

Len Collins - Guitar Edition



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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

The Stave: Introduction

Everything a creative guitarist needs to give their playing a future is written on the stave or on the borders of the stave. And, most importantly, using my method it won't take long to master.

I'm a one of a kind guitar teacher. I've played it all. Used it all. I taught it all to me, now, I'm going to teach it all to you. I held the Guinness World record 2004 - (c)2007 for the worlds largest guitar lesson.

Your ability to work hard and practice is at the heart of Stave Breakthrough and the amazing Music Readers Toolbox.



The Stave

Use this, the **Stave** section, in conjunction with the other three sections in this series.

Fretboard – Scales – Modes and Chords.

The Stave is an opportunity for progress. Many read from it. Few understand it.

The stave is the best, and quickest, method for finding and memorising the notes on the fretboard. The stave is a playground for fingers to become nimble in preparation for scales, chords and the joys of improvisation.

Students new to the stave must have a teacher to define the basics, someone to explain and build on the unique methods within The Music Readers Toolbox.

Beginners, professionals, teachers in schools and colleges and in private tuition will discover something new inside these pages.

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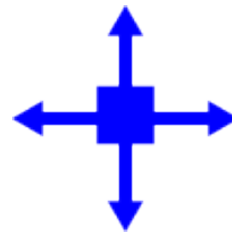
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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

The staff is everywhere in music

The Staff is used by

- Orchestras
- Choirs
- Rock guitarists
- Pop stars
- Classical singers
- Jazz musicians
- Blues players
- Performers in Musicals
- Opera stars
- Composers
- Songwriters

The Tools of the Stave

This is an introduction to the tools of the stave. The stave is an amazing thing. Sound, written on the stave, can be passed from musician to musician for them to play today, tomorrow or even centuries to come.

Sound, captured on the stave is there for practise, performance, rehearsal and recording. It is written on paper to be played from the heart.

Music from the stave can be heard on the guitar – or any instrument or voice. The stave is a friend who needs a bit of understanding.

As with everything musical it is practice and perseverance that makes it work.



The Stave Toolbox

Learning to read from the stave isn't difficult because the stave toolbox is full of surprises, each one ready to make the next surprise easier.

Of course, it takes time before you learn to read music at a moments notice because that is the real trick. But every day, with every hour you practise, with every new piece of music you read, and play, that wonderful day when you can sight read approaches. When it does you will be a musician!!

During my years as a guitar teacher I have developed many unique techniques to encourage my students to enjoy and use the stave in the same way I do.

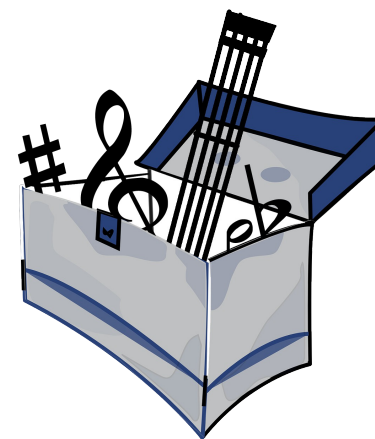


The Stave Breakthrough Method

Written in these pages is the **Stave Breakthrough** method for sight reading music. Remember, everyone is impressed when a musician reads music quickly.

Another thing to remember is when an audience applauds your playing, it is your effort they are applauding not just the music.

When a musician starts from scratch with a new piece of sheet music then turns it into something worth listening to, it brings with it an immense sense of satisfaction. Especially when the melody is one the performer had never heard before.



The Stave Breakthrough: Improvisation

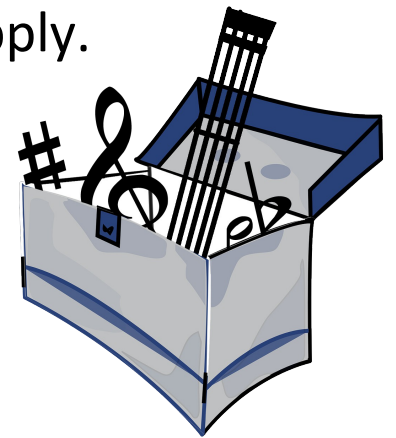
Through the magic of the stave it is possible to learn to improvise. All the clues are there. By understanding how the stave works the answers will be revealed.

The stave is a creative force not simply dots on a page.

Stave Breakthrough does not teach you how to play. It should be used in conjunction with a professional music teacher who understands my unique method. Playing proficiency and sight reading will merge into one complete musician. You couldn't ask for more than that.

You have to do the work. Tools are tools, you are the power supply.

I think it's time to start learning how to read music and how to use the music you read.



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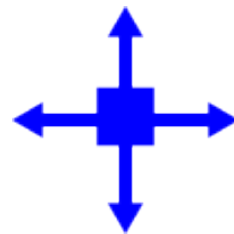
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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

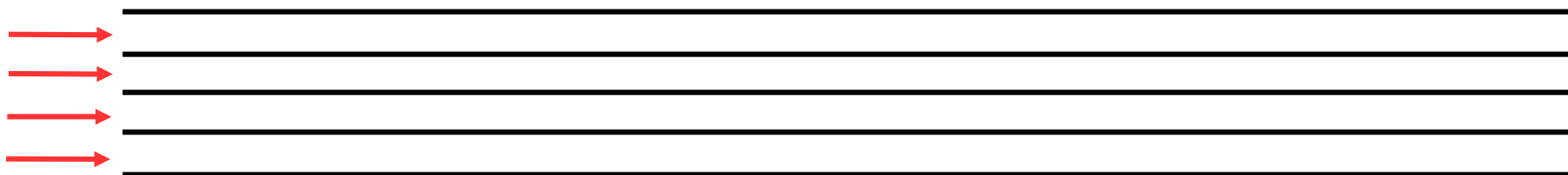
The Stave: 5 lines

The stave is made up of five lines.



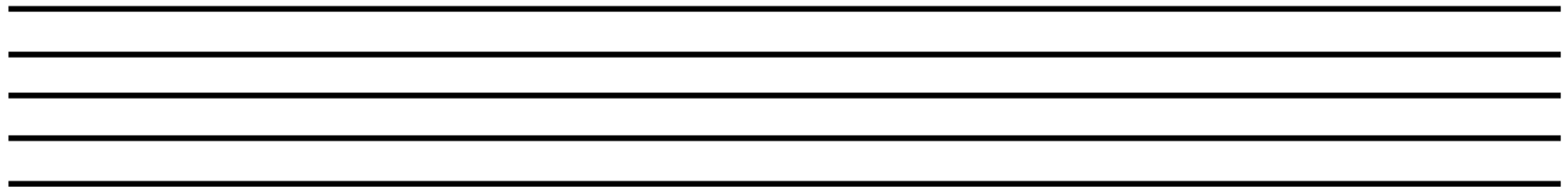
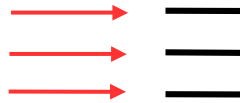
And four spaces

And the four spaces between the lines.



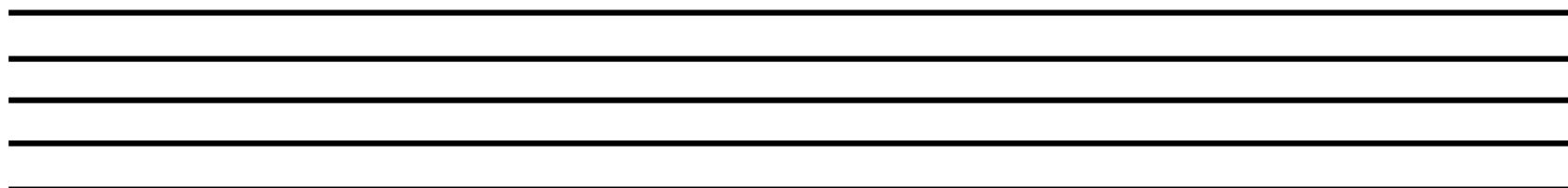
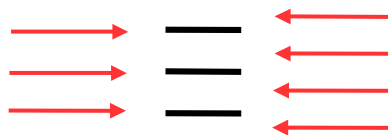
Ledger Lines Above

Three extra (ledger) lines can be added above the stave.



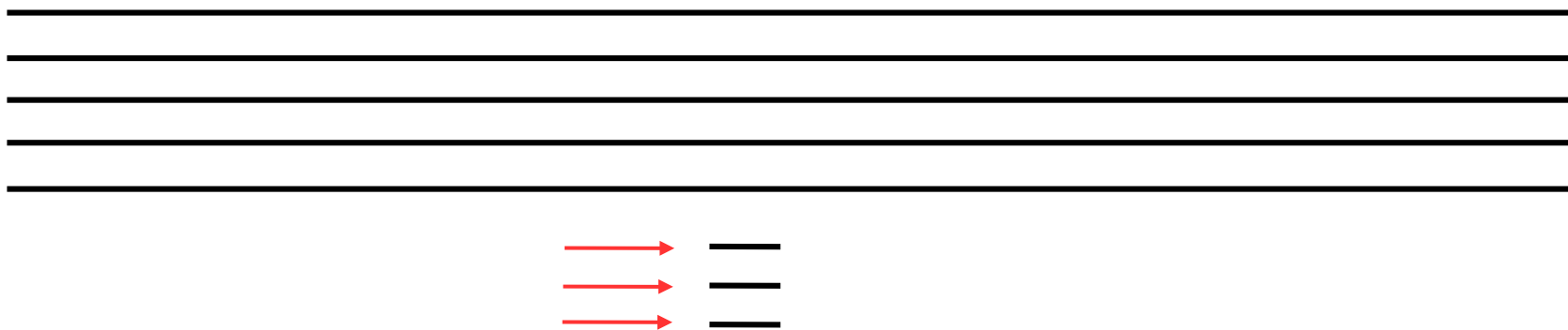
Ledger Lines Above

And the spaces.



