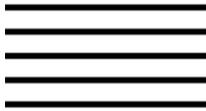
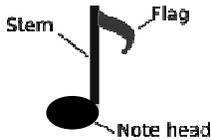


# HOW TO READ MUSIC NOTES (QUICK-LEARN CHEAT SHEETS), Page 1



**Staff** (or **Stave**) - a set of **5 lines** (and 4 spaces between those lines) that music notes and symbols are written or printed on.



**Parts of a note:** **Head** - the round part of a note. (All notes have a head.)  
**Stem** - the straight line part of a note that is connected to the note head.  
**Flag** - a curved line that is attached to the other end of the stem.  
**Beam** - a straightened flag that connects two or more note stems.



**Pitch** is the **highness** or **lowness** of a note or sound.

Pitch is indicated by how high or how low a note's head is located on a staff and is designated by a letter name.

A note head higher in the staff = higher pitch;  
a note head lower in the staff = lower pitch.

**Clefs** are symbols that determine which note letter names belong to the lines and spaces of a staff.



**Treble Clef** (or **G Clef**) - a clef that wraps around the second line from the bottom of the staff, showing that this line is where the note "G" is found.



**Bass Clef** (or **F Clef**) - a clef that indicates that the fourth line from the bottom of the staff (between the two dots) is where the note "F" is found.

**The Musical Alphabet = A, B, C, D, E, F, G.** Note that there is no such note as "H."

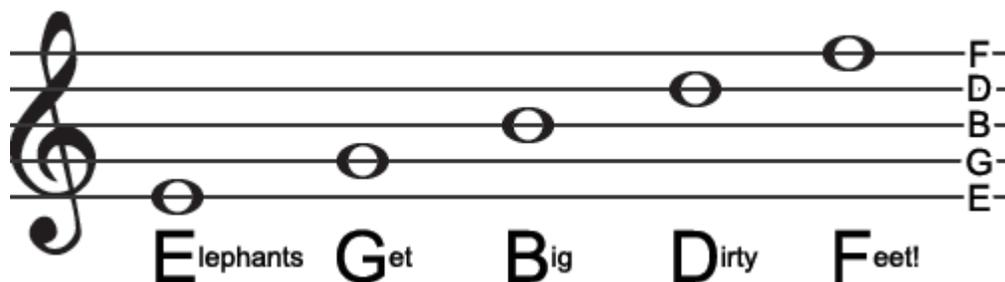


The **hand staff** or, the **Guidonian hand**—was first used by Guido D'Arezzo (c. 991-c. 1033). You can use your hand staff to practice saying and remembering the letter names of the lines and spaces of the staves. If you hold up one hand and turn it sideways, the five fingers on that hand represent the five lines of a staff. And, if you spread those five fingers apart slightly, then the gaps between those fingers represent the four spaces of the staff.

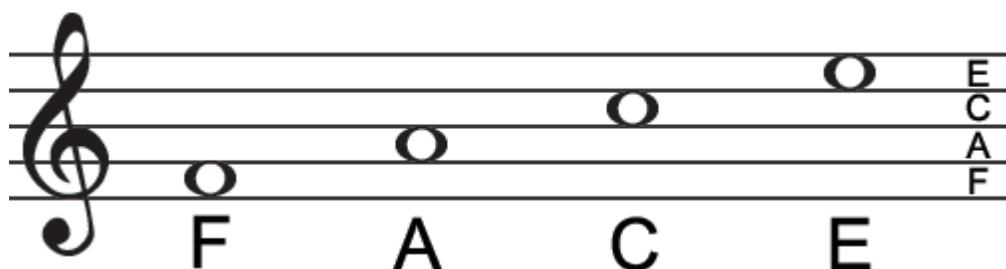
REMEMBER THAT WE ALWAYS COUNT LINES AND SPACES AND SAY THE LETTER NAMES OF THE LINES AND SPACES FROM THE BOTTOM UP, NEVER FROM THE TOP DOWN!!!

## HOW TO READ MUSIC NOTES (QUICK-LEARN CHEAT SHEETS), Page 2

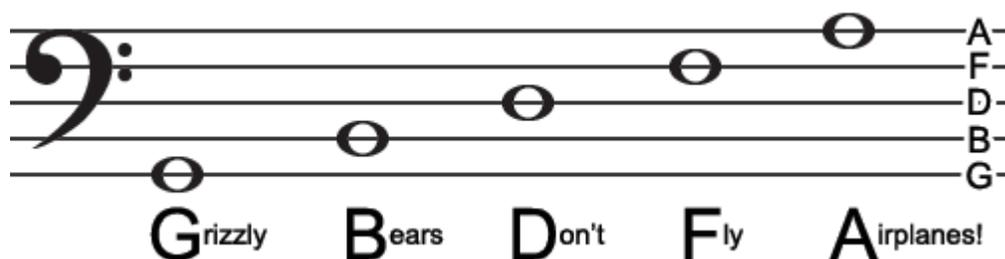
LETTER NAMES OF THE **TREBLE CLEF** (or **G CLEF**) STAFF LINES:



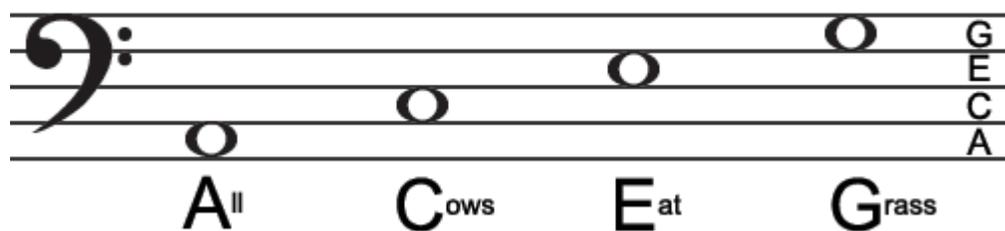
LETTER NAMES OF THE **TREBLE CLEF** (or **G CLEF**) STAFF SPACES:



LETTER NAMES OF THE **BASS CLEF** (or **F CLEF**) STAFF LINES:



LETTER NAMES OF THE **BASS CLEF** (or **F CLEF**) STAFF SPACES:



## HOW TO READ MUSIC NOTES (QUICK-LEARN CHEAT SHEETS), Page 3

NOTE: As you go up a staff from note to note (by step) without skipping any notes (going line-space-line-space, etc.), the notes are in alphabetical order as they ascend by step like this. After “G”, you must start the musical alphabet over again with “A”.

Here are two examples of this, in treble clef and in bass clef:

TREBLE CLEF (G clef):

BASS CLEF (F clef):



Conversely, as notes descend by step on a staff, the note letter names are in reverse alphabetical order:

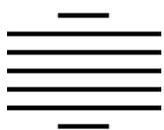
TREBLE (G) CLEF



BASS (F) CLEF



NOTE: On the two staves directly above, the first three notes and the last note are on **ledger lines**.



**Ledger lines** (or **leger lines**) are short lines above or below the staff, used to extend the staff to pitches that fall above it or below it.  
(They are extra lines added to a staff where needed.)

**Accidentals** are symbols that make a slight change to the pitch of the notes that follow them on the same line or space within a measure, unless cancelled by another accidental.

Accidentals include symbols such as the sharp sign, flat sign, and natural sign.

#

**Sharp sign** – **Raises** the pitch of the note that follows it **one half-step higher**.  
This change affects all notes on that same line or space for the rest of the measure, unless it is cancelled out by another accidental.

b

**Flat sign** – **Lowers** the pitch of the note that follows it **one half-step lower**.  
This change affects all notes on that same line or space for the rest of the measure, unless it is cancelled out by another accidental.

♮

**Natural sign** – **Cancels a previous sharp or flat sign**.  
This change affects all notes on that same line or space for the rest of the measure, unless it is cancelled out by another following accidental.



**Steady Beat** = an unchanging, continuous pulse

**Rhythm** = a pattern of long and short notes and rests. (sounds and silences)

.....  
**DURATION (LENGTH) VALUES OF NOTES AND RESTS**  
.....

A **note** is a symbol that indicates a specific time duration (length) of a single musical sound. When placed on a staff, a note also indicates that a certain pitch is to be sounded for a certain length of time.

A **rest** is a symbol that indicates a period of silence for a certain length of time.

Notes and rests are relative to one another in length, which is why they have fractional names:

A **whole note** is (generally) the longest note used in modern written music.

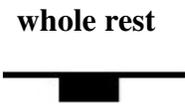
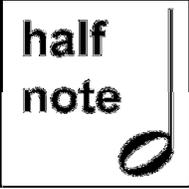
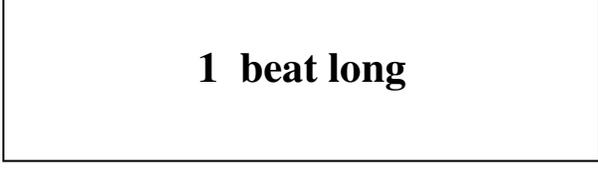
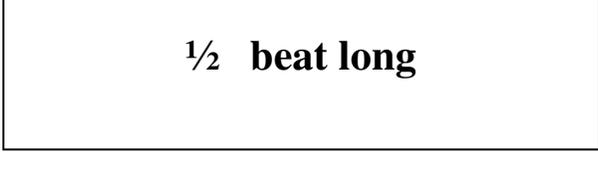
A **half note** is  $\frac{1}{2}$  as long as a whole note.

