AP Music Theory: Unit 1

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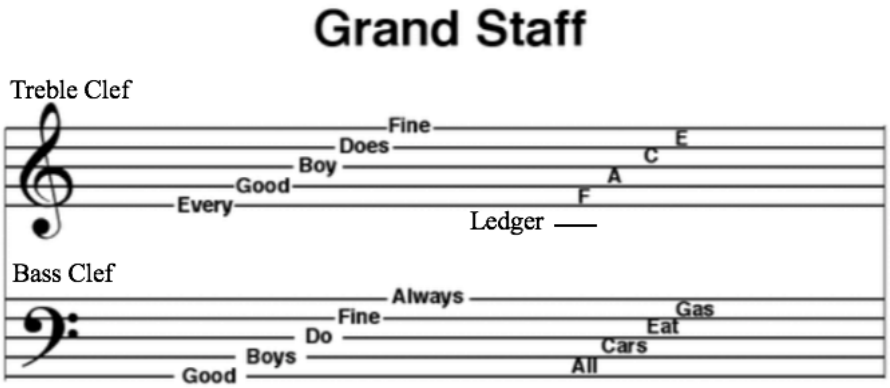
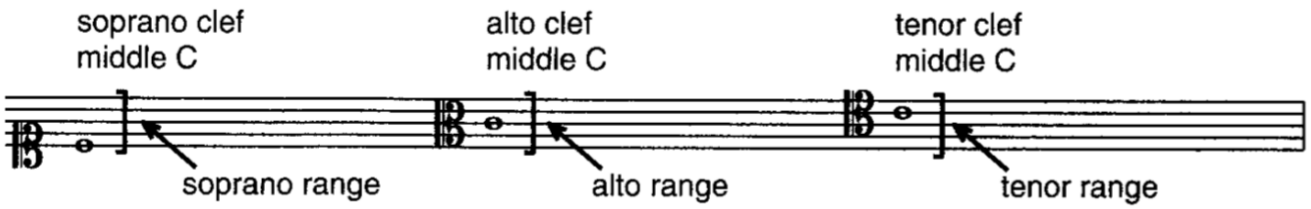
Music Fundamentals I: Pitch, Major Scales and Key Signatures, Rhythm, Meter, and Expressive Elements

Pitch

- **Pitch**: the sound quality of a note that's determined by how high or low a sound is.
    - A pitch of a note has a certain position on a staff.
- A **staff** has 5 lines and 5 places, and each position represents a different pitch.
    - Ex. Grand Staff - a system of 2 five-line staves that have their respective **clefs.**



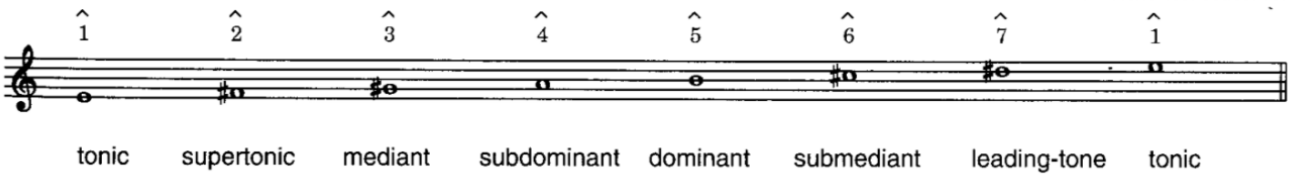
- **Clefs:** symbols that denote the specific pitches on a staff.
    - The three main types of clefs are the treble, bass, and C clefs.
        - The treble and bass clef are part of the grand staff. The treble clef (G clef) is located on the top and the bass clef (F clef) is on the bottom.
- For the treble clef, the note placement for each line is EGBDF (acronym: Every Good Boy Does Fine). For the spaces, it's FACE.
- For the bass clef, the note placement for each line is GBDFA (acronym: Good Boys Do Fine Always). For the spaces, it's ACEG.
- The Alto clef (C clef) is named after the middle C. The ranges on the clef indicate whether it is the soprano, alto, or tenor section.



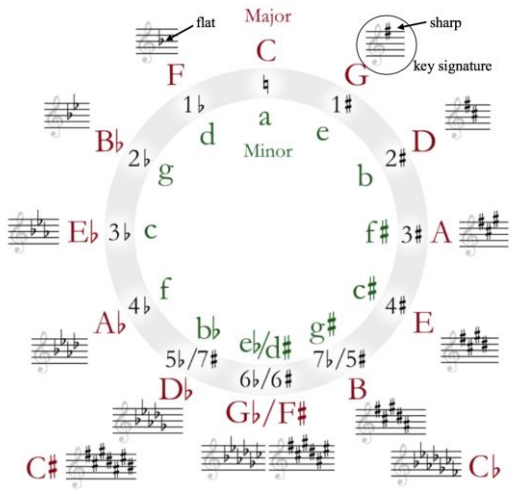
- Short horizontal lines that extend the range of the staff (above or below) are called **ledger lines.**

Major Scales and Key Signatures

- A **scale** is an arrangement of notes in an octave (has 8 notes). For each of the seven different notes, there are **scale degrees**, which are numbered in increasing order.
    - The scale degree names respectective to the degrees are in the order: tonic, mediant, subdominant, dominant, submediant, subtonic (leading-tone).



