

Basic Music Notation

Quick Reference

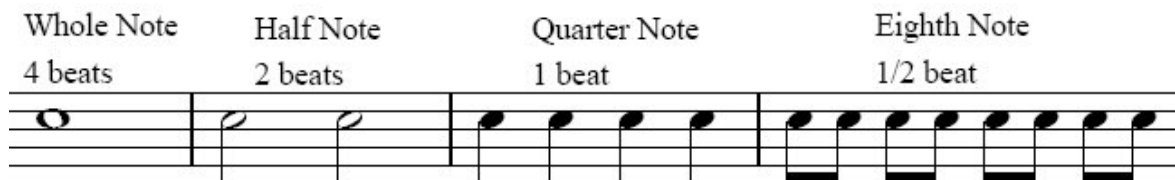
- Music notation is a language that describes the mechanics of musical performance. Using modern music notation, it is possible for composers to note with specificity the musical elements that represent the music itself.
- A composer can now describe the exact notes to be sung, along with how loud and long to sing each word and phrase.
- Music notation uses symbols to represent the various audible components that make up a song. Since music takes place over a period of time, music is intended to be read like a book.

Notes




Anatomy of a Note



A note is composed of a “notehead” with some types of notes including a stem and a flag.


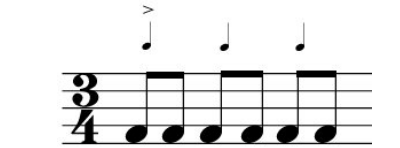
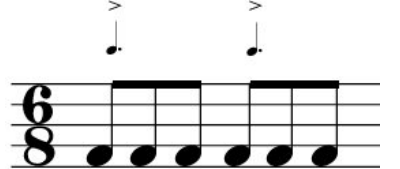


Accidentals

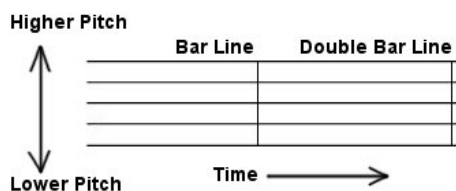
Sharps		Flats		Naturals	
	Raises the note 1/2 step		Lowers the note 1/2 step		Cancels the action of preceding sharp or flat

Time signatures

Time signatures define how many beats there are in each measure marked by bar lines and the value of the note to get one beat. Here are some common Time Signatures.

	In a four-four staff, each measure has four beats and the quarter note gets one beat. Four-four time is usually felt in two pulses of two beats each.
	In a three-four staff, each measure has three beats and the quarter notes gets one beat. Three-four time is usually felt in one pulse of three beats each.
	In a six-eight staff, each measure has six beats and the eighth note gets one beat. Six-eight time is often counted in two pulses of three beats each.

The staff



The staff is the basic structure of music. It is composed of five parallel lines.

It is divided by bar lines that define measures in the music. The end of a piece of music is marked by a double bar line.

Clefs and Grand Staff

A single staff does not provide enough space to express the full range of human hearing, so a clef symbol is usually present at the beginning of a staff to indicate what part of the scale the staff is intended to cover.

Clef

Description

Clef

Description



Treble Clef - This is a form of the G-clef where the note G4 is encircled by the curl of the clef.

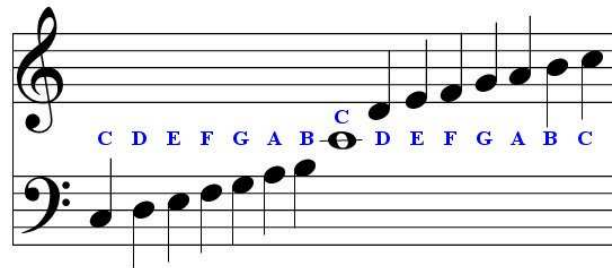
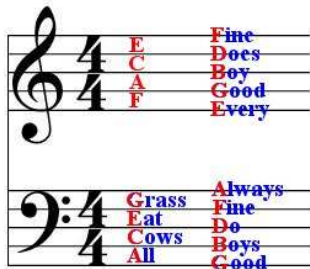


Bass Clef - The bass clef is a form of F-clef where the two dots mark the F on the staff.

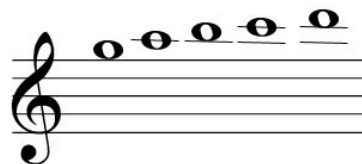


The treble and bass clef staves can be combined to form what is called a grand staff, pictured above. Note the bar lines are joined together and there is a brace on the left side.

Here are two reminders for the note names on the lines and spaces on the grand staff.



For notes that extend above or below either staff, ledger lines are drawn in with the notes.



Rests - Gives a silent break (replacing a note) and can add interest to the music.



Dynamics

Marking

Italian

English

Marking

Italian

English

fff

Fortississimo

Extremely loud

mp

Mezzo-piano

Moderately soft

ff

Fortissimo

Very loud

p

Piano

Soft

f

Forte

Loud

pp

Pianissimo

Very soft

mf

Mezzo-forte




Moderately loud

ppp

Pianississimo

Extremely soft

Key Signature Chart

Key Signature	Major Key	Minor Key	No. of Sharps	No. of Flats	Sharp Names	Flat Names
	C	a	0	0		
	G	e	1		F#	
	D	b	2		F#,C#	
	A	f#	3		F#,C#,G#	
	E	c#	4		F#,C#,G#,D#	
	B	g#	5		F#,C#,G#,D#,A#	
	F#	d#	6		F#,C#,G#,D#,A#,E#	
	C#	a#	7		F#,C#,G#,D#,A#,E#,B#	

Key Signature Chart

Key Signature	Major Key	Minor Key	No. of Sharps	No. of Flats	Sharp Names	Flat Names
	C	a	0	0		
	F	d	1			B \flat
	B \flat	g	2			B \flat , E \flat
	E \flat	c	3			B \flat , E \flat , A \flat
	A \flat	f	4			B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat
	D \flat	b \flat	5			B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat , G \flat
	G \flat	e \flat	6			B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat , G \flat , C \flat
	C \flat	a \flat	7			B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat , G \flat , C \flat , F \flat