

Multimedia Piano Studio



Lesson 1

The Musical Alphabet

An individual musical tone is represented by one of the following written letters:

A B C D E F G

These tones are repeated at various locations up and down the keyboard at a higher or lower pitch. *Pitch* is a specific high or low “frequency” of a sound wave.

The Piano Keyboard

On a full-sized 88 key piano or electric keyboard, the first and lowest sounding white key on the left of the piano player is A. The keys are named according to *repeated cycles of A through G* all the way up the keyboard using only white keys. Observe the image below. There are repeating sets of 2 and repeating sets of 3 black keys. Besides the lowest **A**, one can locate all other **A**'s by selecting the white key to the immediate right of the middle black key in every set of 3 black keys. The highest key on the piano is C. Similarly, every other **C** is located just to the left of each of the sets of 2 black keys.

Lower pitches

Higher pitches



C D E F G A B C D E F G A B

What is Music?

Music is the measured and creative organization of sound and silence for the purposes of relaxation, entertainment, or worship. For music to make sense, it must have some degree of order. Order is derived from the presence of a timed beat, patterns of long and short durations of sound or “notes,” and the use of complementary and contrasting pitches.

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Time Signature

Since music is measured in time, we use a time or “meter” signature to describe how to count a piece of music.



At the beginning of every piece of written music, you will notice stacked numbers (or a large C for “common time”):

Top number = *the number of beats per measure*

Bottom number = *what type of note takes one beat*

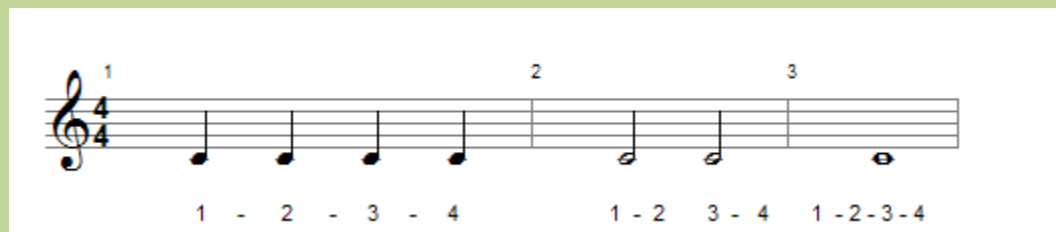
Example:

4/4 time (common time)- 4 beats per measure, a quarter note takes one beat.

3/2 time- 3 beats per measure, a half note takes one beat.

The Beat

Music needs a steady underlying pulse in order to make sense. In common or 4/4 time, the beat is counted like thus: 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, etc. As figured below, the *quarter note* is held for one beat, the *half note* is held for two beats, and the *whole note* is held for four beats.

