

IDEAL FOR
BEGINNERS



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I CAN READ MUSIC



A very first introduction to
music theory for children

By Mary Thompson
Illustrated by Jan McCafferty



CHESTER MUSIC

I CAN READ MUSIC



By Mary Thompson
Illustrated by Jan McCafferty



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Getting Started

This book will help you to learn how to read music in very easy stages.

Throughout the book there are quizzes. You can check the answers on page 24.

How music is written down

Music is written on a set of lines, called a stave. At the beginning of each stave there is a sign called a clef.



Sometimes two staves are joined together like this.



This is a stave.

This is a treble clef.



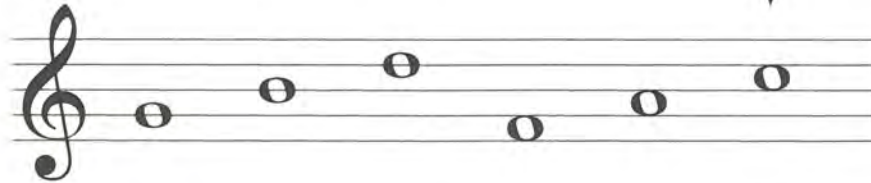
This is a bass clef.

Try writing a treble clef and a bass clef next to the ones shown here.

Musical notes

When you write a story you use words to make up a sentence. In music, you use notes to make up a tune.

This is a note.



Some notes are written on the lines of the stave.

Others go in the spaces between the lines.

You can find out more about notes on the next page.



How long notes last

Notes can last for different lengths. The length of a note is measured in steady counts, called beats.

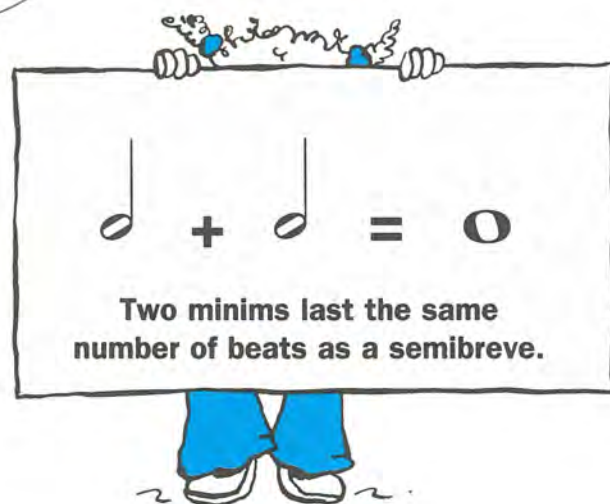
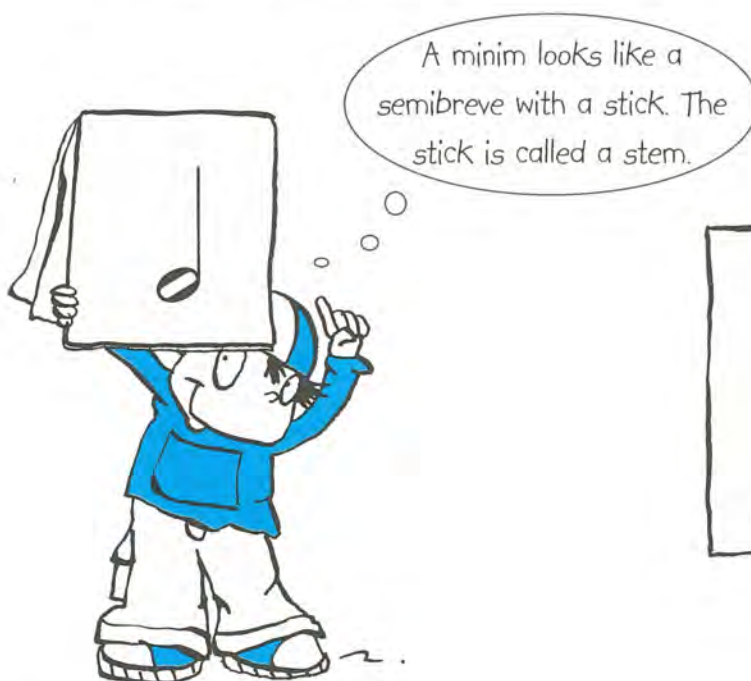
Semibreves

A semibreve is a long note. It lasts for four beats. Semibreves are also called whole notes.



