The Psalterium Monasticum
universally pointed

To explain how the universal pointing system works, we will use psalm 109, as people will be familiar with it.

Dixit Dóminus **Dô**mino **me**o : * Sede *a* **dêx**tris **me**is.
Donec ponam inî**mi**cos **tu**os * scabellum *PE*dûm tu**o**rum.
Virgam virtútis tuæ emíttet Dómî**nus** ex **Si**on : * domináre in médio inimi*CO*rûm tu**o**rum.
Tecum princípium in die virtútis tuæ in splendórî**bus** sanct**o**rum : * ex útero ante lucífe*rum* **gê**nu**i** te.
Jurávit Dóminus, et non pœnî**te**bit **e**um : * Tu es Sacérdos in ætérnum secúndum ór*di***nem**
Mêl**chi**sedech.
Dóminus â **dex**tris **tu**is, * confrégit in die *iræ* **sûæ** **re**ges.
Judicábit in nationibus im**plê**bit ru**i**nas : * conquassábit cápita in *TER*râ mul**tor**um.
De torrénte în **via** **bi***bet : * proptérea ex*a*l**tâ**bit **ca**put.

In the psalm there are four different markings. There are things in **bold**, in *italics*, *UPPERCASE* italics, and a circumflex (^). The combination of these is the universal pointing system.

Psalm 109 above is pointed to be sung with every mode and every ending. Once you recognise the system, you will be able to move through every mode and every ending without reference to any other book. The only thing you will need at the beginning is the tone sheet.

You can see that each verse is divided into two separated by an asterisk *. These correspond to the two pieces of music for each mode on the tone sheet. Each mode (it is called Tonus on the sheet) has one first part (except mode 8 which has two, but the first one is most often used), and a number of different endings. As monks we only have one ending for mode 2, while there are 12 for mode 1! The mode is depicted by a number, and the ending by a letter (or in certain cases a letter and a number, g2, g2 etc.). I am using the term tone for the changes in the ends of the modes.

Singing the psalms is based on the stresses of the words, and changing what you are singing at the end of a phrase. This is called modulation. You modulate the note that you are singing depending on the mode (what it sounds like) and the ending (that version of the mode). The stresses in the first half of the verse are simply shown in **bold**. The final stress is the most important one. Some modes change once (2, 5, 8), and in this case it is always the second **bold** stress that you change on – this is the note with an accent on in the tone sheet. In the case of modes 2, 5, 8, you go up on that **bold** stress. Mode 1 3, and 7 have two changes (on the tone sheet there are two accents) and the first change in on the first **bold** syllable and the second is on the second **bold** syllable. The bit that you sing in between the two changes is shown by the note in between the two accents on the tone sheet.

The other modes are also concerned with the second **bold** stress because that is where they modulate around, but they are different because they change before that stress. For mode 4 you count two before the last bold syllable, and mode 6 you change immediately before the bold syllable.

So what does this look like? Remember we are just looking at the first part of the verse.

Mode 2, 5, and 8:
Dixit Dóminus Dômino **me**o : * - change on the last bold syllable.

Mode 1, 3 and 7
Dixit Dóminus **Dô**mino **me**o : * - change on both bold syllables.

Mode 4
Dixit Dóminus Dô<u>mi</u>no **me**o : * - change two syllables before the bold one (here underlined as <u>mi</u>)

Mode 6
Dixit Dóminus Dômi<u>no</u> **me**o : * - change one syllable before the bold one (here underlined as <u>no</u>)

This may seem complicated but actually if you sing the beginnings of the modes through for the whole of the psalm above, you will get the hang of it very quickly. Universal psalm pointing is not magic, you have to put time in, but once it 'clicks' then you have immediate access to all tones and endings for all the modes.

So if that is the beginning of the verse, what about the ending?

It is based on exactly the same principle, but there are slight changes, because the tone endings are more complicated. But that is what makes singing our psalms so beautiful.

We begin with the stresses. This is shown in the same way as the first part of the verse. So if there are two **bold** syllables, then those are the two stresses in that half of the verse.

Dixit Dóminus **Dô**mino **me**o : * Sede *a* **dêx**tris **me**is – the stresses in the second part of the verse are <u>dex</u> and <u>me</u>.

But you can see that there is also an italic *a*, so what does that mean? Well, it is the pointing system being kind to you, because of mode 4. In mode 4, you modulate around the last stress (the final **bold** syllable) and have to count three syllables before it to begin to change note. Look on the tone sheet to see what it looks like. But to make it easier, the system tells you when that is, so that you do not have to count three while singing! That is the *italic*. So for most of the endings of mode 4, you move, in the second part of the verse, on the *italic*. It makes singing mode 4 much easier! It is not a stress, it is purely for mode 4.

But there are other variations in the second part of the verse. If we look at the second verse of psalm 109:

Donec ponam inî**mi**cos **tu**os * scabellum *PE*dûm tu**o**rum.

In the second part of the verse, there is only one **bold** syllable, and there is an *UPPERCASE* italic. The reason for this is that usually the stresses fall two syllables apart. So in the first verse it is: **dêx**tris **me**is – **dex**, is two syllables before **me**. But Latin is a language and the stresses do not fall where we want them to. So if the stress is not two syllables apart, it is shown as UPPERCASE, and it is in *italics* because that is where we start singing for mode 4. The whole *italic* thing is for mode 4!

The rest of the rules of the second half of the verse are the same as the first.

Some tones are only concerned with the final **bold** syllable, and they have one accent marked on the tone sheet (all of mode 1, 2, 4, 6, 8). But they change usually a couple of syllables before that final **bold** mark. This means that they often change on the other bold mark, but what we are doing is modulating around the final **bold** syllable. In some cases it might look like that it changes on the two **bold** marks, but it is the last one, and two syllables before it. So:

Dixit Dóminus **Dô**mino **me**o : * Sede *a* **dêx**tris **me**is. – change on <u>me</u>, and <u>dex</u>, because <u>dex</u> is two syllables before <u>me</u>. They both happen to be bold.

Donec ponam inî**mi**cos **tu**os * scabellum *PE*dûm tu**o**rum. – change on <u>o</u> and <u>dum</u>, because <u>dum</u> is two syllables before <u>o</u>.

Fopr these modes you have to sing the change in tone not because it is stressed, but because of where is it in relation to the final **bold** stress. This is just the way singing the psalms works. Once you know what the psalms 'sound like', then you will know when you are singing it wrong because the stresses and the modes and tones do not work together if you make a mistake.

This is exactly the same for mode 4 (three syllables before, but always indicated by an *italic*), mode 6 (two syllables before), mode 8 (two syllables before).

As with the beginnings of the verses, for certain modes both stresses are used. This is shown on the tone sheet of the endings where there are two accents. If you look at mode 3, you see there are two accents marked, so that ending changes on the two stresses. For some verses these are the two **bold** syllables, but for others, if there is only one **bold** syllable, then the other one is in UPPERCASE.

That is basically the universal pointing system. Sing through a psalm you know, like 109, for all of the modes and with all of the ending on the tone sheet and after an hour of so, you will understand how it works. It is just practice. It means that you are no longer dependent on a psalm tone generator, or someone else having written that mode with that ending out for you to sing. You can sing anything to any mode and tone.

A note on peregrinus and irregularis. Irregularis is fairly easy. It changes on the second **bold** on the first part, and on the circumflex (^) on the second part. Peregrinus changes on the (^) on the first part and one syllable before the final **bold** on the second part.

Universal pointing key
(by Katrina Edwards)

TONE	First half of psalm (cues are bolding or circumflex): Change from reciting note (modulate) on:	Second half of psalm (cues are bolding, italics, upper case and/or circumflex): Modulate on:
I	Both bolds	**Two syllables before** second bold
II	Second bold	**One syllable before** final bold
III	Both bolds	**Both bolds** or (if only one bold), **upper case and bold**
IV (except endings below)	**Two syllables** before second bold	**Italics** (=3 syllables before bold) OR **Upper case** when one note to ending thereafter
IV g5	**Two syllables** before second bold	**One syllable before** second bold
V	Second bold	**Both bolds** OR (if only one bold), **upper case and bold**
VI	**Syllable before** second bold	**Two syllables before** second bold
VII	Both bolds	**Both bolds** or (if only one bold), **upper case and bold**
VIII	Second bold	**Two syllables before** final bold
Peregrinus	Circumflex	**One syllable before** second bold
Irregularis	Second **bold**	Circumflex