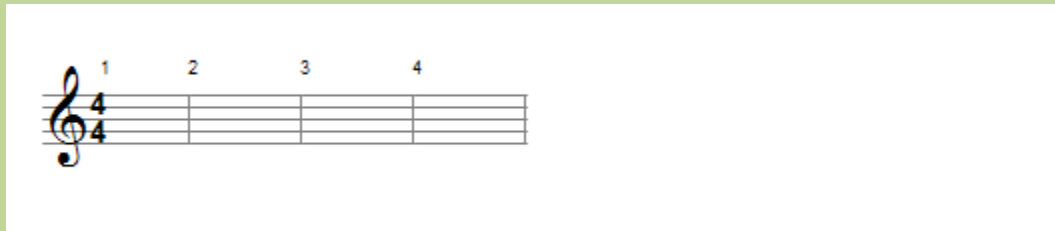


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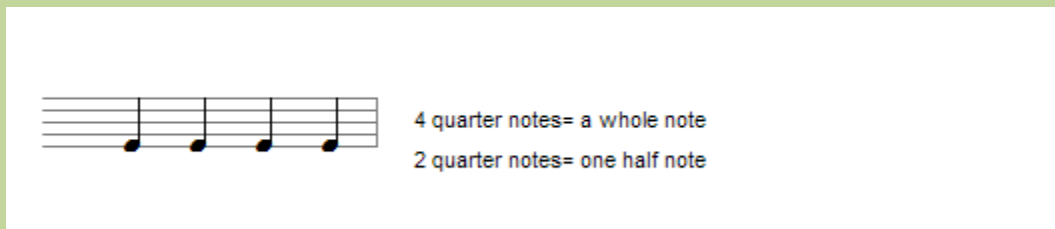
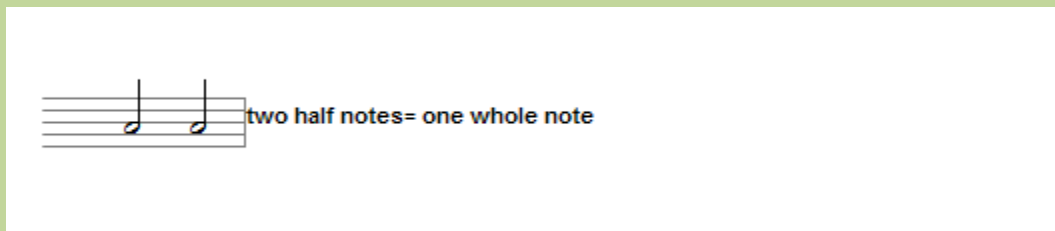
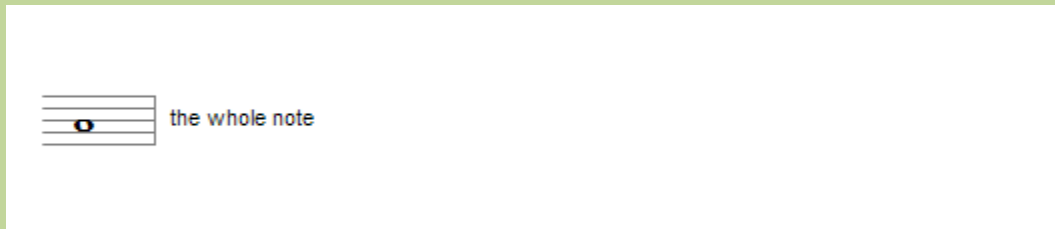
Measures or “bars”

Music is divided into measures. Each *measure* or *bar* is separated by a vertical line. Notice below that there are 4 measures which are numbered. Numbering measures makes discussing, practicing, or locating a particular part of a musical score much easier.



Note Durations

Notes are the duration of sound which is measured according to how many beats of time they are held for. The following chart expresses the relationships between notes. :

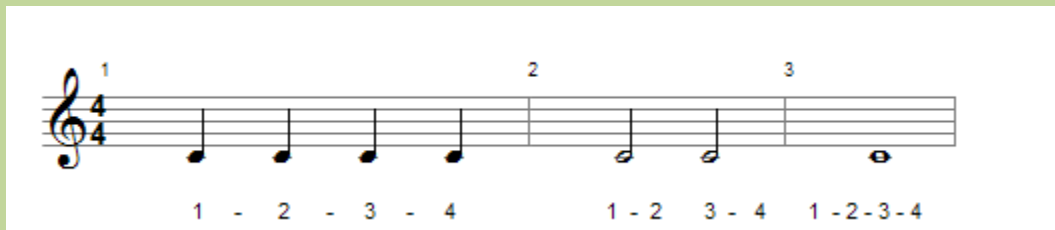


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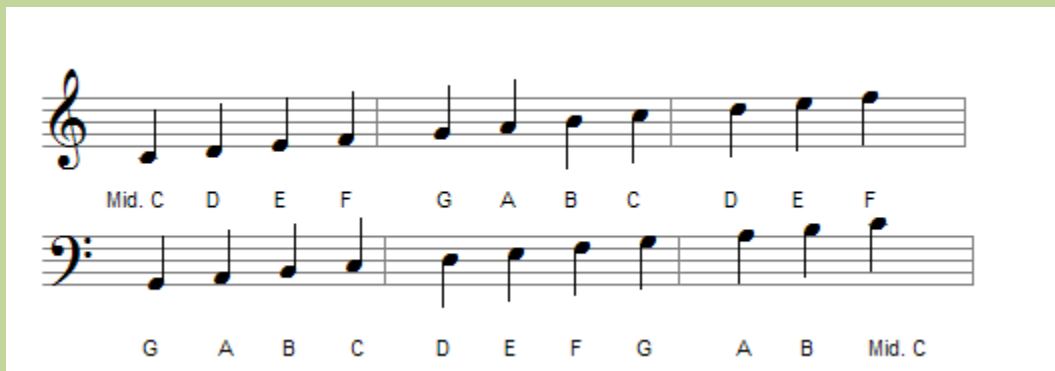
Rhythm

Rhythm is the pattern and pulse of note durations in relationship to a steady beat. In the example below, the even, steady beat would be counted as... 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 and so on. The counting of the beat is the same in each measure. However, the “rhythm” of each measure is different from the others. In the first measure, four notes are played. They each last one beat. In the second measure, two notes and played. They each last 2 beats. Finally, in the third measure, only one note is played which last for 4 beats or the entire measure.



The Grand Staff

The grand staff is comprised of two sets of 5 lines and 4 spaces. In the figure below, the top set of 5 lines and 4 spaces is called the **treble (or G) clef** staff (usually, for notes played with the right hand). The bottom set is the **bass (or F) clef** staff (usually, for notes played with the left hand). The lowest note you see on the treble clef and the highest note of the bass clef are the exact same note on the keyboard. It is called “middle C.” On a piano, it is the centermost key of the keyboard.