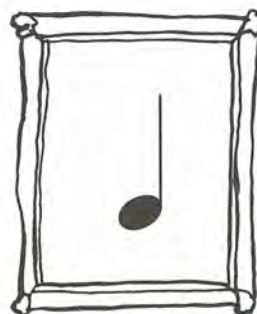
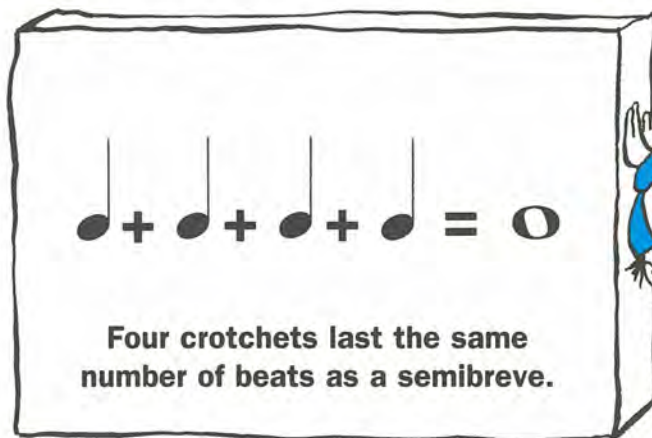
Minims

A minim lasts for two beats. Minims are also called half notes.



Crotchets

A crotchet lasts for one beat. Crotchets are also called quarter notes.



A crotchet looks like a minim that has been coloured in.



Quiz time!

1. Draw a treble clef and a bass clef. Use a different colour for each one, if you like.
2. Where are clefs written?
3. How many lines are there in a stave?
4. If you are writing high notes, which clef do you use?



Counting

When you play a tune, you have to count the beats very carefully, in your head.

Counting semibreves

Every time you play a semibreve you need to count to four before playing the next note.

Practise counting the semibreves below by saying the beats out loud.

It will help to clap at the start of each new note, as you say "one".







												
Count:	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	clap				clap				clap			

Counting other notes









Here are some more rhythms for you to count. Try to count the beats as evenly as you can.



Count the beats for these minims.

				
Count:	1	2	3	4
	clap		clap	


Count the beats for these crotchets.

								
Count:	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	clap	clap	clap	clap	clap	clap	clap	clap

Counting game

See if you can count the rhythm below. Remember to clap at the start of each new note.

Try to count in your head if you can.

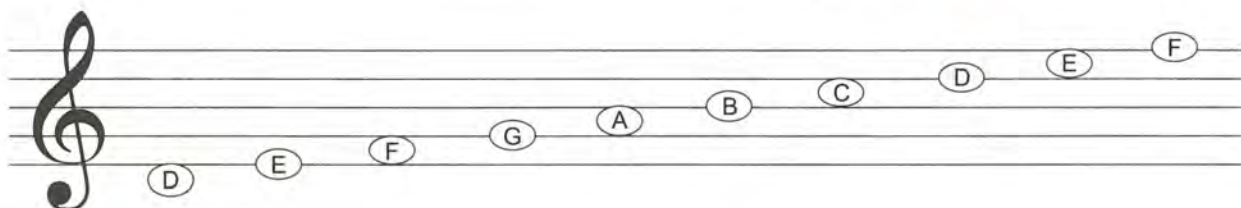
										
Count:	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2
										3

What the notes are called

Notes are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet, from A to G.

