

# READING MUSIC

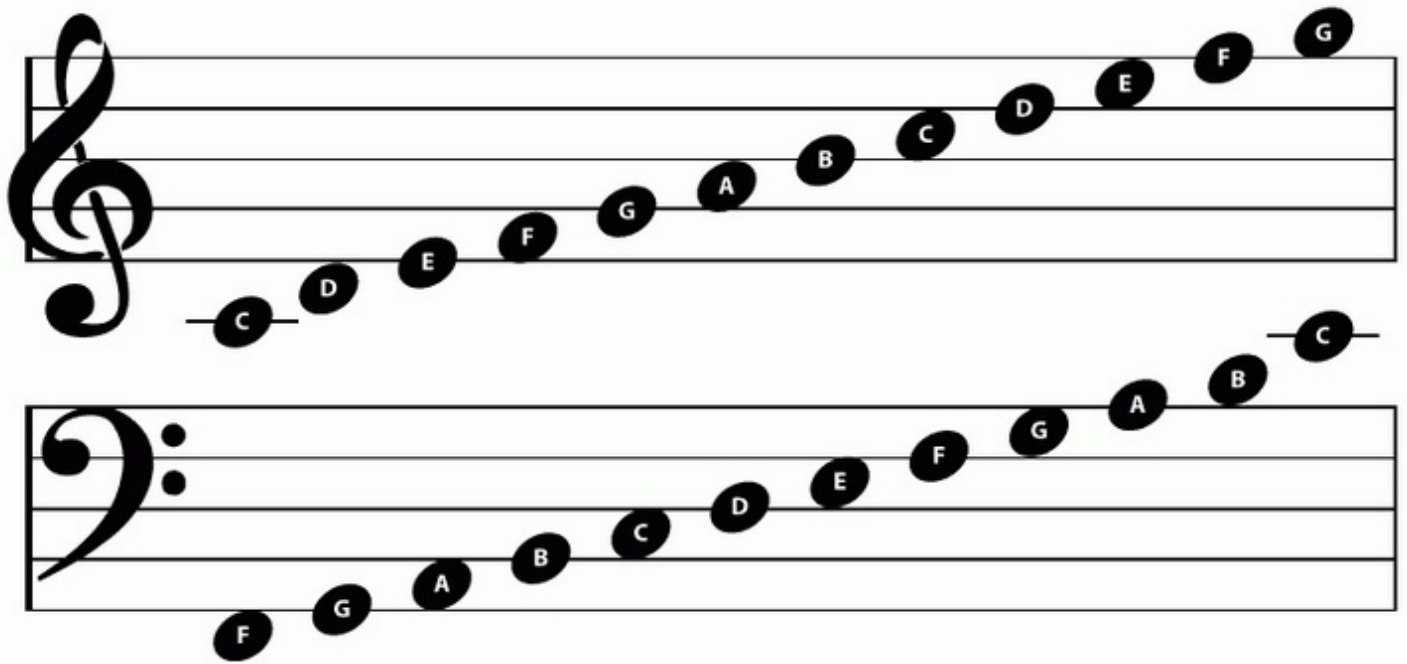
This is a multipage document which will help non musicians gain some basic understanding of standard musical notation, note names and location on the staff, note values, and the more common musical signs and symbols found in sheet music.

If you took music in school, you may have been taught that the musical letter names of the spaces on the "G" clef (looks like a fancy G) are FACE and the lines are Every Good Boy Does Fine. The charts below show those and also the notes above and below the main lines and spaces. For lower range instruments, sometimes music is written on the "F" (looks like a large comma) clef. This clef may also be called the bass clef. The charts below also name the notes on the "F" clef.















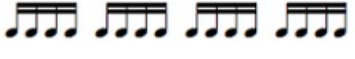
The diagram illustrates the musical notation for two clefs: the treble clef (G-clef) and the bass clef (F-clef). Each clef is shown on a five-line staff. The treble clef is positioned on the first line, and the bass clef is on the fourth line. A red dashed line traces the path of Middle C (C4) across both staves, starting from the first space of the bass clef, moving up to the first line, then across to the first space of the treble clef, and finally up to the second line. The notes on the lines and spaces are listed vertically next to each staff.

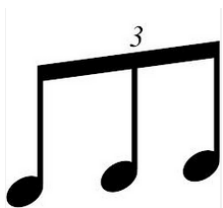
Clef	Line	Space	Line	Space	Line	Space	Line	Space
Treble (G)	1		2		3		4	
		F		G		A		B
		E		D		C		B
		D		C		B		A
		C		B		A		G
Bass (F)	1		2		3		4	
		G		F		E		D
		F		E		D		C
		E		D		C		B
		D		C		B		A

Another way to look at it.

