

Level Up!

A Graduated Approach to Clef Reading
inspired by George Dandelot's *Manuel pratique*



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Level Up! - A Graduated Approach to Clef Reading

inspired by George Dandelot's *Manuel pratique*



“Level Up” refers to a familiar aspect of video game design. No one wants to play a game that is impossible to learn, so most start with a very low level of difficulty and gradually increase from there. As you graduate from level to level your skill increases until you are eventually performing in ways that would have seemed unthinkable on your very first try.

Reading the notes on the clef is a kind of basic skill similar to moving around obstacles in a video game. At first it might be tedious and awkward, but if you keep at it it will become automatic. Ideally, you want to be able to read notes as quickly and effortlessly as you are reading the words in this sentence. A graduated approach organized in levels can help you achieve this.

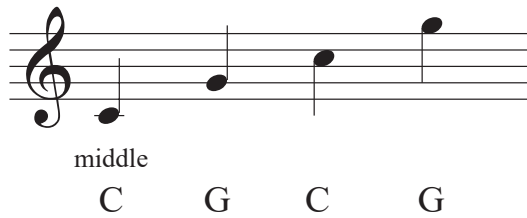
The idea isn't really from the video game era at all. I learned it from a very handy textbook published in 1928, George Dandelot's *Manuel pratique pour l'étude des clés*. You can get a public domain version (in French) by searching on the internet, and I've seen new print editions for sale for about \$25. But I think we can easily make a new free version that will serve the same purpose. What follows is roughly the same as Dandelot's technique. I've changed a few details, called the exercises “levels,” and generated all of my own notes.

How to use this book

I don't think you want to play or sing these exercises - they aren't very musical and aren't going to sound like much of anything. But you do want to practice recognizing the notes. Thus, I think you should “chant” the note names in a steady rhythm - just say what they are, out loud, like “A”, “B”, “C” and so on.

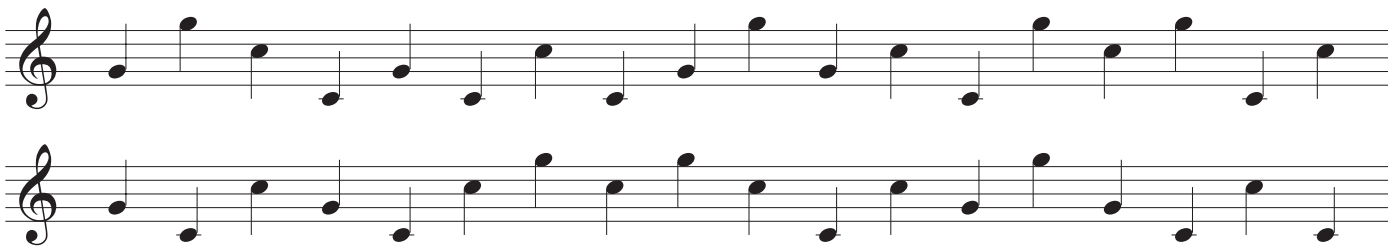
You can also write the letter names below the notes, but that only works once and then the exercise is useless. So if you are going to do that be ready to print a fresh, unmarked copy later.

Treble Clef



Treble Clef is also referred to as “G clef,” because its curlicue shape makes circles around two different G’s. To get started we are going to practice only C’s and G’s as our “anchor pitches.”

