

keyboard

reading | technique | performance

READING 1

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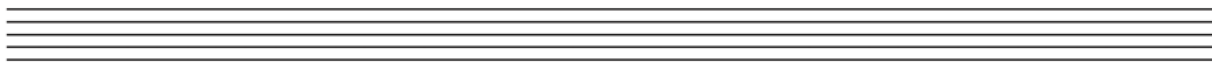
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Chapter 1: The Basic Elements of Music Reading

Reading musical notation can seem daunting at first, but it is a hugely rewarding endeavor which can open the doors to a variety of musical styles. Imagine being able to open up any music score and read it even if you don't know the piece. It can also increase your chances for work. Imagine being called for a recording session, film soundtrack date, Broadway show, or even a last-minute gig. You get to the rehearsal to find a folder full of sheet music on your music stand. This is not a problem if you are able to decipher the notation quickly and accurately; however, if your ability to read music is not strong, you may miss out on certain types of work that are difficult or impossible for the non-reader.

It all starts with the **staff**. This is a set of five horizontal lines and four spaces upon which are placed the various notes and symbols representing the musical pitches and rhythms.

Ex. 1.1



The top line is higher in pitch than the bottom line :

Ex. 1.2



Music is read left to right, just as if you were reading a book.

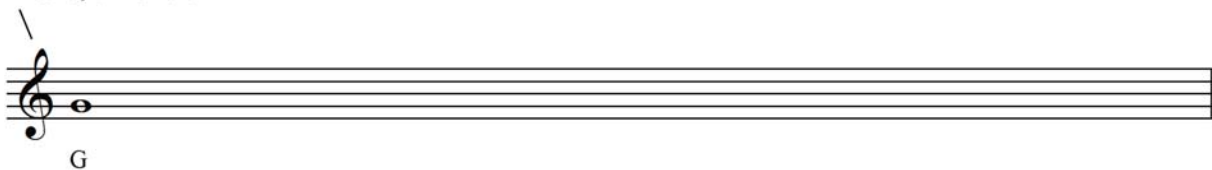
Ex. 1.3



The musical pitches are determined by the choice of **clef**, which is also placed on the staff. Keyboard music is written using both the treble clef and bass clef. The **treble clef**, or G clef as it is also known, evolved from a stylized letter G. (Ex. 1.2). The treble clef primarily notates music to be played by the right hand.

Ex. 1.4

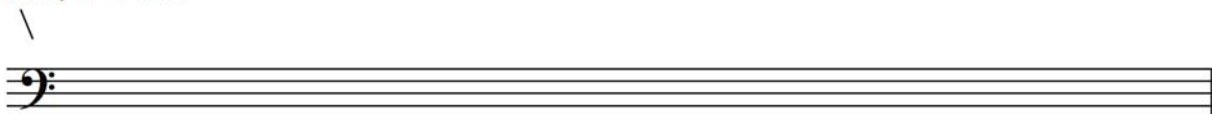
Treble, or 'G' clef



The **bass clef**, or F clef as it is also known, is primarily used by the left hand. Traditionally, the bass clef notates the lowest notes of a musical piece. These notes form a bass line, and are usually played by the left hand.

Ex. 1.5

Bass, or 'F' clef



Chapter 2: Note Identification on the Staff

Now that we have a better understanding of the treble and bass clefs, let's talk about note identification on the staff. Keyboard reading is part note identification and part translation.

First, we identify the note(s) on the staff.

Ex. 1.6



Then, we translate the note(s) to our finger(s).