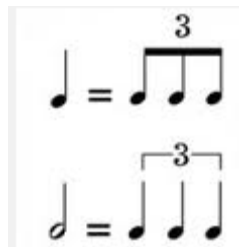


# NOTE & REST CHART

Name	Note	Rest	Beats	$1 \frac{4}{4}$ measure
Whole			4	
Half			2	
Quarter			1	
Eighth			$\frac{1}{2}$	
Sixteenth			$\frac{1}{4}$	



Eighth note triplet



Eighth note triplet and a quarter note triplet

These are examples of a "Triplet." A triplet group's total duration is equal to two of the original note-values contained within. For example, an eighth-note triplet spans two eighth note beats (one quarter-note); a quarter-note triplet spans the length of a half-note; and so on:

These “Dynamic” symbols instruct the musician on the intensity and volume with which to play a passage.

<u>Dynamic Symbols</u>		
<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
<i>ppp</i>	Pianississimo	Very Very Soft
<i>pp</i>	Pianissimo	Very Soft
<i>p</i>	Piano	Soft
<i>mp</i>	Mezzo Piano	Medium Soft
<i>mf</i>	Mezzo Forte	Medium Loud
<i>f</i>	Forte	Loud
<i>ff</i>	Fortissimo	Very Loud
<i>fff</i>	Fortississimo	Very Very Loud
< <i>cresc.</i>	Crescendo	Gradually becoming louder
> <i>decresc.</i>	Decrescendo	Gradually becoming softer
<i>dim</i>	Diminuendo	Gradually becoming softer
<>	Messa di voce	Becoming louder then softer

Knowing the meaning of these musical symbols will help make your playing more accurate and phrased the way the composer or arranger intended.



This is a "Sharp." A sharp tells you to raise a note by a half step.



This is a "FLAT." A flat tells you to lower a note by a half step.



This is an example of a "Key Signature." The key signature tells you which "Key" the piece is written in, how many sharps or flats there are (if any) and what notes are sharped or flatted.

In this example, the key is "D" and the notes that are "sharped" are "C" (3rd space) and "F" (5th line).



This is a "Natural." It tells you to ignore any sharps or flats for that note. Eg if the key signature has 2 sharps (C and F) but in a particular measure the composer wants you to play a C natural and not "sharp" the C, then you will see a natural sign next to that note.



This is an example of a "Time Signature." The top number in the time signature tells you how many beats per measure in the tune. The bottom number tells you which note type gets 1 beat. In this example, there are 4 beats to a measure and a quarter note gets 1 beat.




This is the symbol of "Common Time." Common time is a rhythmic pattern in which there are four beats, esp. four quarter notes, in a measure. It is the equivalent of 4/4 time. This pattern occurs often in classical music and is the norm in rock, jazz, country, and bluegrass.





This is the symbol for "Cut Time." Cut time is essentially half of common time or the equivalent of 2/2.




The Key and Time Signatures work together to give you information you need to play a tune. In this example, "C" and "F" are sharped; there are 3 beats to a measure (common in waltzes) and a quarter note gets 1 beat.

**"Common Time"**  
 Four beats per measure  
 Quarter note gets the beat

**"Cut Time"**  
 Two beats per measure  
 Half note gets the beat

**"Waltz Time"**  
 Three beats per measure  
 Quarter note gets the beat

**"6/8 Time"**  
 Six beats per measure  
 Eighth note gets the beat

More examples of time signatures and their meanings













This symbol is called a "Fermata." It is sometimes also called a "Hold." When you encounter this symbol over a note, you should hold that note for longer than you otherwise would. You hold it for emphasis and emotion. It is up to the player or conductor just how long to hold.



The "Greater Than" sign over this note is called an "Accent." If a note is accented you should play it with extra emphasis.



The "Dot" over this note is a staccato. A note played "Staccato" should sound sharply detached or separated from the others.

ITEM	NOTE	REST	VALUE (number of beats)
Dotted whole note/rest			6
Dotted half note/rest			3
Dotted quarter note/rest			1 1/2
Dotted eighth note/rest			3/4
Dotted sixteenth note/rest			3/8

"Dotted" notes or rests increase the value by another half of the starting note value.

Example: if a quarter note has one beat, then a dotted quarter note has 1 and 1/2 beats.

See examples at left.



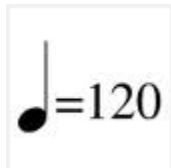
This is a "Segno" or "Sign" or "Dal Segno." Dal segno, often abbreviated D.S., is used as a navigation marker. From Italian for "from the sign," When you see the symbol or D.S. in sheet music, you are instructed to repeat a passage starting from the sign.

or

**D.S.**

D.S. al coda means repeat back to the sign, and when *Al coda* or *To coda* is reached jump to the [coda](#) symbol and play the rest of the piece.

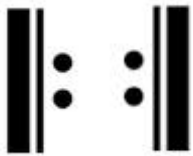
D.S. al fine instructs the musician to repeat back to the sign, and end the piece at the measure marked *fine*. (fine means end)



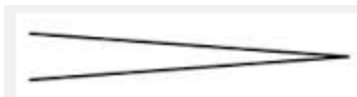
Occasionally you will see a designation like this at the top of a musical score. It indicates the tempo the arranger would like for the piece. It is helpful to set your metronome using this designated tempo. In this example, the desired tempo is quarter note=120. This is a fairly brisk tempo.