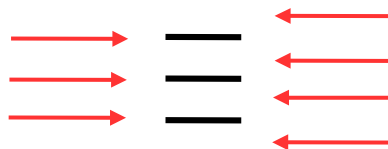
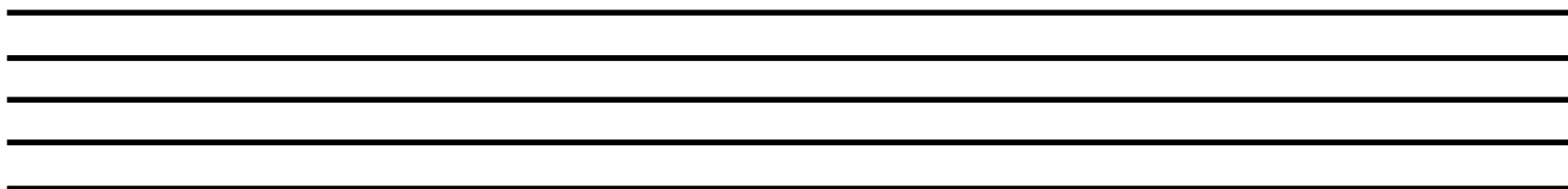
Ledger Lines Below

Three extra (ledger) lines can be added below the stave.



Ledger Lines Below

And the spaces.



The Treble Clef

The treble clef at the start of a piece of music is telling you the notes placed on the staff is for guitars and other instruments that use high sounding notes.



Other instruments / voices use different Clefs

Each clef is dedicated to the musical range of an instrument or voice.

Treble clef

Bass clef

Tenor clef

Alto clef



The main stave - lines

For now we will remove the ledger lines to focus on the main five lines of the stave.

A note can be placed on any of the five lines



The main stave - spaces

Or in a space between two lines



Sight Reading

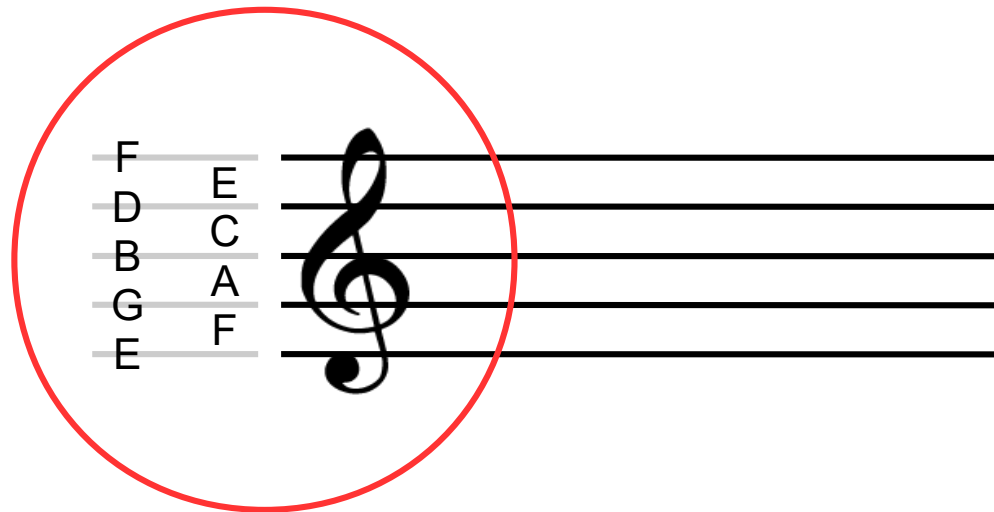
Music is written on the staff to be read and played, or sung, at the same time.

It is called sight reading.



Writing Down Sound

Every line, including the spaces between the lines, on the stave has its own name.



Linking to the fretboard

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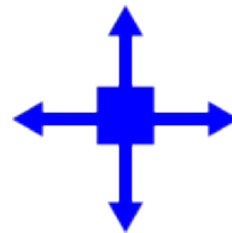
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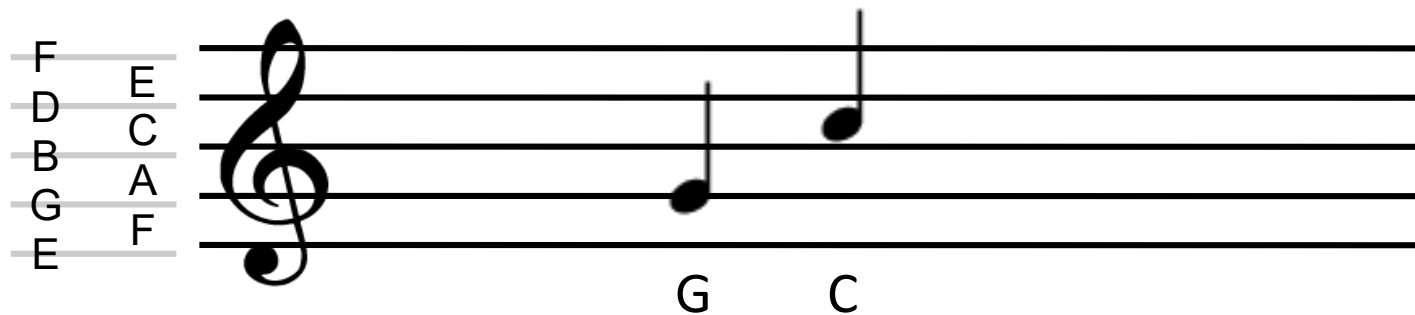


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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

Matching the names

To link the stave to the guitar we must know the names of the positions of the notes on the stave and where to find them on the fretboard.

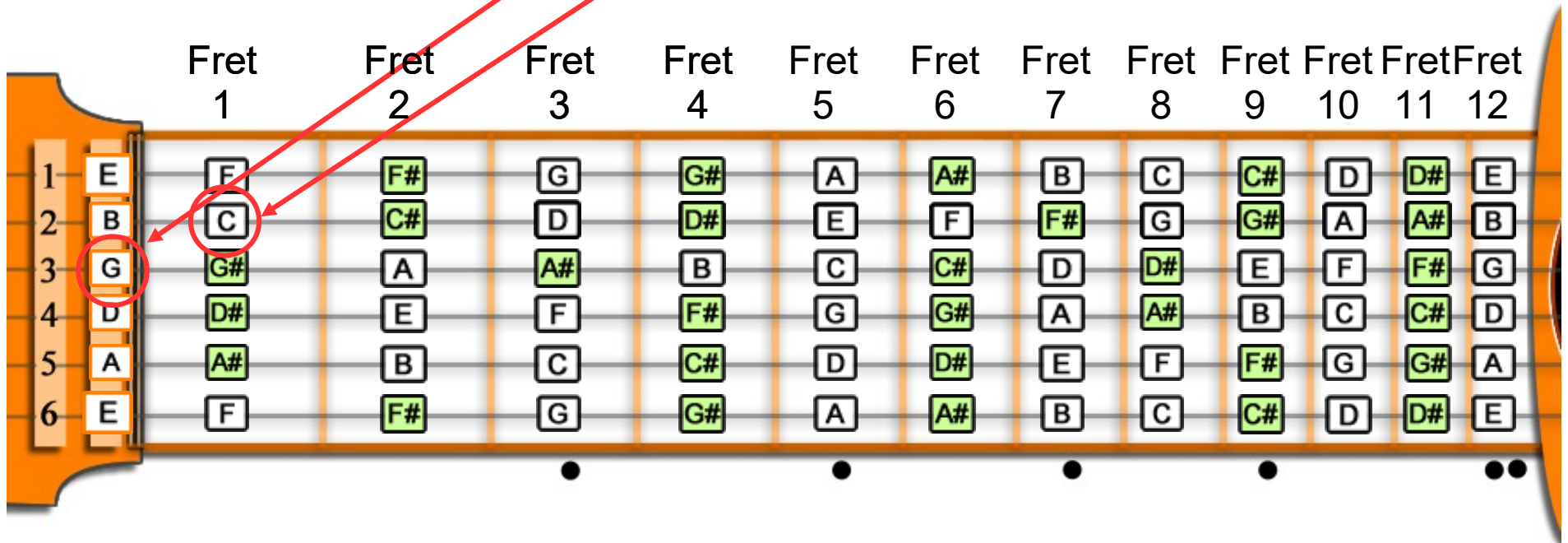
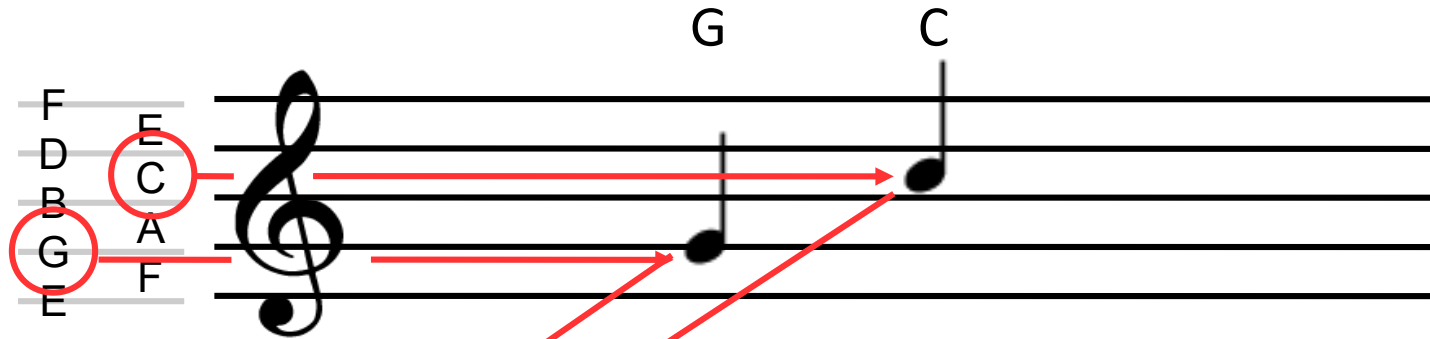


When we started these guitar lessons* the first thing I taught you was the names of the notes on each string.

Now we will start to use that knowledge.

* Stave Breakthrough and The Music Readers Toolbox can be used with any instrument and any vocal range.