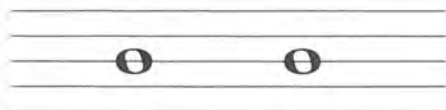
Treble clef notes

Here are the names of the notes when there is a treble clef at the beginning of the stave.



Quiz time!

1. How many beats are there in two semibreves?

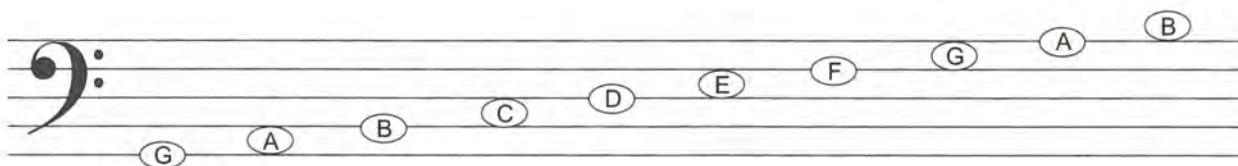


2. How many beats are there in four minims?



Bass clef notes

Here are the names of the notes when there is a bass clef at the beginning of the stave.



Remembering the names of the notes

To help you remember the names of the notes, you could make up some funny phrases.

Treble clef phrases

For the notes on the lines:

E G B D F

For the notes in the spaces:

F A C E

Bass clef phrases

For the notes on the lines:

G B D F A

For the notes in the spaces:

A C E G

Why not try making up some of your own?



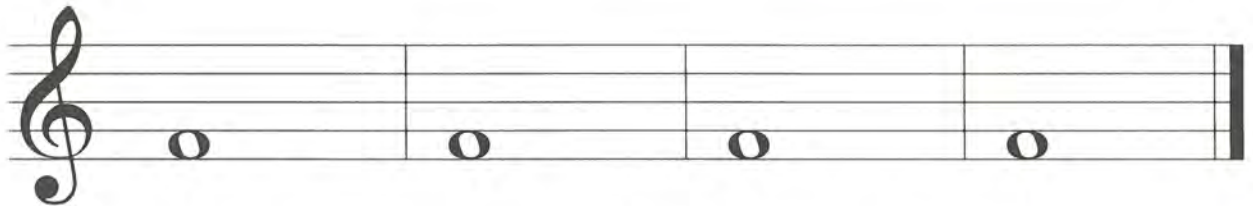
Splitting music up into sections

When you write a story you leave a space between each word. This makes it easier to

read. Music is split up into short sections too. Each section is called a bar.

Bars

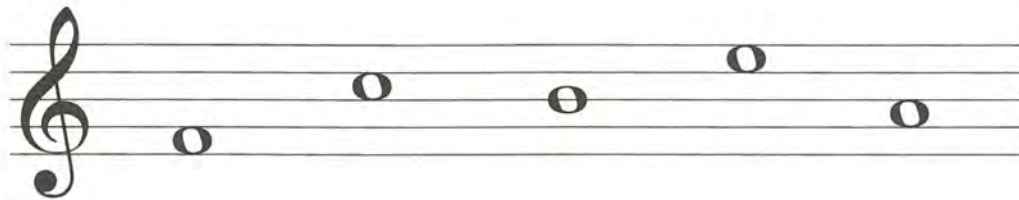
Bars are separated by lines, called bar-lines. Each bar has the same number of beats in it.



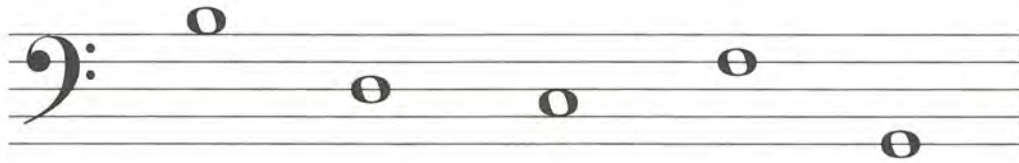
In this music there are four beats in each bar.