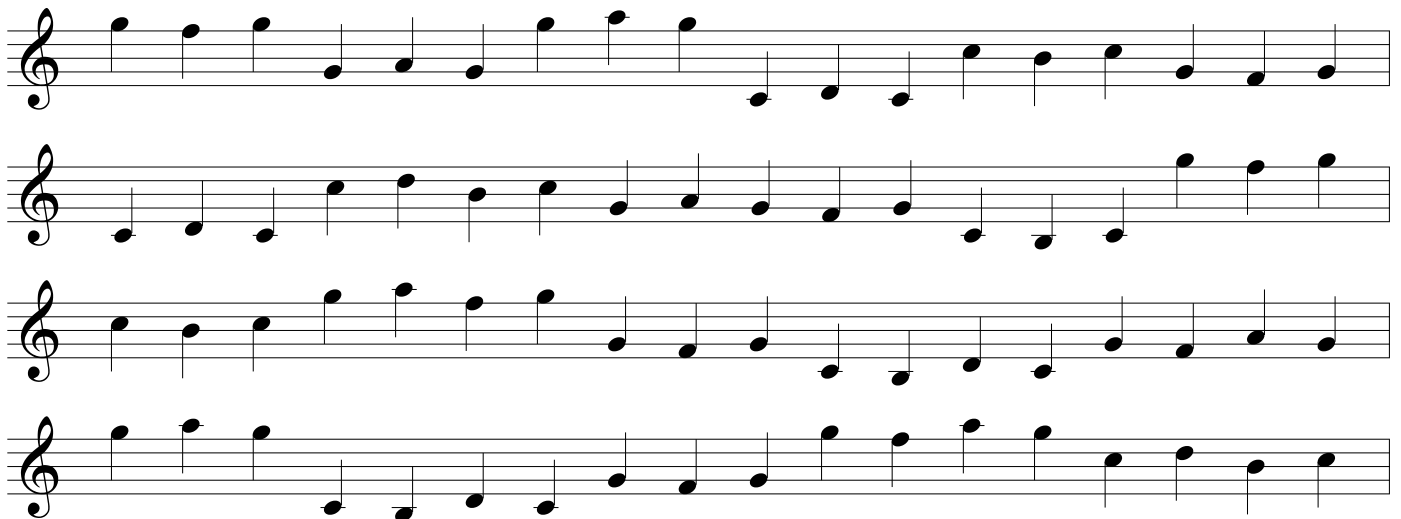
LEVEL ONE - THE ANCHOR PITCHES



LEVEL TWO - NEIGHBOR FIGURES



Our neighbor figures start on an anchor pitch, move away to a neighbor note, and then return.

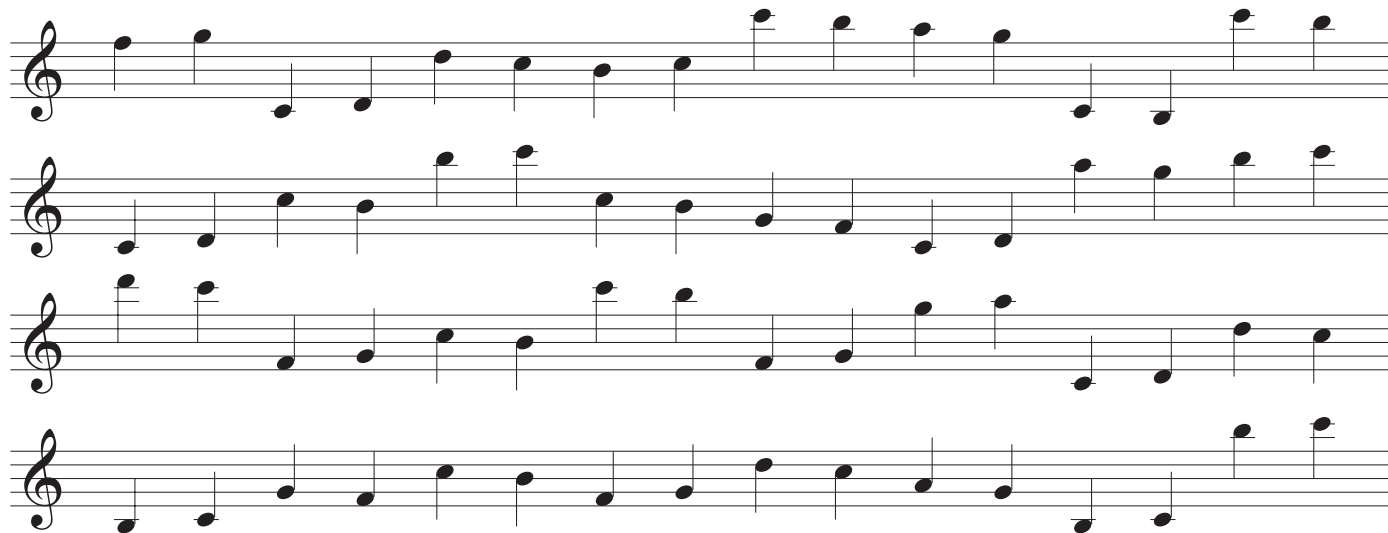


LEVEL THREE - INCOMPLETE NEIGHBORS + HIGH C



Now our neighbor notes merely precede or follow an anchor note.

