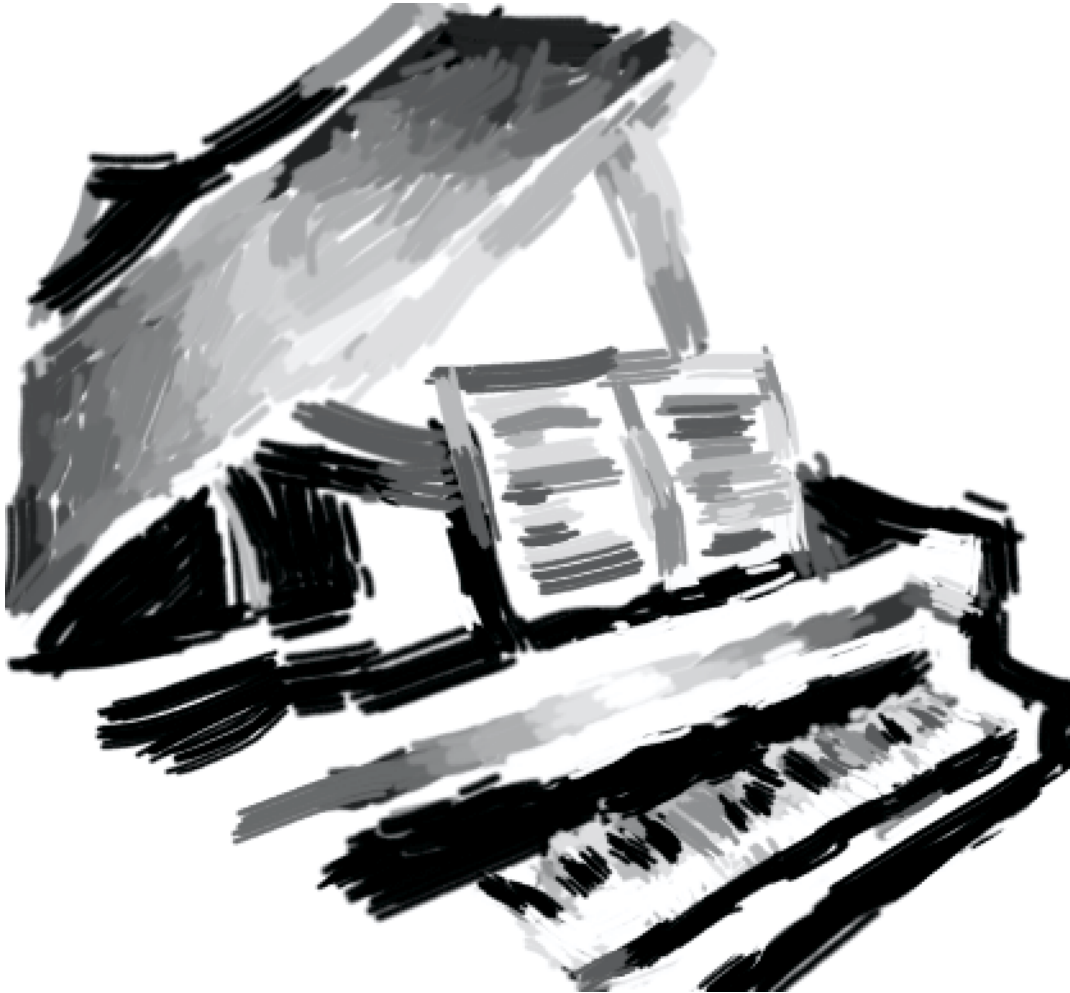


Student's Name

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# Learning the Code™

a method for piano study  
<http://www.learningthecode.com>



## Book 1

written and edited by James L. King III

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04-08-2003	additional extremely minor fixes, and additions to dedications page, added storefront URL on back cover.
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07-21-2003	major revisions on progress charts. URL and email address changed on license notices. (The old email and URL will remain active until at least January 1, 2006)

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# dedications

The editor wishes to thank all people who have tested the material, made submissions, suggestions, and comments. Some of these people are recognized below:

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Allan Gabay  
Keith Mead  
Kristene Gore

# introduction

Learning to play the piano or keyboard is fun. At each lesson, your teacher will give you some songs for you to learn at home. If you want to get really good, you need to play these songs every day.

At first, you might not play the pieces well. But as you play the songs some more, you'll find that you get better and better as you play them. After a while you will play your pieces very well. Soon, you may play these songs not only for your teacher, but also for your parents and for your friends and relatives.

In the future, you may play in a band. People may hear your music on the radio, or see your video on television! You might become a concert pianist who plays very hard music in front of many people. Think about how excited you'll be when everyone stands up and cheers for you when you finish playing! You could play the organ or piano at a church or temple. Perhaps you will become a teacher!

Even if you never do any of those things, you can still have fun playing your favorite songs anytime you want. You can play for yourself or maybe for a few friends, too.

Many musicians know how to read a secret code. This code tells them all about the musical sounds they should play. This code is really easy and fun to learn, but only if you take some time every day to practice using it, so let's get started!

James Legrand King III (Lee)

## Introduction for teachers:

This method book is designed to provide a solid approach to piano study and music reading, using a "landmark" system of note-reading. It is unique in using the paradigm of music as a "secret code" throughout the book.

Please inform the author/editor at [jlking3@hotpop.com](mailto:jlking3@hotpop.com) with your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and praise. It is important for the editor to know what works and does not work well and how the students respond, both good and bad. Every single comment and suggestion is cherished and considered. If you obtained this book free, and would like to support further development in this method series, contact the editor at the email address given above.

Book 1 is designed not only as the beginning of the Learning The Code series, but can also be used as a primer before beginning with any method book that has little or no pre-reading exercises. It may also be used as supplemental study material for students using other method books before they begin note reading on the staff.

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# have a seat!

There are many types of keyboards. There are pianos, synthesizers, organs, and portable keyboards, not to mention harpsichords, clavinets, celestas, and clavichords. Regardless of the keyboard you use, you must sit properly if you want to play it well.

Sit up straight, with your feet flat on the ground. If your feet do not touch the ground, then put a small stool on the floor (or even some books) and place your feet there.

Your elbows should be just a little higher than the keyboard. Adjust the piano bench or the keyboard stand until you are sitting at the correct height, or place books on your bench and sit on them.



When you play any type of keyboard, you should keep your hand relaxed and your fingers curved. Wrap your fingers around a tennis ball to see how curved your fingers should be. Play with your fingertips. Don't let your wrists fall down on the front of the keyboard.

Many people sit too close to the piano. Be sure that your knees are just underneath the keyboard. If you have to twist your wrists to play, you're sitting too close.

Some people play keyboards while standing up. If you do this, be sure that you adjust the height of your keyboard stand so that your forearms are level with the keyboard. Don't stand too close to the keyboard when you play.

Some keyboard instruments, like some synthesizers with guitar straps, and accordians, are meant to be played standing up. Even with these keyboards, curved, relaxed fingers are important.

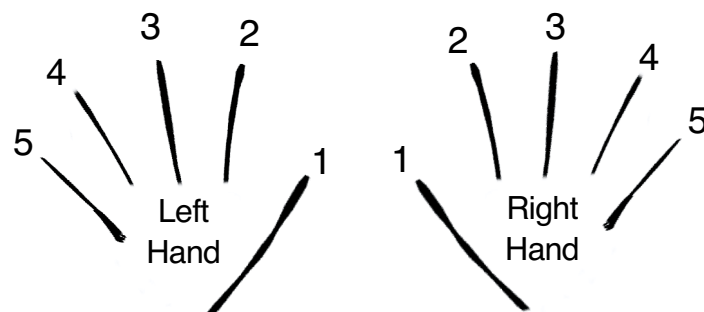
## How long should I practice?

It's not really how long you practice (although that helps) but it's what you do **when** you practice. At first, try to play each of your assigned pieces correctly at least 5 times every day. If you practice every day, you'll get better much faster. Your teacher will help you learn the best way to practice.



# coding the fingers

Sometimes you have to use a certain finger to play a certain key when you play the piano. Pianists and keyboardists use a number code for their fingers so they know exactly which finger to use. The thumb of the left hand is called finger number 1, and the thumb of the right hand is also called finger number 1.



There are several ways to help you learn and remember how your fingers are numbered:

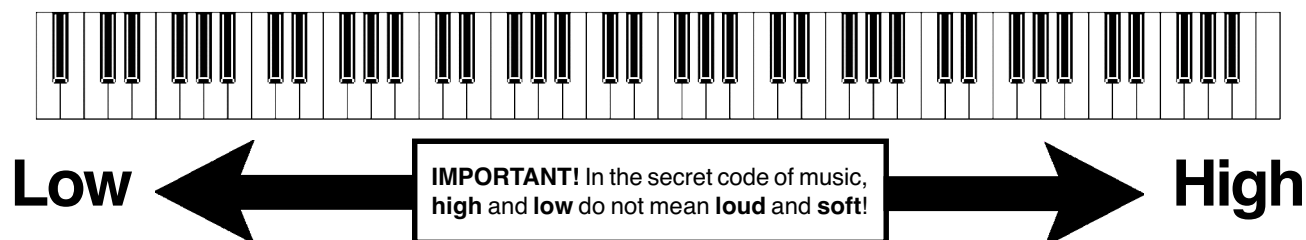
- 1) Place your hands together as if you are praying. Tap fingers 1 together, then fingers 2 together. While you do this, say the finger number out loud.
- 2) Trace an outline of your hands on a sheet of paper and number the fingers.
- 3) Place your hands on a table. Have someone say a finger number, then tap that finger number on the table. Later, the person calling out the numbers can also say whether to tap the right or the left hand.
- 4) No matter what, your thumb is finger 1. Always.

## Do you know right from left?

The easiest way to figure out which hand is which (if you still have trouble with right and left) is to hold out your hands in front of you, making sure you're looking at the backs of your hands. Fingers 1 and 2 on one hand will make a capital "L". That hand is your left hand.

# the keyboard

All keyboards have white and black keys. The black keys are found in groups of two and three. Sometimes there is an “orphan” black key on one side of the keyboard.



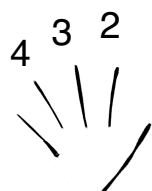
## Playing groups of 2 black keys



Use the right hand fingers 3 and 2. Play groups of two black keys, starting from the highest group. Say “play down” as you play each key and move down to the next group of two black keys. Keep playing until you get to the lowest group of two black keys.



## Playing groups of 3 black keys



Use the left hand fingers 4, 3 and 2. Play groups of three black keys, starting from the lowest group. Say “play-ing up” as you play each key and move up to the next group of three black keys. Keep playing until you get to the highest group of three black keys.

Experiment with playing up and down the groups of black keys. You might even try making up a song using just the black keys!

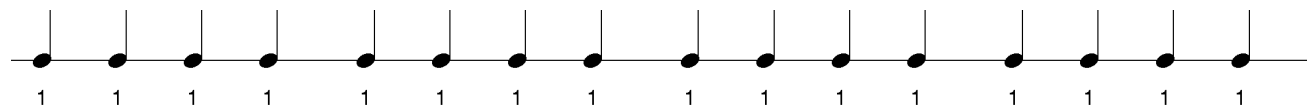


# keep the beat!

Music follows a steady pulse, just like your heart does. Some sounds last just a short time and other sounds last longer. Mixing these short and long sounds together creates **rhythm**. The steady pulse is sometimes called the **beat**.

Clap a steady pulse with your teacher. Then, while you're clapping, say "**ONE**" with each clap.




Many musicians know how to read a secret code. This code tells them about the sounds they are supposed to play and how they are supposed to play them. The rhythm you just clapped with your teacher would look like this in that secret code:



This code symbol is called a **quarter note**. When you are clapping once per pulse, click, or beat, you are clapping quarter notes. Quarter notes get **ONE** count or beat or click. The **stem** of the quarter note can go either up or down. When the stem points up, it's on the right side of the **notehead**. When the stem points down, it's on the left side:

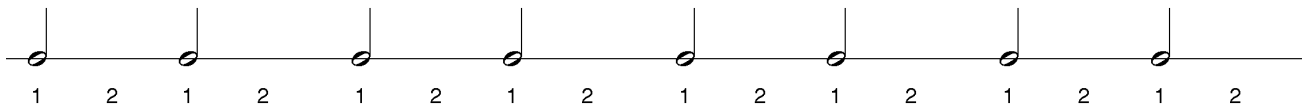


Draw 3 quarter notes with stems up and 3 quarter notes with stems down.

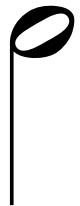
Start with an oval ...	Fill it in ...	Add the stem ... Now you're done!
		

# count to two!

Clap a steady pulse with your teacher. Then while you're clapping a steady pulse for a while, begin to count "**ONE-TWO**" and clap on "one" and hold your hands together on "two." The secret code looks something like this:



This code symbol is called a **half note**. When you are playing one note and holding it for two pulses, clicks, or counts, you are playing half notes. Half notes receive **TWO** counts or beats or clicks. Half notes last twice as long as quarter notes.



Sometimes musicians write in the counts under notes to help get the rhythm right. Under the line of notes below, write down how you would count the rhythm. Write "1" for every quarter note and "1 - 2" for every half note. Then clap and count the rhythm. Keep it slow and steady.