Quiz time!

1. What are the names of these treble clef notes?



2. What are the names of these bass clef notes?



Have you thought of any phrases to help you remember the names of the notes? Why not write them down here?

How many beats are in a bar?

At the beginning of a piece of music there are numbers that tell you how many

beats are in each bar. These numbers are called the time signature.

Time signatures

Here you can see one of the most common time signatures, 4/4 time.

The top number tells you how many beats there are in each bar.



The bottom number tells you what kind of beats they are.



The number 4 on the bottom stands for crotchets.

In 4/4 time there are four crotchet beats in each bar.

3/4 time

In 3/4 time there are three crotchet beats in each bar.



Try counting
three beats in
a bar.



2/4 time

In 2/4 time there are two crotchet beats in each bar.



Remember, the top
numbers tells you there are
two beats in each bar.



Leaving gaps in music

There are signs in music that tell you to leave gaps. These gaps are called rests.

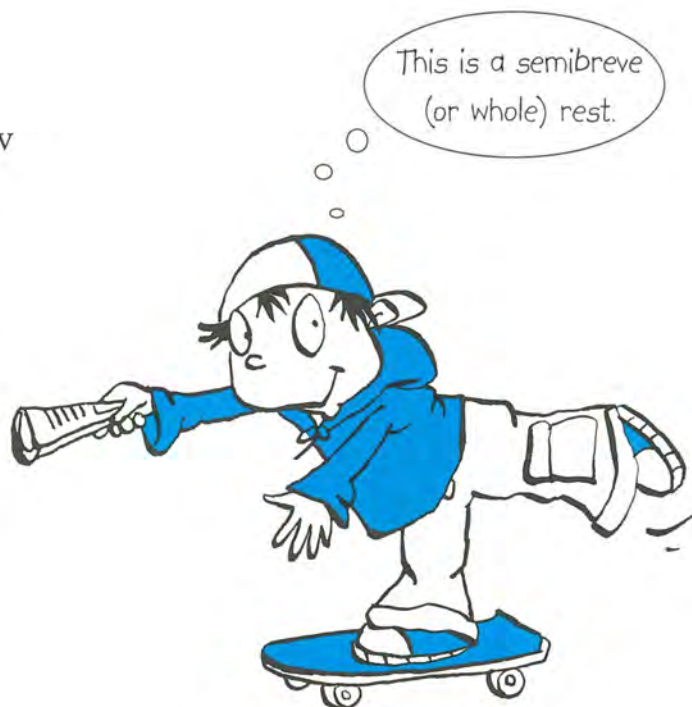
Rests

When you see a rest, count the correct number of beats in your head, before playing the next note.



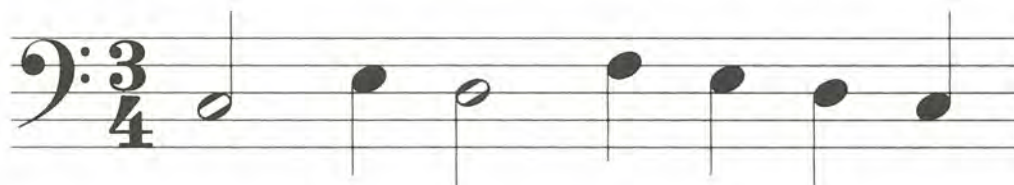
Semibreve rests

A semibreve rest is also used to show a rest which lasts for a whole bar.



Quiz time!

1. How many bars should there be in the music below?



2. What is the time signature of this music?



Another note-length

Here you are going to learn about a shorter note, called a quaver.



Quavers

A quaver lasts for half a crotchet beat. Quavers are sometimes called eighth notes.



Grouping quavers together

Quavers are often joined together in groups of two, three or four. This makes them easier to read.



This is how two quavers are joined together.