Note: The *consecutive* line, space, line, space, of the Grand Staff corresponds to *consecutive white keys* on the keyboard.

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Treble Staff Lines

A musical staff in treble clef showing six quarter notes. The notes are positioned on the first ledger line below the staff (C), the first space (E), the first line (G), the second space (B), the second line (D), and the third space (F).

C E G B D F



Mid. C E G B D F

The notes on the staff above correspond to their location on the keyboard below. Starting from the bottom line of the treble clef, the lines are E, G, B, D, and F. A commonly used memory phrase to recall this set of lines is “**Every Good Boy Does Fine.**” Middle C is located on the first “*ledger*” line below the staff lines. *Ledger lines* are used to notate pitches below or above the range of the staff.

Treble Staff Spaces

A musical staff in treble clef showing four quarter notes. The notes are positioned in the first space (F), second space (A), third space (C), and fourth space (E).

F A C E



Mid. C F A C E

In the graphics above, the noted spaces of the treble clef correspond to their location on the keyboard. Notice that the spaces of the treble clef spell the word “FACE”.



Bass Staff Lines

A musical staff with a bass clef. Six notes are written on the lines from bottom to top: G (first line), B (second line), D (third line), F (fourth line), A (fifth line), and Mid. C (middle C, positioned above the staff).

G B D F A Mid. C



G B D F A

The most common way to remember the lines of the bass staff is to memorize the phrase “**Good Boys Do Fine Always.**”

Bass Staff Spaces

A musical staff with a bass clef. Four notes are written in the spaces from bottom to top: A (first space), C (second space), E (third space), and G (fourth space).

A C E G



A C E G

Many people use **All Cows Eat Grass** to recall the spaces of the bass clef.

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Review Activities

1. Define the following terms:

Pitch-

Beat-

Time signature-

Measure-

Rhythm-

Treble clef-

Bass clef-

Ledger line-

2. Practice identifying the note names on the keyboard until you get 50 correct responses at http://www.musictheory.net/trainers/html/id80_en.html Turn black keys off for now.

3. Practice identifying lines and spaces of treble and bass clefs of the Grand Staff at http://www.musictheory.net/trainers/html/id82_en.html

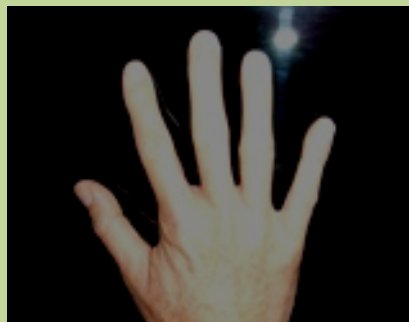
4. Learn the C major scale below. The numbers below the staff are the number of the finger which should be used for each note. The treble clef scale is to be played with your right hand. Bass clef is to be played with your left hand. Play hands separately at first. Start with r.h. #1 on middle C. Play three notes and then go under #3 finger with your thumb to play F. This will extend the distance of your hand to reach the C above middle C. As you descend, simply use all of your fingers until you run out and then, cross over with #3 on E just above middle C.

Finger numbers

5 4 3 2 1



1 2 3 4 5



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The C major scale- one octave (fingering below)

(under)

(over)

(over)

(under)

After you understand the fingering, it would be wise to play along to the tick of a metronome set between 60 and 80 beats per minute (bpm). Play the scale evenly in regards to note duration and using the same degree of force to produce even notes with regards to how loud or soft the sound of individual notes are.

It is important to learn scales because chords and songs are created from scales. A *scale* is a sequence of notes which are separated by a particular pattern of half steps and whole steps. The smallest distance between two notes is called a *half step*. Example by going up from C to the very next note to the right you come to a black key which is called C sharp (#). The distance of a *whole step* can be shown by going up from C to the closest D (there is one black key between them). The major scale step pattern can be applied beginning on any note :

C Major SCALE NOTES- C D E F G A B C

STEP PATTERN between NOTES- w.s. w.s. h.s. w.s. w.s. w.s. h.s

Meaning of Abbreviations - (whole step) (half step)

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5. Practice playing the following tunes which use the C major scale. Remember, the quarter note takes one beat and the half note takes two beats. Don't forget to count while you play! See the pieces performed at the following link: www.multimediapiano.com/lesson1

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Musical notation for the song 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'. It consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody with fingerings: 3 2 1 2 for the first four notes, and 3 5 5 for the last three notes. The second staff contains a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

Simple melody of *Ode to Joy* (Beethoven)

Musical notation for the simple melody of 'Ode to Joy' by Beethoven. It consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody with fingerings: 3 4 5 for the first three notes. The second staff contains a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.