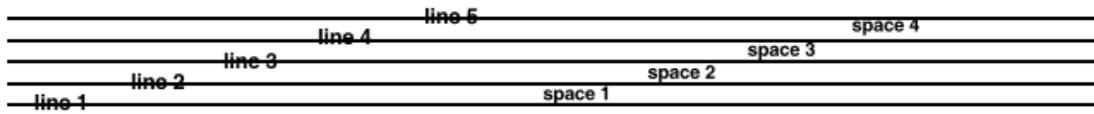


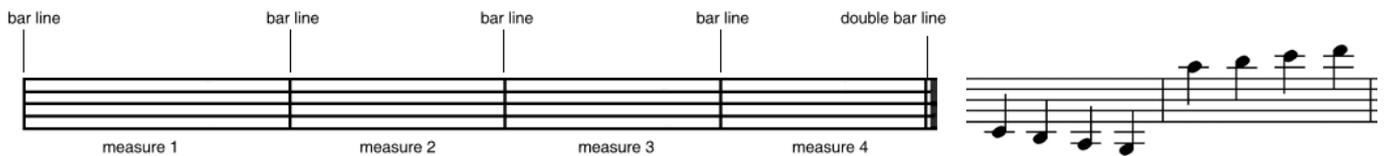
A Basic Guide To Reading Music

Staff

Music is written on a staff comprising of 5 horizontal lines which create four spaces between them. Multiple staves (the plural of staff) are joined together by a vertical line at the left side indicating that the music on all the staves joined by this line are to be sung/played simultaneously

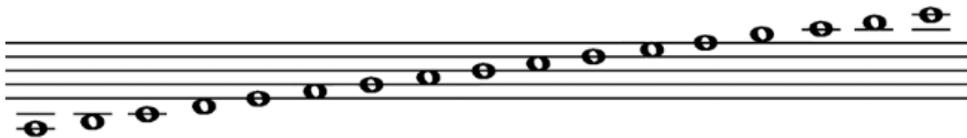


Bar lines are used to split the music up into smaller sections to make it easier to read, double bar lines indicate the end of a section or song, a measure is the area between two bar lines. Notes outside of the standard staff range are annotated with the use of leger lines

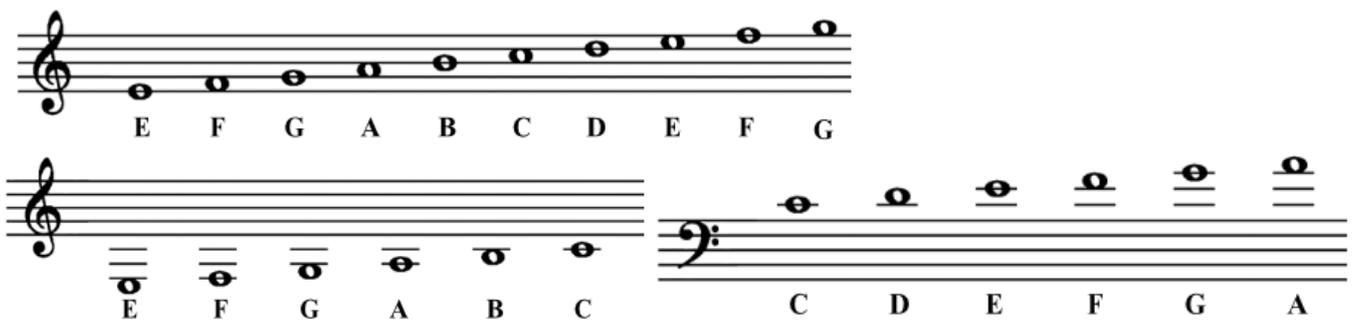


Notes

Notes are placed either in a space or on a line, the higher up the note is placed the higher the note is sung



Each note on a line or space is represented with a letter in the range A to G. These seven letters repeat themselves in sequence above and below a staff. A count of eight notes takes you back to the same note an octave apart.



Clefs

You may have noticed the different symbols at the start of the above two diagrams, these are called clefs



This is a treble clef (Higher Notes) and this is a base clef (Lower Notes)

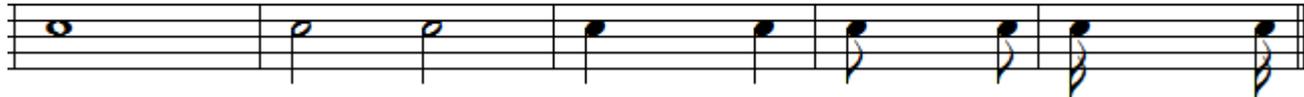
The inner loop of the treble clef circles a line while the loop on the bass clef circles a space

This note is represented as a G where the treble clef G is an octave (8 notes) higher than the base clef G

Note Duration

The shape of a note indicates the length of time a note needs to be held for

Whole Note 4 Beats	Half Note 2 Beats	Quarter Note 1 Beat	Eighth Note 1/2 Beat	Sixteenth Note 1/4 Beat
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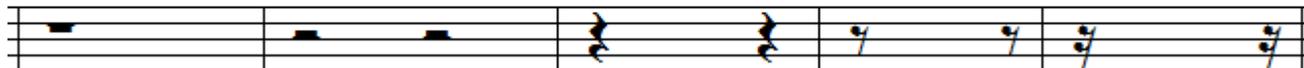
You may see eighth and sixteenth notes tied together within a measure by beams



Eighths are joined with a single beam, Sixteenths are joined with a double beam
The beams do not change the duration of the notes but does make it slightly easier to read