This is how three quavers are joined together.



This is how four quavers are joined together.

Quaver rests

A quaver rest lasts for half a crotchet beat. Here you can see what a quaver rest looks like.



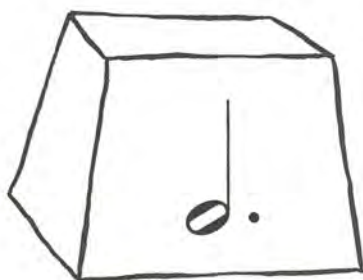
Dotted notes

Sometimes there is a dot after a note. This makes the

note last for one and a half times its normal length.

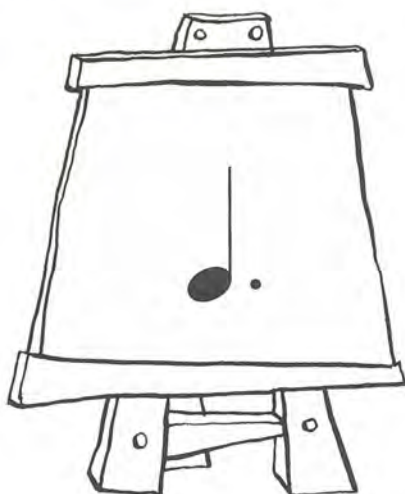
Dotted minims

A minim lasts for two beats, so a minim with a dot after it lasts for three beats.



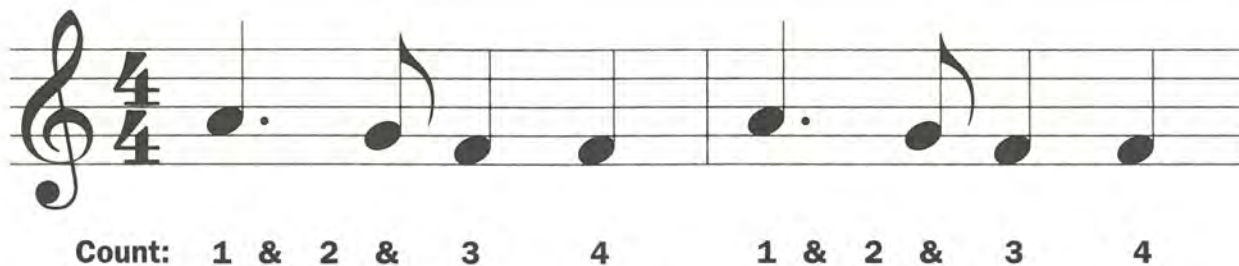
Dotted crotchets

A dotted crotchet lasts for one and a half beats.



Counting dotted crotchets

When you play a dotted crotchet, it helps to count “one and two and”.



Quiz time!

1. How many beats does this rest last for?



2. How many beats does this rest last for?

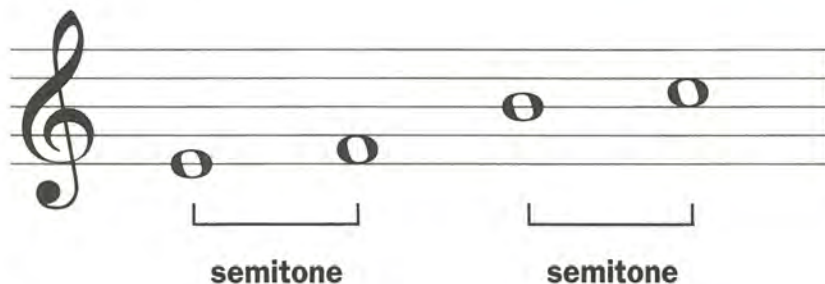


The distances between notes

The distance between two notes is known as an interval. The smallest interval is called a semitone. Two semitones added together make a tone. Find out more below.

