MUT 1001
FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC

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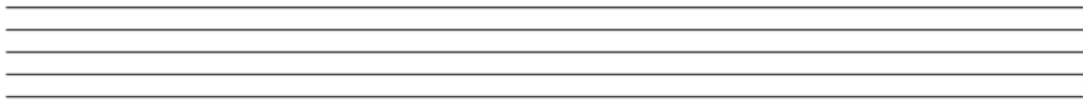
UNIT 2
PITCH

THE STAFF

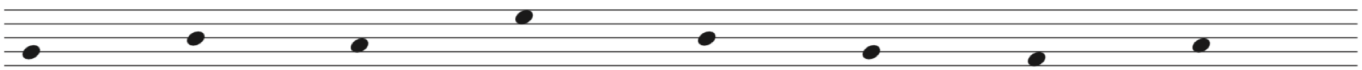
The staff consists of five horizontal lines and four spaces upon which noteheads are placed:

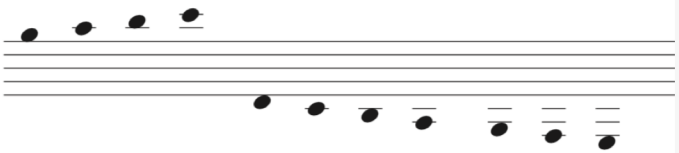


Ex. 2-1 - staff

THE STAFF

Noteheads may be placed on lines or spaces as well as above or below the staff using ledger lines.

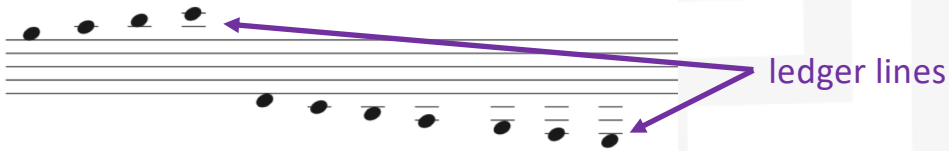




Ex. 2-2

LEDGER LINES

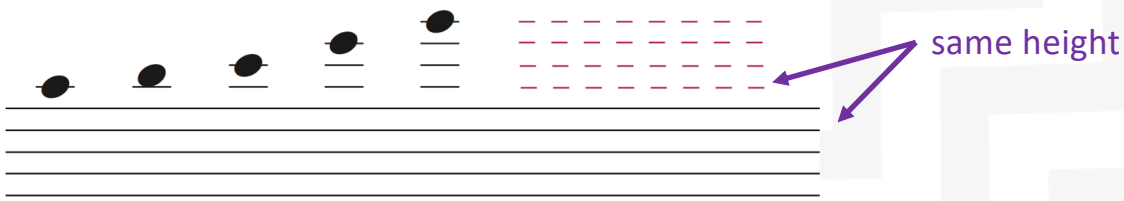
Ledger lines are short temporary lines added to individual notes when they are too high or too low to be placed within the staff.



Ex. 2-3

LEDGER LINES

Note that the spacing of the ledger lines is the same as the staff lines. Ledger lines simply represent imaginary additional staff lines drawn as needed.



Ex. 2-4

Notes with ledger lines are extremely common so you should become very familiar with them.

CLEFS

The noteheads shown in the previous examples do not indicate specific notes. In order to represent spefic notes, we need to use a clef.

There are seven possible clefs, but the most common are the treble, alto, tenor and bass clefs. Of these, the treble and bass are by far the most commonly found. Note that only three different clef shapes are used:

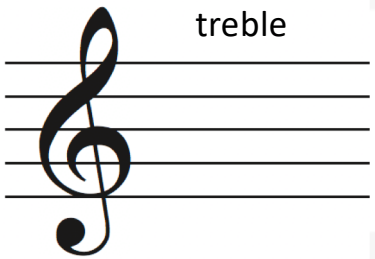
G-clef, C-clef, and F-clef.

