

# Using the Solfege Plugin in Sibelius

*Bob Zawalich updated February 26, 2022*

The *Solfege* plugin adds names to selected notes based on the position of the notes within a major scale.

The plugin allows you to specify which pitch is the root of the major scale (the "1" pitch), and specify a set of syllables to be applied to the lowered, natural, and raised version of each of the 7 pitches in the major scale. This is known as a "Moveable Do" system.

You can choose different text styles to put the names above or below the notes, and to use different fonts.

Solfège - Version 01.09.40 - by Bob Zawalich

This plugin adds names to selected notes. The names come from lists of Solfège systems that provide syllables to be used for the lowered, natural, and raised forms of the seven scale positions of a major scale.

The plugin provides a "movable-do" mechanism, where you specify the pitch to be used for degree 1 of the scale. By default it assigns "1" to the root of the scale used at the start of the selection, based on the key signature.

You can edit the Solfège systems, and create new ones, and these are retained across Sibelius sessions.

Solfège system	Lowered	Normal	Raised
La Minor	1 De	Do	Di
<b>Moveable Do</b>	2 Ra	Re	Ri
Moveable Do Lower	3 Me	Mi	Ma
Roman Lower	4 Fe	Fa	Fi
Roman Upper	5 Se	So	Si
Sargam	6 Le	La	Li
Sargam Single	7 Te	Ti	To
Scale Positions			

Edit/Add Systems...

Match "1" to major scale:  Add names to voice:  Text style for solfège syllables (type or choose from list):

☒ Use written pitch  
☒ Only write top note of chords  
☐ Respell pitches not found in solfege system

☐ Create Lyric syllables if a Lyric style is used

For example, if you have a C major scale, set the "1" pitch to be C, use Technique text style, and choose the "Moveable Do" system, you will see:



If you have G major, and use the "Scale Positions" system and the Lyrics text style, you should see:



If you choose a system in the Solfege system list, you will see the syllables assigned to each pitch to the right of the list. You can change the syllables used in any system with the Edit/Add Systems button.

Solfège system

- La Minor
- Moveable Do
- Moveable Do Lower
- Roman Lower
- Roman Upper
- Sargam
- Sargam Single
- Scale Positions

	Lowered	Normal	Raised
1	De	Do	Di
2	Ra	Re	Ri
3	Me	Mi	Ma
4	Fe	Fa	Fi
5	Se	So	Si
6	Le	La	Li
7	Te	Ti	To

Edit/Add Systems...

## Changing keys

When the main dialog first comes up, it looks at the first key signature in the selection, treats it as a major scale (even if it is marked as being minor), and sets the root of the scale as the "1" pitch. You can change to a different major scale root if you wish.

If the key signature changes during the selection, the plugin will take the new major scale root to be the "1" pitch until another key signature is encountered.

If you originally chose something other than the scale root and changed keys and came back to the original key, the plugin will not restore your original choice, but will use the root according to the key signature (as a major scale).

If there are modulations within the selection, be careful to check that you are getting what you want. You may want to limit the selection to a single key.

## Minor keys and modes

Since the "minor" setting of key signatures is often not used in Sibelius scores (e.g., scores in A minor are often given a C major key signature), the plugin always treats a key signature as if it were the major key for consistency.

If you really want to process a natural minor key, the way to do it is to define a solfege system that puts Do on the 6<sup>th</sup> step of the scale (and thus Mi is on the first step). The included La Minor system works this way.

You can do the same thing for other modes as well. For Dorian, put Do on the second step, and Ti on the first, and so on.

## Respelling pitches not found in solfege system

The plugin's solfege systems define syllables for the lowered, normal and raised pitch for each of the 7 scale steps. So for C major, Cb, C, and C# are defined. For Eb major, Ebb, Eb, and E are defined.