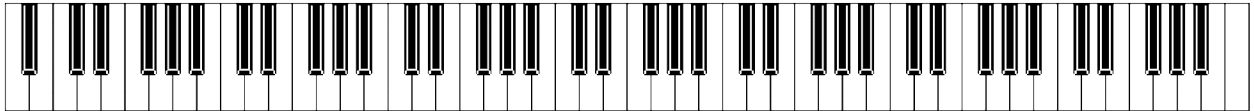
Draw 3 half notes with stems up and 3 half notes with stems down.



<p><b>Start with an oval ...</b></p> 	<p><b>Add the stem ...</b> <b>Now you're done!</b></p> 
--	--

# FunSheet

Draw a circle around all the 3 black key groups.  
 Draw a square around all the 2 black key groups.  
 Draw a triangle above the orphan black key.



Which direction on the keyboard is up? Which direction on the keyboard is down?  
 Write your answers below the arrows.



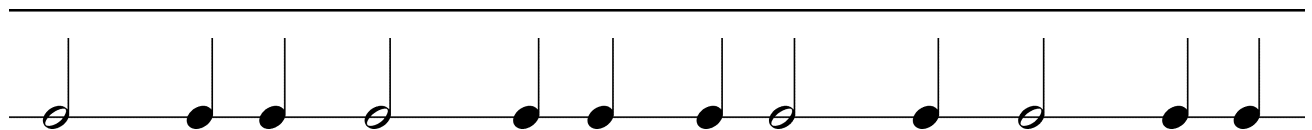
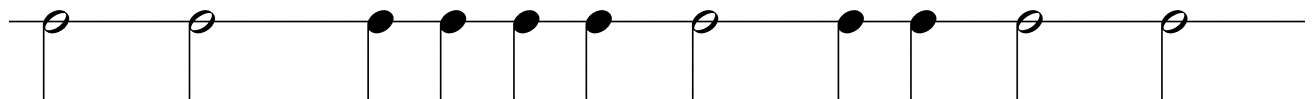
\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

The \_\_\_\_\_ of a note can go either up or down. (Hint: it's attached to the notehead.)

How would you count these rhythms? Write the counts below the notes. In class, clap and count the rhythm for your teacher.



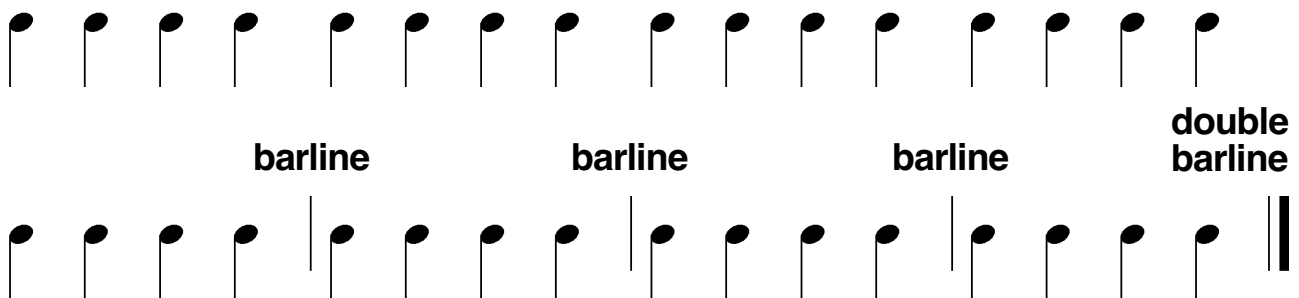
# dividing it up!

Spaces separate letters into words so they are easier to read.

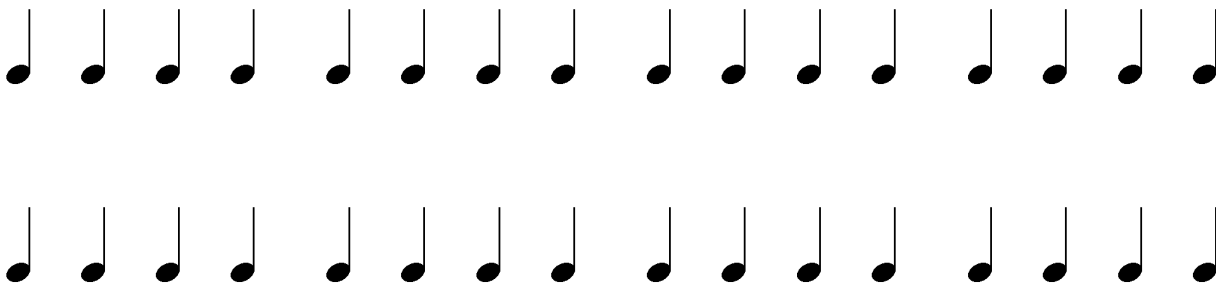
That jumble of letters above is a real sentence, but it is hard to read because there are no spaces. Once spaces are added to the sentence, it is easy to read:

Spaces separate letters into words so they are easier to read.

We separate letters with spaces into words. We separate notes with **barlines** into **measures**. Barlines and measures make music easier to read. A special barline called a **double barline** is used to mark the end of a song.



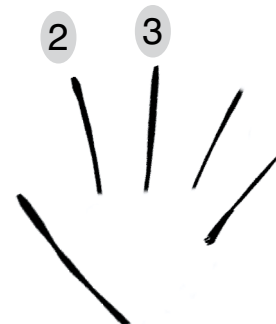
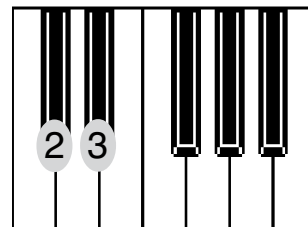
Divide these lines of notes into measures by adding barlines. Put 4 quarter notes in each measure. Draw a double barline at the end. (They're easy to draw: one thin line, then one thick line.)



# crickets

To play this song, you'll use fingers 2 and 3 of your right hand on a two black key group. Answer the questions below:

1. How would you count out the rhythm? Clap and count it.
2. Read the words of the song. Do you think this piece should be played high or low on the keyboard?



Use the achievement chart below to chart your progress!

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
correct hand	correct hand position	Level 2+ correct fingers	Level 3+ correct rhythm	everything correct 3 times	3 times in a row correctly

3 2 3 2 3 3

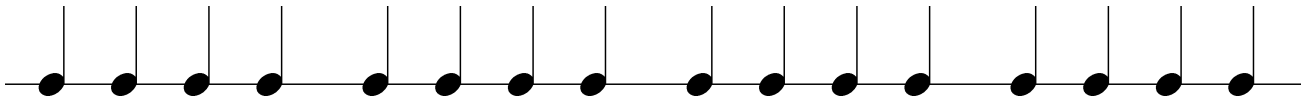
Hear the crick - ets chirp - ing,

2 3 2 3 2 2

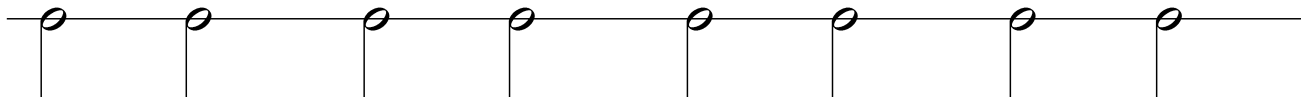
as the sky gets dark - er.

# FunSheet

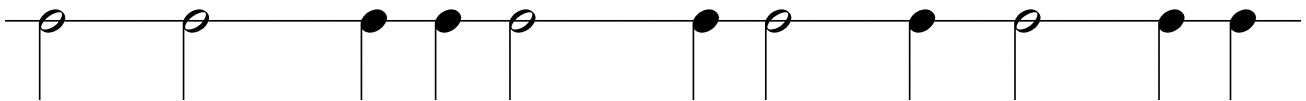
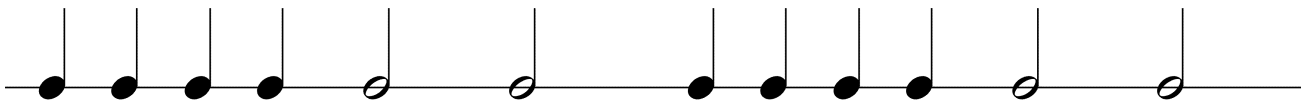
Divide this line of music into 4 equal measures. Draw a double bar at the end.



Divide this line of music into measures by adding bar lines after every 2 half notes. Add a double bar at the end.



Can you divide these examples into measures? Put four beats in each measure. Draw a double bar at the end of each line.

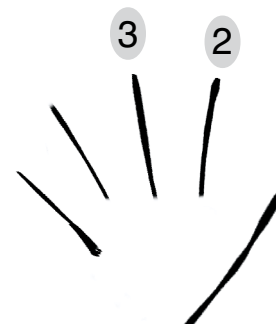
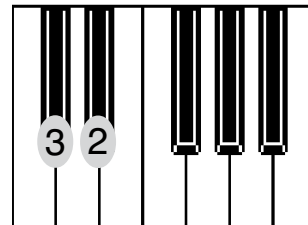




# lullaby

To play this song, you'll use fingers 2 and 3 of your left hand on a two black key group. Answer the questions below:

1. How would you count out the rhythm? Clap and count it.
2. Read the **lyrics**. (That's a secret code word for the words of the song.) Should this piece be played high or low on the keyboard?



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
correct hand	correct hand position	Level 2+ correct fingers	Level 3+ correct rhythm	everything correct 3 times	3 times in a row correctly

2
3
2
2
3

Sleep, sleep, ba - by sleep.

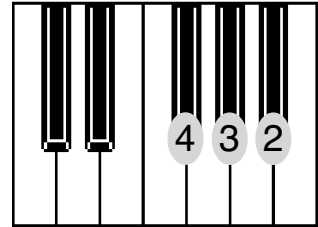
2
2
3
3
2
3

Close your eyes; don't you peep.

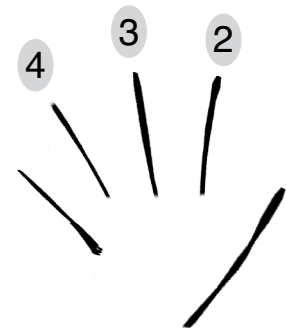
# at the zoo

To play this song, you'll use fingers 2, 3 and 4 of your left hand on a group of three black keys. Answer the questions below:

1. How would you count out the rhythm?
2. Read the lyrics. Should this piece be played high or low on the keyboard?



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
correct hand	correct hand position	Level 2+ correct fingers	Level 3+ correct rhythm	everything correct 3 times	3 times in a row correctly



4 3 2 3 | 4 3 2

There's a li - on look - ing proud!

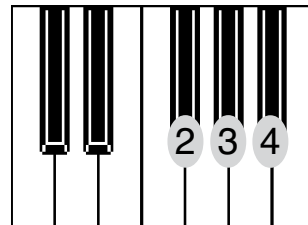
3 3 | 2 3 4

"Roar!" Wow, he is loud!

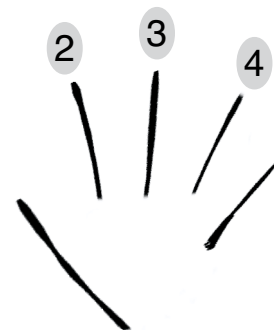
# count carefully

Use your right hand for this piece. Answer the questions below:

1. What fingers are you going to use?
2. Are the rhythms in the first line and second line the same or are the rhythms different?



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
correct hand	correct hand position	Level 2+ correct fingers	Level 3+ correct rhythm	everything correct 3 times	3 times in a row correctly



3 3 4 3 2 3 4

Count this rhy - thm care - ful - ly,

3 3 2 3 4 3 2










then you'll play it eas - i - ly!

# FunSheet

To make it through this maze, answer a question, then follow the directions for your answer. If you answer all the questions correctly, you'll make it to the finish!

Start Here!

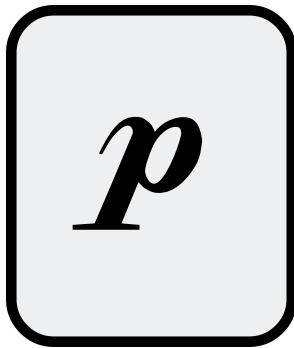


<p>If this is a quarter note, move right two spaces. If this note gets two beats, then move down three spaces.</p> 	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p>What do you call the line that separates measures? If you say it's a bar line, go right two spaces, but if you think it's a half note, go left two spaces.</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move down 4 spaces!</p>
<p>If this is a left hand, then move right three spaces. If this is a right hand, move right five spaces.</p> 	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p> If you count this 1-2-1-1, then go down four spaces. If you count this 1-1-1-2, then go left 2 spaces.</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move down 1 space!</p>
<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p>Is the arrow pointing to finger 1? If so, then move down 2 spaces. If not, then go down 3 spaces.</p> 	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move left by the number of beats a quarter note gets!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up by the number of beats a half note gets!</p>	<p>If you think the thumb is finger 1, go left one space, otherwise go up two spaces.</p>	<p>Take a break and move left one space for another question!</p>
<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 1 space!</p>	<p>What is this symbol? If you think it's a bar line, go up 2 spaces. If you think it's a double bar line, go right 4 spaces.</p> 	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p> If this note gets one beat, move down one space. If this note gets two beats, move down two spaces.</p>	<p>Take a break and move up two spaces for another question!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move left 2 spaces!</p>
<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p> If this is a left hand, move up 2 spaces. If this is a right hand, then move up 4 spaces.</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move left 1 space!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up 1 space!</p>	<p>Is the arrow pointing to finger 4? If so, move left 1 space. If not, move left 4 spaces.</p> 
<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up 4 spaces!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 1 space!</p>	<p>There are more white keys than black keys. If this is true, go left 2 spaces. If this is false, go up 2 spaces.</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 1 space!</p>	<p><b>Congratulations!</b> You made it!</p> 

# the *p* and *f* of it

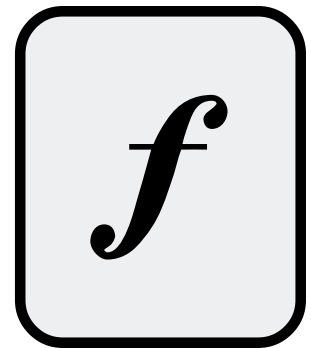
The first piano had a funny name. It was called the “soft-loud.” A musician could play the piano softly by playing the keys very gently or loudly by playing the keys very hard. Other keyboards made at that time, like the pipe organ and the harpsichord, could not do that.