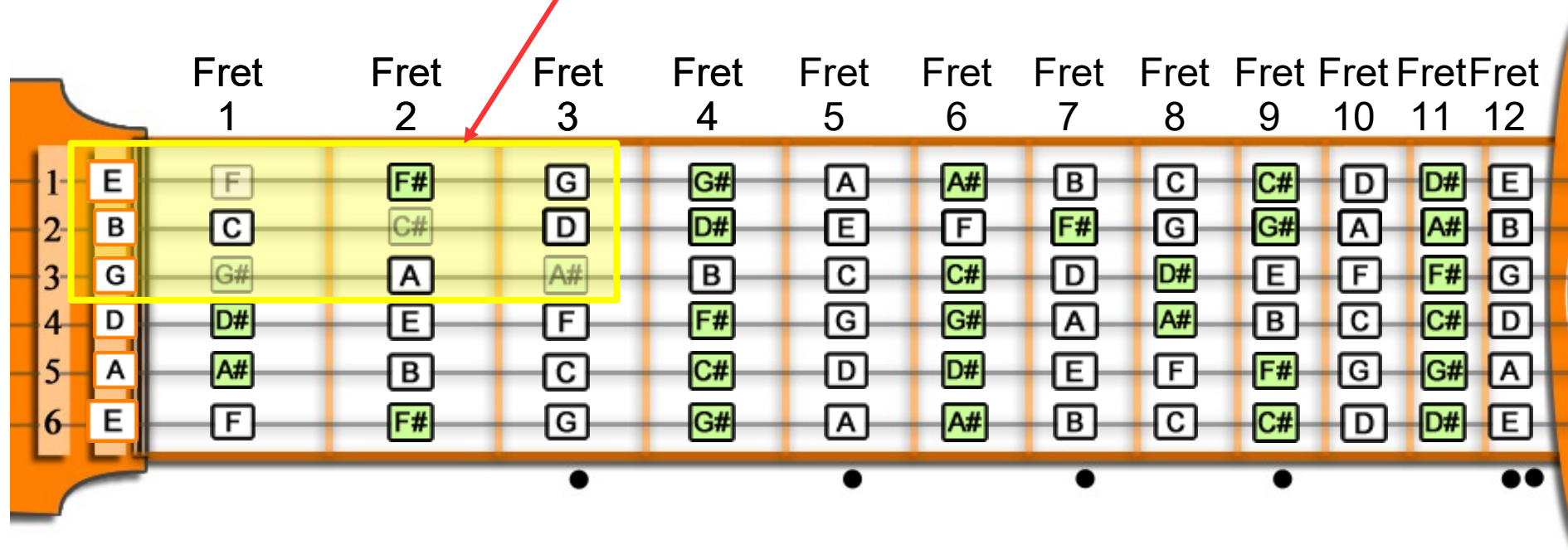
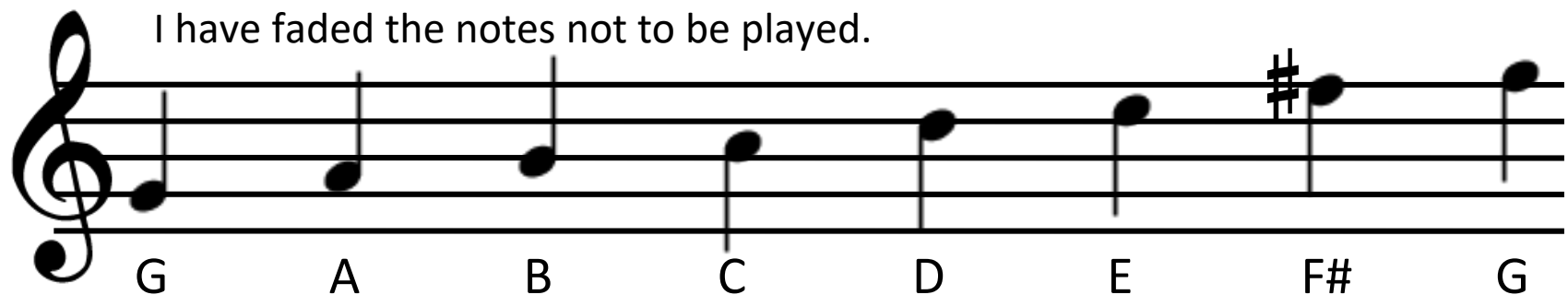
Linking Stave to Fretboard



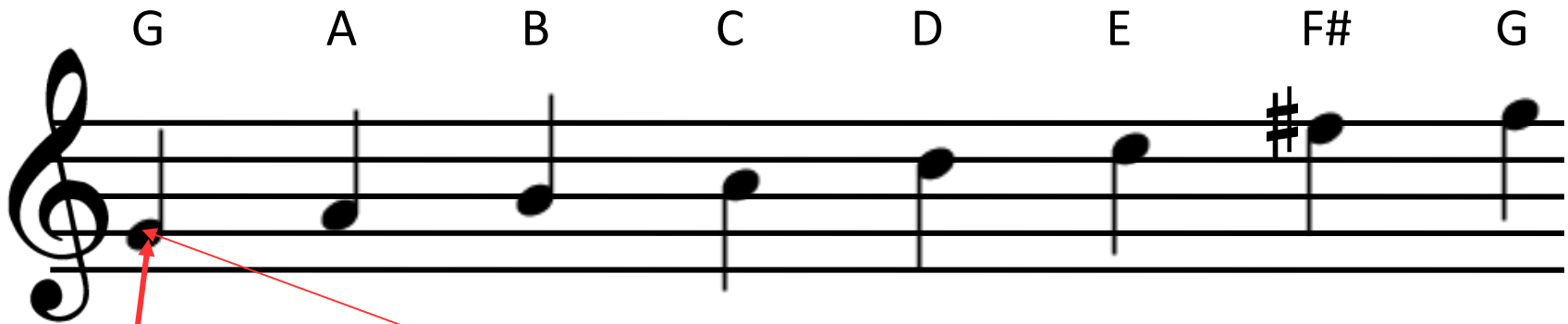
The Yellow Area

To make it clearer I have highlighted an area on the fretboard in yellow.

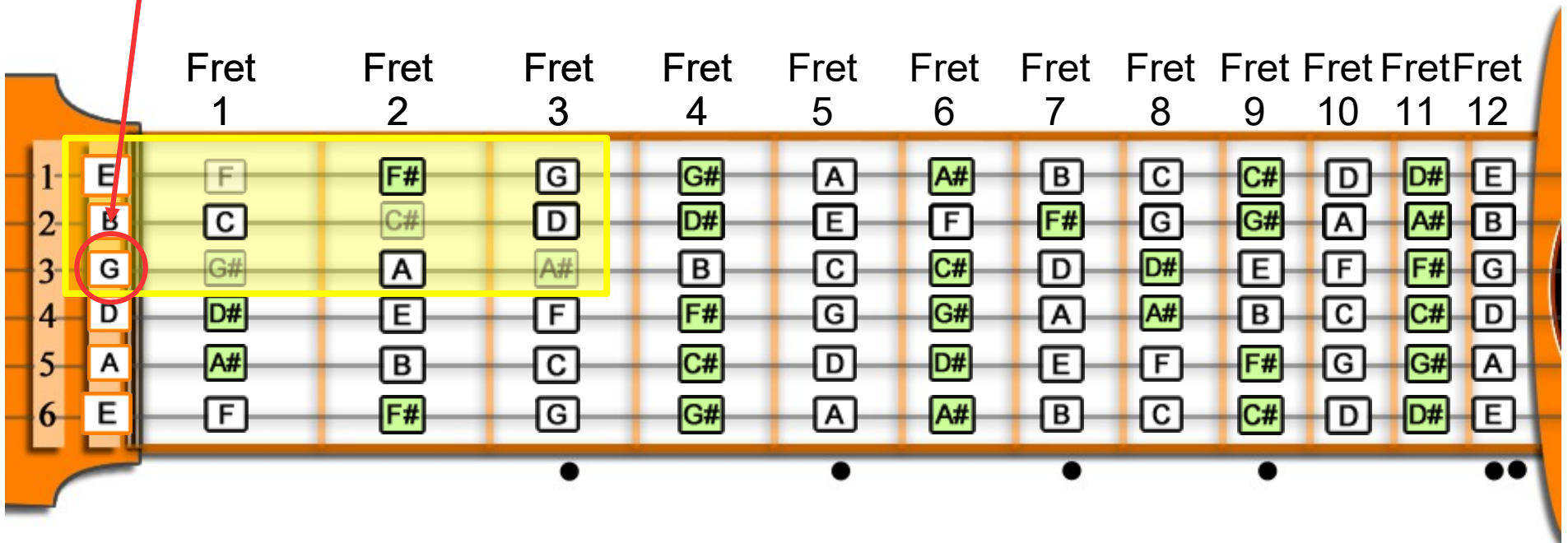
I have faded the notes not to be played.