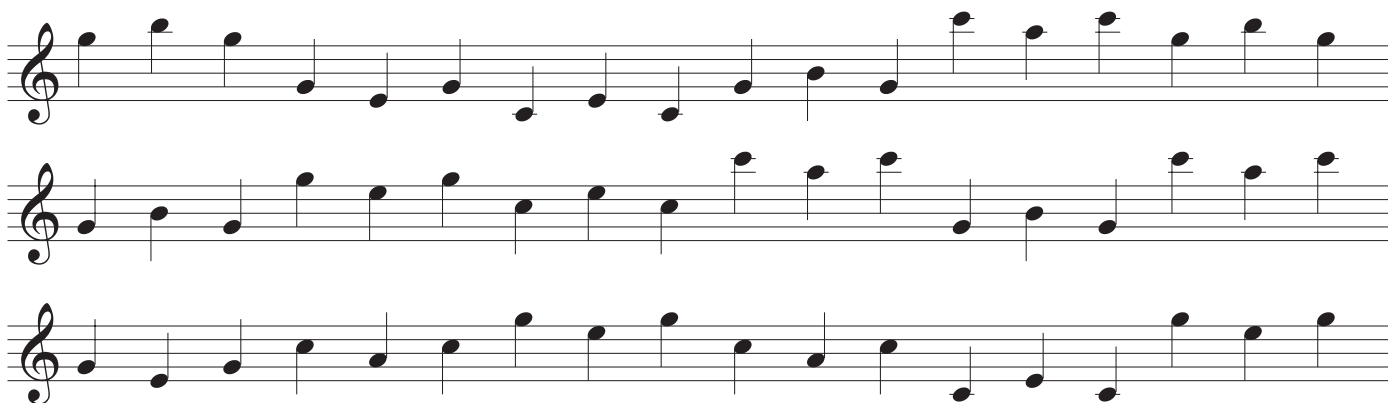
PLUS we'll add a new high C, two ledger lines above the staff.



LEVEL FOUR - THIRD-RELATED NEIGHBOR FIGURES



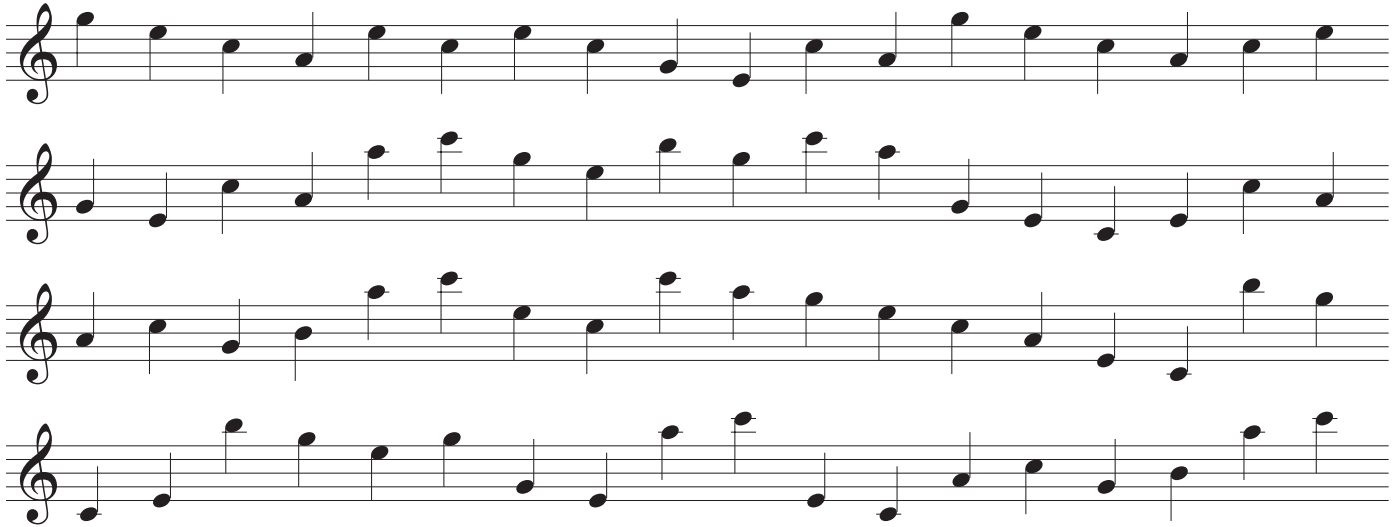
Now we make the same pattern as level two, with an anchor note, nearby note, and return, but we skip by thirds instead of steps.