In music, special code symbols are used to tell you how loud or soft you should play. (The secret code word for that is **dynamics**.)



This is the code symbol for soft. The Italian word for soft is **piano**. (pronounced pee-AH-no) The symbol is the first letter of the word *piano*. Go back to page 8, “The Keyboard,” and play through all the black key exercises again, this time playing as softly as possible. Be sure that the notes you play actually sound — it is easy to just press the key down and have no sound come out.

This is the code symbol for loud. The Italian word for loud is **forte**. (pronounced “FOUR-tay.”) The symbol is the first letter of the word *forte*. Go back to page 8, “The Keyboard,” and play through all the black key exercises again, this time playing as loudly as possible. Be sure to keep control as you play — it is easy to just “bang” on the keys, but that can hurt the keyboard.



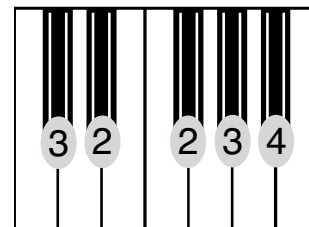
Trace the symbols in the boxes, then draw 3 forte symbols and 3 piano symbols below.

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Since the piano was first built by Bartolomeo Cristofore, an Italian, he used the Italian words “piano-forte” to name the instrument. Later it was shortened to “piano.”

# old macdonald

Check the keyboard for the correct hand position. In this song, notes above the line are to be played with the right hand, and notes below the line are to be played with the left hand. Follow the **dynamics**. Make up some new verses with different instruments.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
correct hand position	Level 1+ correct rhythm	Level 2+ correct notes	Level 3+ correct dynamics	3 times correctly	3 times in a row correctly

Right Hand

Left Hand

Old Mac - Don - ald wrote a song, E I E I O! And

Right Hand

Left Hand

in this song he played a flute, E I E I O! He'd

Right Hand

Left Hand

toot toot here and toot toot there! Here and there and ev - 'ry - where!(Toot!)

Right Hand

Left Hand

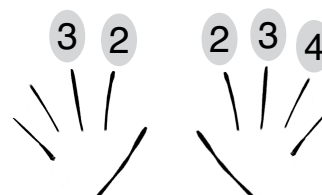
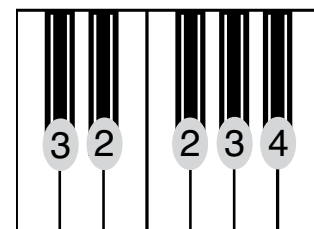
Old Mac - Don - ald wrote a song, E I E I O! (Toot!)



# sound off!

Check the keyboard for the correct hand position. In this song, notes above the line are to be played with the right hand, and notes below the line are to be played with the left hand. Follow the **dynamics** carefully.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
correct hand position	Level 1+ correct rhythm	Level 2+ correct notes	Level 3+ correct dynamics	3 times correctly	3 times in a row correctly



Right Hand

Left Hand

*p* *f*

Prac - tice key - board ev' - ry day! (Prac - tice key - board ev' - ry day!)

Right Hand

Left Hand

*p* *f*

You'll get ve - ry good that way! (You'll get ve - ry good that way!)

Right Hand

Left Hand

*p* *f* *p* *f*

Sound off! (Sound off!) Let's go! (Let's go!)

Right Hand

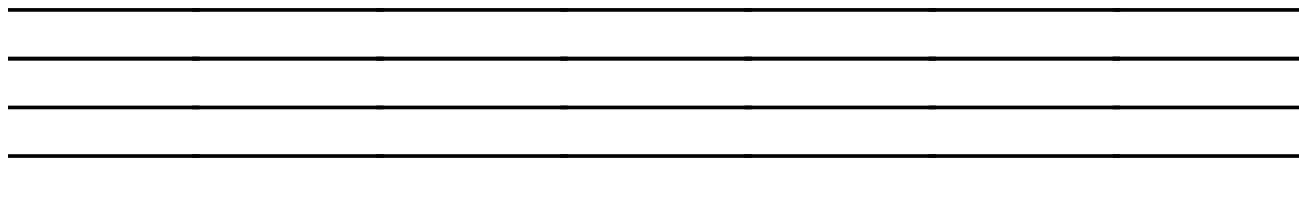
Left Hand

*p* *f*

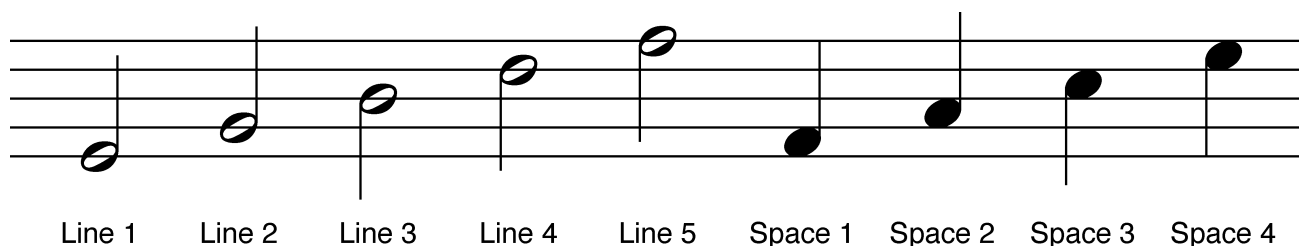
Keep it stea - dy, fin - gers curved and sit tall! That is all!

# the staff

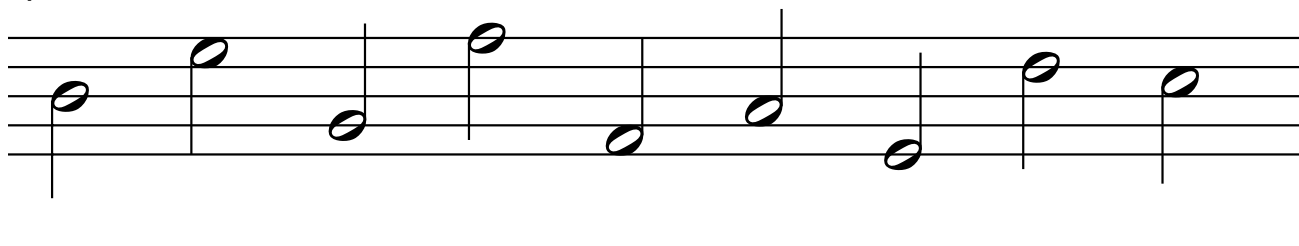
The secret code of music is written on set of 5 lines called a **staff**:



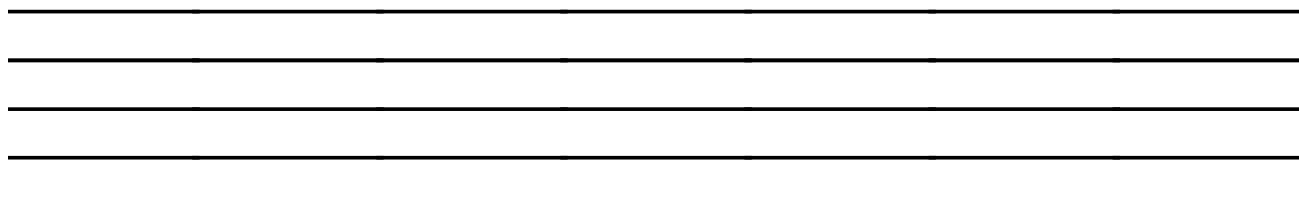
Notes can be written on the lines or in the spaces between the lines. We number the lines and spaces from the bottom to the top, from lowest to highest:



On which lines or spaces are the following notes written? Use L1 for line 1, S1 for space 1, L2 for line 2, and so on.



On the staff below, draw half notes on lines or spaces. Don't repeat a line until you've used all the lines and don't repeat a space until you've used all the spaces. If a note is on or above the third line, turn the stem down. Otherwise, turn the stem up.

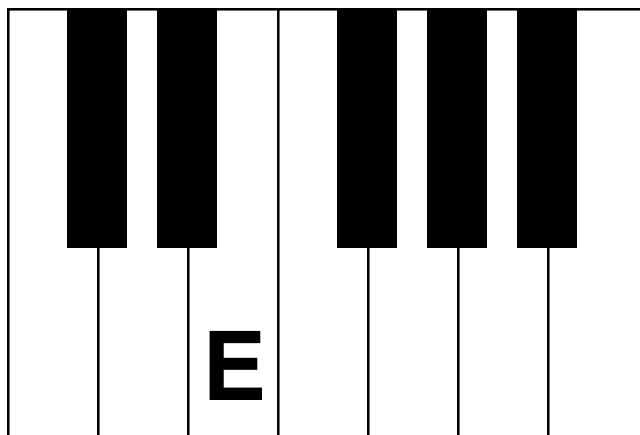
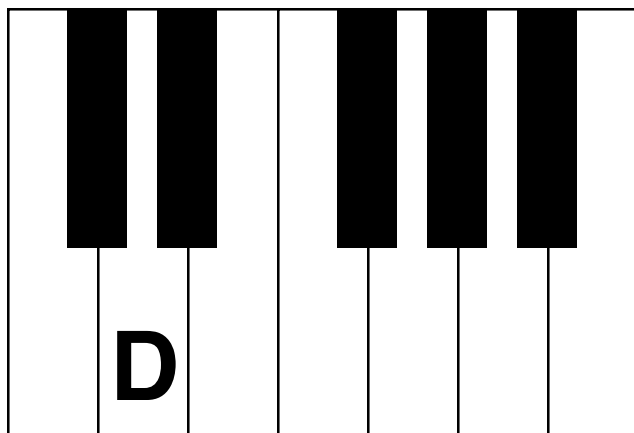


Line    Space    Space    Line    Space    Line    Line    Space    Line

# white keys cde

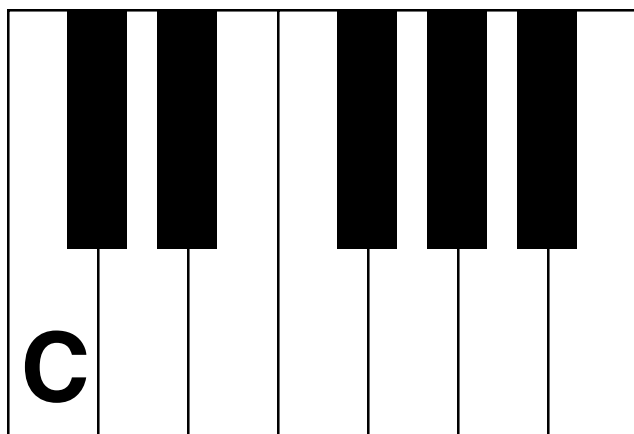
The staff is important because each line and each space on the staff stands for a certain **white** key on the keyboard. The first seven letters of the alphabet are used to name all the lines and spaces on the staff: **A, B, C, D, E, F, and G**. Those seven letters also name all the white keys on the keyboard. The black keys can be used to help you find all the white keys.

**D** is the easiest key to find. It is found between the two black keys in the two black key group. Find all the D's on your keyboard.

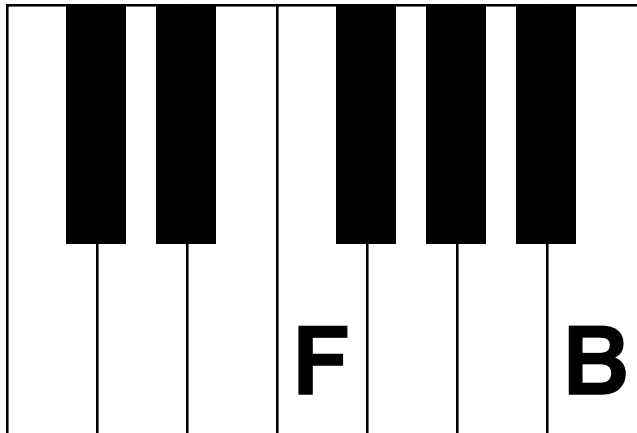


**E** is the next easiest key to find. It is found to the right of the group of two black keys. Find all the E's on your keyboard.

**C** is found on the left side of the group of two black keys. One special C, called **Middle C**, is the C closest to the middle of your keyboard or piano. Find every C on your keyboard. Find Middle C on your keyboard.



