments