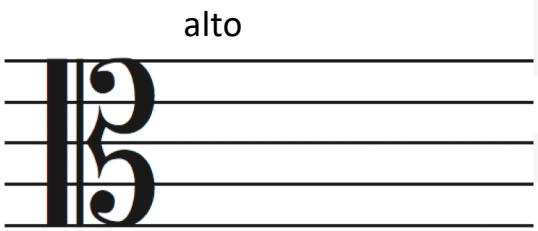
G-clef

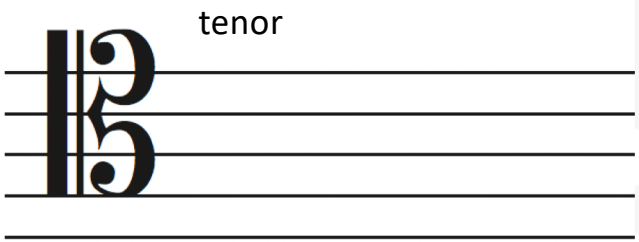
C-clef

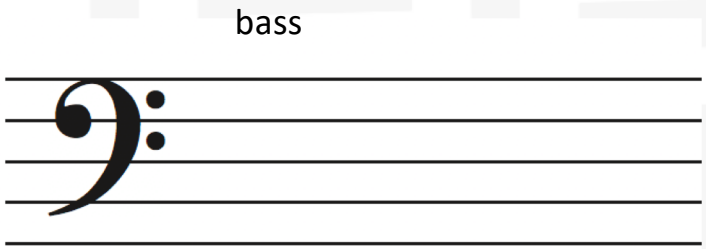
F-clef

COMMON CLEFS





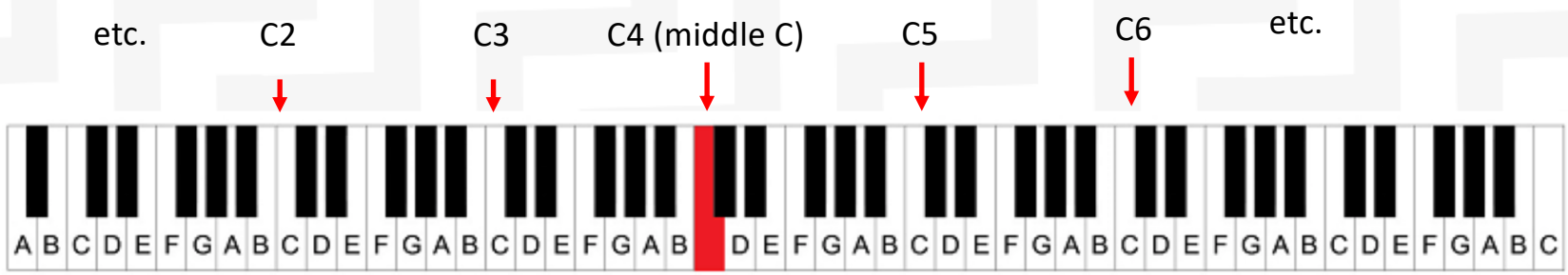




Ex. 2-5

HOW CLEFS WORK

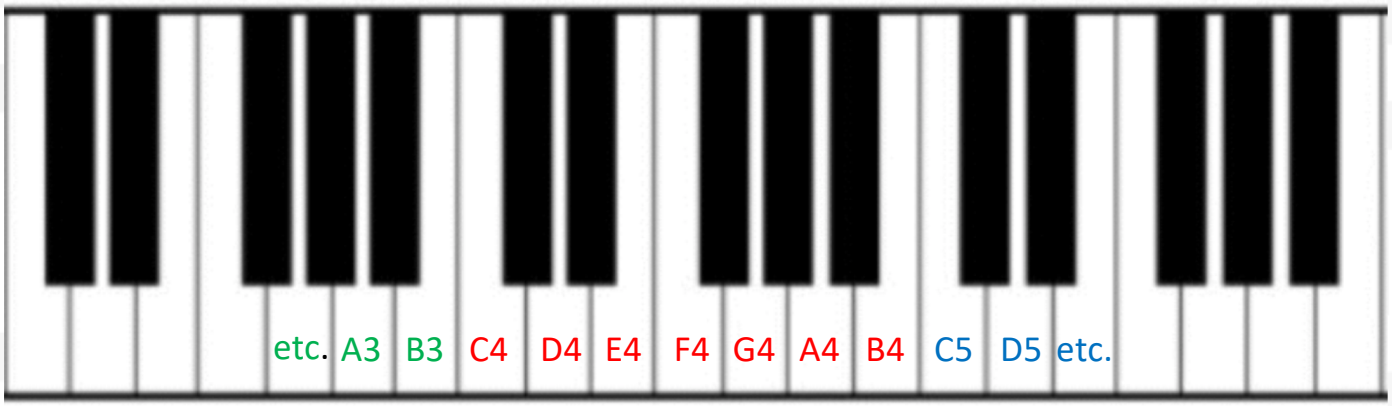
Clefs allow you to easily indicate both the letter name and octave number of a note. The standard reference for octave labeling is C4, or middle C; this is the C that sits roughly in the middle of the piano keyboard:



Ex. 2-6

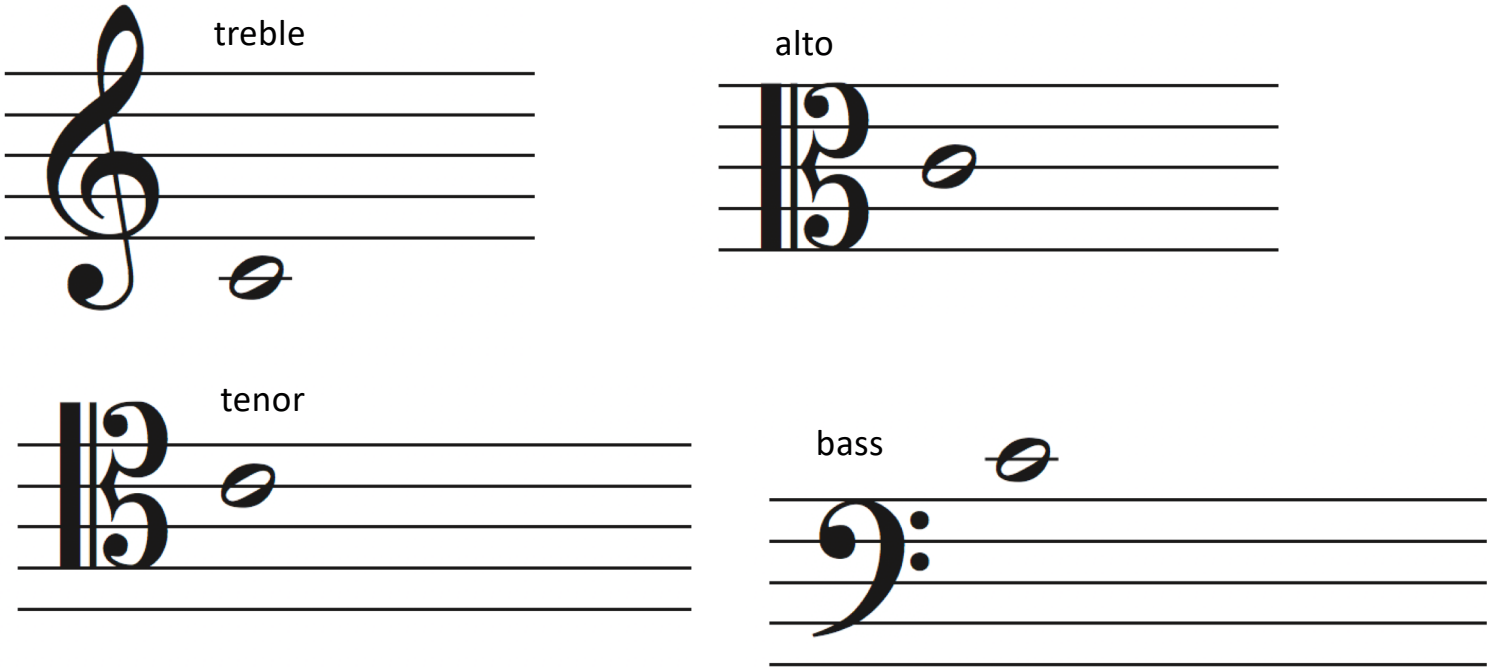
LABELING PITCHES

All pitches that fall between C4 and C5 are labeled using their respective letter followed by the number 4. Notes that are between C3 and C4 will have the number three, etc.



Ex. 2-7

MIDDLE C IN DIFFERENT CLEFS



Ex. 2-8

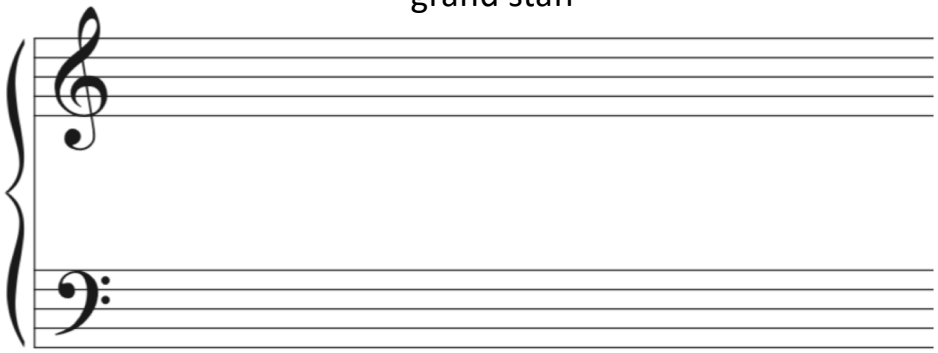
MORE ABOUT CLEFS

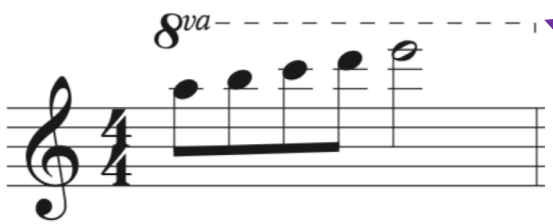
As you can see from Ex. 2-8, C4 is located in a different place in each clef. You may also notice that the most radical difference is between treble and bass clefs. Treble clef is ideal for voices and instruments with a high register and bass clef is ideal for those with a low register. Some instruments like the piano and the harp use two staves, one with treble clef and one with bass clef at the same time. This is called a grand staff.