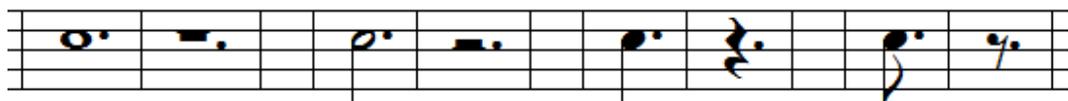
Just as important as the notes are the rests between them, these give you a chance to breathe

Whole Rest 4 Beats	Half Rest 2 Beats	Quarter Rest 1 Beat	Eighth Rest 1/2 Beat	Sixteenth Rest 1/4 Beat
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Seeing Dots

When you see a dot after a note it indicates that the duration of the note is increased by a half of the note value so in the below line it becomes



6 Beats 3 Beats 1 1/2 Beats 3/4 Beat

As you can see the dot values also applies to the rests

Triplets

A triplet is annotated with the number 3 placed above a set of notes and indicates that the 3 notes selected are to be sung in the same duration as it would normally take to sing just two of the notes



(1 + 2) 3 4 (1/2 + 1) 2 3 4

Ties and Slurs

A tie is used to indicate that there is no break between notes of the same pitch across a bar line. A slur indicates that a word or syllable is to be sung over different notes and that the transition between the notes should be more of a glide effect between the notes rather than jumping to each note directly one to the other.

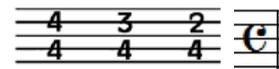


Tie Slur

The word Tie is sung for a length of eight beats on the same note while the word Slur is sung for a length of four beats across four different notes

Time signature

Somewhere in a staff line you might see two numbers located one above the other



the most common you will see are 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 2/2 and 6/8.

The top number represents the number of beats that will be in each measure

The bottom number tells you which note duration value gets one beat

for example - 4/4 means four beats of a quarter note value and 6/8 means six beats of an eighth note value.

A 4/4 is also known as the common time signature and is sometimes shown with this C shaped symbol.

Rhythm

Knowing the note durations and time signatures helps count out the rhythm of the music usually with a silent foot tap or body sway. The top number in the time signature indicates the number to count up to, and the bottom number indicates which note value you are counting. You may notice in the last bar of the examples below, that the second note does not start on a beat but between beats 2 and 3, this is called syncopation.

More Notes on More Notes

So far, all of the graphic examples above have been shown using natural note intervals up and down the staff but there are also half note intervals which are indicated by other symbols (called accidentals), attached to the front of the notes. Any note that does not have flat or sharp symbol in front of the note is a natural note. A flat note lowers the pitch half way to the next lower note. A sharp note raises the pitch half way to the next higher note. The natural symbol is used to cancel out the effects of a sharp or flat note. The effects of applying a sharp or flat apply to the whole measure unless it is changed or cancelled with another accidental.

Natural Flat Sharp Natural Flat Flat Natural Sharp Natural Sharp Sharp Natural Sharp Sharp Sharp Sharp

The diagram above shows that in the second measure the first two notes are the same pitch, in the third measure middle two notes are the same pitch and in the fourth measure all the notes are the same pitch. Between measures two and three the accidental on the last note of measure two is cancelled by the bar line.

Keys to the Notes

The use of sharp or flat notes can be set for an entire section of music by the use of key signatures which look like a bunch of sharps or flats following the clef symbol. Each line or space that has one of these indicates that for the entire section, all of the notes appearing on them will be either flat or sharp notes unless individually changed or on a change to another key in a following section.

Seeing More Note Markings

You may see symbols above or below the notes, dots, lines and arrows. Each note that has a dot attached to it should be followed by a very brief moment of silence before starting the next note. Notes with lines attached to them must be sung to the full length of the note. Notes with the arrows indicate that the first part of the note needs to be emphasised with a slight increase in volume before very quickly reverting back to normal. The other symbol you may see is called a fermata and indicates that the note may be held longer than its normal duration.



Dynamics

This term refers to how quiet (*p*) or how loud (*f*) the notes need to be, the more p's the quieter, the more f's the louder or if preceded by (*m*) it is moderately quiet or loud. The dynamic lasts until altered by another dynamic.

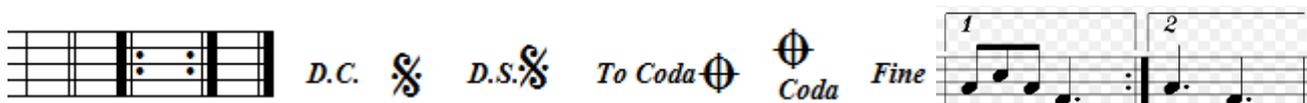


These two symbols indicate to grow gradually louder or to grow gradually quieter over the length of them.



Where Do I Go Next?

You have seen the use of single bar lines which create measures in the music, a thin double bar indicates a separation of sections within a piece of music and a thicker bar on the right indicates the end of a piece of music. The bars with the two dots indicate that the section of music between them is to be repeated, if there is no opening repeat bar (two dots on the right of the double bar) then the music is repeated from the start.



You may see D.C. followed by *al Coda* or *al Fine* which means go back to the start of the piece then to the marked Coda (final piece of the music) or Fine (the end of the music). If you see a D.S. it means go back to this symbol $\%$ instead of the start of the piece and then to the *al Coda* or *al Fine*. First and second time repeats are marked with the numbers 1 and 2 and have lines above the bars to indicate the number of bars in the repeat section. At the end of the second repeat, all of the bars under the number 1 are to be skipped.

Which line do I follow

The line you follow on the sheet music will depend on which part you will be singing, either - Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass. Some pieces of music will have staff lines for each and some will be combined. As a general rule, the Soprano and Tenor notes have stems that go up and the Alto and Bass notes have stems pointing down. Where there are more than two notes on a staff, a section will be split so that both notes will be sung in that section.