LEVEL FIVE - THIRD-RELATED INCOMPLETE NEIGHBORS



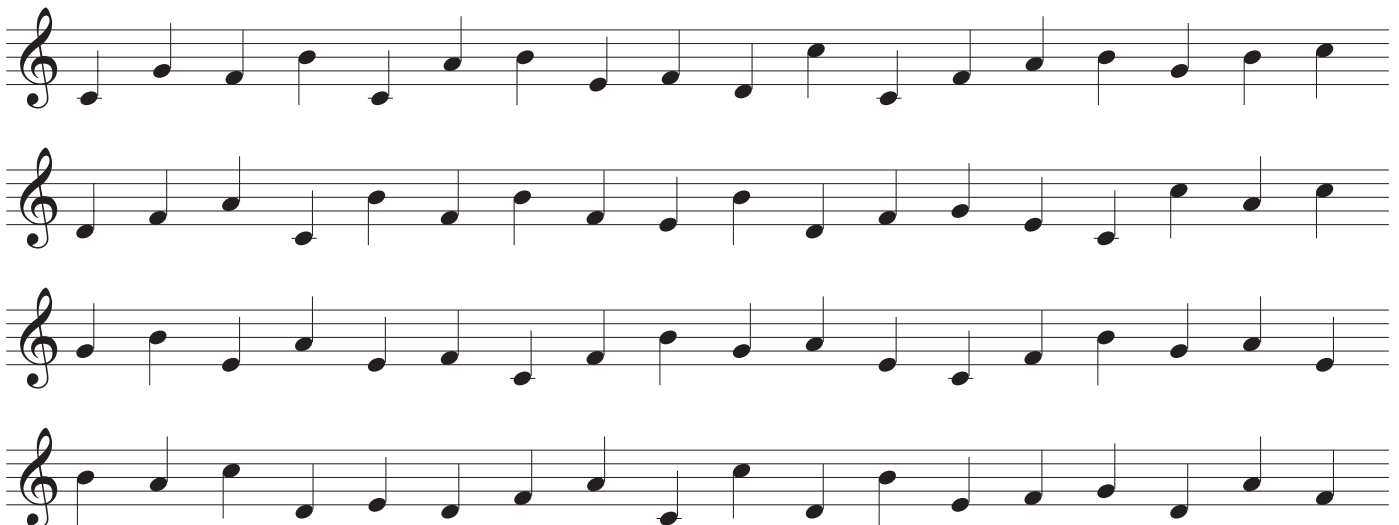
Third-related notes either follow or precede an anchor note.



LEVEL SIX - FULLY RANDOM NOTES, ONE OCTAVE



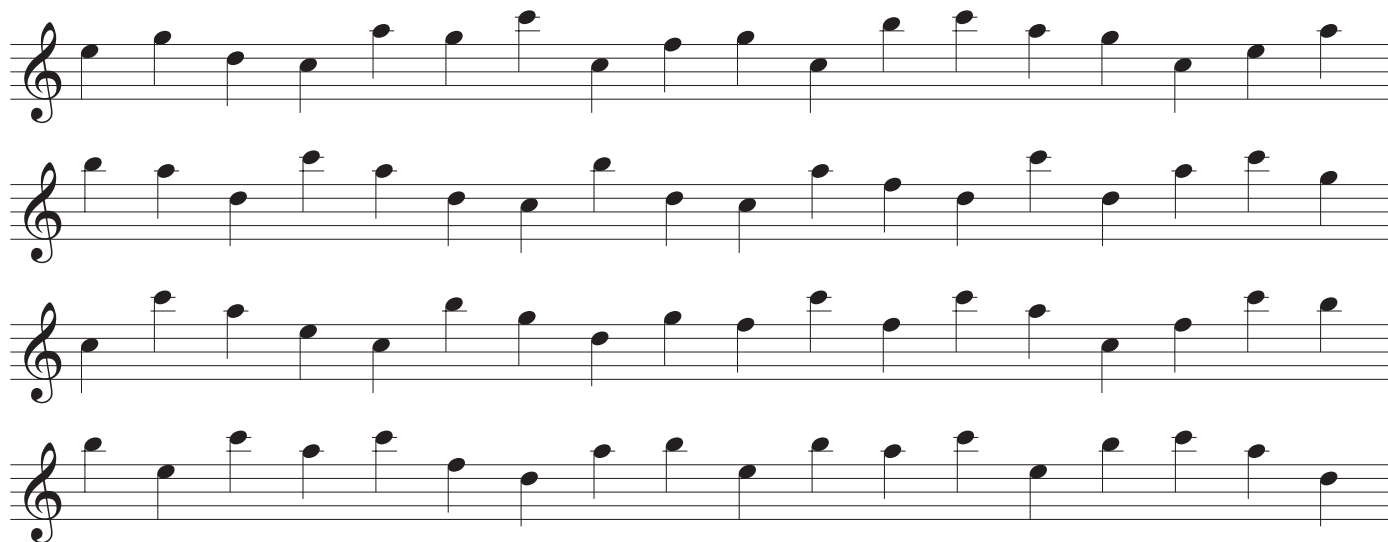
All white notes between middle C (aka C4, c') and the octave above (= C5, c'').



