

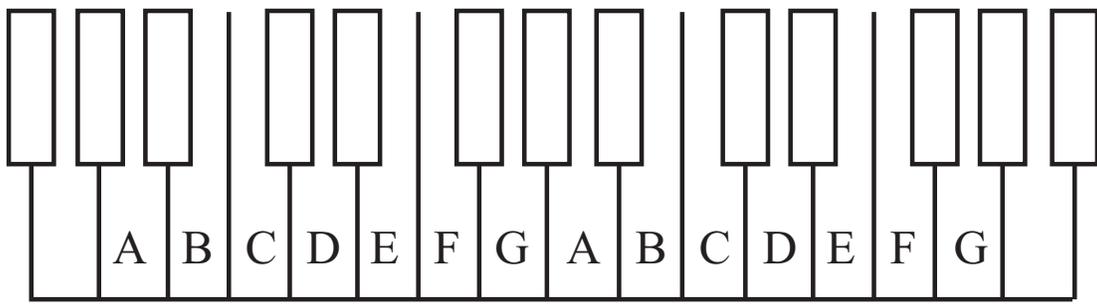
The Very Beginning: Reading the Staves

To get started reading music, you need to understand the “note names” we use to refer to pitches.

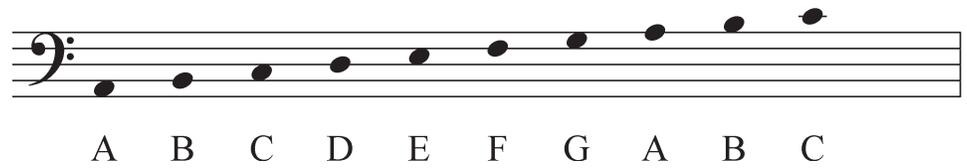
The note names in English begin with the letter A and proceed up to G. After G they repeat, so the note above G is A (and the note below A is G.)

... E F G **A B C D E F G** A B C ...

These letter names correspond to the white keys on the piano.

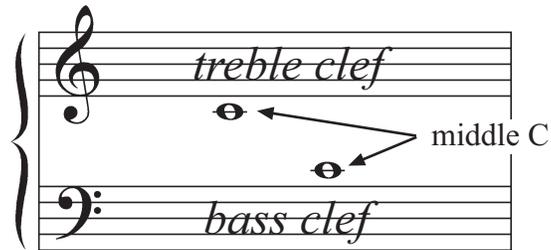


In written music the notes alternate between the lines and spaces on the staff, like so:



The Grand Staff

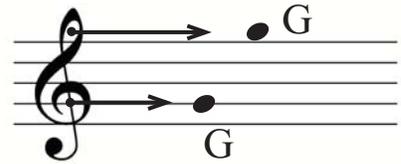
Piano music is usually written on the grand staff, a combination of treble clef and bass clef. The space in the middle is home to “middle C.” (Middle C is, unsurprisingly, the C that’s in the middle of the average piano keyboard, and it is pretty much the center of useful musical sounds.)



Treble Clef

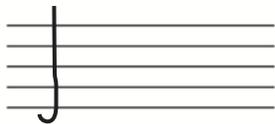
On the far left of each staff there is a fancy-looking symbol called a clef. It tells you what the lines on the staff mean.

The treble clef is also known as the “G Clef.” It draws loopy circles around two different G’s.



Making your own is easy in three steps.

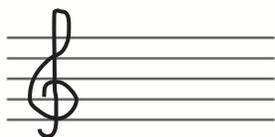
1) Go up the center.



2) Loop around the top.



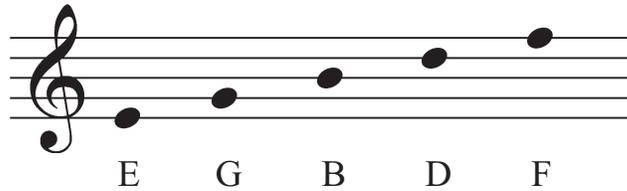
3) Make a big loop from bottom line to middle line.



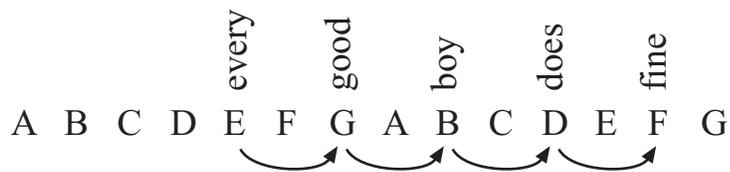
Memorizing the Lines and Spaces

People like to memorize the lines and spaces on the staff with little mnemonics.

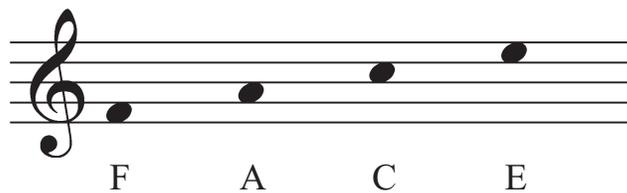
The lines on the treble staff are “Every Good Boy Does Fine” or “Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge”



Remember, in hitting all the lines we are skipping over every other note, or making “thirds.”

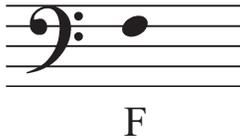


The spaces in the treble clef spell FACE

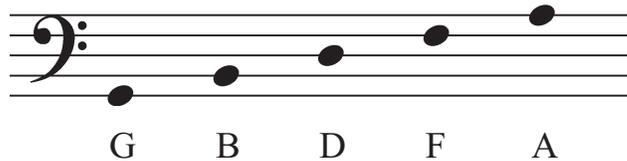


Bass Clef

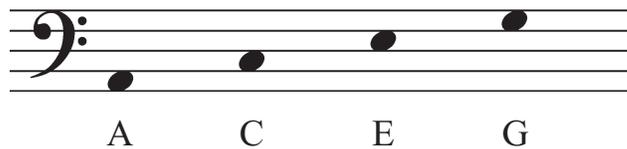
Bass clef puts two dots around the note F.



The lines in the bass clef are “Good Boys Do Fine Always”



And the spaces are “All Cows Eat Grass.”



Beyond the Mnemonics

As you begin to study music, you really don't want to have to stop and count up “Every Good Boy...” with each new note. You've got to learn to read the staff as naturally as you can read words.

Doing practice drills on a computer can help - check out my website davesmey.com for links to a few programs I like.

Also, I've got a special handout for practice called “Level Up!” that starts off easy, focusing at first on only a few notes in the staff. By making the task simple and gradually increasing in difficulty I think one can master this somewhat tedious skill.