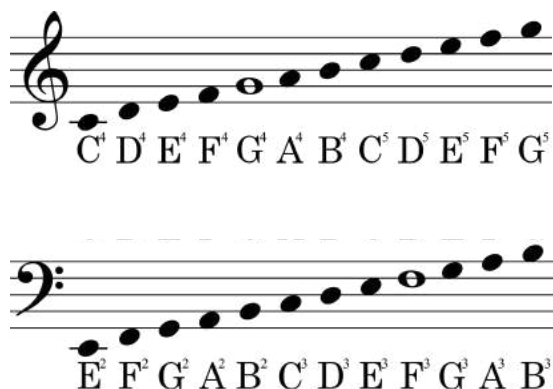


# Introduction to Music Theory

[This pdf](#) is a good starting point for those who are unfamiliar with some of the key concepts of music theory.

## Reading musical notation

Musical notation (also called a score) is a **visual representation** of the pitched notes heard in a piece of music represented by dots over a set of horizontal **staves**. In the top example the symbol to the left of the notes is called a **treble clef** and in the bottom example is called a **bass clef**.



People often like to use a **mnemonic** to help remember the order of notes on each clef, [here is an example](#).

## Intervals

An interval is the **difference** in pitch between two notes as defined by the **distance** between the two notes. The easiest way to visualise this distance is by thinking of the notes on a [piano keyboard](#). For example, on a C major scale, the interval from C to E is a 3rd and the interval from C to G is a 5th. [Click here](#) for some more interval examples.

It is also common for an increase by **one interval** to be called a **half-step**, or **semi-tone**, and an increase by **two intervals** to be called a **whole step**, or **tone**.

## Major and minor scales

A scale is a set of notes from which melodies and harmonies are constructed. There are two main subgroups of scales: [Major](#) and [minor](#). The type of scale is dependant on the intervals between the notes:

**Major scale - Tone, Tone, Semi-tone, Tone, Tone, Tone, Semi-tone**

**Minor scale - Tone, Semi-tone, Tone, Tone, Semi-tone, Tone, Tone**

For example (by visualising a keyboard) the notes in C Major are: CDEFGAB, and C Minor are: CDE ♭ FGA ♭ B ♭ . [Here](#) is list of some more interesting scales (not just major and minor!) with accompanying sound examples.

## Key Signatures

In general, a piece of music is based around specific scale or key, i.e the group of notes/pitches used in the majority of the piece. The **key signature** tells a musician what key the piece is in and usually appears just after the clef, expressed as a collection of **flats** ( ♭ ) or **sharps** (#).

[This link](#) will take you to a key signature quick reference sheet.

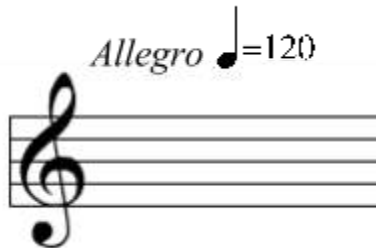
## Harmony

A harmony is made when two or more notes are played at the same time and is the basis for **chords**. Harmonies can be **consonant** (pleasant) or **dissonant** (unpleasant or jarring) depending on the interval between the combination of notes used. [This webpage](#) gives a good overview.

[Here](#) is a list of **chord types** with some accompanying sound examples.

## Tempo

Tempo describes the overall pace of a piece of music and is usually expressed in **beats per minute (BPM)**. A tempo marker is usually placed above the staff like so:



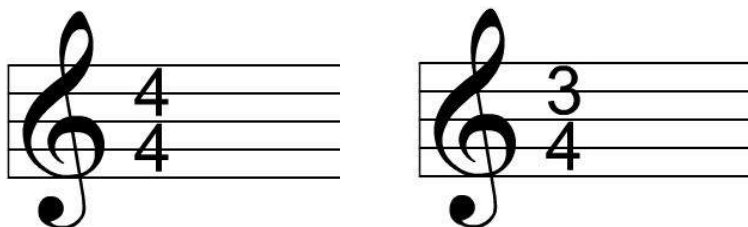
[See here](#) for a list of tempo markings with translations from Italian.

## Rhythm

The term **rhythm** is used to describe how the notes in a piece of music are arranged over time to generate some kind of, usually repeating, **pulse**. **Note values** are the visual representation of rhythm and describe the duration for which a note, or a rest, should be held relative to the **tempo**.

See [this table](#) for a list of note values.

A **time signature** appears to the right of the clef and key signature of a staff and tells a musician how a piece of music should be **counted**. It is made up of two numbers, one on top of the other (not unlike a fraction). The top number tells you how many beats there are to one bar whilst the bottom number defines the note value of the count.



For example a time signature of  $\frac{4}{4}$  (the most commonly used signature in popular music) signifies that there are 4 crotchet/quarter notes to a bar. [Here](#) is a list of time signatures with some sound examples.