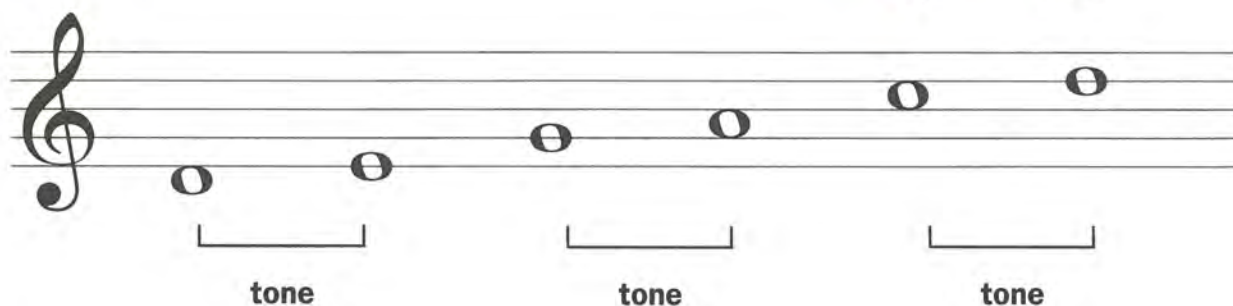
Semitones

The interval between the notes E and F, and B and C, is a semitone.



Tones

The distance between the other notes you have learned so far is called a tone.



Sharps and flats

In between notes that are a tone apart there is an extra note, either called a sharp or a flat.



A sharp sign in front of a note makes it a semitone higher.

A flat sign in front of a note makes it a semitone lower.

So A sharp is the same as B flat.



A sharp or flat sign also applies to any other notes of the same pitch later in that bar.

So this note is A sharp, too.

Repeat signs

There are signs that tell you to play all, or part, of the

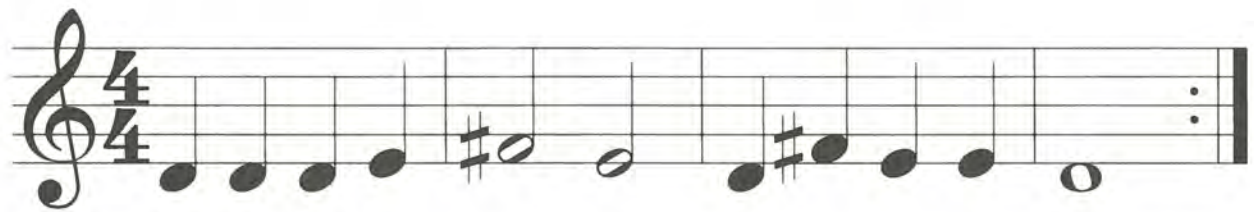
music again. These are called repeat signs.

Repeating all of the music

When you have to repeat all of the music, the repeat sign is at the end.

When you reach the repeat sign, go back to the beginning and play the music again.

The second time you reach the repeat sign, stop playing.



Repeating part of the music

When you only have to repeat part of the music, there are repeat signs at the beginning and end of the section you have to repeat.

When you reach the second repeat sign, go back to the first repeat sign and play that section again.



Reading a tune

There is a tune for you to read below, to test yourself on what you have learned.