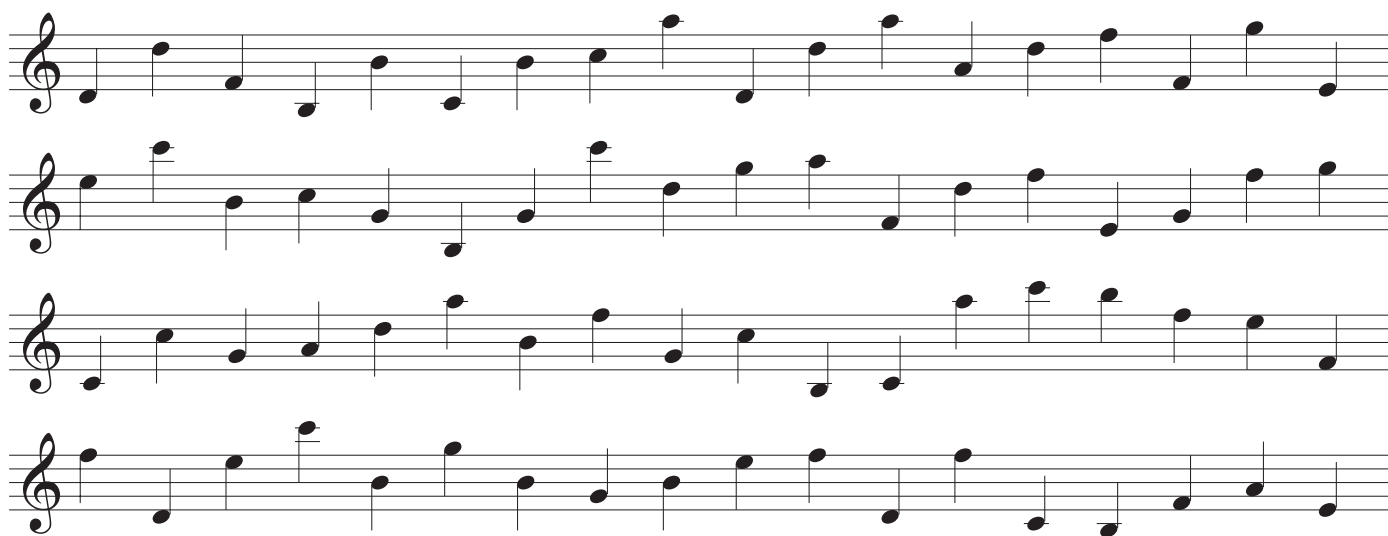
LEVEL SEVEN - FULLY RANDOM NOTES, HIGHER OCTAVE



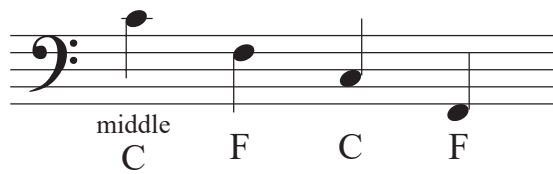
All white notes between C5 (or c'') and C6 (c''').



LEVEL EIGHT - FULLY RANDOM, TWO OCTAVES

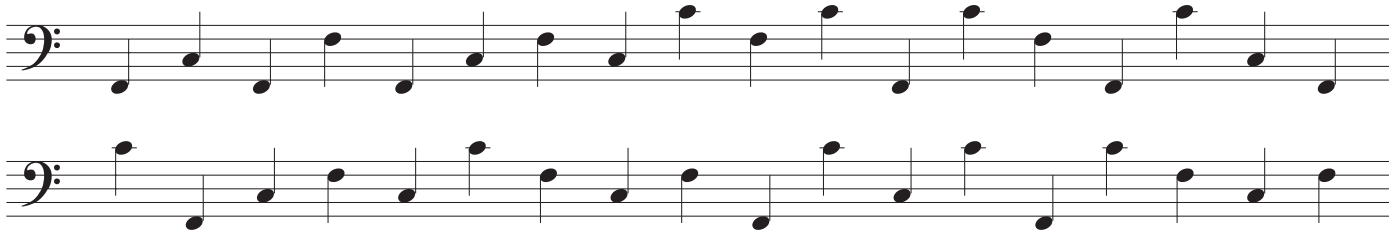


Bass Clef



Bass clef places its two dots around F, so we are going to use F and C as our anchor pitches.