A **quarter note** is  $\frac{1}{4}$  as long as a whole note.

An **eighth note** is  $\frac{1}{8}$  as long as a whole note.

A **sixteenth note** is  $\frac{1}{16}$  as long as a whole note.

The following table of notes and rests indicates how many steady beats long each note is and how many steady beats long its corresponding rest is in 4/4 time (4/4 meter):

<u>NOTE NAME</u>	<u>LENGTH OF THE NOTE AND REST</u>	<u>REST NAME</u>
 <p>whole note</p>	 <p>4 beats long</p>	 <p>whole rest</p>
 <p>half note</p>	 <p>2 beats long</p>	 <p>half rest</p>
 <p>quarter note</p>	 <p>1 beat long</p>	 <p>quarter rest</p>
 <p>eighth note</p>	 <p><math>\frac{1}{2}</math> beat long</p>	 <p>eighth rest</p>
 <p>sixteenth note</p>	 <p><math>\frac{1}{4}</math> beat long</p>	 <p>sixteenth rest</p>

.....

## HOW TO READ MUSIC NOTES (QUICK-LEARN CHEAT SHEETS), Page 6

**BEAMS:** Sometimes, notes with flags (such as eighth notes and sixteenth notes) are joined together with a straightened-out flag called a **beam**. Examples:



### ..... DOTTED NOTE RULE:

A **dot** after a note adds one-half of the original note length value to the note.

EXAMPLES OF SOME DOTTED NOTES IN 4/4 METER:

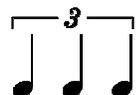
**Dotted half note**  ( 2 + 1 ) = **3** beats

**Dotted quarter note**  ( 1 + ½ ) = **1 ½** beats

**Dotted whole note**  ( 4 + 2 ) = **6** beats



**Fermata (Hold)** – A symbol that looks like a half circle with a dot inside it that, when placed over a note (or sometimes under a note), tells the performer to hold that note out a little longer. Nickname for this symbol: “**bird’s eye.**”



**Triplets** – Three notes of the same kind with a 3 over or under them. The three notes of a triplet are played in the same amount of time that it normally takes to play two of these notes.

**Time Signature or Meter Signature** – Tells how the beats in music are divided into measures.

A measure contains the number of beats shown by the time signature.

The top number of the signature tells the number of beats in a measure; the bottom number tells what kind of note gets one beat.

EXAMPLES OF TIME SIGNATURES (METER SIGNATURES):



←Some basic time signatures:  
4/4 or common time (C), 2/2 or cut-time (¢),  
2/4, 3/4 & 6/8

**Key Signature** – Flat signs or sharp signs without notes next to them that appear near the beginning of the staff. They alter all of the notes on the indicated lines and spaces for the entire staff, unless cancelled out by accidentals.

EXAMPLES OF KEY SIGNATURES:



The order of **FLATS** in a key signature:

**BEADGCF** *mnemonic:* BEAD, Girls Can Flirt.

The order of **SHARPS** in a key signature:

**FCGDAEB** *mnemonic:* Fat Cows Go Down And Eat Barley.

## HOW TO READ MUSIC NOTES (QUICK-LEARN CHEAT SHEETS), Page 7

### ARTICULATION MARKS:



**Staccato** mark – a dot over or under a note (not beside it) that tells the performer to play the note shorter and to make it separated and detached from the note after it.



**Legato** or **tenuto** mark – a line over or under a note that tells the performer to play the note long and hold it out for its full value to make it connected to the note after it.



**Slur** – a curved line over or under two or more notes of different pitch that tells the performer to play the notes smoothly and connected. Wind instrument players should play slurred notes in one breath, using a tongue start on only the first note of the slur.



**Tie** – a curved line over or under two notes of the same pitch that tells the performer that the two notes are joined together and played as one note. As with a slur, wind instrument players should play tied notes in one breath, using a tongue start on only the first note of the tie.



**Accent** mark – shaped like a sideways “V”, this symbol tells the performer to play the note louder than all of the other notes around it so that it stands out.

.....

Dynamics marks are symbols that indicate what the **loudness** or **softness** of the music should be.

### LIST OF SOME DYNAMICS MARKS:

***pp***

**Pianissimo** – very soft

***p***

**Piano** – soft

***mp***

**Mezzo Piano** – medium soft

***mf***

**Mezzo Forte** – medium loud

***f***

**Forte** – loud

***ff***

**Fortissimo** – very loud



**Crescendo** – getting gradually louder as the two lines get further apart.



**Decrescendo** (or **Diminuendo**) – getting gradually softer as the two lines get closer together.

**10**  


**Multi-measure rest or Multi-bar rest** – Tells the performer how many measures to rest without a change in the meter or time signature.  
EXAMPLE: The example to the left tells the performer to rest 10 measures. So, if the meter or time signature is 4/4, then the performer would silently count to four ten times in order to rest for the indicated amount of time.