Ex. 1.7

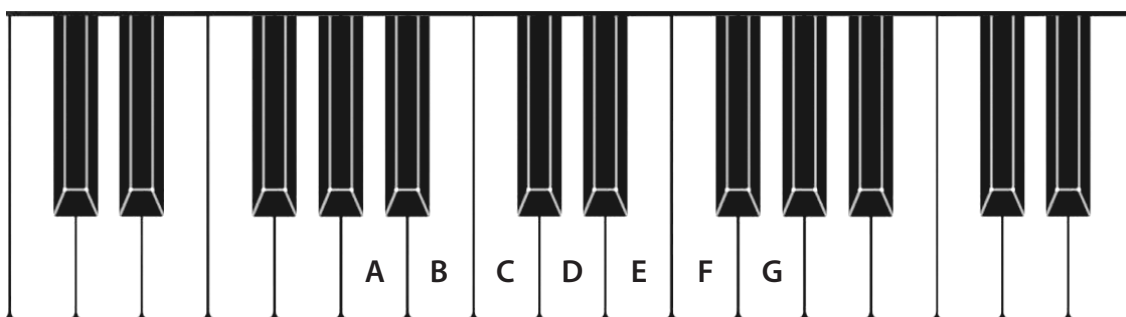


Ex. 1.8 demonstrates what the musical alphabet looks like on the keyboard.

Ex. 1.8

Introduction to the Musical Alphabet

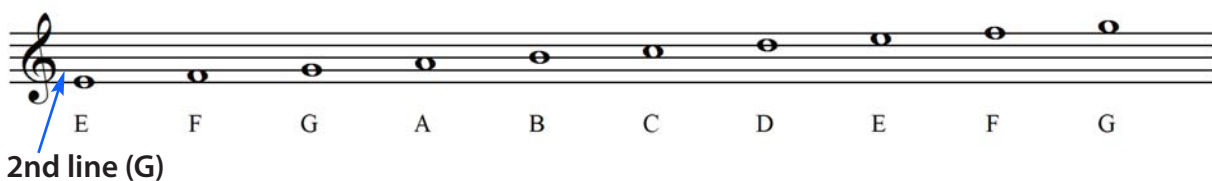
The musical alphabet consists of the following letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, G



Note Recognition within Treble (G) Clef

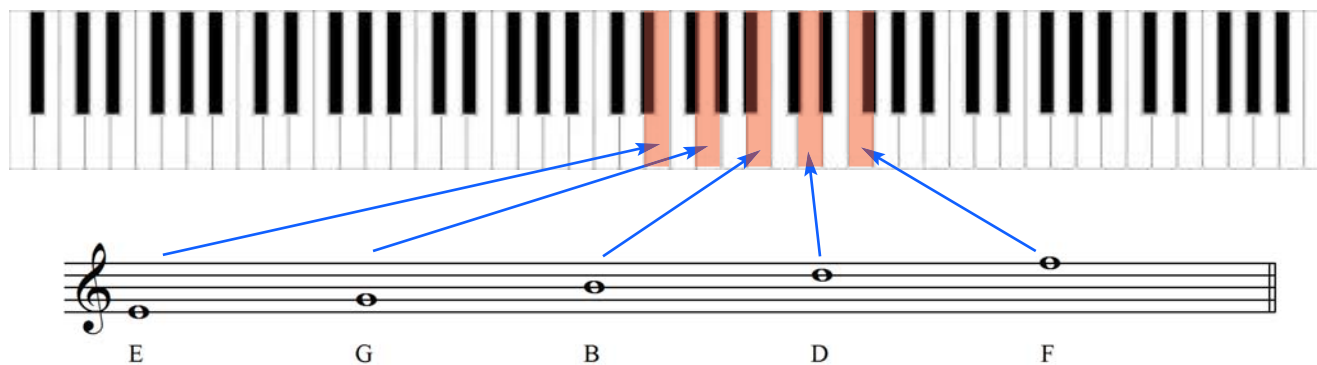
Ex. 1.9 demonstrates what the musical alphabet looks like on the staff.