# white keys fgab

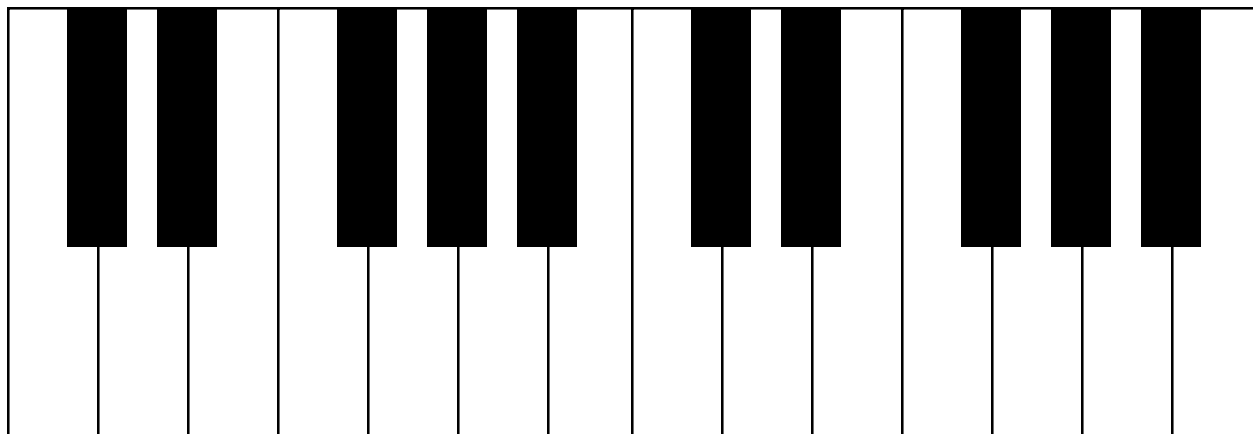


The next two easiest keys to find are **F** and **B**. F is found on the left side of the group of **three** black keys, and B is located on the right side of the group of three black keys. Find every F and B on your keyboard.

The last two keys to find are **G** and **A**. They are the keys in the middle of the group of three black keys. G is between the first two black keys, and A is between the last two black keys. Find every G and A on your keyboard.



Can you write in all the names of the white keys on this keyboard?

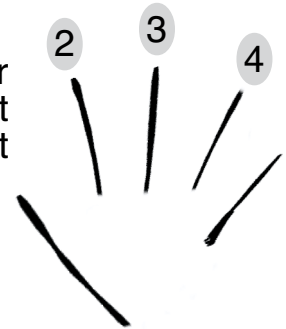


# finding notes

The most important part of reading the secret music code is being able to find the right key to play by looking at where a note is on the staff. Here's how to do it:

The letter to the left of the staff tells you what white key to play when the note is on that certain line or space. Notes can then **step** up or down on the staff (which means you play **the very next white key** on the keyboard) or **repeat** on the same line or space (which means that you play the same key).

Use your right hand and play this piece by reading the finger numbers. Start on the G above middle C. After you have played it correctly, write in the letter names under the notes. Then play it again, paying attention to the steps and repeated notes.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	3 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row

2 3 4 4 4 4 4 4

G

*f*

Notes step up, re - peat and then the

4 3 2 3 2 3 2

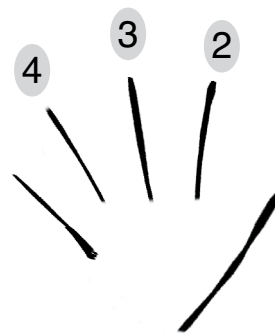
notes step down and then they end.

# staff reading

Practice reading from the staff playing with your left hand now.

The letter to the left of the staff tells you what white key you should play when the note is on that line or space. Notes then step up or down on the staff or repeat on the same line or space.

Use your left hand and play this example by finger numbers. Start on the F below middle C. After you have played it correctly, write in the letter names of the notes that you played. Then play it again, paying attention to the steps and repeated notes.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	3 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row

**F**

2 3 4 4 4 4

*p*

Notes step down, notes re - peat.

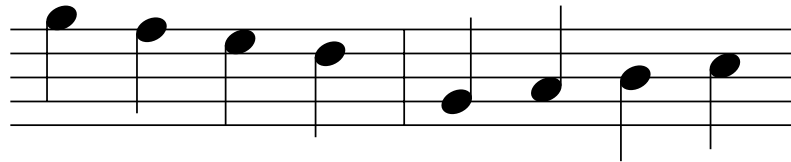
4 3 2 2 3 2

Notes step up. Gee, that's neat!



# steps and seconds

Steps move on the staff by going from a line to the **very next** space or from a space to the **very next** line, up or down:



On the keyboard, steps move from one white key to the **very next** white key. They also move from one letter in the musical alphabet to the **very next** letter, up or down.



The secret code word for “step” is a **second**.

We use secret code words like “second” and “third” and “fourth” to let us know how far away notes are from each other on the keyboard and on the staff.

These special code words are called **intervals**.

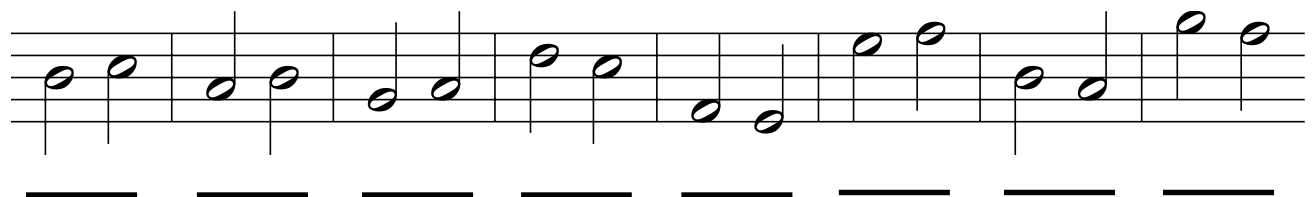
Start on Middle C. Play the note a second higher. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Start on Middle C. Play the note a second lower. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Start on any E. Play the note a second higher. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

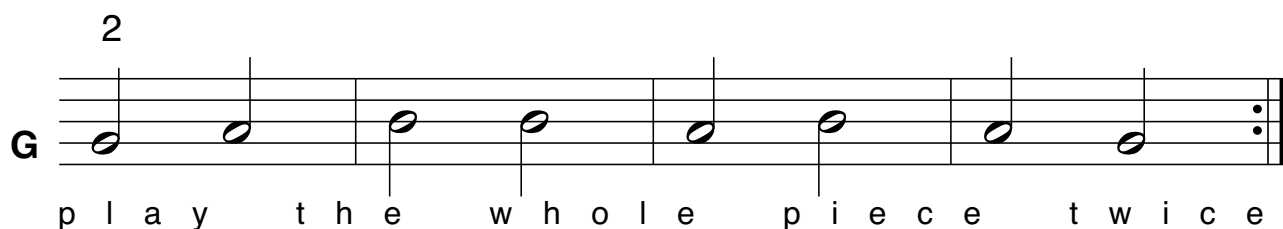
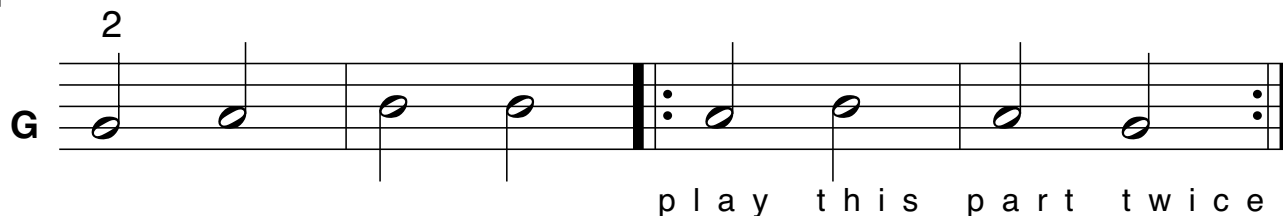
Start on any A. Play the note a second lower. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Are these steps moving up or down?



# play it again!

There's another special code symbol that looks like a double bar line with two dots. It's called a **repeat sign**. Everything between the repeat signs is played twice. If there is no beginning repeat sign, then go back to the beginning and play the whole piece twice.



Play the above exercises with your right hand. On what note are you going to begin? With which finger? Write in the other finger numbers and letter names of the notes if you need to. Follow the repeat signs carefully.

In the following three lines of music, shade in the areas that will be played twice.



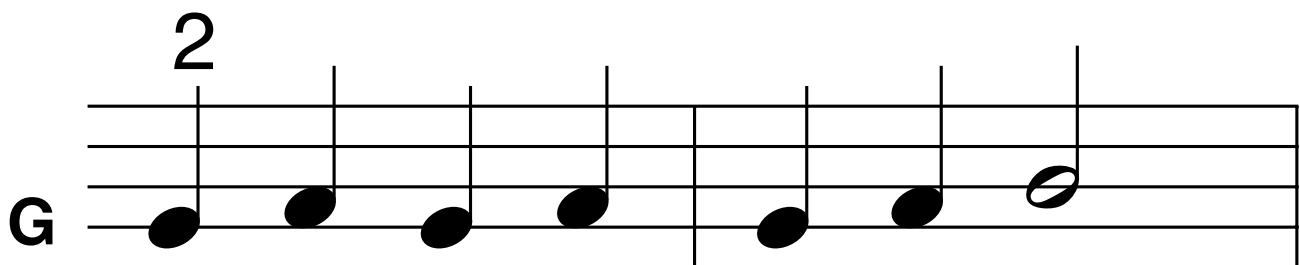
For extra credit, play these three lines of music correctly, including repeats. Use the right hand on the first two lines and the left hand for the last line.

# rh seconds

This song uses your right hand. Try to read the music by following the pattern of steps: G, step up, step down, etc. Start on the G above middle C.

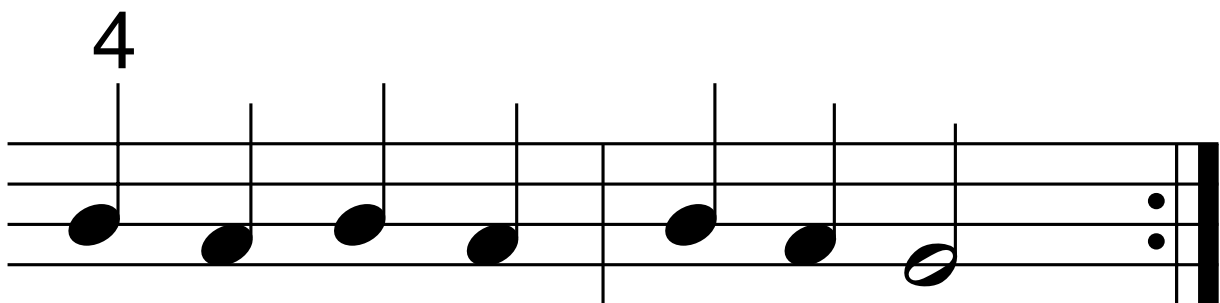
Circle the repeat sign at the end. There is no beginning repeat sign, so you'll go back to the beginning of the piece and play the whole song a second time. Keep the rhythm steady, and be sure that your fingers are curved while you play!

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	Level 3+ correct dynamics	Level 4+ repeating correctly	3 times correctly in a row



*p*

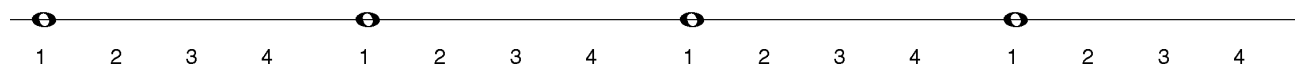
1. See how sec - onds move by steps?  
2. Now we play a sec - ond time.



The re - peat sign means two reps.  
Keep it soft, you're do - ing fine!

# in the whole!

Clap a steady pulse with your teacher. While you're clapping a steady pulse, begin to count "**ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR**" and clap on "one" and hold your hands together on "two-three-four." The secret code looks like this:






This code symbol is called a **whole note**. When you play one note and hold it for four pulses, clicks, or counts, you are playing whole notes. Whole notes receive **FOUR** beats or counts. Whole notes last twice as long as half notes, and four times as long as quarter notes. Whole notes do not have a stem. They can be drawn with two diagonal lines inside for decoration, or they can be drawn as just plain ovals.

Try clapping and counting this exercise with half, quarter and whole notes:



Draw 3 whole notes with the diagonal lines, then 3 whole notes without.

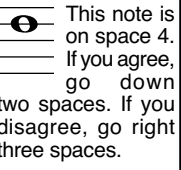
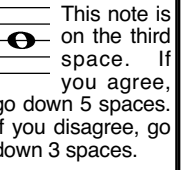
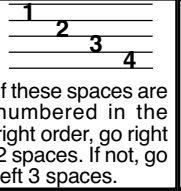
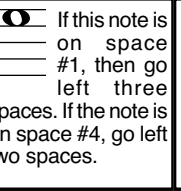
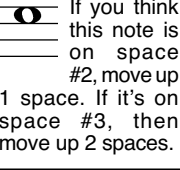
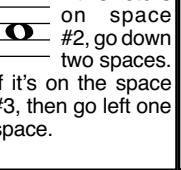
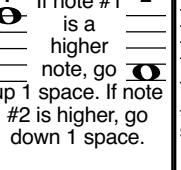
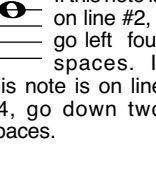
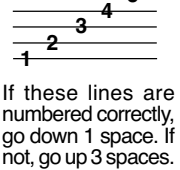
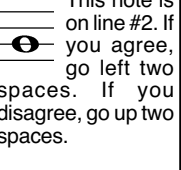
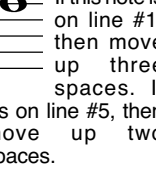
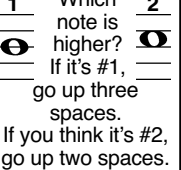



<b>Start with an oval ...</b> (you're done now if you want) 	<b>Add the two diagonal lines ...</b> 	<b>Fill them in ... now you're done!</b> 
--	---	--

# FunSheet

Answer a question, then move according to your answer. If you answer all the questions correctly, you'll make it to the finish!