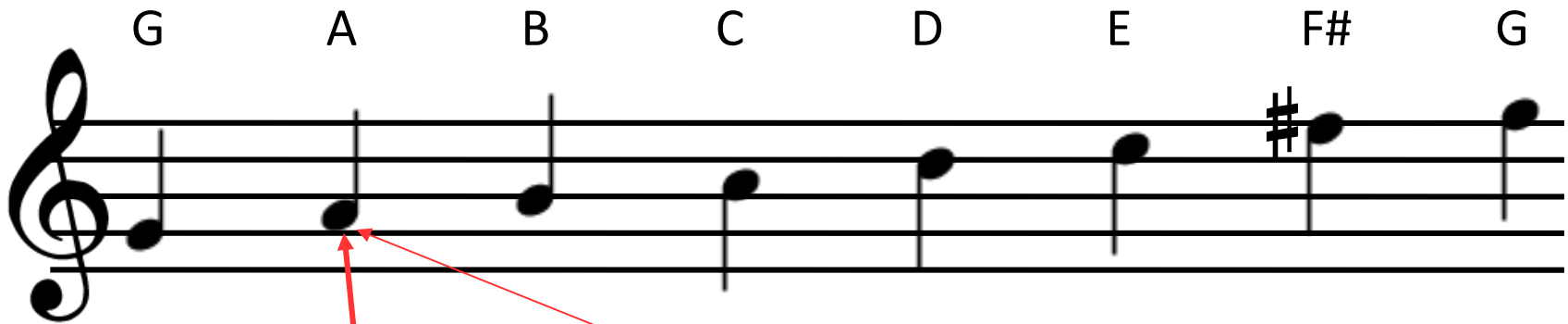
G – String 3



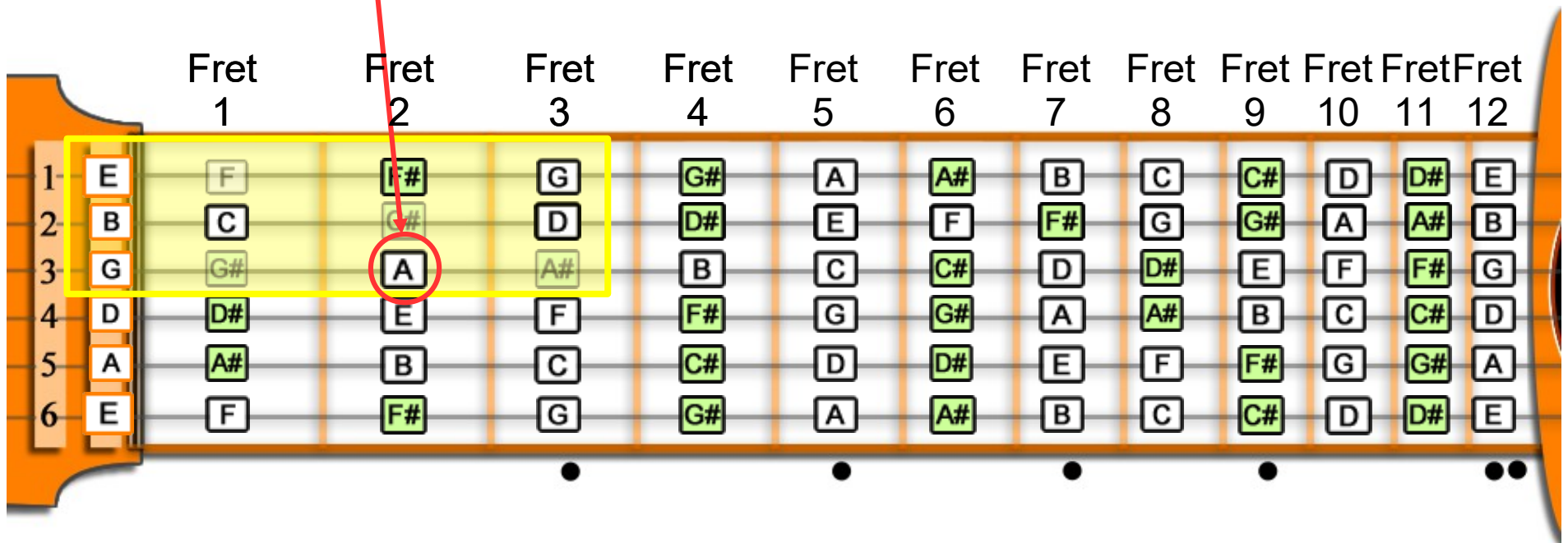
String 3 - Open. G
Play it on your guitar.



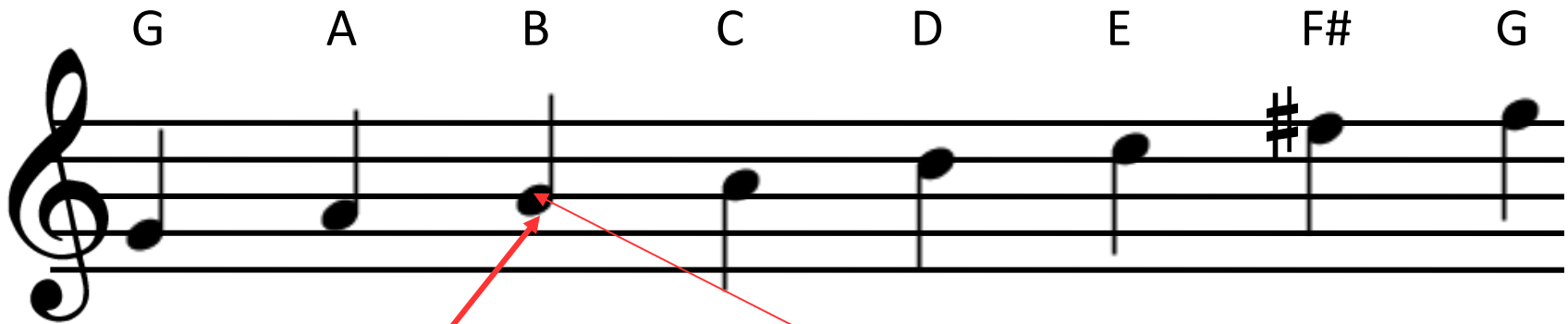
A – String 3



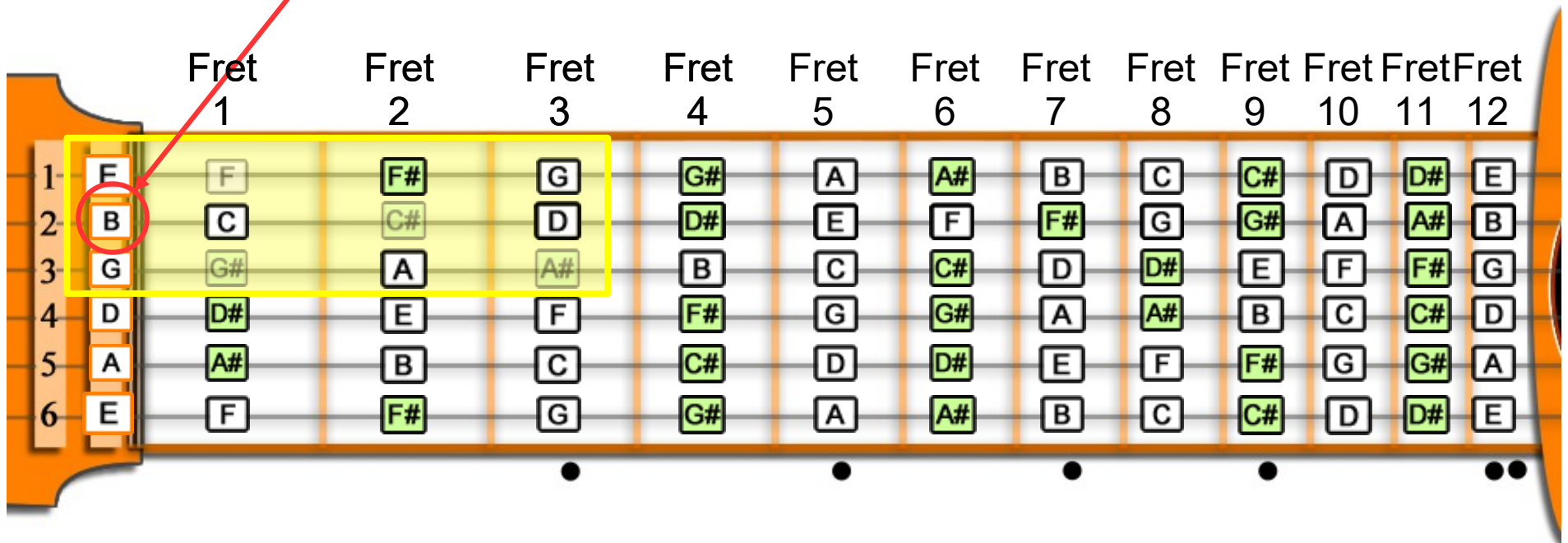
String 3 - fret 2. A
Play it on your guitar.



