



## Introduction to Music Notation

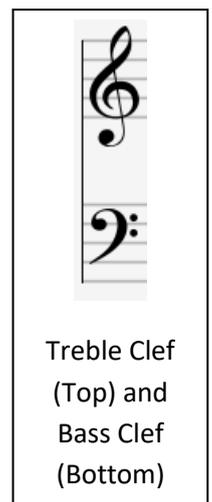
Music notation is the written language of western music that is used across various genres and instruments. It can serve as a common **language** to bridge the gap between different instruments.

### Staff

The **Staff** (or Staff) is the area that the notation is written on. It is made up of five horizontal lines.

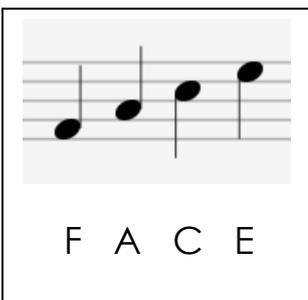
### Clefs

At the beginning of a piece of notation, there will be a symbol called a **Clef**. This tells you what the pitches of the following notes are. For guitar this is the **Treble Clef**. Different instruments use different Clefs. Bass guitar uses the **Bass Clef** and Piano uses both. There are other Clefs, but these are two most common. You don't necessarily need to know how to read music written in a clef other than your own (but it can be useful!).

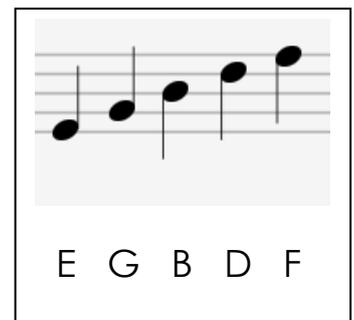


### Pitch

As mentioned above, the Staff is made up of five lines. These are used to tell you what **pitch** the note is. The higher the line the note is on, the higher the pitch. Notes can be found on any one of the five lines, or in between them.



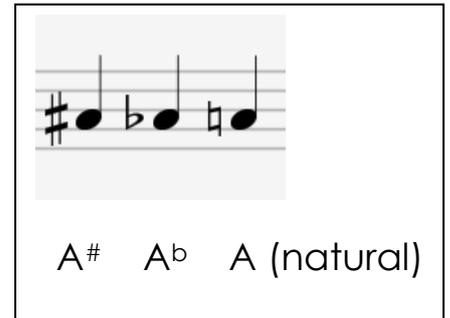
There are ways of remembering the pitches of the **Treble Clef**. The spaces can be remembered because they spell out the word **F A C E**. There is a Mnemonic that can be used for the pitches on the lines. 'Every **G**ood **B**oy **D**eserves **F**ood'.





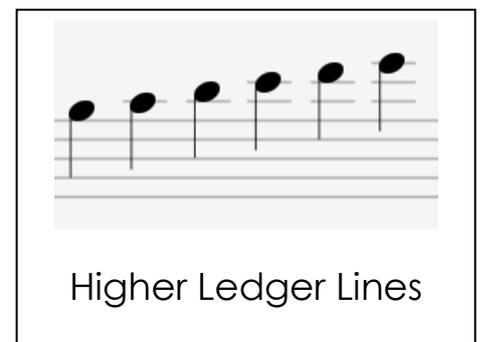
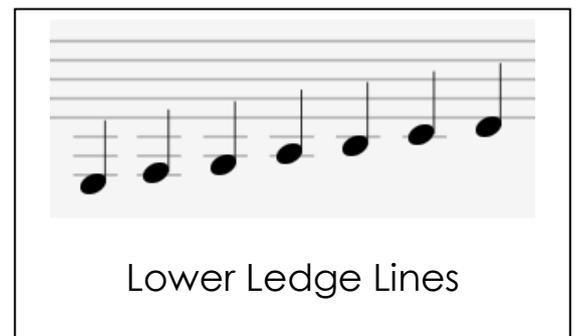
## Accidentals

We also have to consider the notes in between the whole notes. For example, we have a note in between A and G called A<sup>b</sup> (Flat) or G<sup>#</sup> (Sharp). The **Flat** symbol looks like a **lower-case B**, and this lowers the note after by a **semi-tone** (One fret on a guitar). The **Sharp** symbol looks like a **Hashtag** and this raises the following note by a **semi-tone**. The last commonly used accidental is a natural symbol and this returns a sharp or flat note to its original pitch.



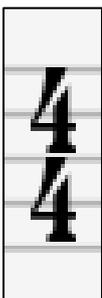
## Ledger lines

Because there are notes on our instruments beyond what we can write on the staff, we use things called **Ledger Lines**. These are **temporary lines** that **extend the Staff** and allow us to write **higher and lower Pitches**. The notes show Ledger Lines down below to the open low E string and up to the 12<sup>th</sup> fret on the High E string. Notes above the 12<sup>th</sup> fret of the High E would have Ledger Lines used along with other symbols.

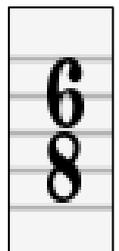


## Time signatures & Bars

So far we have talked about various symbols and the pitches, but **Rhythm** also has to be notated too. Music is broken up into **bars** which are written as **vertical lines on the Staff**.



At the beginning of the staff you will have a **Time Signature**, which tells you how many **beats per Bar** and what kind of beats they are. The most common Time Signature is **4/4** which tells us that there are **4 x Crotchets per Bar**. The top number is **how many beats** and the bottom number tells you **which type of beat**. Another common Time Signature is **6/8** and that tells us there are **6 x Quaver beats per bar**.





## Key Signatures

Between the Clef and the Time signature you may find something called the **Key Signature**. Now explaining what Key signatures are is a bit long for this guide, but in short it tells you to play **certain notes** as **Sharps** or **Flats** throughout **unless told otherwise**. In the key of G Major you have one sharp (F#), so if the key signature of G Major was displayed you would play **every F as an F# instead of an F Natural**. This saves time for you as the reader. Otherwise you would have to read all those F#'s. This is especially important when you could have keys with 5 sharps or 5 flats.



You can of course have a piece of music where the **key changes** halfway through, or **accidentals** are used to tell you where to use notes outside of the key. If there was a key change you would see the new key displayed at the start of the bar where it changes.

## Final words

Now there is a lot more to learn about Music notation, but this guide should get you started. See other guides that go into more depth with **Rhythm** and **Key Signatures**.