## START HERE

 <p>If this note is on a line, go down two spaces. If this note is on a space, go right four spaces.</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 2 spaces!</p>	 <p>This note is on space 4. If you agree, go down two spaces. If you disagree, go right three spaces.</p>	 <p>This note is on the third space. If you agree, go down 5 spaces. If you disagree, go down 3 spaces.</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move down 3 spaces!</p>
<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move down 4 spaces!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move down 3 spaces!</p>	 <p>If these spaces are numbered in the right order, go right 2 spaces. If not, go left 3 spaces.</p>	 <p>If this note is on space #1, then go left three spaces. If the note is on space #4, go left two spaces.</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>
<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 1 space!</p>	 <p>If you think this note is on space #2, move up 1 space. If it's on space #3, then move up 2 spaces.</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	 <p>If this note is on space #2, go down two spaces. If it's on the space #3, then go left one space.</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up 1 space!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move left 2 spaces!</p>
<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up 3 spaces!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up 2 spaces!</p>	 <p>If note #1 is a higher note, go up 1 space. If note #2 is higher, go down 1 space.</p>	 <p>If this note is on line #2, go left four spaces. If this note is on line #4, go down two spaces.</p>
<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 5 spaces!</p>	 <p>If these lines are numbered correctly, go down 1 space. If not, go up 3 spaces.</p>	 <p>This note is on line #2. If you agree, go left two spaces. If you disagree, go up two spaces.</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move left 2 spaces!</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	 <p>If this note is on line #1, then move up three spaces. If it's on line #5, then move up two spaces.</p>
<p>What is this called? If it's called a note, go up 2 spaces, but if it's called a staff, go right 4 spaces.</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move right 1 space!</p>	 <p>Which note is higher? If it's #1, go up three spaces. If you think it's #2, go up two spaces.</p>	<p><b>Nope!</b></p> <p>go back and try again!</p>	<p><b>Correct!</b></p> <p>Move up 2 spaces!</p>	<p><b>You made it!</b></p>  <p><b>Congratulations!</b></p>

# 1h seconds

This song uses your left hand. Try to read the music by following a pattern: the notes move either up or down a second, or they repeat. You may begin on any C.

Circle the repeat sign at the end. Since there is no beginning repeat sign, you'll go back to the beginning of the piece and play the whole song a second time. Follow the dynamic sign, and be sure to use curved fingers while playing! Use the progress chart to help you practice properly.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	Level 3+ correct dynamics	Level 4+ repeating correctly	3 times correctly in a row

5

C

1. Fin - ger five now joins the oth - ers,  
2. Sec - onds play - ing in the left hand,

4

what a friend to meet!  
keep a stea - dy beat!



# FunSheet

Solve the clues to figure out the words you need to find in the word search. Turn the page upside down if you need a list of words to help you.

This separates notes into measures.

\_\_\_\_\_ keys are arranged in groups of two and three.

Keep your fingers \_\_\_\_\_ while playing.

This is found at the end of a piece.

This is the italian word for "loud."

This note gets two beats.

The distance between two barlines is called a \_\_\_\_\_.

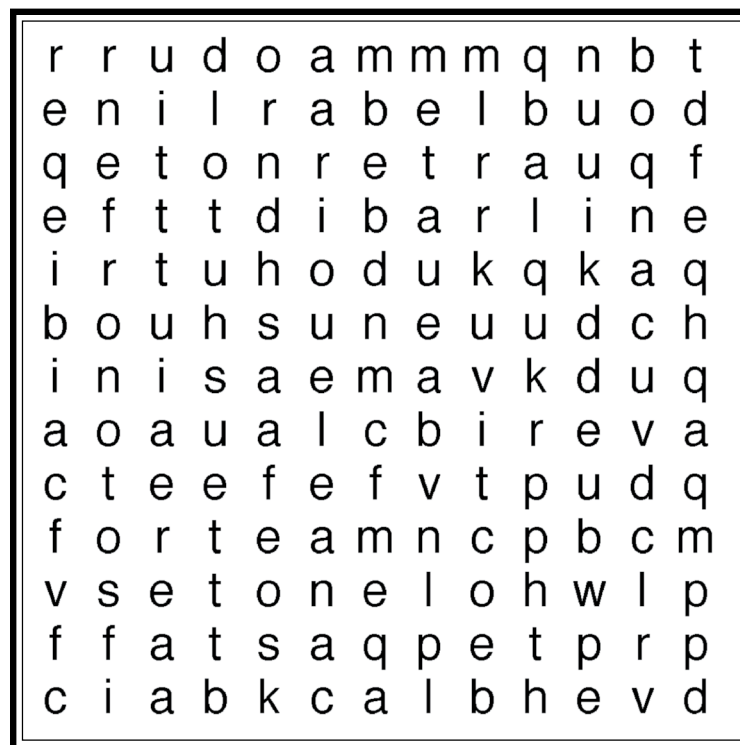
This is the Italian word for "soft."

This note gets one beat.

The 5 lines on which music notes are written.

Finger 1 is your \_\_\_\_\_.

This note gets 4 beats.

[illegible]

double barline, quarter note, whole note, half note, barline, measure, curved, black, forte, piano, staff, thumb

# gee, a clef!

So far, you've seen a letter at the beginning of the staff to tell you on which key to begin playing. There are special code symbols (which used to be letters a long time ago) that help you find the first key to play. These code symbols are called **clefs**.



This code symbol is a **G clef**. It gets that name because it came from the letter G. If you look carefully, you will see the letter G hidden inside. That G locates a certain G on the keyboard: the G right above middle C. When you see a note on the line that's marked with the G clef (it's line 2), you'll play the G above middle C. The G clef is used to name notes above middle C, in the middle to high part of the piano. The word "treble" means high, so the G clef is also called the **treble clef**.

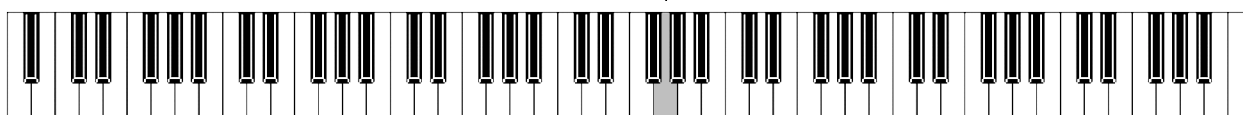


The **G** circles around ...

Usually G clef notes are played with the right hand, but not always! (The left hand can play high notes, too!)



Line 2, which means that a note placed there will be played on a special key on the keyboard ...



← **C** ← **G** ... this G, the G above Middle C.

Use a sheet of manuscript paper and draw several lines of G clefs.

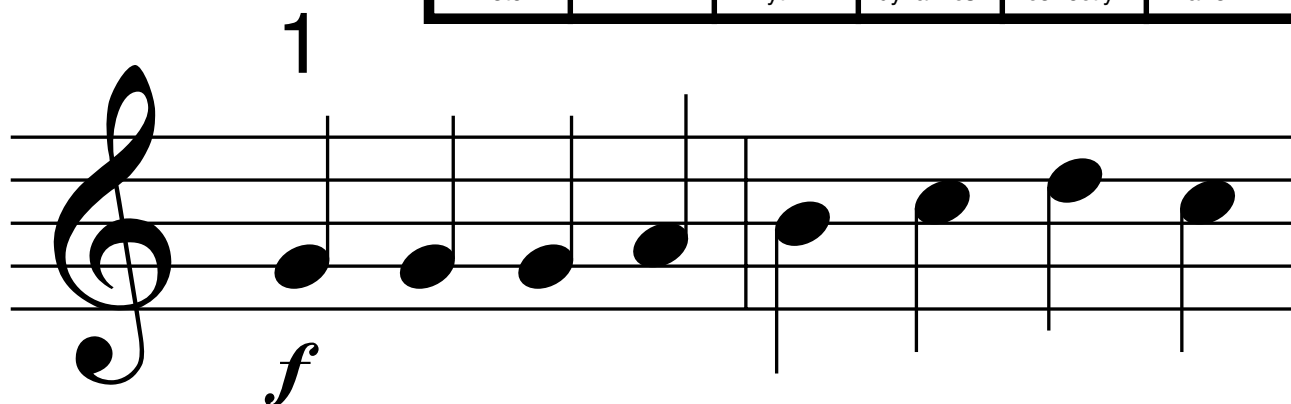
<b>Start with a J ...</b> 	<b>Add a half circle ...</b> 	<b>Add the G ... Now you're done!</b> 
-------------------------------	----------------------------------	---

# g clef reading

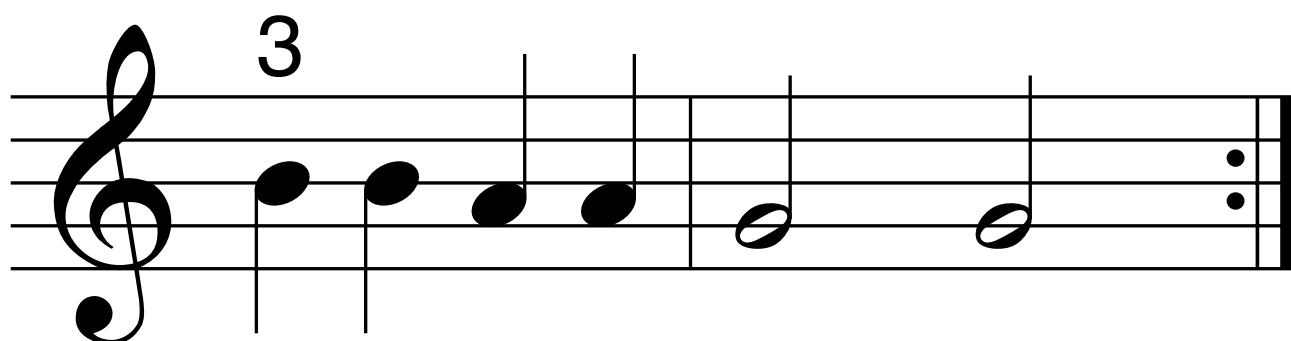
Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What finger are you going to use to play that note? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Which hand are you probably going to use? (circle your answer) Left Right
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	Level 3+ correct dynamics	Level 4+ repeating correctly	3 times correctly in a row



1. G, re - peat then step up high and  
2. Now we play a sec - ond time and



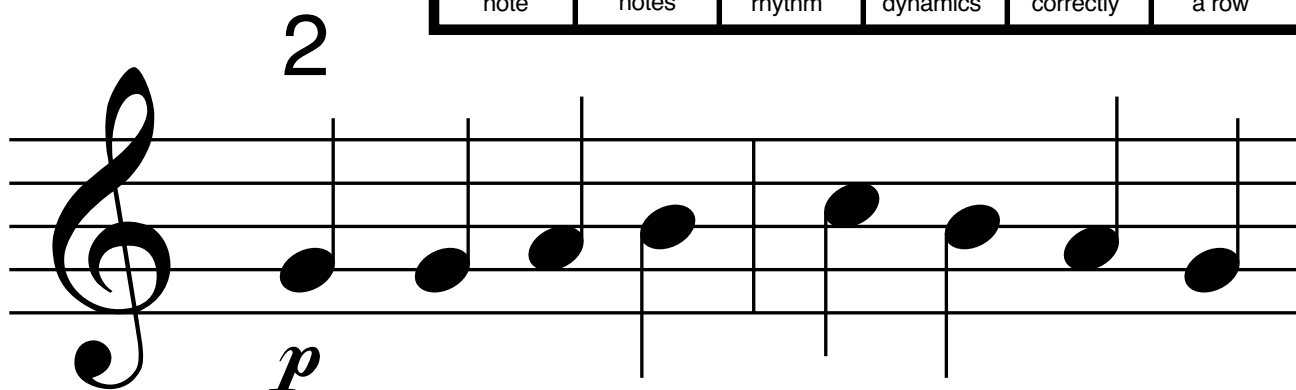
then re - turn to G, Gee!  
find - ing it so ea - sy!