- On the above staff, you can see the scale degree names and numbers using the E major scale.
- For each type of scale, there are respective sharps and flats. A **flat** lowers the pitch one half step below its original pitch, and a **sharp** raises the pitch one half step above. The **circle of fifths** (pictured on the right) gives the order of the key signatures with the major and minor keys.
    - A **major scale** is a diatonic scale, meaning it has 5 whole steps and 2 half steps (between the 3rd & 4th note, and the



7th & 8th note). The interval sequences between the notes are W, W, H, W, W, W, and H.

- A whole step has 2 half steps, and a half step is the smallest distance between 2 pitches.

- The major scales follow the circle of fifths. There are 12 types of major scales (in red) and as you follow it clockwise, the # of sharps increases by one, and the # of flats decreases by one.
  - For example, the G major scale has 1 sharp (F) and the E flat major scale has 3 flats (B,E,A)

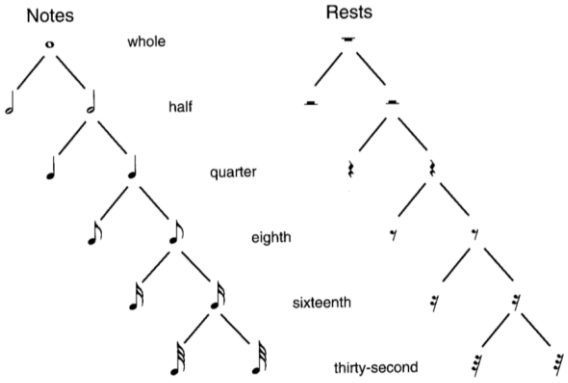
- The **key signature** is the arrangement of sharps or flats that correspond to the following notes. The order of the sharps is (FCGDAEB), and the order of the flats is (BEADGCF).
  - For example, the A major scale has 3 sharps (F,C,G); for every note that is F,C,G in the piece, it will be sharp.

Rhythm

Same spaced clicks are **pulses**. When you tap your foot at a consistent rate while listening to something, those pulses are known as **beats**. How you tap the beats is the **tempo** (speed). Duration in music is how long sound or silence lasts. Rhythm is an aspect of this and there are multiple rhythmic values that symbolize the duration of a note or rest.

On music sheets, rhythm is notated by the **notehead** (filled or unfilled), the stem (connected to the notehead), and the **flag** (attached to the stem).

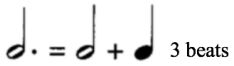
- Whole note: unfilled notehead; 4 beats
- Half note: unfilled notehead with stem; 2 beats
- Quarter note: filled notehead with stem; 1 beat
- Eighth note: filled notehead with stem and flag; ½ of a beat
- Sixteenth note: filled notehead with stem and 2 flags; ¼ of a beat



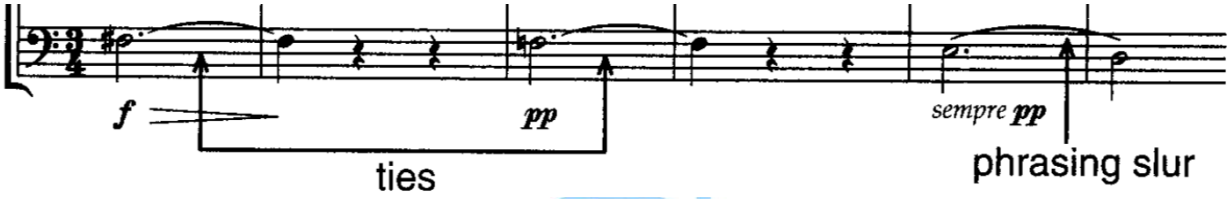
A rest symbolizes the silence in music. From the image above, the durational value corresponds to the notes.

There are more features that can slightly change the rhythmic value of a note/rest.

- The **dot** after a note/rest lengthens the value by half.
    - For example, if a half note has 2 beats, then a dotted half note has 3 beats. (half of 2 is 1)



- A **tie** also lengthens the pitch's duration. It is a curved line that combines the rhythm value of 2 or more identical notes. **Phrasing slur** is a musical notation that connects multiple different pitches by curved lines. It represents playing the notes connected (legato).



Meter

Meter is the framework that categorizes beats and rhythms into bigger patterns of accented and unaccented beats. It means "to measure" and consists of a strong beat with a pattern of weaker beats, creating a metrical accent. A collection of beats (2, 3, or 4 beats) are combined into a **measure**, which are symbolized through **bar lines**.

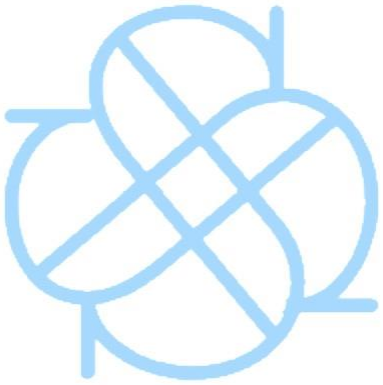
- **Time Signature** is the beat division and appears at the beginning of a piece (after key signature). It takes the form of a fraction - the top number represents how many beats per measure, and the bottom number is what note makes up the beat unit.
    - For example, ¾ indicates 3 beats per measure and that the quarter note makes up the beat.
    - 2 time signatures that don't use the fraction are C and ¢. C stands for 4/4 (referred to as **common time**). The second one is cut time (2/2).

Expressive Elements:

There are symbols that describe a certain style or overall speed a piece should be played.

pianissimo	*pp*
piano	*p*
mezzo piano	*mp*
mezzo forte	*mf*
forte	*f*
fortissimo	*ff*

- **Dynamic** symbols indicate how loud or soft a note/phrase should be.
    - The dynamic terms are displayed above.



All graphics are courtesy of *The Complete Musician*!