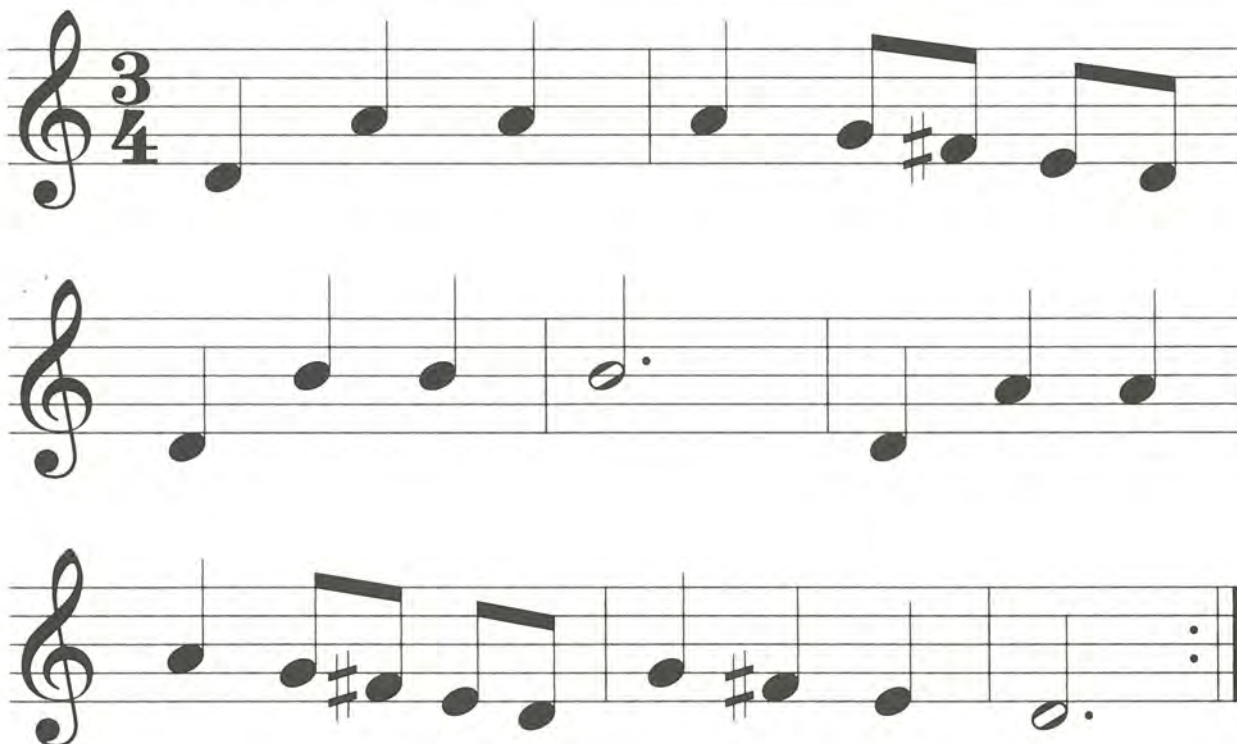
Remember to count as evenly as you can.



Look out for the sharp signs.



Lavender's Blue



Answers

Page 5

1. Treble clef
Bass clef
2. At the beginning of each stave.
3. Five.
4. The treble clef.



Page 8

1. Eight.
2. Eight.

Page 11

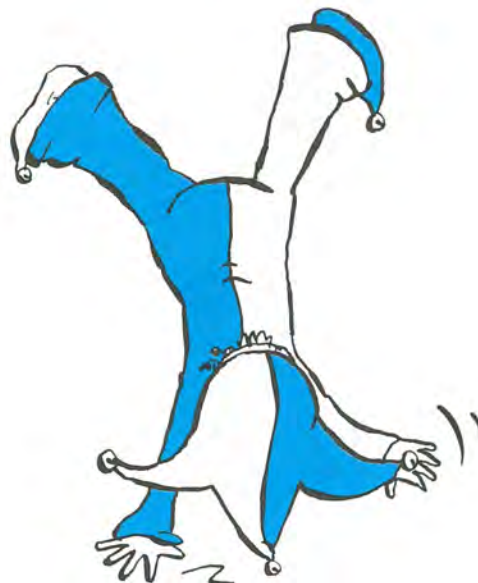
1. F, C, B, E, A
2. B, D, C, F, G

Page 15

1. Three.
2. $\frac{2}{4}$

Page 19

1. One.
2. Half a beat.





The simplest introduction
to learning to read music.
Looking at basic music theory –
note names, signs and symbols,
what they look like and what they mean.

No musical knowledge is needed – ideal for
children starting to learn to sing or play
an instrument.


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