LEVEL ONE - THE ANCHOR PITCHES



LEVEL TWO - NEIGHBOR FIGURES



Once again our neighbor figures start on an anchor pitch, move away to a neighbor note, and then return.

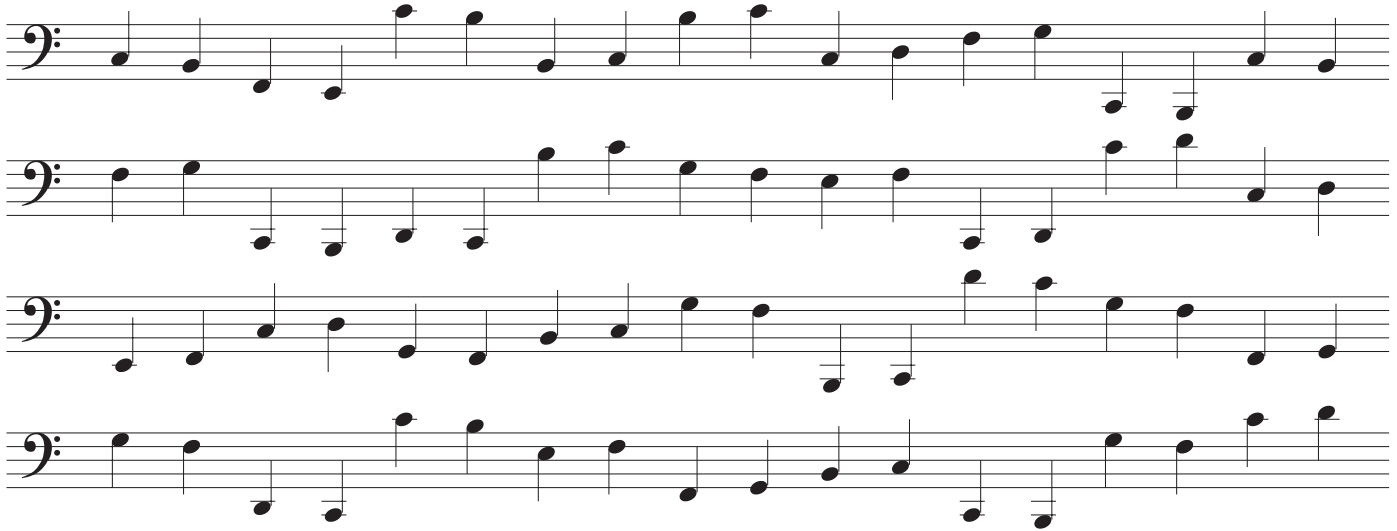
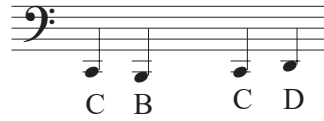


LEVEL THREE - INCOMPLETE NEIGHBORS + LOW C



Now our neighbor notes merely precede or follow an anchor note.

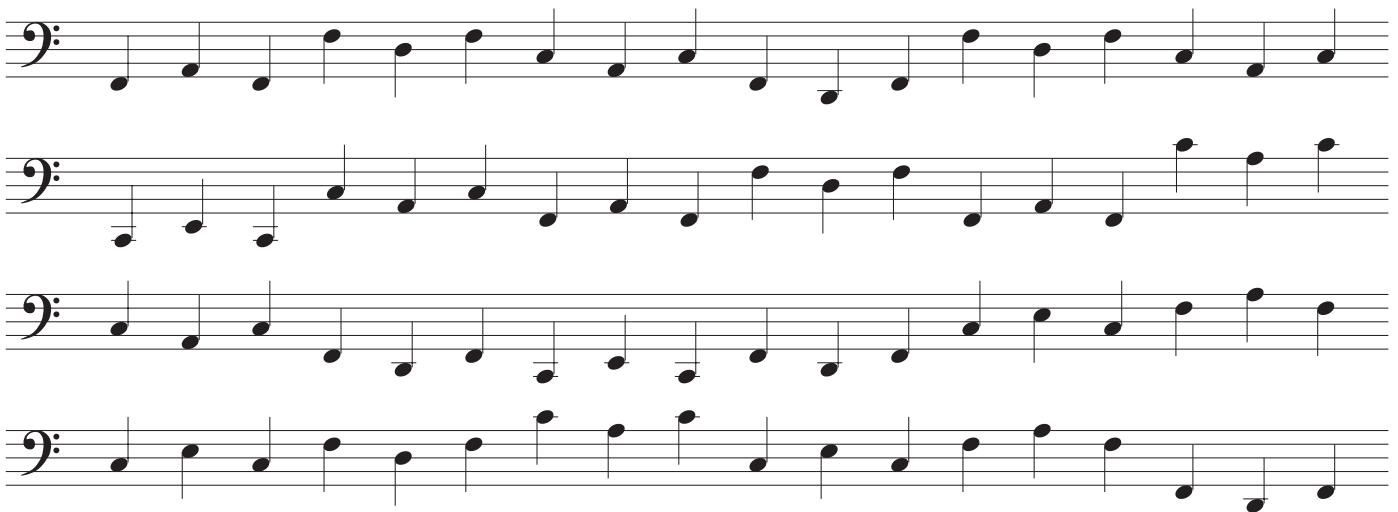
PLUS we'll add another C, two ledger lines below the staff.