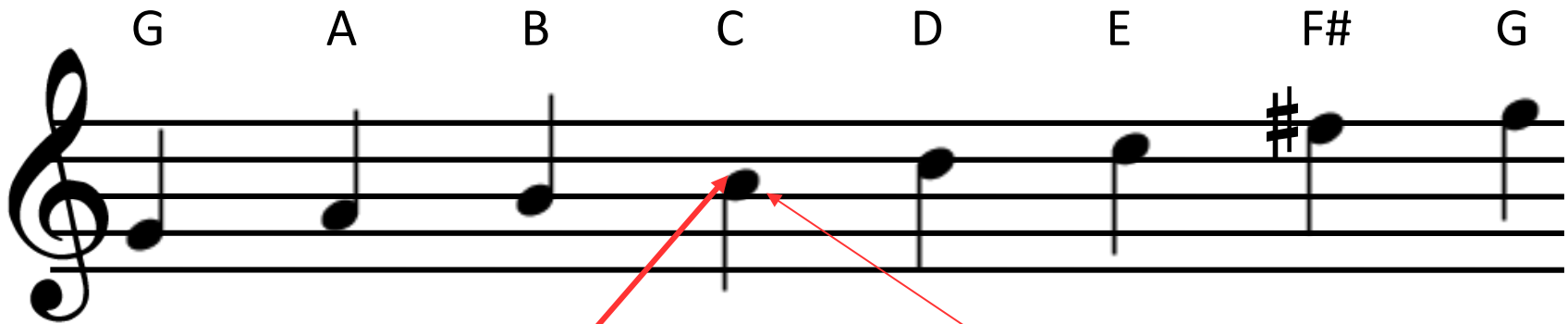
B – String 2



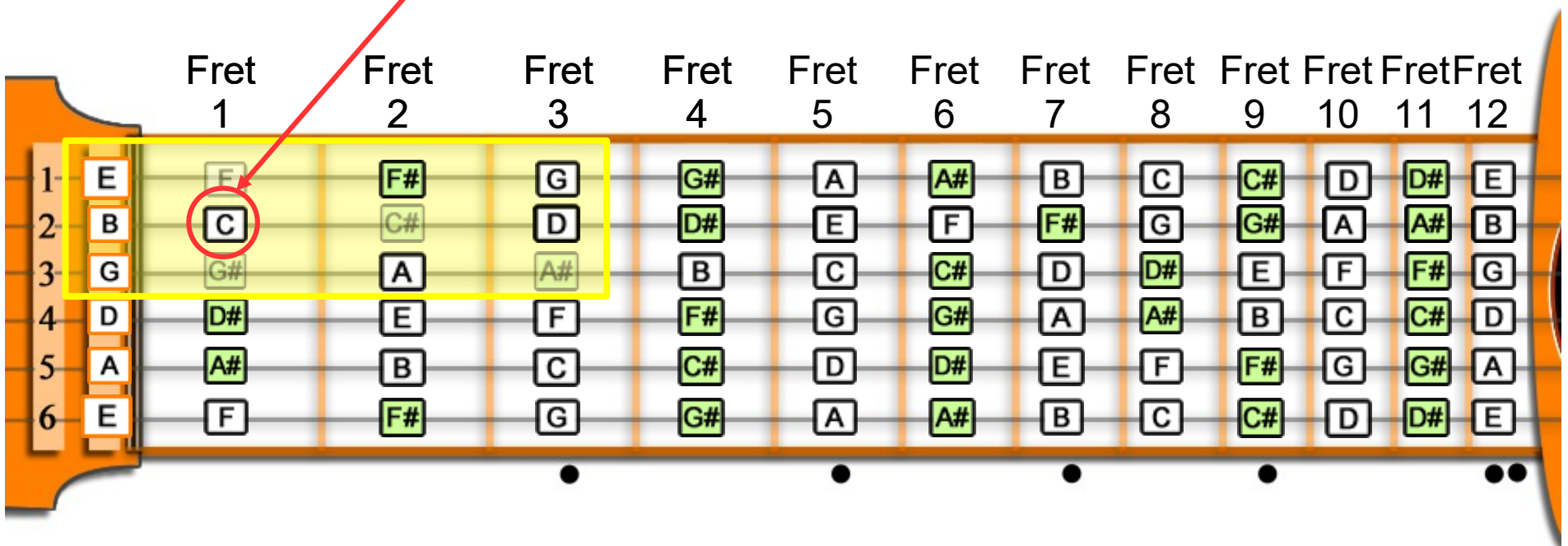
String 2 - open. B
Play it on your guitar.



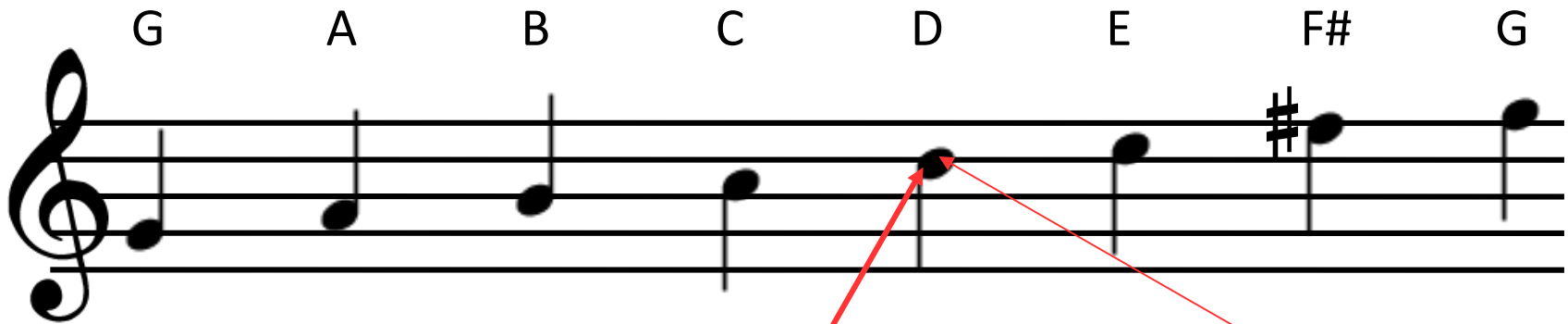
C – String 2



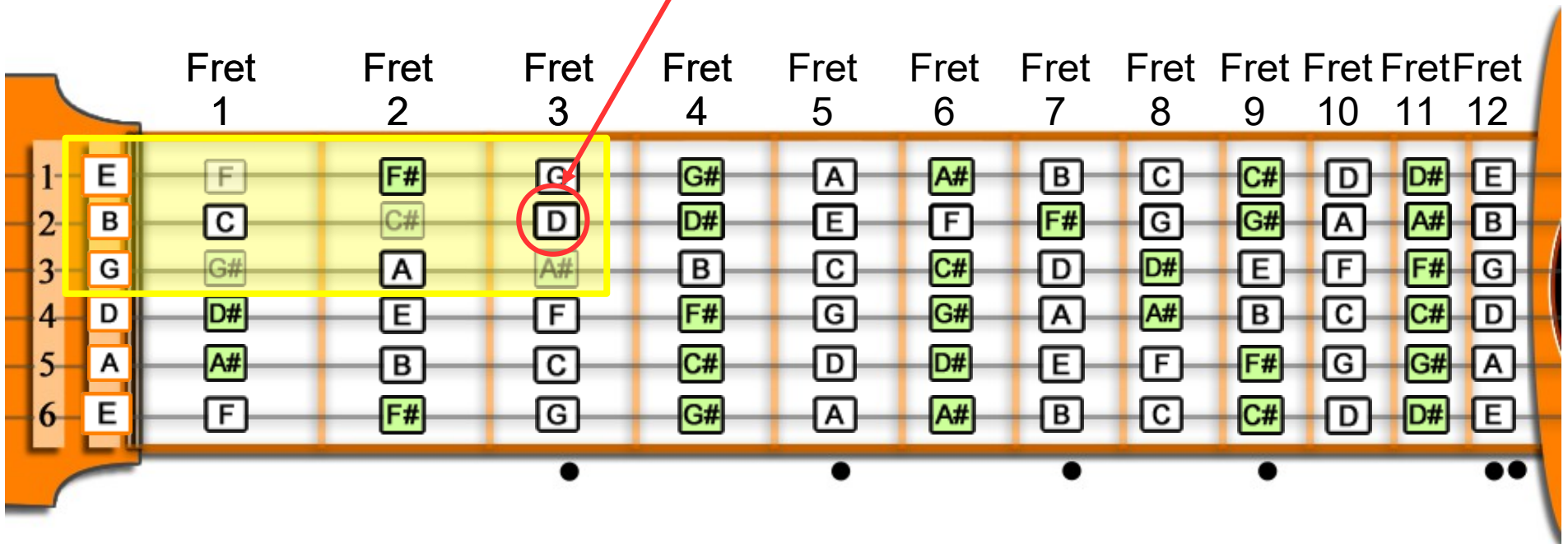
String 2 - fret 1. C
Play it on your guitar.



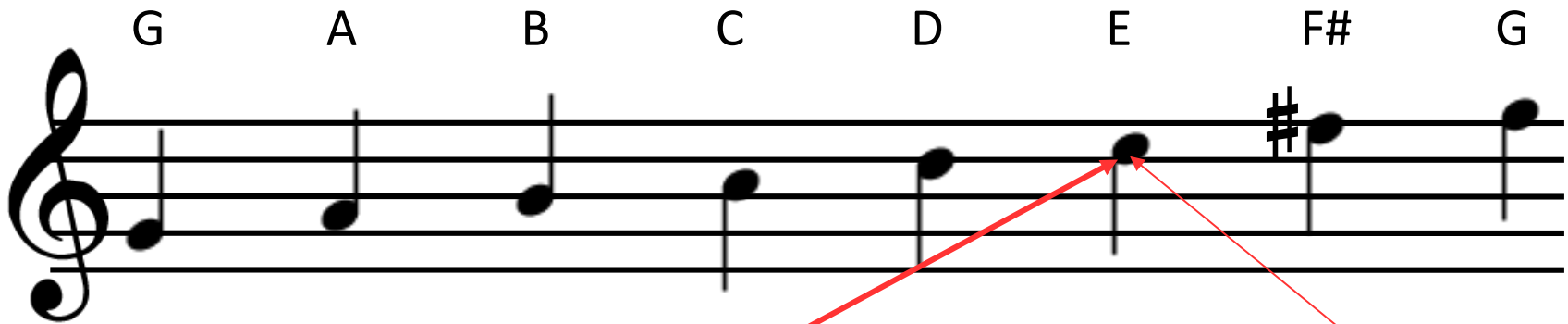
D – String 2



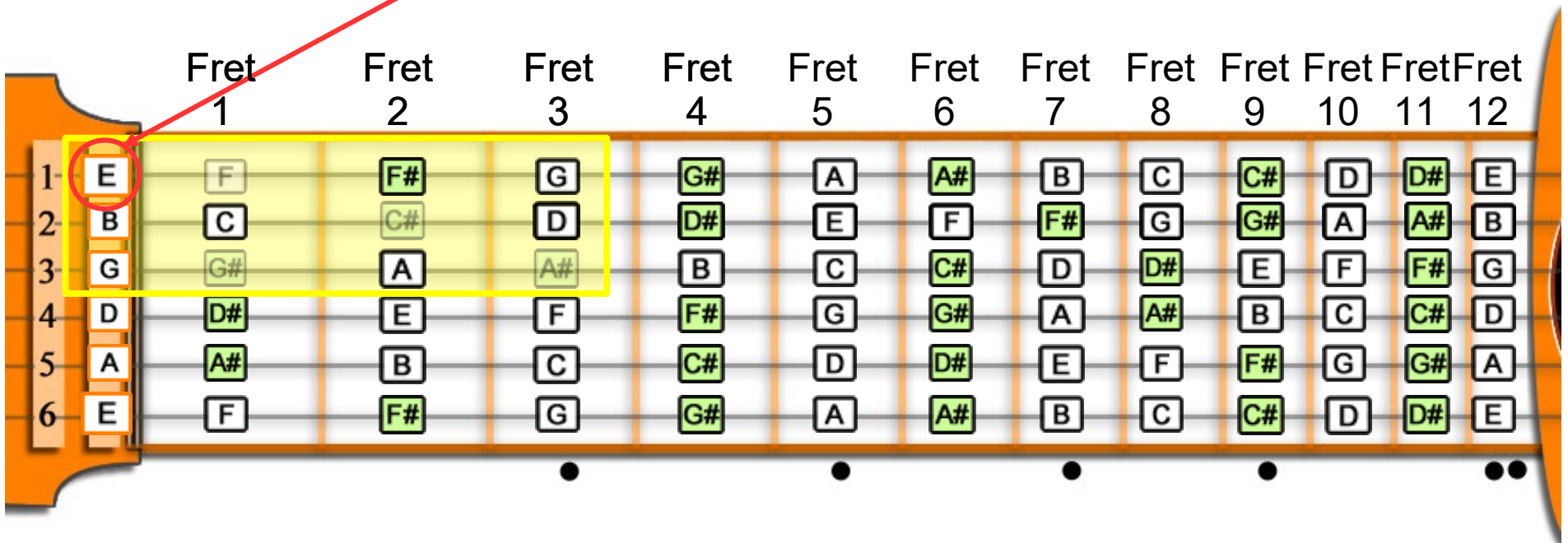
String 2 - fret 3. D
Play it on your guitar.



