

Music is written using a series of symbols placed on a set of 5 horizontal lines, called the **Staff**. The Staff is divided into **Measures** by vertical lines called **Bar Lines**. Each line and each space on the Staff represents a different **Note**, determined by a symbol placed at the beginning of the Staff, called a **Clef**

How to Read Sheet Music

Sheet Music, like Charts, is read from left to right.



Charts are essentially simplified versions of sheet music, so many of the same rules and symbols apply to both, including Time Signatures, Bar Lines, and Repeat Signs.

Sheet Music for most instruments is usually written on one Staff, with one Clef, (Treble for higher instruments, Bass for lower ones) with the exception of piano music, which usually uses Treble Clef for the right hand part, and Bass Clef for the left hand. This combined Staff is called the Grand Staff.



The Treble Clef: From bottom to top, the *lines* on the Treble Clef are the Notes: **E G B D F** (Every Good Boy Does Fine)

The *spaces* on the Treble Clef are the Notes: **F A C E** (spelling the word, "Face")

Chords are indicated in Sheet Music by multiple Note symbols stacked *vertically* on the staff, signifying that these Notes are to be played together all at once. Similarly, any Notes or Chords that align vertically on both Clefs are to be played at the same time.

Melodies are often written on the Treble Clef (and in the case of piano pieces, usually played with the right hand), as is the case in this piece. The Bass Clef tends to be used for accompaniment, including bass Notes (setting a tonal foundation for the Melody) and/or Chords (providing harmonic context for the Melody). Looking *only* at the Treble Clef part of this piece, can you tell what song it is?



The Bass Clef: From bottom to top, the *lines* on the Bass Clef are the Notes: **G B D F A** (Good Boys Do Fine Always)

The *spaces* on the Bass Clef are the Notes: **A C E G** (All Cows Eat Grass)

The Key is indicated by a **Key Signature**, which uses Accidental symbols (# and b) placed at the far left of the Staff, right after the Clef symbols, to signify a particular Key. In this piece, there is a Flat symbol (b) on the Note "B", indicating the key of F Major (or D Minor), in which the Note "B" is always to be played as **Bb** unless it is altered later in the piece.*

Notes above or below the range of the Staff are written using Ledger Lines, short horizontal lines that are essentially just continuations of the Staff. For example, in the Treble Clef, the space above the top line is G, the Ledger Line above it is A, the space above that is B, the next Ledger Line is C, etc. In the Bass Clef, the space above the top line is B, the Ledger Line above that is C, etc.

As indicated by their placement, the Treble Clef is *higher* than the Bass Clef. That is, the Notes indicated on the Treble Clef are to be played in a higher octave than the Notes on the Bass Clef. The relationship between the two Clefs is an imaginary line, one line above the top of the Bass Clef, one line below the bottom of the Treble Clef. This line, in relation to either Clef, represents middle C (the C closest to the middle of a keyboard).

Any Notes used that are outside of the Key of a particular piece of music must be indicated using Accidental symbols, placed immediately to their left. For example, in this piece, there is an Eb, although E would usually be played as E Natural in this Key. Therefore, there is a Flat symbol (b) placed next to the modified E. These alterations last for the duration of the Measure, but no longer. That is, any other E's in this Measure would also be Flat, but they would go back to being Natural in the next Measure.

*Each Key has a unique Key Signature (with the exception of relative Minors and Majors), with a unique number of sharps or flats. For example, the Key of Eb Major (or C Minor) has three flats (Eb, Ab, and Bb). If the Key Signature indicates that these Notes are flat, that means the Key of the piece must be Eb Major (or C Minor). While these Keys contain the same Notes, you can usually tell whether a piece is in a Major Key or its Relative Minor by looking at which Note/Chord the piece resolves to. If it resolves to C (C Minor) it's probably in C Minor. If it resolves to Eb (Eb Major) it's probably in Eb Major.