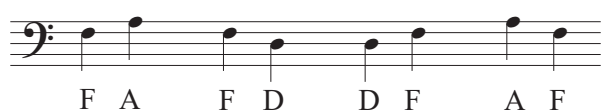
LEVEL FOUR - THIRD-RELATED NEIGHBOR FIGURES



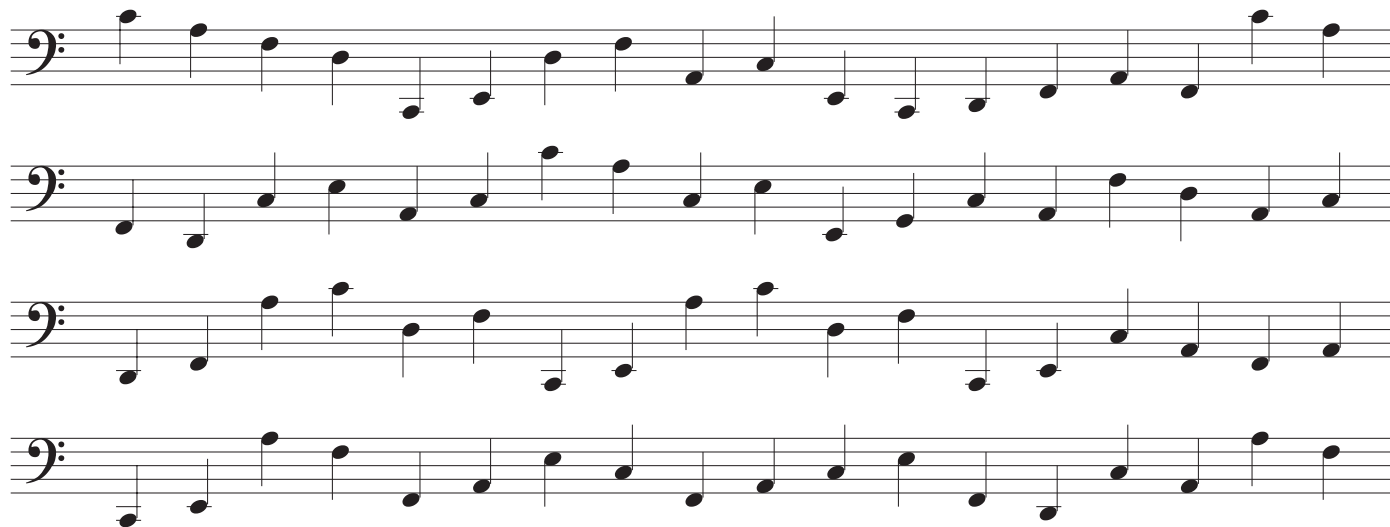
This is the same pattern as level two, with an anchor note, nearby note, and return, but we skip by thirds instead of steps.