Ex. 1.9



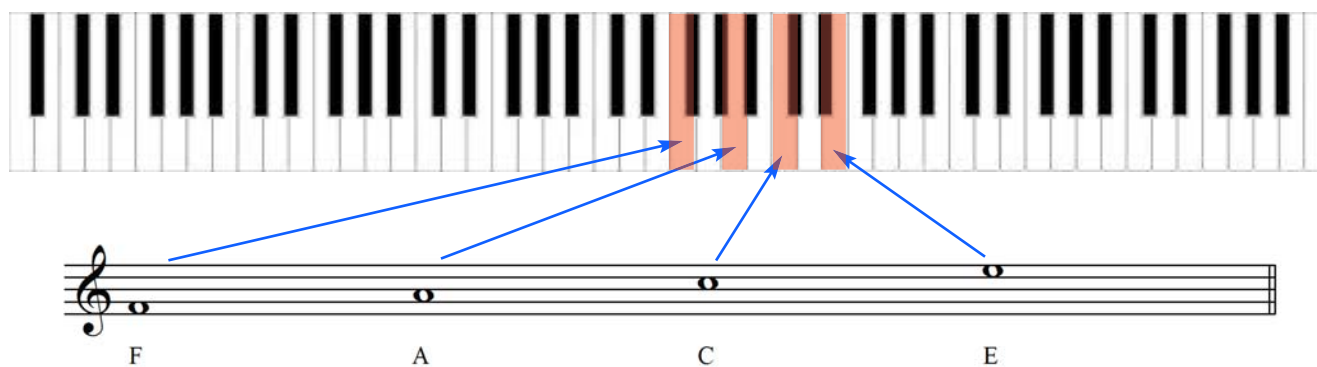
As you can see below, the five lines are called **E G B D F**. A good way to remember this is to use the acronym **Every Good Boy Does Fine**.

Ex. 1.10



The four spaces spell the word **F A C E**.

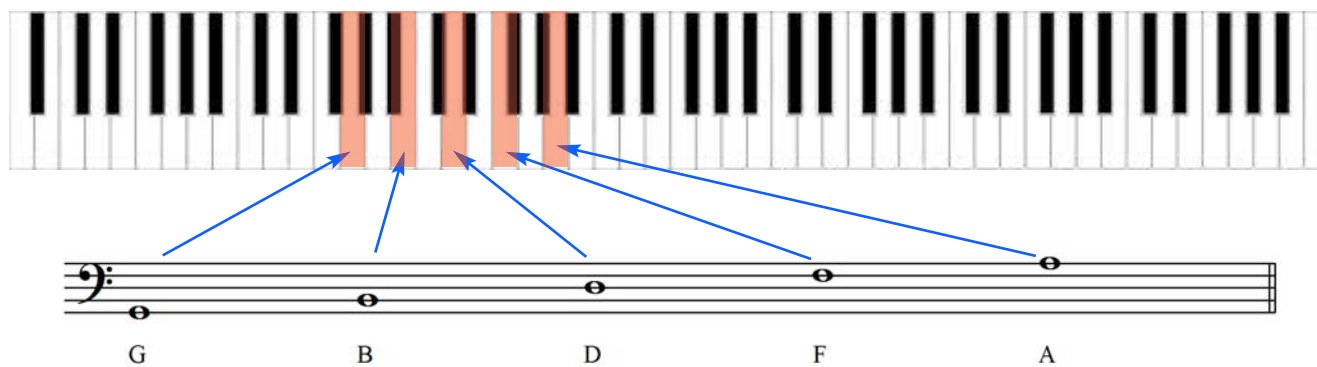
Ex. 1.11



Note Recognition within Bass (F) Clef

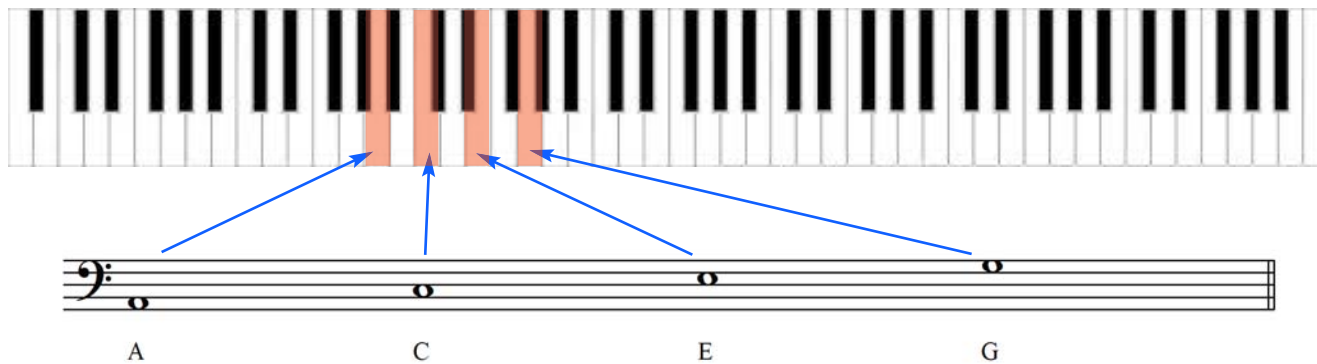
A common acronym for the bass clef lines is **Good Boys Do Fine Always**.