These are examples of "Grace Notes." A Grace Note is an extra note added as an embellishment. It is usually played quickly as a lead in to the main note. It is not essential to the harmony or melody and may be omitted.



These are repeat signs. When you see these symbols, you will repeat the notes/measures between the 2 repeat signs.



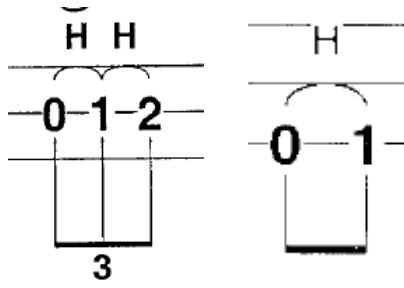
This is a "Decrescendo" symbol. It directs the player to make a gradual decrease in loudness in a piece of music for the notes under the decrescendo.



This is a "Crescendo" symbol. It directs the player to make a gradual increase in loudness in a piece of music for the notes under the crescendo.

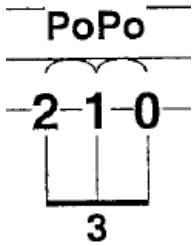


A diamond shaped symbol is the notation for a "Harmonic." A harmonic tone is made by lightly touching a string with the left hand and plucking with the right. The sound is a beautiful bell-like tone.

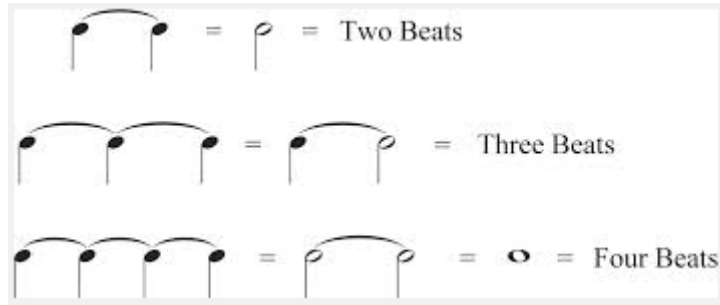


Hammer on and Pull Off. If you see an “H” over a note it is a direction to hammer down on that fret to create the tone without plucking the string.

A “PO” notation is a direction to pull your finger off the fretted string with your left hand. The note that will sound will be an open string if you do not have any other notes fretted on that string or the next note that your finger is fretting.

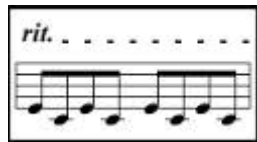


Hammering on and Pulling Off add some interest and embellishment to playing and in cases of very fast music, it is a good way to get in all the notes more quickly.

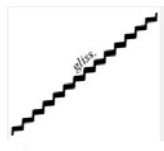
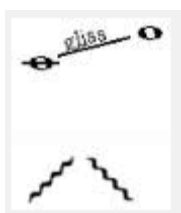


“Tied” notes. When you see a curved mark linking notes together, that is called a “tie.” When a note is tied, it is held for the duration of both notes without strumming, plucking or picking the string a second time.

See examples at left.



Toward the end of a song, you will sometimes see “Rit” or Ritardo.” This is an instruction to slow down this passage. It usually adds interest, drama or beauty to a piece to “ritard” the ending.











“Gliss” or “Glissando”

These straight or squiggly line marks are called a gliss or glissando. A glissando is a glide from one pitch to another. You would slide from one note to another with your left hand or fret a chord and pull down through the strings with your right hand. Do it in a way that there is a little more separation as you pull through the chorded notes than there would be if you simply strummed.







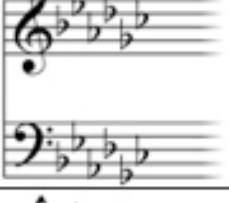





This chart and the one on the next page shows the correlation between key signatures and the musical key. It also notes how many and specifically which notes are “sharped” or “flatted.”

Key Signature	Key	Number of Sharps	Sharp Names
	C Major A Minor	0	None
	G Major E Minor	1	F#
	D Major B Minor	2	F#, C#
	A Major F# Minor	3	F#, C#, G#
	E Major C# Minor	4	F#, C#, G#, D#
	B Major G# Minor	5	F#, C#, G#, D#, A#
	F# Major D# Minor	6	F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, E#
	C# Major A# Minor	7	F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, E#, B#

### Key Signature Chart

Key Signature	Key	Number of Flats	Flat Names
	C Major A Minor	0	None
	F Major D Minor	1	Bb
	Bb Major G Minor	2	Bb, Eb
	Eb Major C Minor	3	Bb, Eb, Ab
	Ab Major F Minor	4	Bb, Eb, Ab, Db
	Db Major Bb Minor	5	Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb
	Gb Major Eb Minor	6	Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb
	Cb Major Ab Minor	7	Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, Fb