# g clef reading II

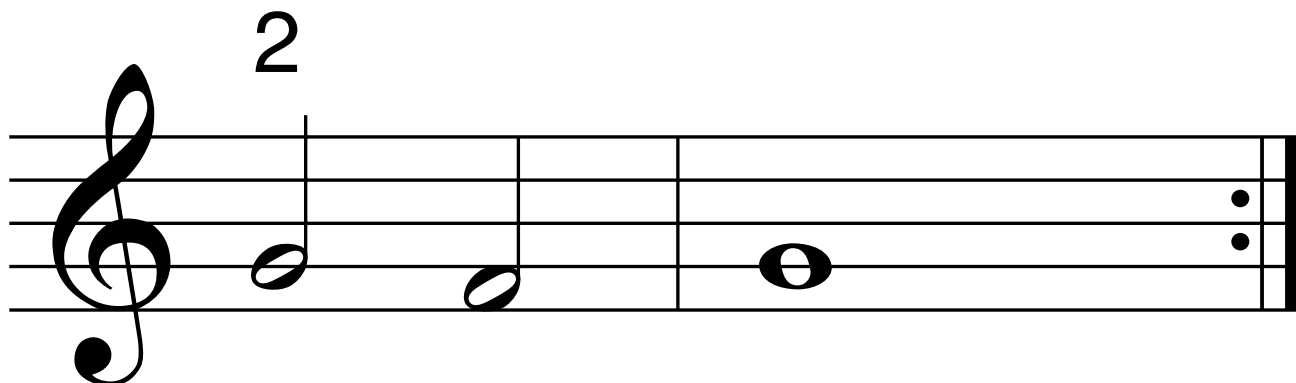
Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What finger are you going to use to play that note? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Which hand are you probably going to use? (circle your answer) Left Right
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	Level 3+ correct dynamics	Level 4+ repeating correctly	3 times correctly in a row



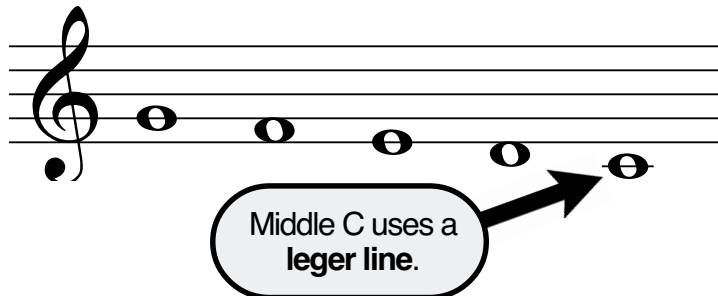
1. Now we try a diff - 'rent fing - er  
2. Read - ing mu - sic is so ea - sy,



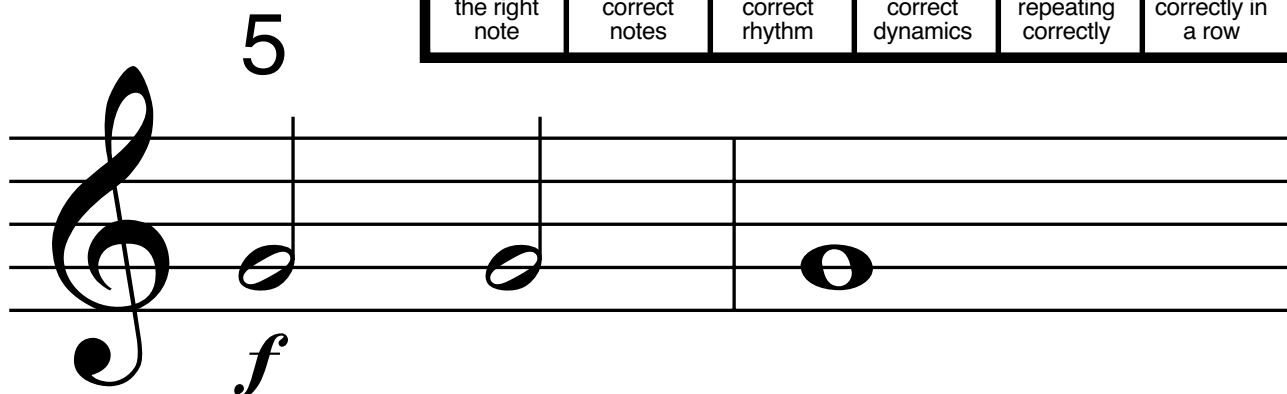
to be - gin.  
now we end.

# over the “leger”

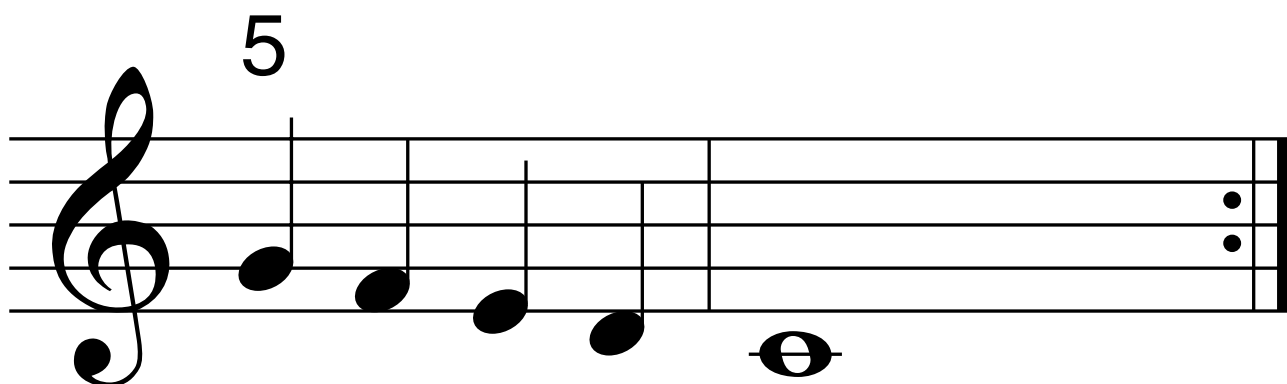
Musicians add extra lines to the staff when they run out of lines and spaces. The code for these special, extra lines is **leger** lines (sometimes spelled **ledger**). Leger lines are only used when they are needed.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	Level 3+ correct dynamics	Level 4+ repeating correctly	3 times correctly in a row




1.Start on G,  
2.Fin - gers curved,




mov - ing down to C.  
keep it stea - dy, please.

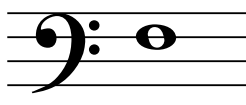
# the f clef

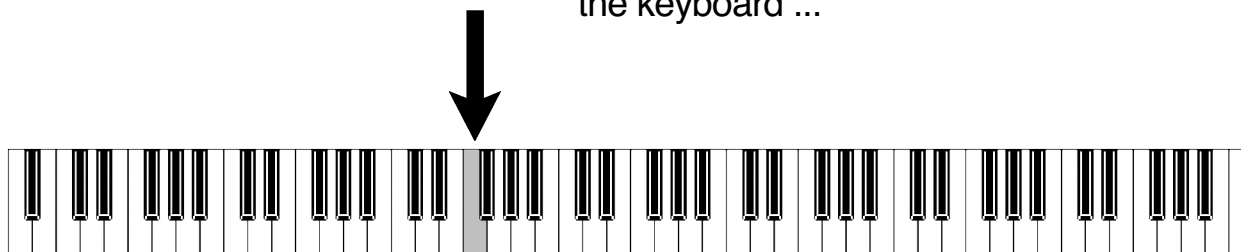
Just as there is a code symbol for the high notes on the keyboard, there is a special code symbol for the low notes, too.



This code symbol is an **F clef**. It gets that name because it came from the letter F. If you look carefully, you'll see that it even looks like a fancy letter F. That F locates a certain F on the keyboard: the F right below middle C. When you see a note on the line that's marked with the F clef (it's line 4), you'll play the F below middle C. The F clef is used to name notes below middle C, in the middle to low part of the keyboard. The word "bass" (pronounced with a long a) means low, so the F clef is also called the **bass clef**.



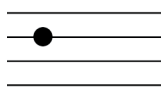


The **F** is found on ...  Line 4, which means that a note placed there will be played on a special key on the keyboard ...



... this F,  **F**  **C**  
the one below Middle **C**

Usually F clef notes are played with the left hand, but not always! (The right hand can play low notes, too!)

Use a sheet of manuscript paper and draw several lines of F clefs.

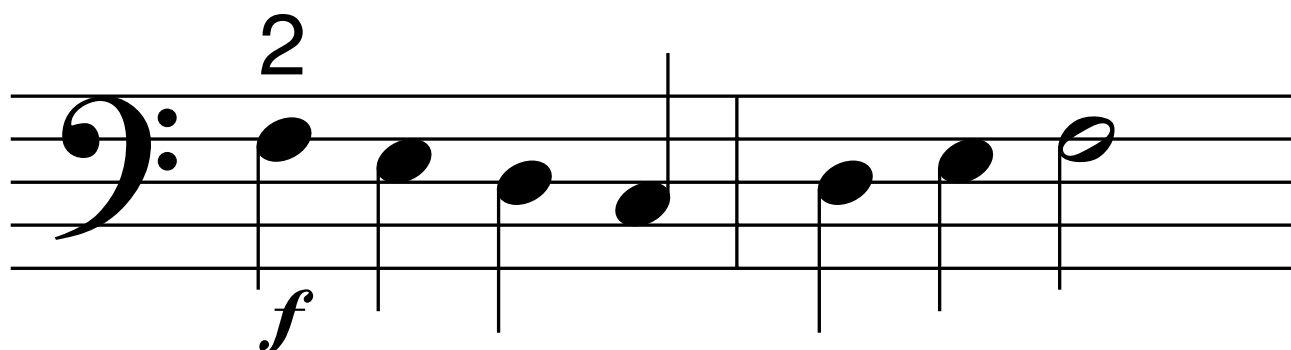
<b>Draw a dot on line 4...</b> 	<b>Curl around from top to bottom ...</b> 	<b>Add dots in the top 2 spaces ...</b> 
<b>Now you're done!</b>		

# f clef reading

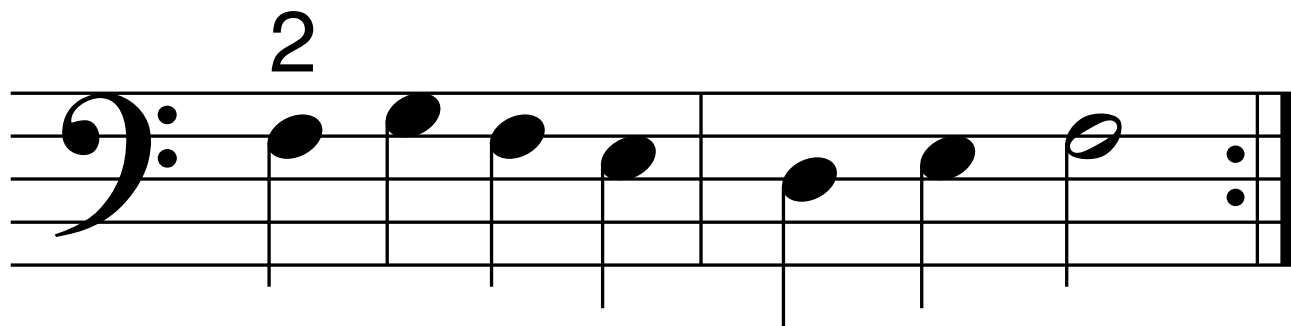
Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What finger are you going to use to play that note? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Which hand are you probably going to use? (circle your answer) Left Right
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
starting on the right note	Level 1+ correct notes	Level 2+ correct rhythm	Level 3+ correct dynamics	Level 4+ repeating correctly	3 times correctly in a row



1. F clef, left hand sure is fun!  
 2. All five fin - gers play - ing fine,



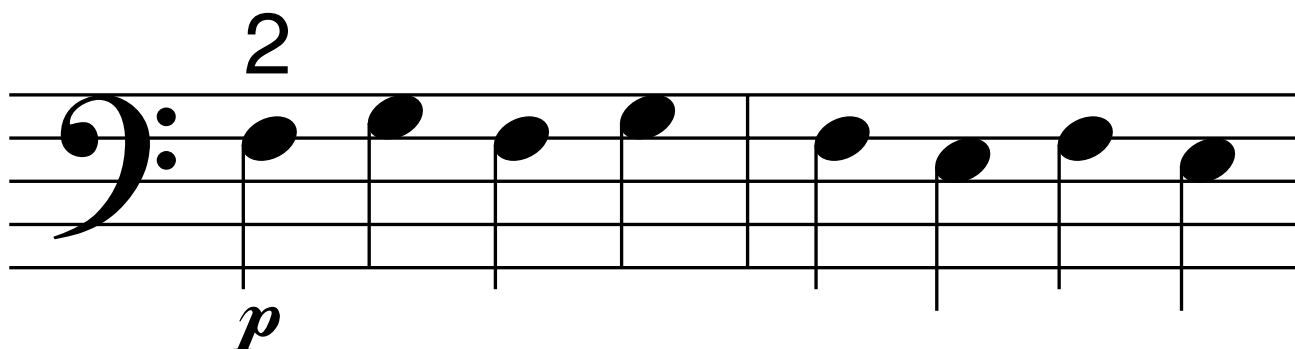
Play a - gain and then you're done!  
 count out loud in per - fect time!