LEVEL FIVE - THIRD-RELATED INCOMPLETE NEIGHBORS



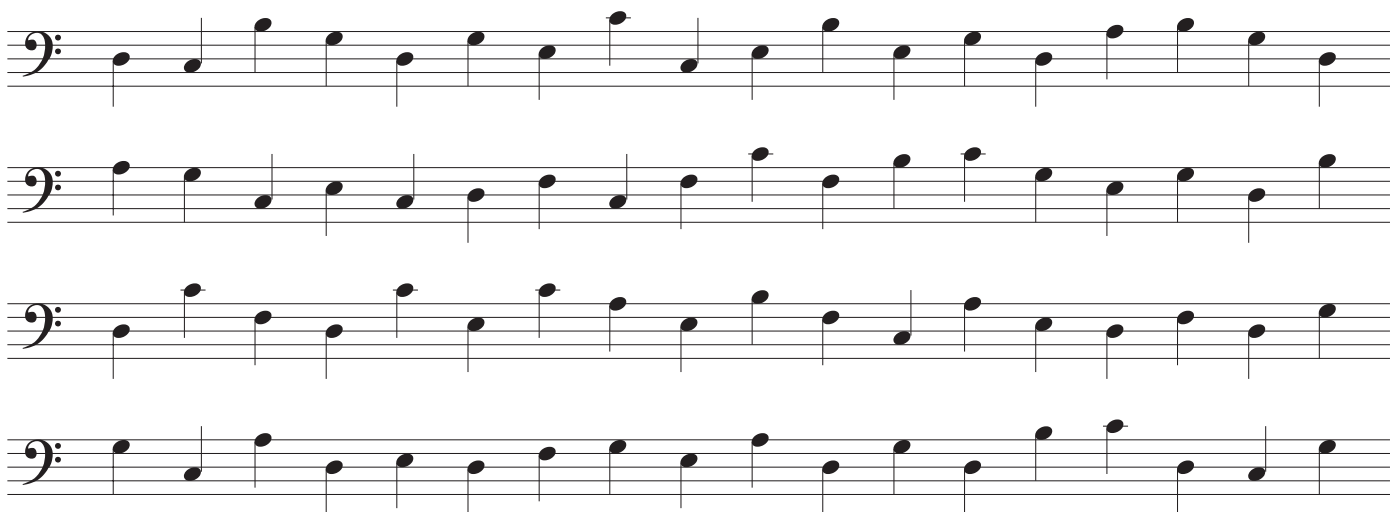
Third-related notes either follow or precede an anchor note.



LEVEL SIX - FULLY RANDOM NOTES, ONE OCTAVE



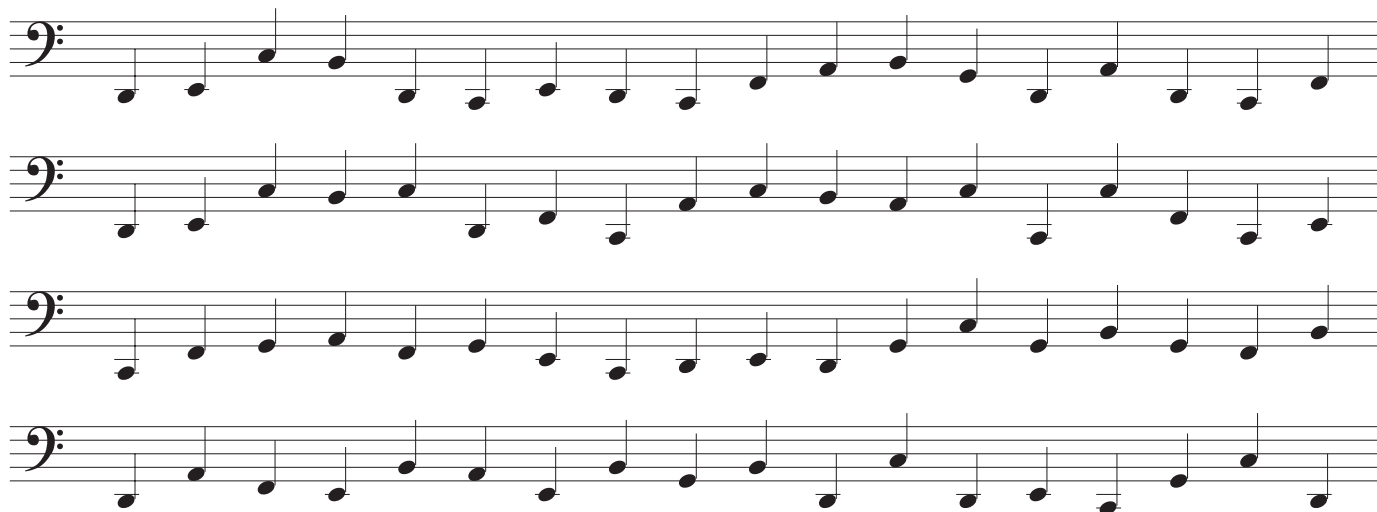
All white notes between the C in the staff (also known as the “small c” or C3) and the middle C (aka C4, c’).



LEVEL SEVEN - FULLY RANDOM NOTES, LOWER OCTAVE



All white notes between the great C (C2) and the small C (C3).



LEVEL EIGHT - FULLY RANDOM, TWO OCTAVES