**’**

**Breath mark** – Looks like a comma. It tells a wind instrument performer where to take a breath. (It tells a non-wind instrument player to create a slight break in the sound.) This “break” does not change the tempo or meter and it also does not interrupt the steady beat. Although breath marks are sometimes written in scores by composers and publishers, they are most often written in by the performers. The best place for a breath is at the end of a phrase, especially after long notes or during rests.

**Phrase** – a complete musical thought or a musical sentence. It is usually best for wind instrument players to take a breath at the end of each phrase.

**//**

**Grand Pause or Caesura** – Indicates a brief, silent pause, during which time is not counted and the steady beat is briefly interrupted.  
Nickname for this symbol: “**railroad tracks.**”

**1.**  
**2.**

**First and Second Endings** – Indicate that a repeated passage of music is to be played with a different ending (under the designated bracket) each time.

**Tempo** – The speed of a piece of music.

**SOME COMMON TEMPO MARKINGS:**

**Largo or Lento** – very slow.

**Grave** – slow & solemn.

**Adagio** – slow & stately; at ease.

**Andante** – walking speed.

**Moderato** – moderate or medium tempo.

**Allegro** – quick & lively.

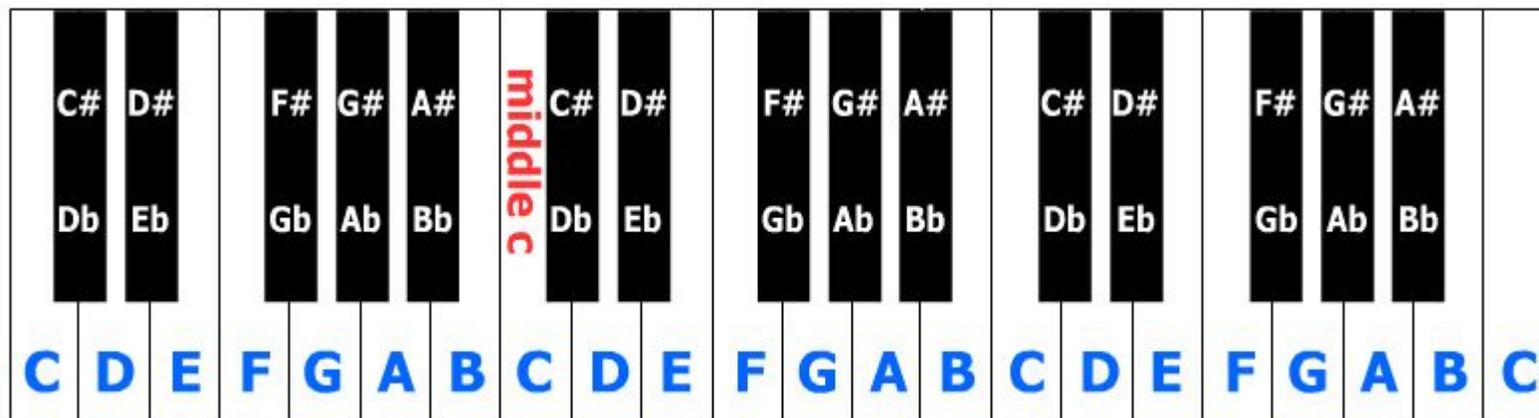
**Vivace** – very fast.

**Presto** – extremely fast.

**Ritardando or Rallentando** – gradually slowing down.

**Accelerando** – gradually speeding up.

## Finding Pitches (Note Letter Names) on the Piano Keyboard



Notice that the black keys come in alternating sets of 2 and 3. (That is, 2 black keys that are close together, and 3 black keys that are close together.) This pattern repeats over and over across the piano keyboard.

You can learn the letter names of the white keys by remembering where they are in relationship to the sets of black keys. For example, the white key that is immediately to the left of a set of 2 black keys is always the note, C. As another example, the note to the right of a set of 3 black keys is always the note B.

Notice that, going from left to right, the white keys occur in alphabetical order, A through G. When you get to a G, then you have to start all over again after the G with a higher A (since there are no notes that are named H through Z.)

The black key notes are in-between notes that are sharps or flats. Each black key has two names: A sharp name, and a flat name. For example, if a black key is between C and D, then it is called either C# (C-Sharp) or Db (D-Flat).

If you already know how to play another instrument, such as a band instrument, then you already know how to read the notes on the staff, so now all that you have to do to play your band songs on the piano is to use the keyboard picture above to help you find the correct notes on the piano keyboard.

Notice that there is never a black key between E and F, and also never a black key between B and C.