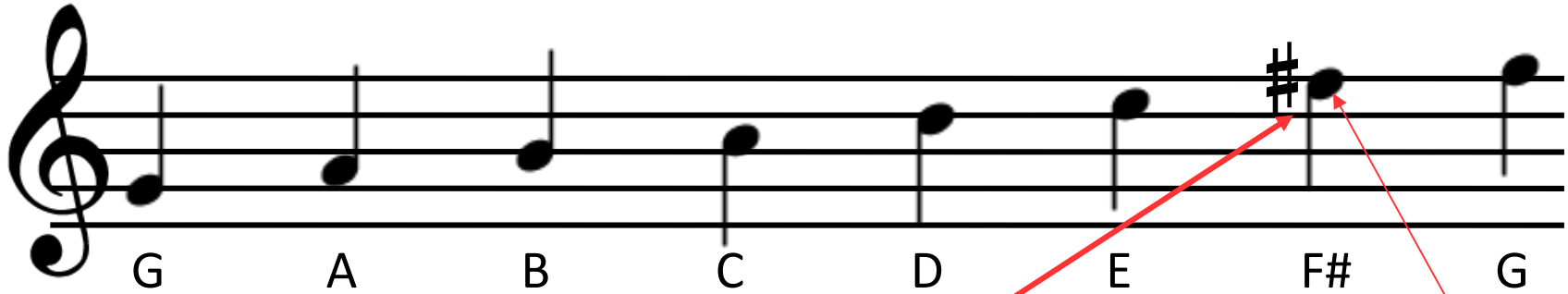
E – String 1



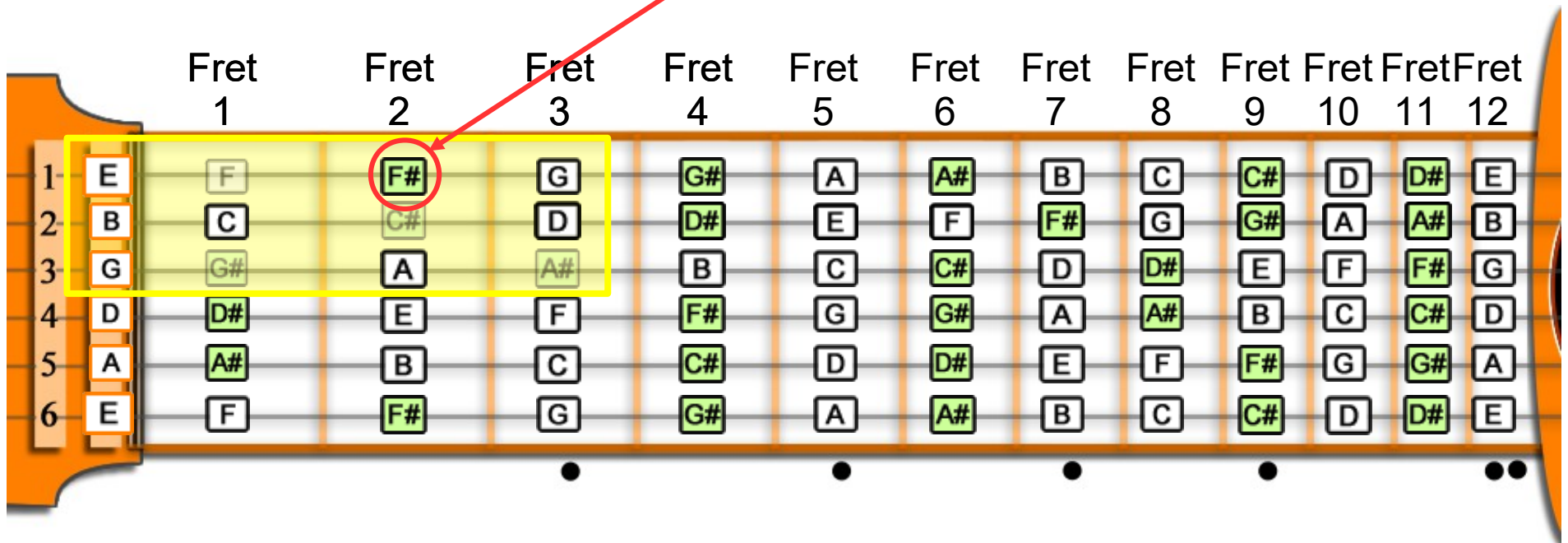
String 1 - Open. E.
Play it on your guitar.



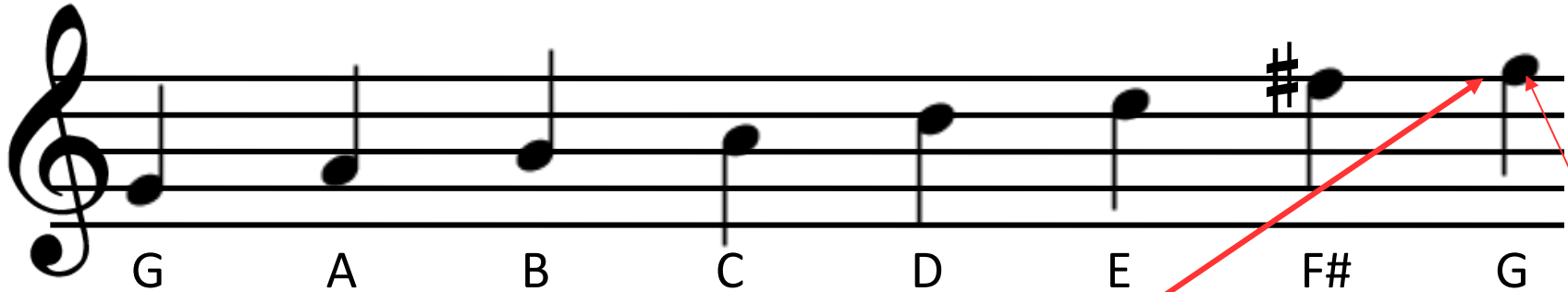
F# – String 1



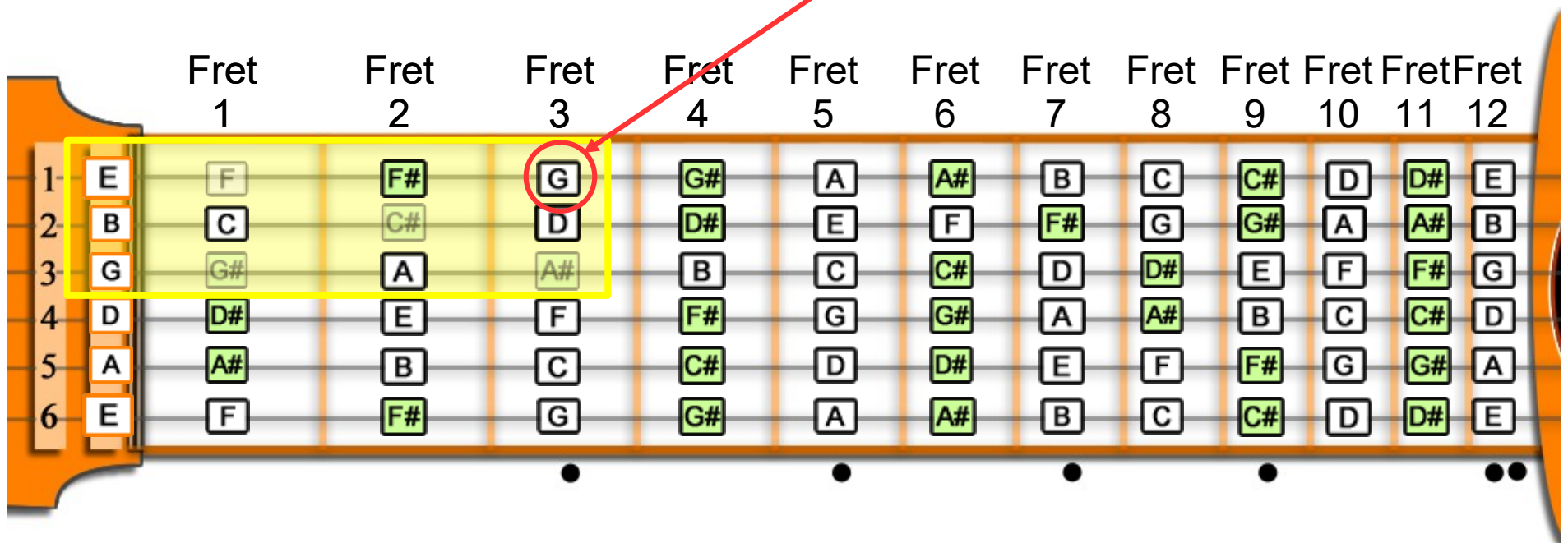
String 1 - fret 2. F#
Play it on your guitar.



G – String 1



String 1 - fret 3. G
Play it on your guitar.



Beyond the five lines - Ledger Lines

So far, the notes we have looked at have been found on the five lines and spaces of the staff.

Now we must explore the ledger lines.

The range of the guitar fretboard goes from:

String 6 open to the 12th fret of string one, covering three octaves.

Each fretboard note has a place on the extended staff.