Most instruments have a range that is too wide to fit in a single staff. To make up for this, a combination of ledger lines, ottava signs, and clef changes are used. The cello, for example, normally reads in bass clef but, in the upper register, tenor and treble clefs are used to avoid excessive ledger lines.

CLEFS

grand staff





ottava sign

Indicates that all notes below the bracket sound an octave higher than written.

Ex. 2-9

READING NOTES

Most beginning music students are taught to memorize the names of the notes on the lines and spaces using various acronyms. While this method will help you get familiar with the notes within the staff, it is quite slow. In addition, many of the notes you will encounter will be outside of the staff.

Speed-reading

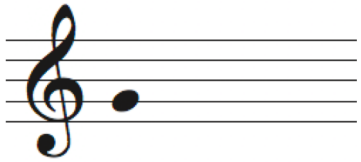
Learning to read notes quickly is an essential skill for a musician (professional musicians can read notes much faster than they can say them). Reading music fluently requires considerable time and practice. This process is not as linear as it may seem; you will learn to recognize certain notes immediately, and may have trouble with some other notes for a while, for no apparent reason. You can start by learning a small section of the staff and gradually expand above and below. Computer drills such as the ones available on teoria.com can help you improve your sight-reading skills and provide immediate feedback, but only with regular practice.

One thing you may find helpful is to memorize the note names skipping every other note:
C E G B D F A – D F A C E G B – E G B D F A C – F A C E G B D – G B D F A C E – A C E G B D F – B D F A C E G
This can help you navigate across the staff faster, and later will help you with spelling triads.

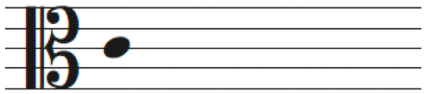
READING NOTES

locating reference notes

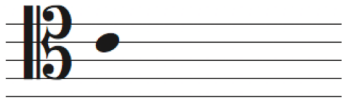
Treble (G-clef) - shows where G is located



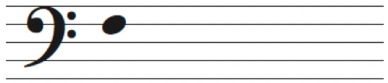
Alto (C-flef) - shows where C is located



Tenor (C-flef) - shows where C is located



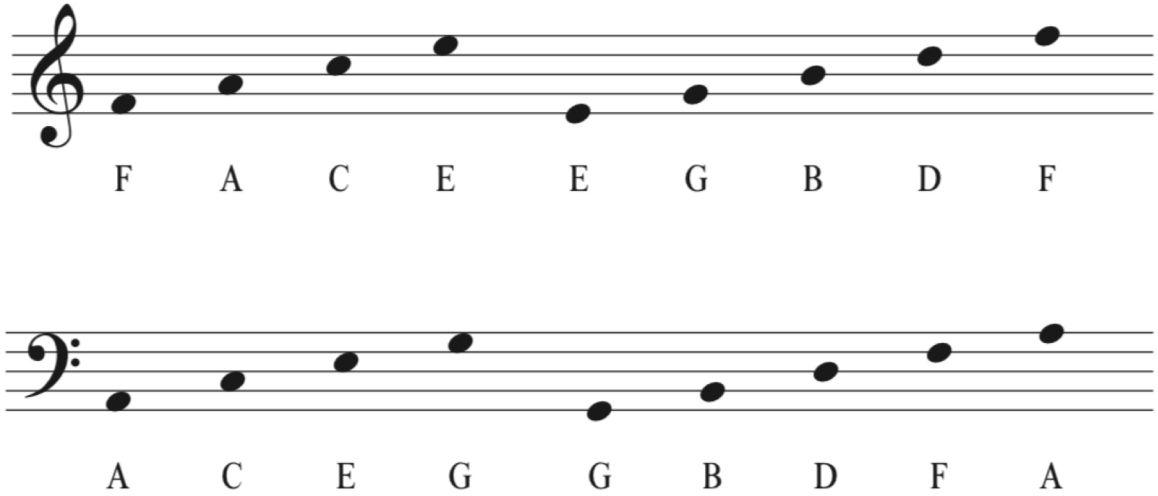
Bass clef (F-clef) – shows where F is located



Ex. 2-10

READING NOTES

lines and spaces in treble and bass clef



Ex. 2-11

Log on to teoria.com by following this link:
http://teoria.com/en/exercises/clef.php