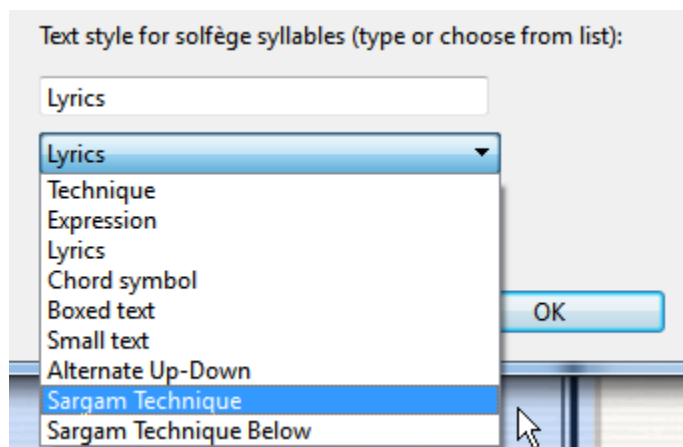
Each pitch can have 5 accidentals (bb, b, natural, #, x), so there are 35 total valid pitches, and 14 are not in the system.

So if you encounter a Cbb in C major, it is not defined in the solfege system.

By default, the **Respell** checkbox is unchecked, and such pitches will not have syllables added to them. If you want to have these mapped to a pitch, check the box, and Cbb will be remapped to a pitch in the system (it could be Bb or A#, and it may not really make sense within the system, so only use this option if you really need it).

## Text Styles

You can choose different text styles to change the position and formatting of the added syllables. The list box contains a set of standard (built-in) text styles plugin and text styles that come from text objects contained in the current score.



The list also contains a special style, *Alternate Up-Down*, which uses Technique style for the first note and Lyrics for the second, and then alternates. Technique is the default, and it puts the syllables above the notes. Expressions (italic) and Lyrics go below the staff.

"Sargam Technique" is in my list above because the score I am using has text objects that use that style. Just having the style defined in the score (as when you have imported a house style) will not put it in the list. You need to add a text object (even a temporary one) that uses the style to get it into the text styles list.

**You can also type in a text style name;** it must be defined in the current score, though it does not need to be used in the score, and it must be spelled exactly as it is defined, in the same case ("Technique" would work, but not "technique"). **If you type in your own style name it must be in the current language (i.e, French or German) that you are using.** The built-in names in the list box will always be in English but they are translated internally, so they should work in any language.

You can define your own text styles that use special characters, such as Hindustani characters for Sargam notation. If you do this, you must have any special fonts installed, the text style that uses the font must be defined in the current score, and you need to define your own solfege system that uses those characters.

## Lyrics

In Sibelius, *Text* objects and *Lyric* objects are different. Lyrics have a duration, handle hyphens, have extenders, and other properties that normal Text objects do not have.

If you use choose a Lyrics text style, the plugin will usually still create Text objects, and only use the Text Style to change the text vertical position to be below the staff. If you check "Create Lyric syllables if a Lyric style is used", then the plugin will create Lyric objects for the Solfege syllables.

One use for this is to be able to export a MusicXML file to another program that can sing lyrics (such as the *Virtual Singer* used by *Harmony Assistant* – see <https://www.myriad-online.com/en/products/virtualsinger.htm>). In such a case, the Solfege symbols need to be recognizable as Lyrics.

Text style for solfège syllables (type or choose from list):

Lyrics line 2

Lyrics line 2 ▼

☒ Create Lyric syllables if a Lyric style is used

## Defining your own Solfege systems

You can edit a solfege system to use different syllables (you may prefer Si to Ti, for example), and you can also define your own system. These edits and definitions will be retained across Sibelius sessions, and it is also possible to share your custom systems with other users.

To change an existing system or make a new one based on an existing system (or to just make a totally new system), choose a system from the Solfege Systems list and choose Edit/Add Systems....

The Edit dialog will come up. You can choose the system you started with or a different one. The syllables and the name for the chosen system appear in edit boxes to the right of the list box.

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**Solfège**

Click on a Solfège system to edit it. If you keep the same system name, the existing entry will change. Choose a new name to create a new system. The New System button will clear all the edit boxes.

Add syllables for lowered, normal, and raised scale steps. Choose Save to save changes.

There are some special formatting commands.

- \* To underline an entry, precede the entry with an underscore ( \_ ) character, which will be removed and replaced with underlining of the following text.
- \* To use formatted accidentals, use "\b" for a flat, and "\#" for a sharp.
- \* Do not mix the underscore and accidental formatting characters in the same field, as they cancel each other out.

You can write a text file containing all your settings, or read in such a file from another source, by choosing "Import / Export..."