Beyond the five lines - Colour Coding

I don't normally use colour coding in my lessons, or my diagrams, but to emphasise the three octave range of the stave, and it's relationship with the fretboard, I made an exception.

I created this colour scheme to define the three octaves to help my students.

Each section contains the notes E – D#. The high area (green) has an extra E to finish the third octave. On the stave the sharps are placed within the key signature or as accidentals.

(If you are uncertain about this, please read the scales section.)

Colouring the Fretboard

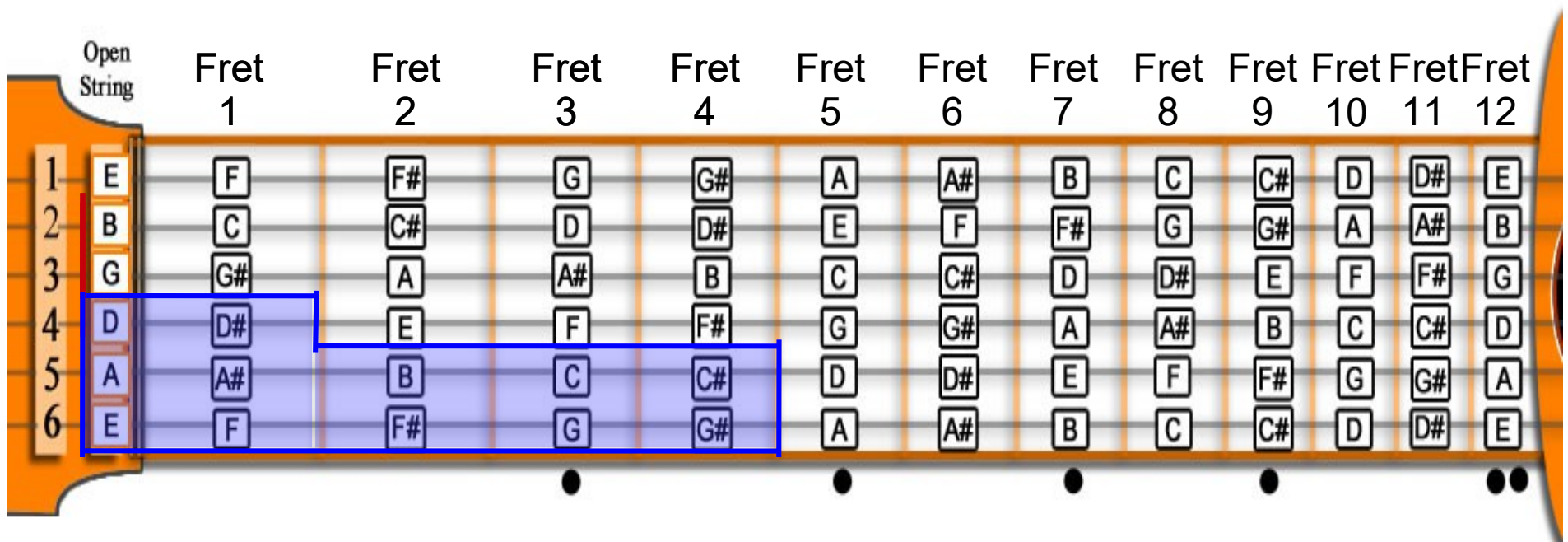
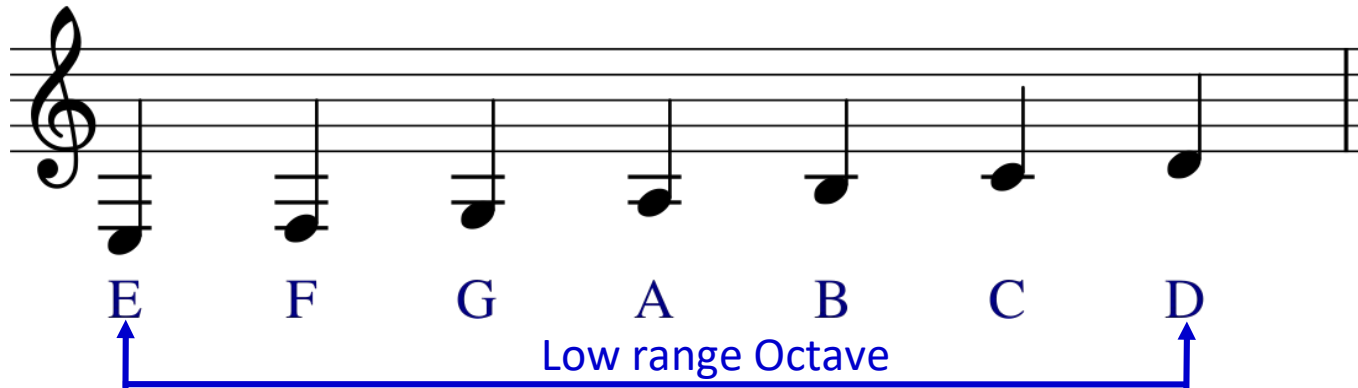
The low area is shaded blue,
ranging from string 6 open E to string 4 D#.

The middle area is shaded brown,
ranging from string 4 E to string 2 D#.

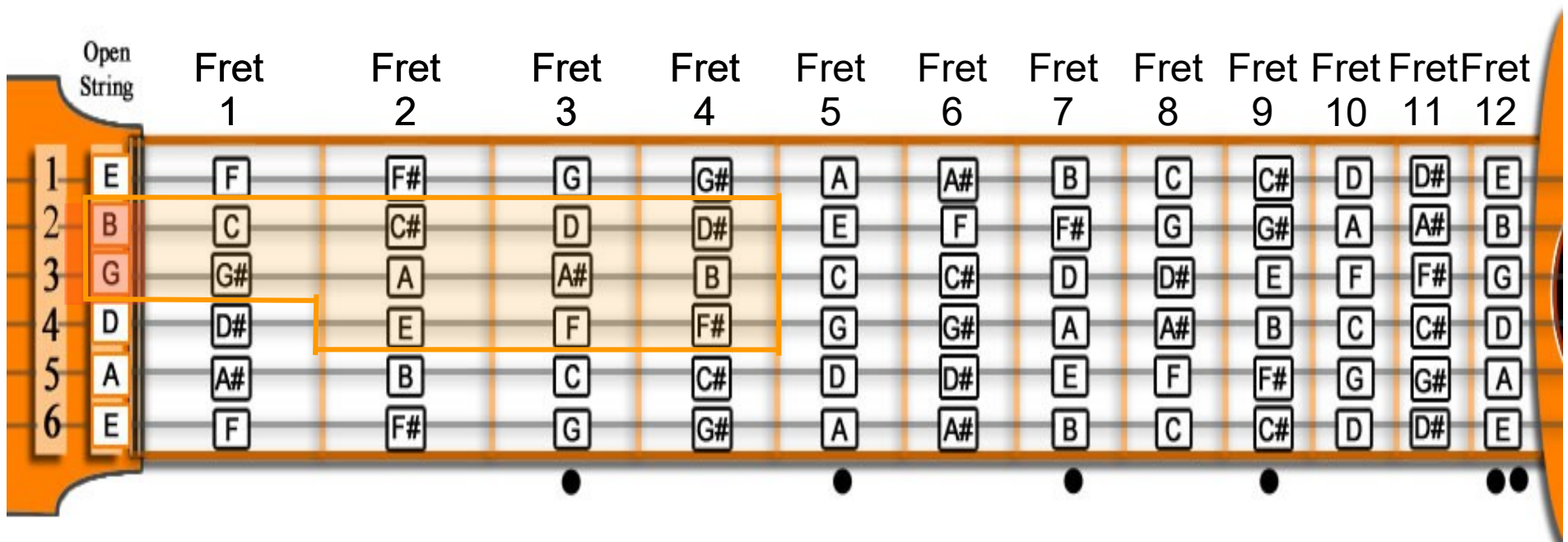
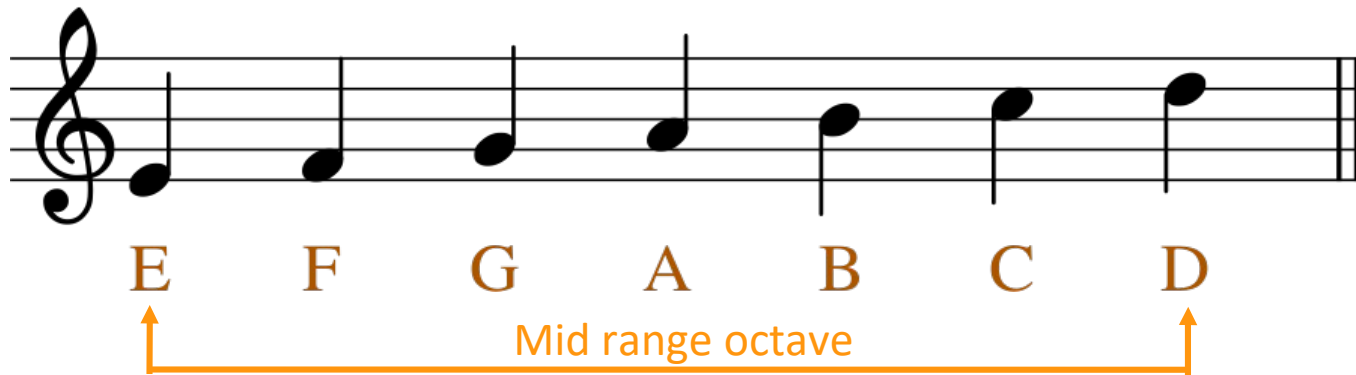
The high area is shaded green,
ranging from string 1 E open to string 1 string 12th fret E.

Please remember, the colours are a guide - they don't appear on printed music.

