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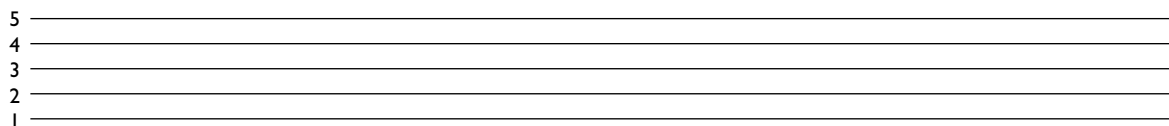
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About the author

David Harrison is a London-based guitarist and saxophonist. A jazz graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, he teaches guitar at London's renowned City Lit and is the author of several best-selling music tutorial publications.

The staff

Music is written on five lines called a *stave* (or *staff*).

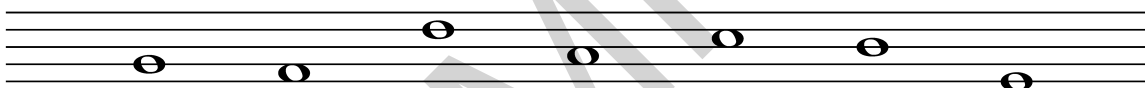


The lines are numbered 1–5, starting with the bottom line.

So if we talk about the second line, for example, it will always be the second line *from the bottom*.

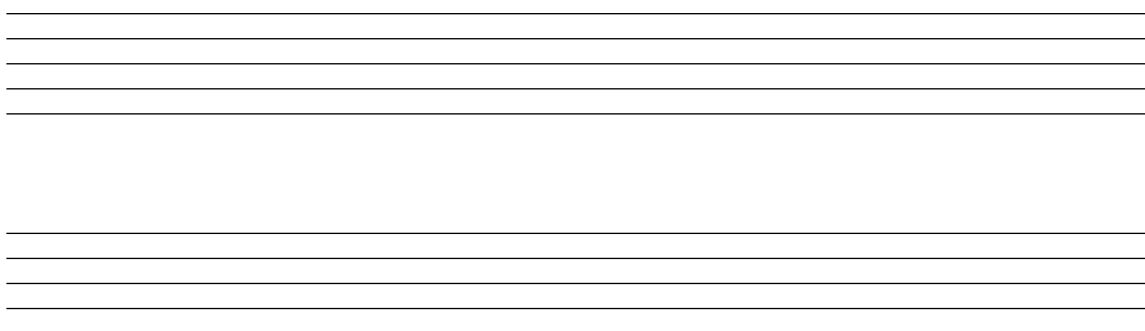
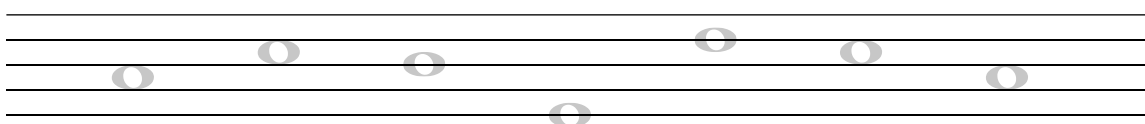
Writing basic notes

Basic notes are oval symbols that either sit on the lines or between them, like this:



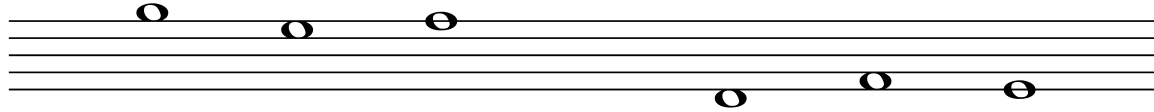
Try writing a few notes like this on the staff below. Make sure that it's easy to tell whether the notes are on the lines or between them.

You can either draw your own or trace the examples until you get the hang of it.



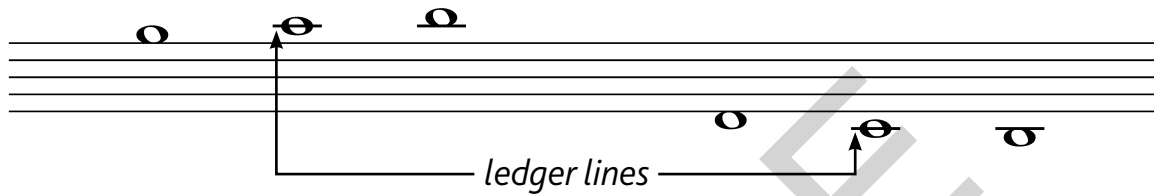
Up and down the staff

Notes can be written high up at the top of the staff, or low down at the bottom.