Ex. 1.12



To remember this, use the phrase **All Cows Eat Grass**.

Ex. 1.13

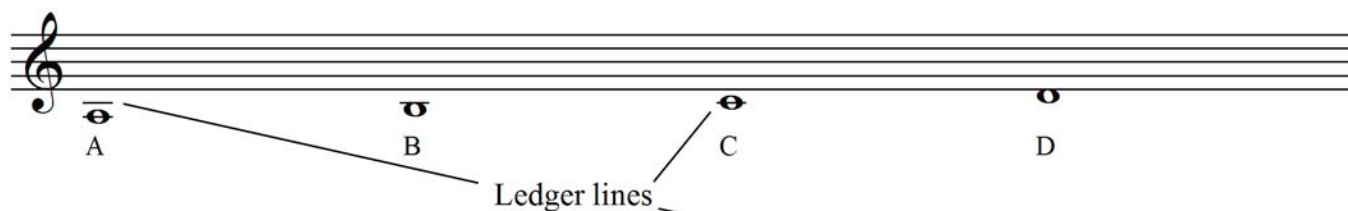


Chapter 3: Ledger Lines

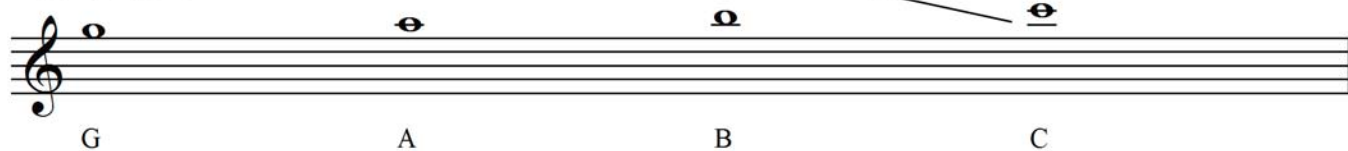
In order to play notes above or below the staff we use ledger lines. A ledger line is used to notate pitches above or below the lines and spaces of the staff. A line slightly longer than the note head is drawn parallel to the staff, above or below, spaced at the same distance as the lines within the staff. Let's take a look at these on the treble clef.

Ex. 1.14

Below the staff:

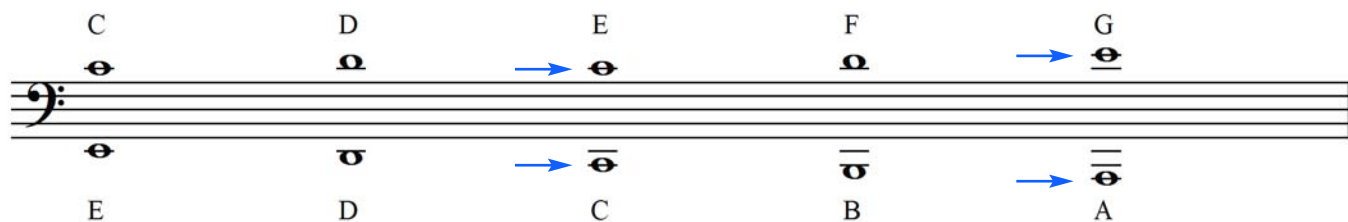


Above the staff:



Notes can be placed on ledger lines within the bass clef as well:

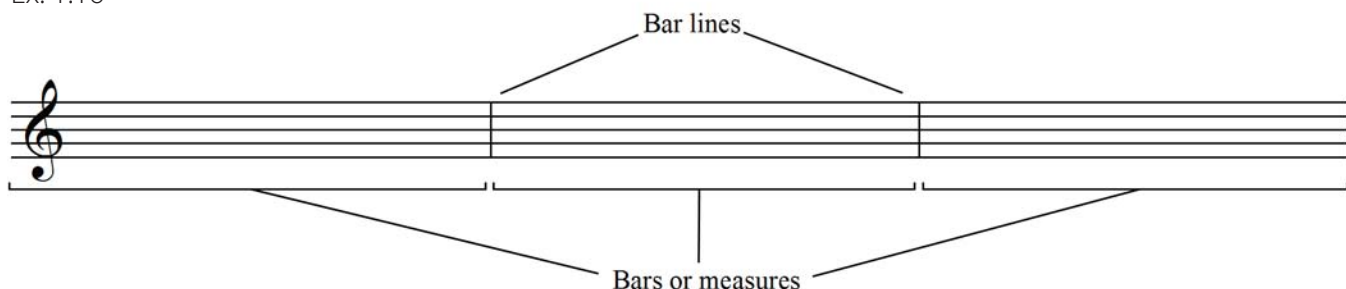
Ex. 1.15



Chapter 4: More Notation Basics

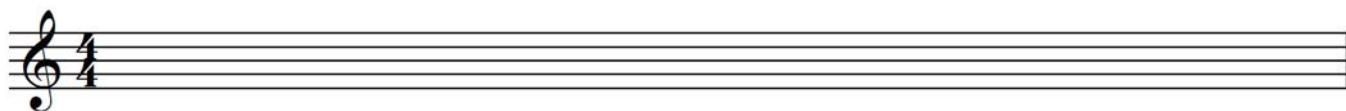
Music is arranged on the page and divided into equal parts using **bar lines**. The space between the bar lines is called a **bar** or **measure**.

Ex. 1.16



In order to know how to count the music a time signature is placed at the beginning of the score. These are two numbers, one above the other. The top number indicates how many beats are in each bar and the bottom number indicates which note value receives one beat.

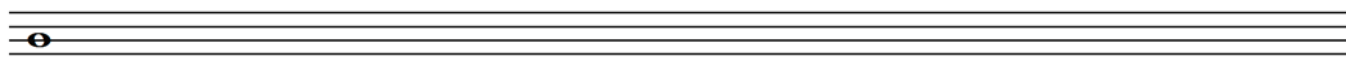
Ex. 1.17



While the placement of the notes on the staff represents the pitch, the duration of the note is represented by the note value. A whole note is equal to two half notes or four quarter notes. A half note is equal to two quarter notes. Two eighth notes are equal to one quarter note and two 16th notes are equal to one eighth note. So, how many 16th notes in one whole note? If you answered 16, you were correct.

A **whole note** (Ex. 1.18) is represented by an open oval shape.

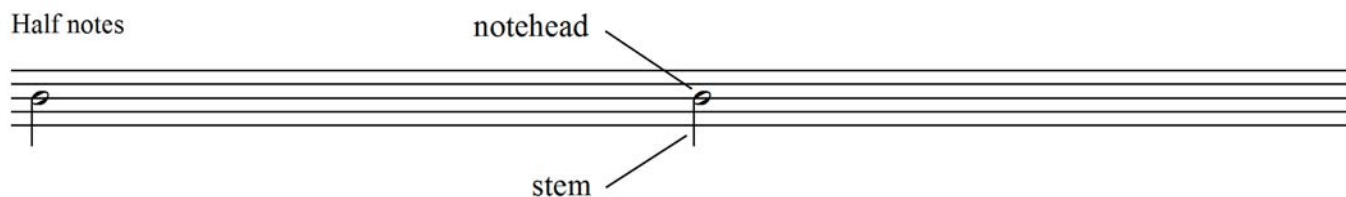
Ex. 1.18



A **half note** looks like an open oval with a stem attached.

Ex. 1.19

Half notes



Quarter notes are represented by black note heads with stems.