# f clef reading II

Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

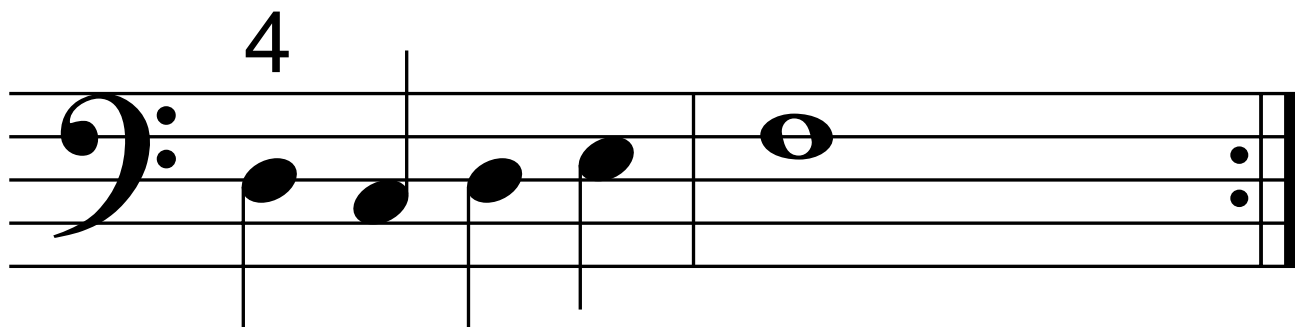
- 1) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What finger are you going to use to play that note? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Which hand are you probably going to use? (circle your answer) Left Right
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
5 times	5 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row	7 times correctly in a row	10 times correctly in a row



*p*

1. F, now step up, F, now step down,  
 2. Keep it gen - tle, keep it stea - dy,



then re - turn to F.  
 D C D E F.

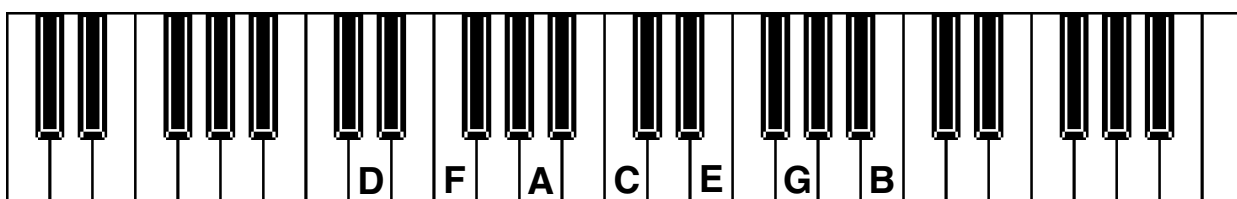


# skips and thirds

Skips move on the staff by going from a line to the **very next line** or from a space to the **very next space**, up or down:

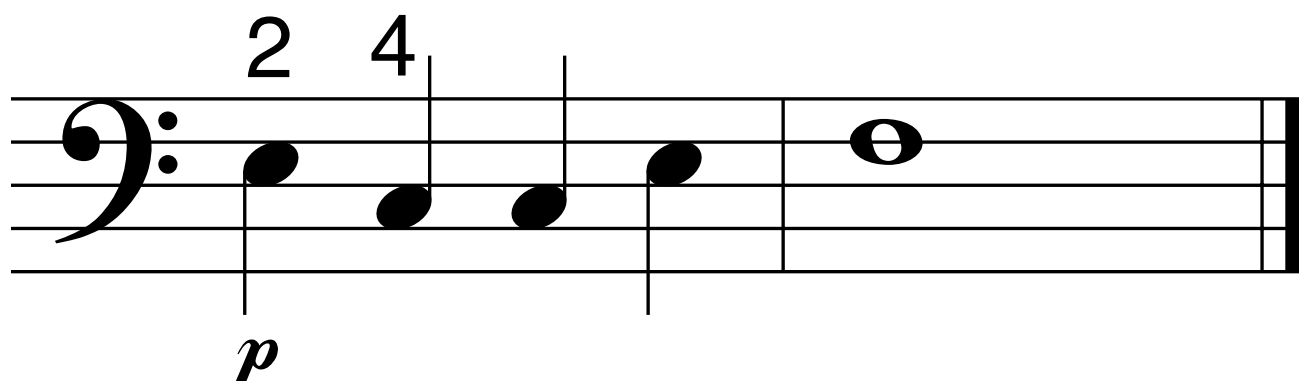
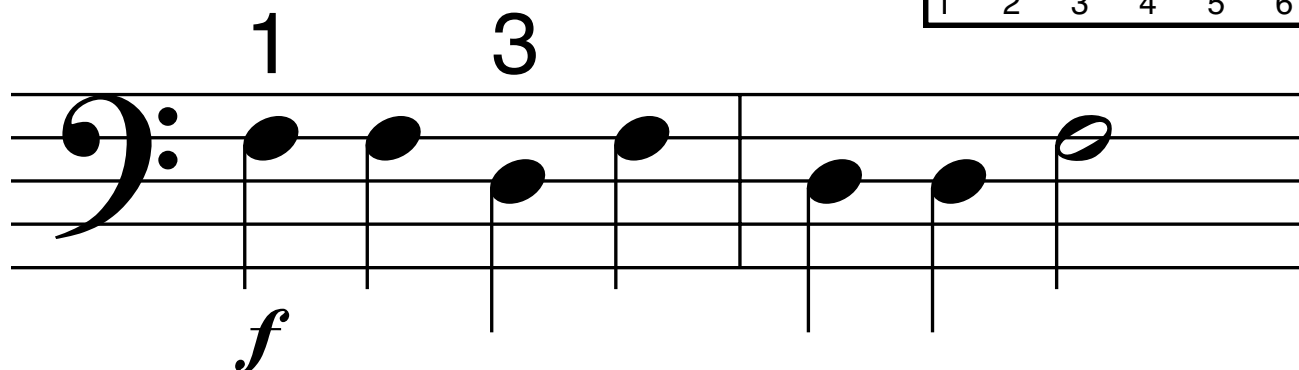


On the keyboard, skips jump over a white key, either up or down. They also skip a letter in the musical alphabet. The code word for a “skip” is **third**.



## Level Progress Chart

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---



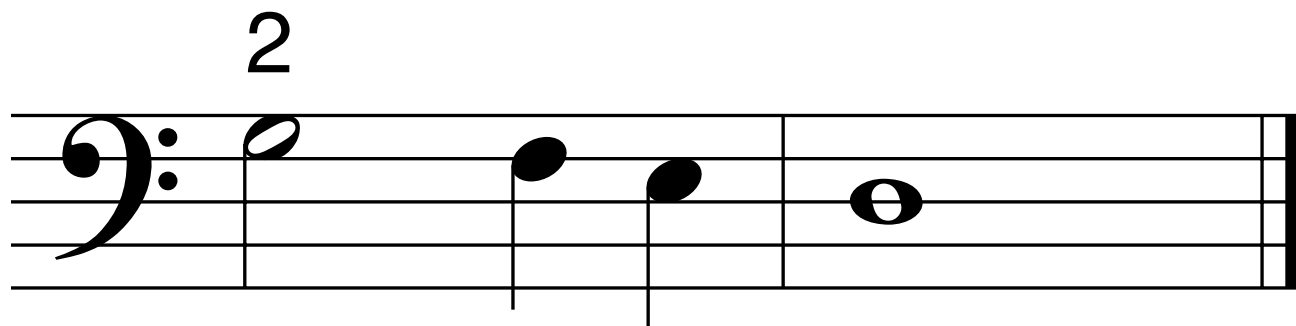
# f clef etude

An **etude** (rhymes with “hey, dude!”) is a piece of music written for students. Etudes are written to help students play and read music better. This etude was written to help students read seconds and thirds with the left hand.

Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What finger are you going to use to play that note? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Which hand are you probably going to use? (circle your answer) Left Right
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
5 times	5 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row	7 times correctly in a row	10 times correctly in a row

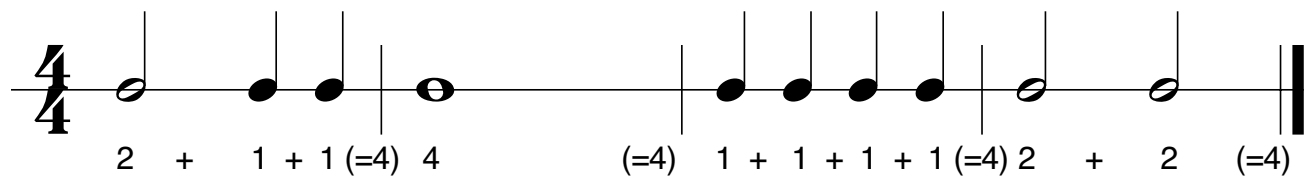


# what timing!

Most written music has some code numbers at the very beginning that show how to count the rhythm. These numbers are called the **time signature**.

**4**  
**4**

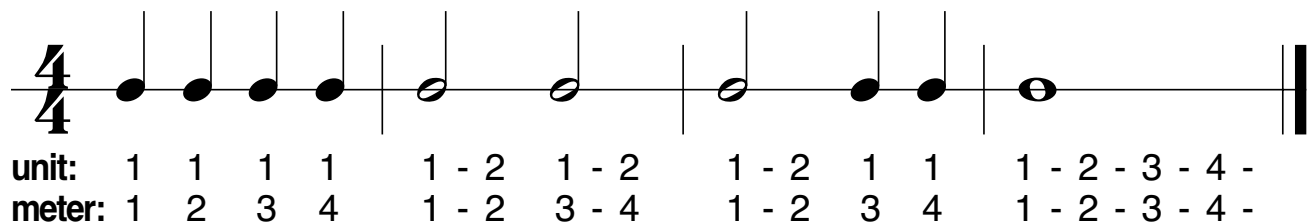
This time signature means that there will be four quarter notes in each measure, or a mixture of notes that will add up to four beats.



The time signature is made up of two code numbers.

The top code number tells you how high to count in each measure, and the bottom code number stands for the type of note (quarter, half or something else) that is used to count the beat. A time signature of  $\frac{4}{4}$  means there are four beats per measure and the quarter note is the type of note that gets one beat.

There are two ways to count the rhythms. The first way is **unit counting**, where each note is counted for its length. The second way is **meter counting**, where each note is counted by its place in the measure:



Most professional musicians use meter counting, so it would be a good idea to use meter counting whenever possible. If you want to practice, go back and play a few of the previous pieces in this book. This time, however, count out loud using meter counting instead of unit counting.

# FunSheet

The “code” numbers at the start of a piece are called the \_\_\_\_\_.

**4**

The top number tells you \_\_\_\_\_

**4**

The bottom number stands for \_\_\_\_\_

Write out the counts for this rhythm. First, use 1 for a quarter note, 1-2 for a half note and 1-2-3-4 for a whole note. Then below that, write in 1-2-3-4 under each measure of counts.

1 - 2 1 1

1 - 2 3 4

1. On the line below, draw a whole note at the beginning of each measure.

**4**

**4**

2. Now add a stem to the whole notes and make them half notes. Add another half note to each measure so that the beats add up to four.

3. Now fill in the half notes and make them quarter notes. Add enough quarter notes to each measure so that the beats add up to four.

# count to four

Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What finger are you going to use to play that note? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Which hand are you probably going to use? (circle your answer)    Left    Right
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer)    Loud    Soft
- 5) How high will you count in each measure? (circle your answer)    1    2    3    4

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
5 times	5 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row	7 times correctly in a row	10 times correctly in a row

5

*f*

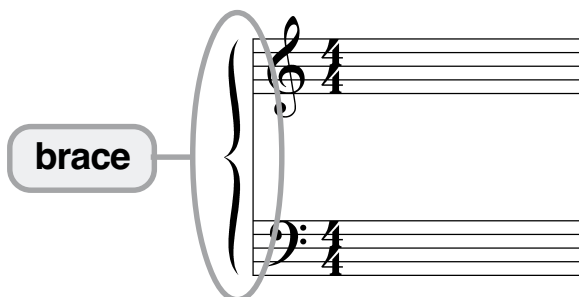
1 2 3 4      1 2 3 4

3

1 2 3 4      1 2 3 4

# ain't it grand?

The **grand staff** is created by joining the G clef staff and F clef staff with a barline and a **brace**:

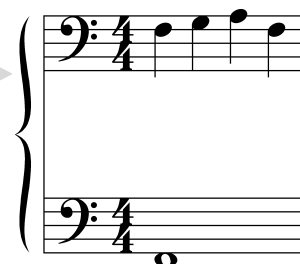


The right hand plays the top staff of the grand staff, and the left hand plays the bottom staff.




Sometimes both hands need to play low. In this case, both the top and bottom staves have F clefs.

Sometimes both hands need to play high. In this case, both the top and bottom staves have G clefs:



Middle C is in the middle of the grand staff, using only one leger line. In the secret code of music, Middle C is where the high and low notes split from each other on the grand staff.



<p><b>Draw a bracket ...</b></p> 	<p><b>Add a line ...</b></p> 	<p><b>Add the clefs and time signature ... Now you're done!</b></p> 
--	--	---

Draw some grand staves on a sheet of manuscript paper.

# grand reading

Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) Which hand will you start with? (circle one) Left Right
- 2) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_ with finger # \_\_\_\_.
- 3) When the other hand comes in, which note will you play? \_\_\_\_\_ with finger # \_\_\_\_.
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft
- 5) How high will you count in each measure? (circle your answer) 1 2 3 4

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
5 times	5 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row	7 times correctly in a row	10 times correctly in a row

5 1

*f*

G, step down to C.

F, step up to C.