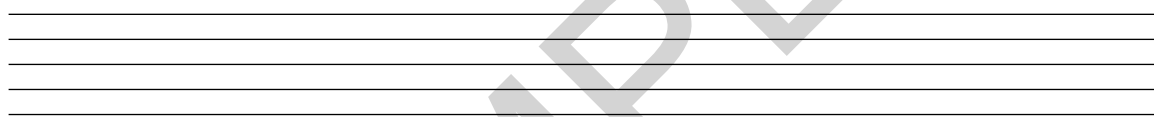


The higher notes *sound higher*, and the lower ones *sound lower*.

If a note is really high or low, it might need some extra lines, called *ledger lines*:



Try writing some high and low notes with ledger lines on the staff below.



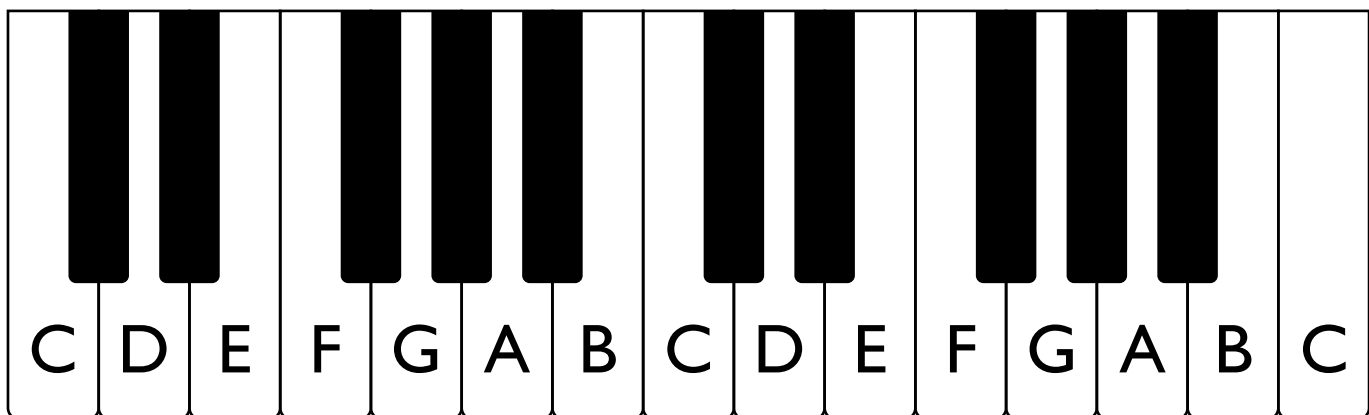
The keyboard

Even if you don't play the piano, the keyboard is a really useful way of understanding notes and other elements of music theory.

Notice that all the white keys are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet, A–G.



The black keys are arranged in repeating groups of two and three. This should help you to remember which white keys are which.



← LOWER





HIGHER →

Adding the clefs

A symbol called a *clef* is drawn at the beginning of every stave. The most common clefs are the *treble* clef and the *bass* clef. Let's have a go at drawing them.

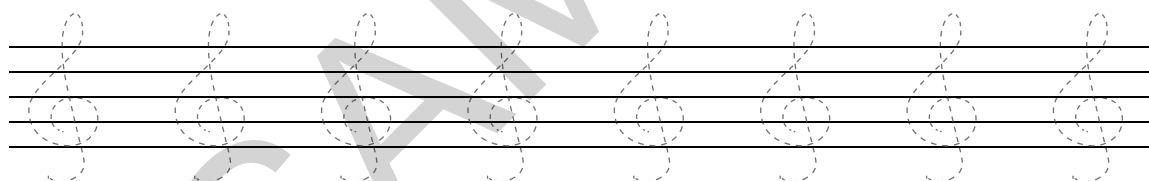
Treble clef

The treble clef is based on a spirally curl around the second line of the stave.

- 1** Start by drawing the curl: 
- 2** Now bring the line up above the stave, like the neck of a swan: 
- 3** Make a loop, bringing the line back down: 
- 4** And finally go right through the curl, ending with a little tail at the bottom: 





Try tracing these treble clefs below, or use your own manuscript paper. You'll soon get used to it!



Bass clef

The bass clef is based on a curly shape that begins on the fourth line of the stave, with two dots added.

- 1** Draw the curl not quite the whole height of the stave. It looks a bit like an ear: 
- 2** Now add two dots on the right, either side of the fourth line: 



Now have a go at drawing some nice smooth bass clefs yourself.

