

1A. Musical Notation

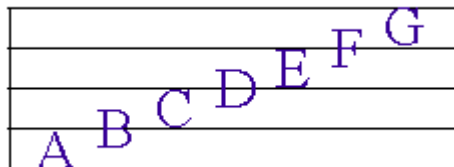
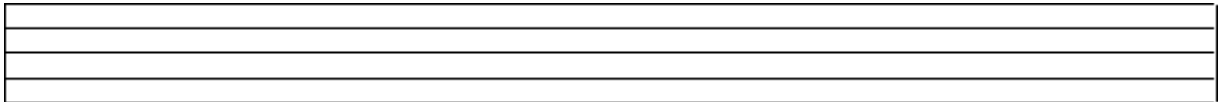
For many people musical notation is a nightmare. Actually, it has a lot of benefits, and it's quite easy to read. Tablature is quite common but much more complicated and in many cases rather confusing. In this lesson I'll show you how easy it is to learn musical notation.

The first seven letters of the alphabet are identical with the names of the seven natural tones:

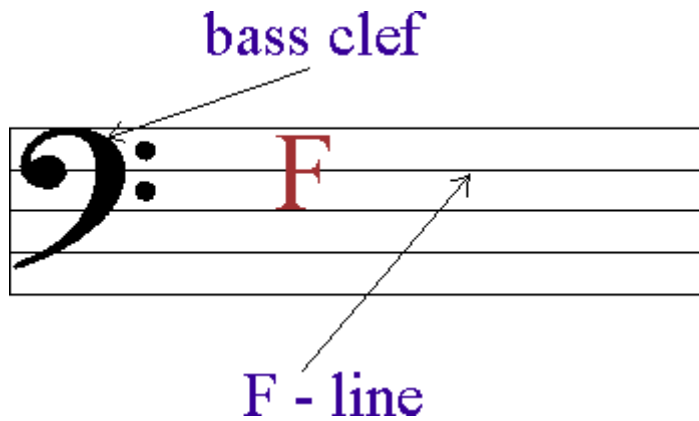
The musical alphabet							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

The names of the remaining notes are mere derivatives - like adding a suffix to a word.

Instead of letters, however, musical notation uses symbols and a system of five lines called staff:



The symbols are written on the lines and spaces. The position of the symbol, i.e. the line or space, determines the name of the note. The note on the lower space is A. On the line above that is B, C is on the next space, D on the middle line, E on the space above that, the fourth line is F, and G is on the upper space. The musical alphabet repeats above and below the staff, and the notes are relative to those within the staff. Their pitch, however, is higher or lower depending on their position.

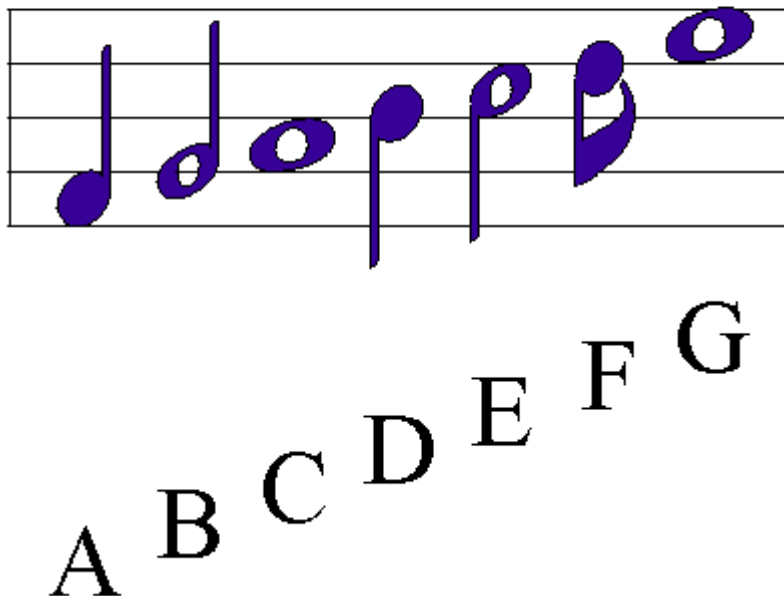


This notation within the staff applies only for the bass and other low-pitched instruments like the cello, the tuba etc. The staff is marked by a clef at the beginning to prevent any confusion. The bass clef is a stylised F, and the two dots indicate the F line within the staff.