Ex. 1.20

Quarter notes



Eighth and 16th notes are beamed in groups of two or four.

Ex. 1.21

Eighth notes

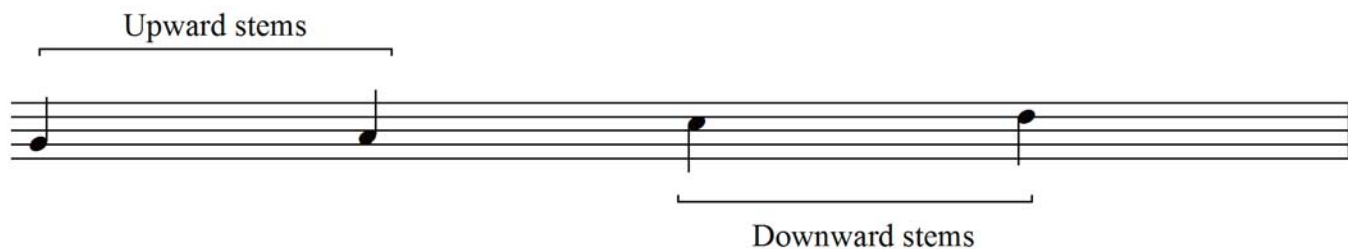


Sixteenth notes



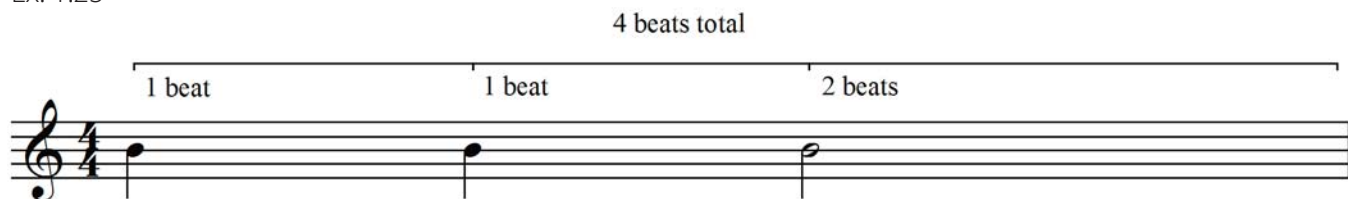
The stems point either downwards or upwards depending on their position on the staff. Notes on and above the middle line have downward pointing stems which attach to the left side of the notehead and notes below the middle line have upward pointing stems which attach to the right side of the notehead.

Ex. 1.22



Note values are similar to mathematical fractions. So, in Ex. 1.23, a 4/4 (quadruple) time signature tells us to count four quarter notes per bar. Within the bar itself, notes of different values can be placed as long as they do not exceed the total value of the bar (as determined by the time signature).

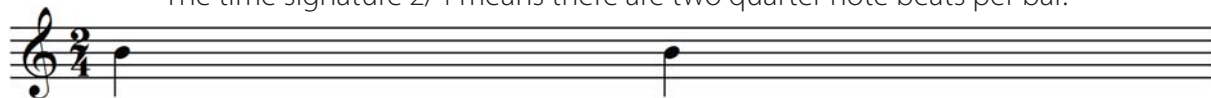
Ex. 1.23



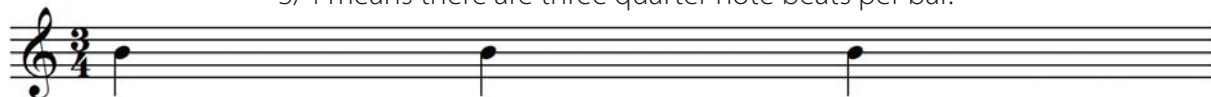
Other simple time signatures you will see are 2/4 (duple time) and 3/4 (triple time). Often you will see a C at the beginning of a score. This stands for **common time** and is the same as 4/4.

Ex. 1.24

The time signature 2/4 means there are two quarter note beats per bar.



3/4 means there are three quarter note beats per bar.



Remember, we are counting beats and not notes. You can place any note value in a bar so long as they add up to the total value of the bar.