**Solfège systems**

- La Minor
- Moveable Do
- Moveable Do Lower
- Roman Lower
- Roman Upper
- Sargam
- Sargam Single
- Scale Positions**

	Lowered	Normal	Raised
1	\b1	1	\#1
2	\b2	2	\#2
3	\b3	3	\#3
4	\b4	4	\#4
5	\b5	5	\#5
6	\b6	6	\#6
7	\b7	7	\#7

System name: Scale Positions

Delete selected system    New System

Import/Export...    Cancel    Save

Type in any syllables you want to change. You can leave some blank, in which case no syllable is added to the corresponding pitch. If you precede the syllable with an underscore, the syllable will be underlined. \b and \# will be converted to formatted flat and sharp characters, assuming that these characters are present in the font used by the active text style.

The *New System* button will set all the edit boxes blanks, so you can start from scratch.

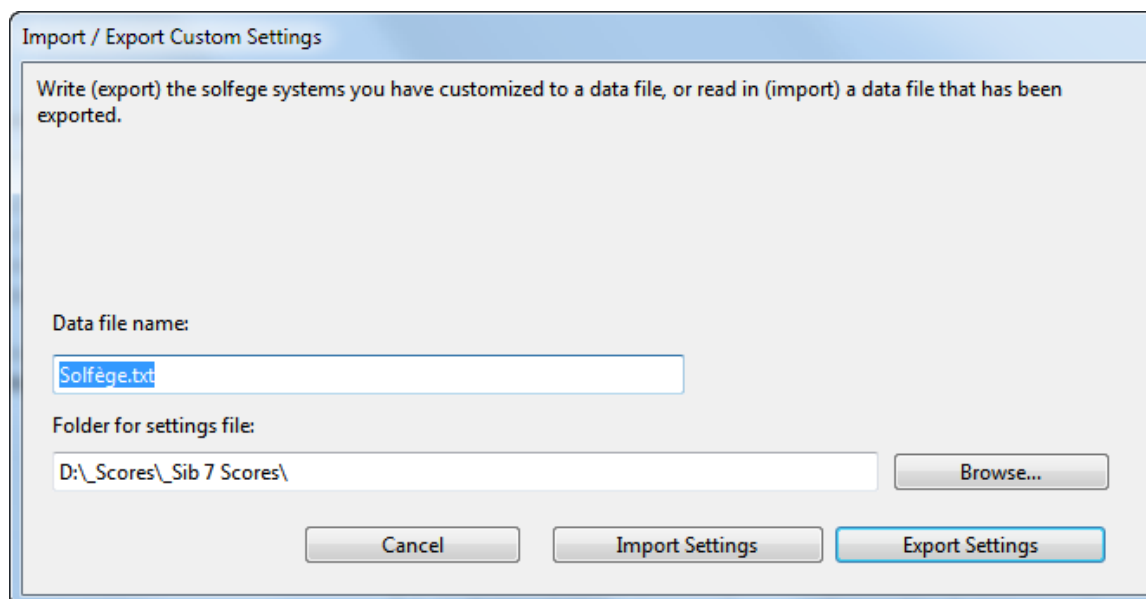
If you change syllables and leave the *System name* unchanged, the existing system is edited. If you change the *System name*, a new system will be added to the bottom of the system list.

## Deleting systems

Select a Solfege system and click on Delete selected system to delete it. This will remove all traces of the system, so be sure before you do this. Do not delete the supplied systems unless you really never want to use them, as it is possible, but tricky, to restore the original settings (using the *Preferences* plugin). Deleted systems will not delete systems on another machine if you Export and Import a system set that has deleted systems.

## Importing and Exporting systems

If you have defined custom systems and you want to share them or move them to another machine, use the Import/Export button. This will let you create a text file containing the system definitions. Keep track of where the file is written, and copy it to another machine. Now bring up the Import/Export dialog, type in the file name, and choose Import Settings. Any added systems in the import file should appear in the current list of solfege systems.



The dialog box is titled "Import / Export Custom Settings". It contains a text area with the instruction: "Write (export) the solfege systems you have customized to a data file, or read in (import) a data file that has been exported." Below this, there are two input fields. The first is labeled "Data file name:" and contains the text "Solfège.txt". The second is labeled "Folder for settings file:" and contains the text "D:\\_Scores\\_Sib 7 Scores\". To the right of the second input field is a "Browse..." button. At the bottom of the dialog, there are three buttons: "Cancel", "Import Settings", and "Export Settings". The "Export Settings" button is highlighted with a blue border.