5 1

1

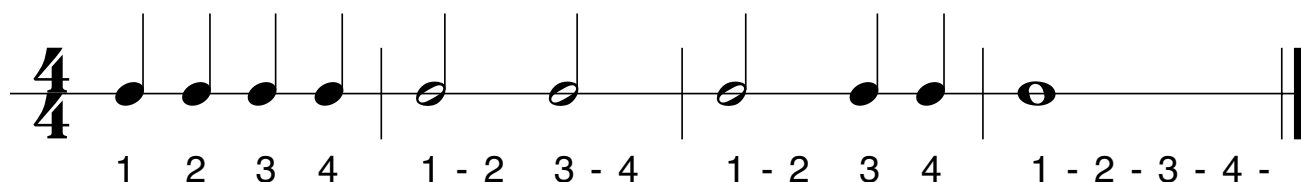
Now play lots of thirds.

Right hand ends this verse!

1

# count to three

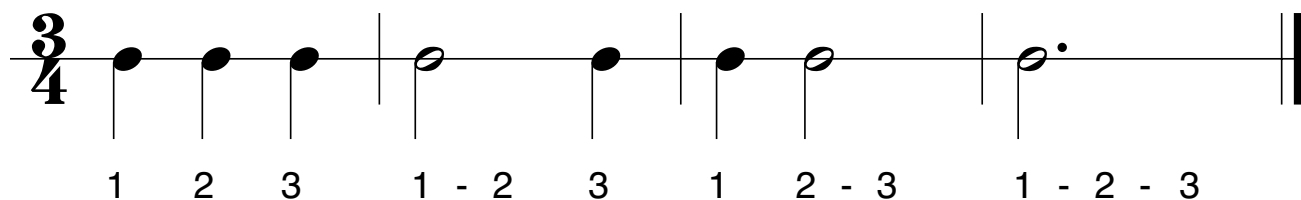
Time signatures are the code numbers musicians use so they know how high to count. A time signature of  $\frac{4}{4}$  means that a musician would count out loud like this:



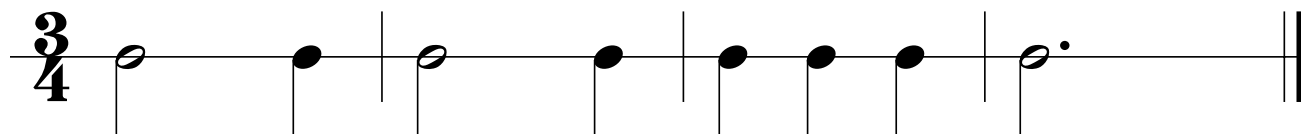
# 3 4

When musicians see this time signature, they know that they must count to three in each measure. This time signature means that there are three quarter notes in each measure, or a mixture of notes that add up to three beats.

Before you clap the next example, take a look at the last measure. It contains some special code. There's a half note, but there's also a dot next to the half note. Adding a dot makes a half note a **dotted half note**. A dotted half note gets three beats or pulses or clicks.



In the next example, write in the counts below the notes. Then clap the rhythm while counting out loud. Then play the example on the keyboard using Middle C.





# tres grande!

Before you play this piece, answer these questions:

- 1) Which hand will you start with? (circle one) Left Right
- 2) On what note are you going to start? \_\_\_\_\_ with finger # \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) When the other hand comes in, which note will you play? \_\_\_\_\_ with finger # \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) Are you going to play loud or soft? (circle your answer) Loud Soft
- 5) How high will you count in each measure? (circle your answer) 1 2 3 4

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
5 times	5 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row	7 times correctly in a row	10 times correctly in a row

The first system of musical notation is for the right hand, starting on a treble clef in 3/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody begins on a half note G4 (labeled with a '5' above it), followed by quarter notes A4 and B4. The first measure is marked with a piano 'p' dynamic. The first three measures are numbered 1, 2, and 3 below the staff. The notation continues with a dotted half note G4 in the second measure, and then quarter notes A4 and B4 in the third measure. The system ends with a dotted half note G4 in the fourth measure.

The second system of musical notation is for the left hand, starting on a bass clef in 3/4 time. The melody begins on a half note G2 (labeled with a '2' below it), followed by quarter notes A2 and B2. The first three measures are numbered 1, 2, and 3 below the staff. The notation continues with a dotted half note G2 in the second measure, and then quarter notes A2 and B2 in the third measure. The system ends with a dotted half note G2 in the fourth measure.

# “star”-ting on c

Before you play this piece, be sure your hands and fingers are on the right notes!

## Level Progress Chart

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

4

*p*  
Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are!

1 4 1

4

Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia-mond in the sky.

4

4

Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are!

1 4 1

# FunSheet

Solve the clues to figure out the words you need to find in the word search. Turn the page upside down if you need a list of words to help you.

---

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---

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---

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Another name for the F clef.

This note gets three beats.

This sign tells you to play in the middle to lower part of the piano.

This sign tells you to play in the middle to high part of the piano.

When the G clef and F clef are combined together with a barline and brace, they make the \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_.

Musicians add \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ when they run out of lines and spaces on the staff.

When you count 4 quarter notes as 1, 2, 3, 4.

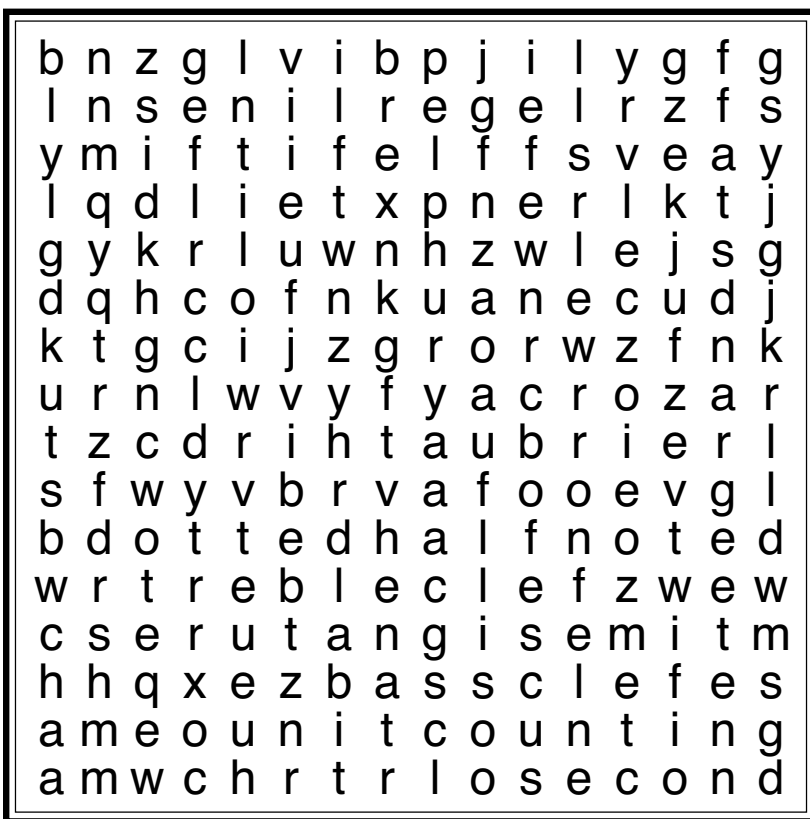
The distance from a line to the very next space, or from a space to the very next line. Also known as a step.

The distance from a line to the very next line, or from a space to the very next space. Also known as a skip.

These two numbers tell you how high to count in a piece of music.

Another name for the G clef.

When you count 4 quarter notes as 1, 1, 1, 1.



bass clef, dotted half note, f clef, g clef, grand staff, ledger lines, meter counting, second, third, time signature, treble clef, unit counting

# ceremonial march

This piece is filled with seconds and thirds. On the second page, watch carefully for the measures where both hands will play together. Practice these measures especially slowly hands separately, then put the hands together.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
5 times	5 times correctly	3 times correctly in a row	5 times correctly in a row	7 times correctly in a row	10 times correctly in a row

Majestically

2

3

A musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written for a piano, with a treble and bass staff. The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a simple accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a final quarter note in the fourth measure. The bass staff has a single quarter note in the first and fourth measures, and is empty in the second and third measures.

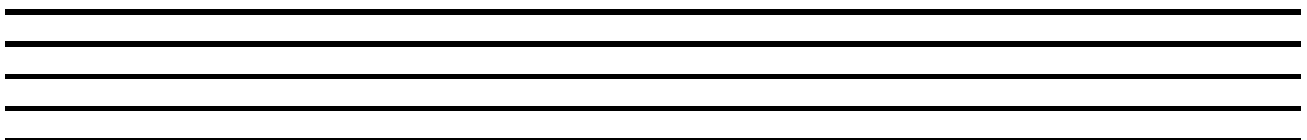
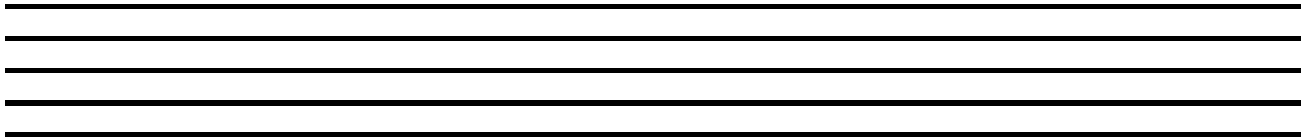
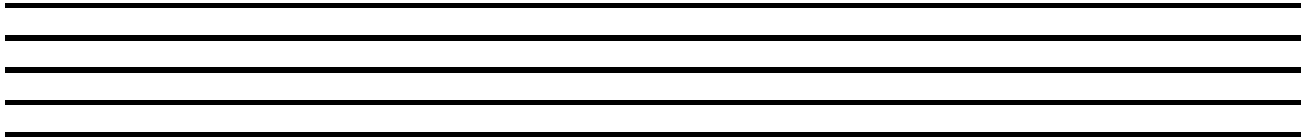
Congratulations on finishing book 1 of Learning The Code. Write the date when you finished this book as a record of your progress. You've learned quite a lot about the "secret code" of music, but there's much more of the music code to learn in your next book!

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Signature

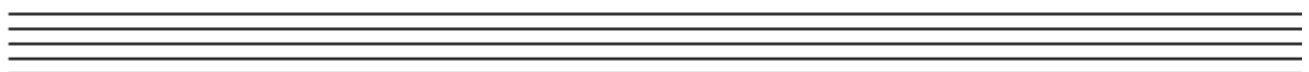
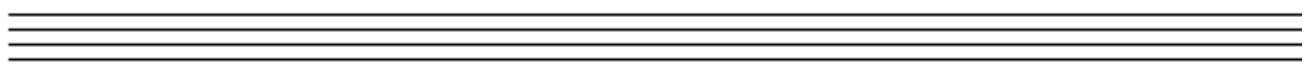
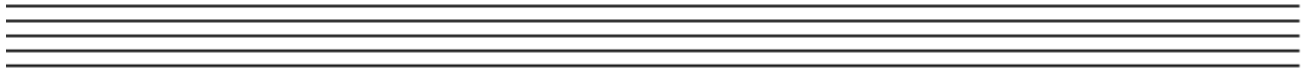
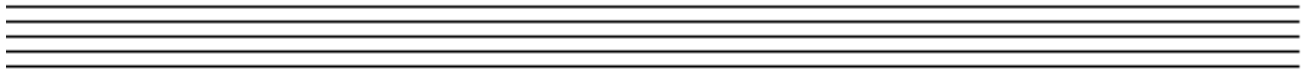
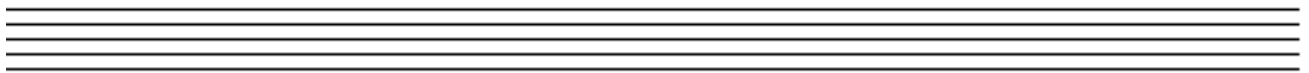
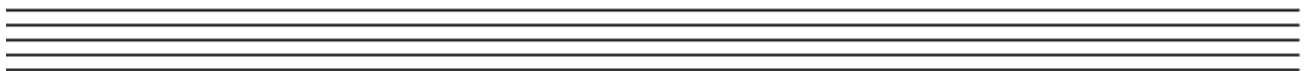
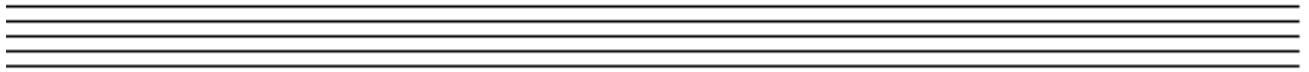
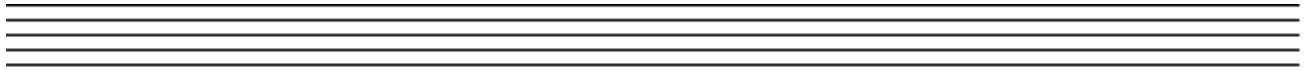
# manuscript paper

Use this paper to practice drawing music signs and notes, or to create your own songs!



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**Contact the editor at [jking@learningthecode.com](mailto:jking@learningthecode.com)  
for information regarding supporting and  
contributing to the further development of this  
piano method series.**

## **About the editor:**

James L. King III is the executive director of the North Miami Conservatory of Music, and maintains a piano studio of 35 students. He has taught piano since 1993. He earned a bachelor's degree in music theory from Furman University, and a master's degree in music composition from the University of South Carolina. He is an active freelance music editor for major music publishers.

## **About this edition:**

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