For a start you'll only have to learn five symbols.

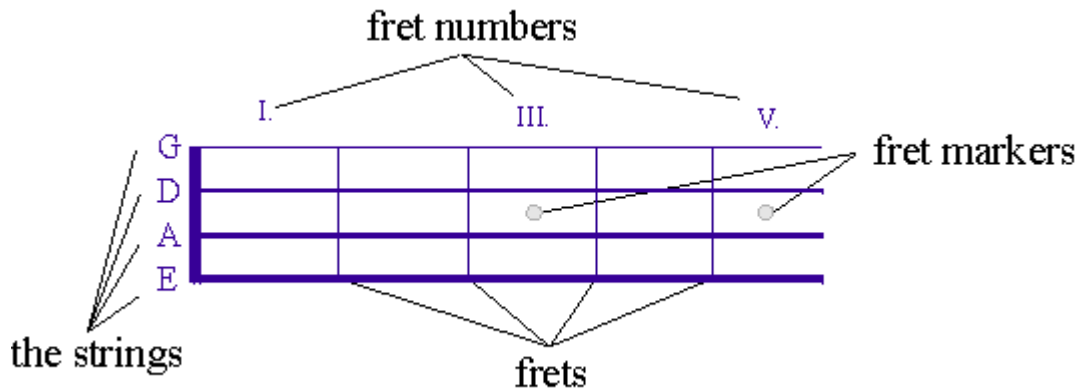
The appearance of the symbol (head, stem and flags) indicates the time value (duration), and the position of the symbol in the staff determines name and pitch.

The note symbols



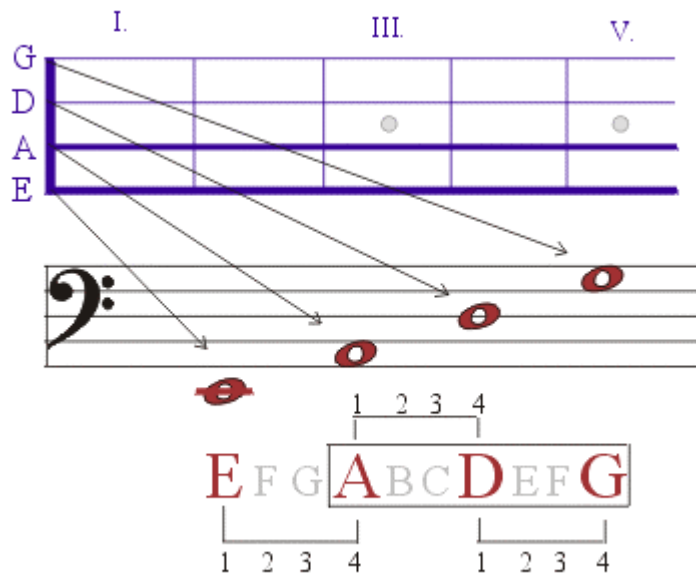
You've probably realised already how easy musical notation is. With a little practice you'll soon be an expert.

1B. The Open Strings



The illustration above visualises the open string layout on the fretboard of a four-string bass. We'll use these "fretboard diagrams" quite often so here's a brief explanation. Looking down at the fretboard the biggest string (E) is next to you. This is the bottom line in the box. The smallest string is the furthest away from you (G) and the top line of the box. Dots on the four box lines indicate the fretting fingers and note position.

The open strings of your bass each have their individual sounds and names. They're called E, A, D, and G, and they denote different pitches. Pitch is indicated by the note position in the staff: the higher the position the higher the pitch. In notation, the open strings are written like this:



Memorise the open string positions in the staff. Notice that they're alternately written on lines and spaces. **E** is the lowest note on a four-string bass. It is written on a **ledger line** below the staff.

The remaining notes are also easy to memorise. **D** is on the center line, **A** is on the bottom space where the musical alphabet begins, and **G** is on the top space.