Octave 1: Low range. Colour - Blue

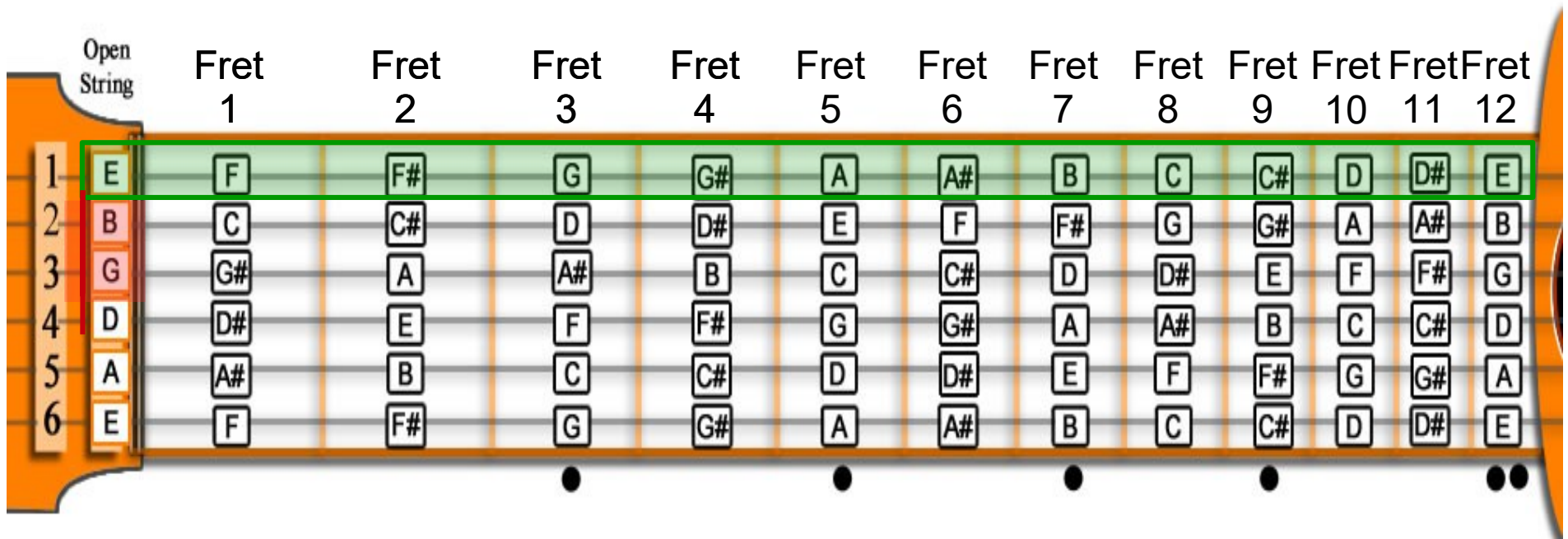
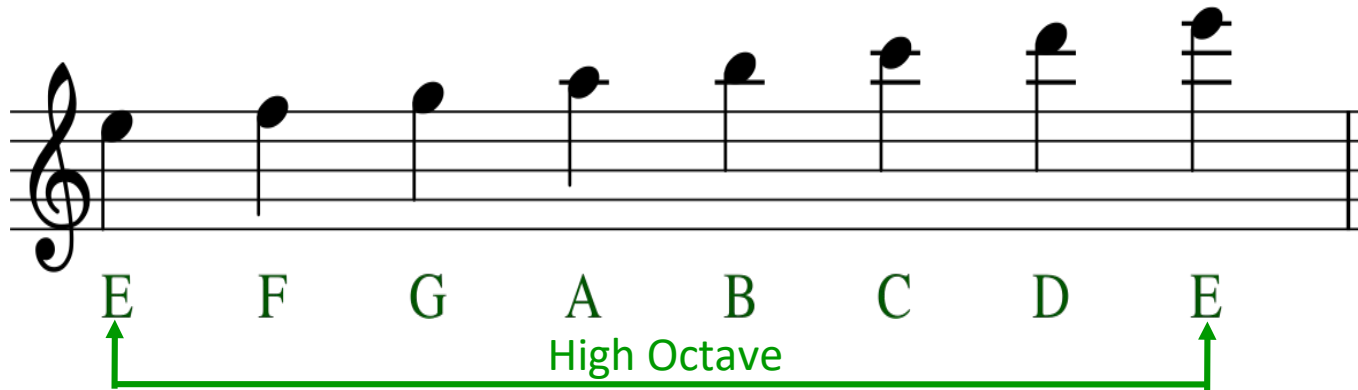


Octave 2: Mid range Colour - Brown

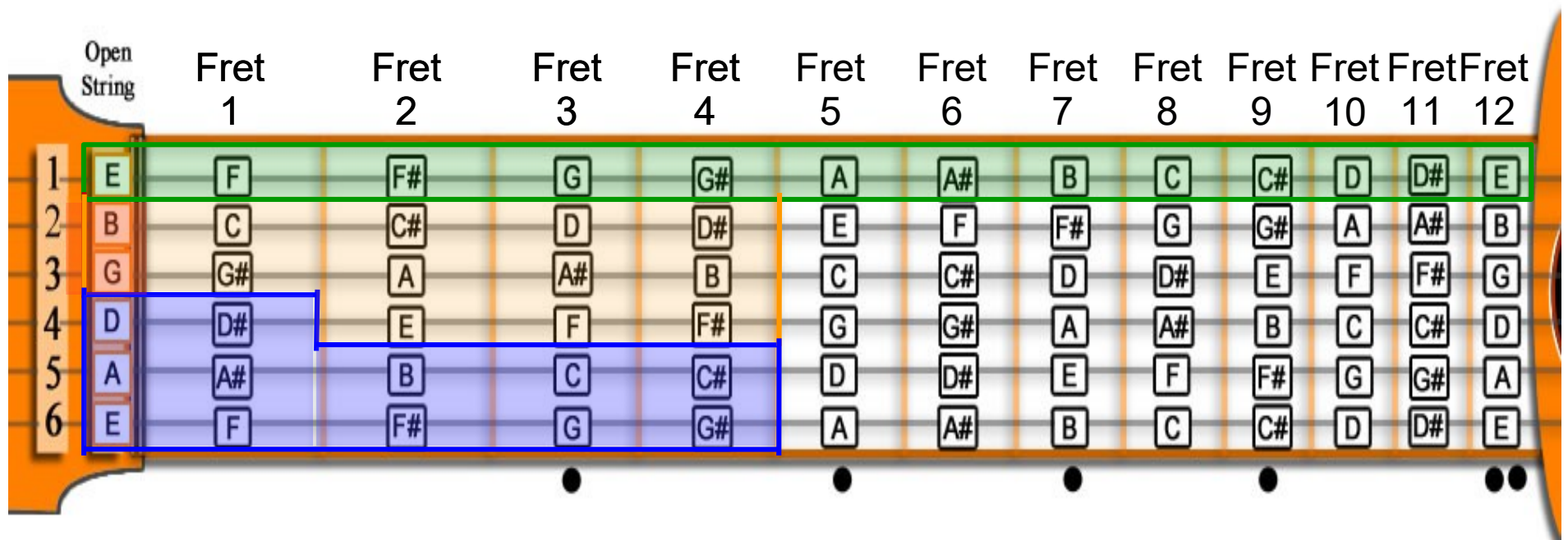


Octave 3: High range

Colour - Green



Beyond the five lines. A new colour scheme



What about the area not colour coded?

The area I didn't colour code contains repeated notes from the three other areas. As soon as you feel confident enough to try, play one of your songs elsewhere on the fretboard. Your teacher will help. The fretboard is full of notes that appear on different strings.

A musical staff showing a sequence of notes from E1 to E6. The notes are grouped into three color-coded regions: blue (E1-D2), orange (E2-D3), and green (E3-E6).

Open String	Fret 1	Fret 2	Fret 3	Fret 4	Fret 5	Fret 6	Fret 7	Fret 8	Fret 9	Fret 10	Fret 11	Fret 12
1 E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E
2 B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B
3 G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G
4 D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D
5 A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
6 E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E

The Next three pages...

The next three pages show the colour coding in action.

I will explain everything as we move further through the pages.

To someone new to music reading and Stave Breakthrough don't panic, simply move on to the next section: music symbols after having a quick look.

As you learn more about the stave you can return to page 41 at any time.

The colour scheme in action: Note names

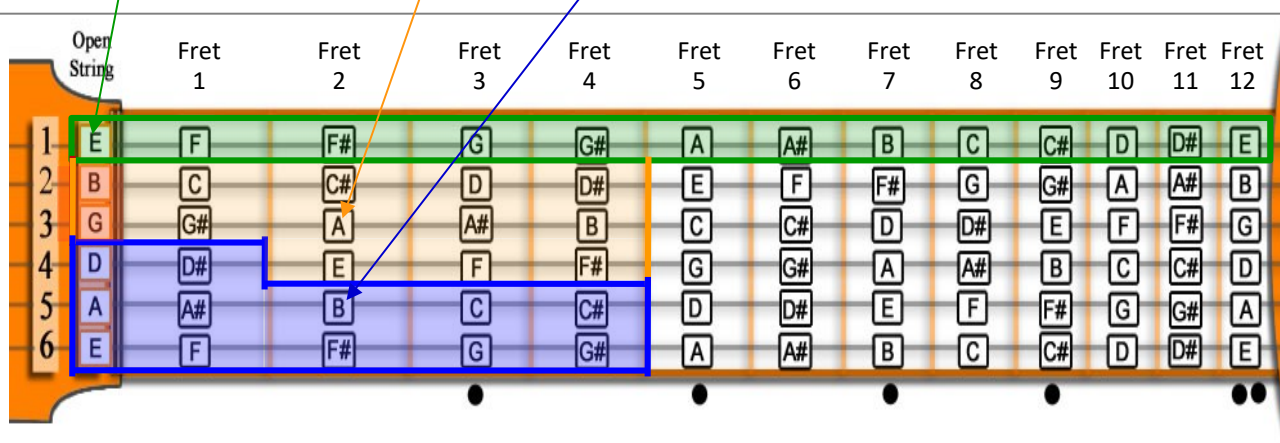


Note names A C# E E B G# B A C# D E D B A G# E E

Match all the note names of this melody to the fretboard below.

D.C. al Coda

2. D B A G# E A C# E E B E A C# E E F# E A



Note names, string numbers on the fretboard

E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E

Note names A C# E E B G# B A C# D E D B A G# E E
 String numbers 3 2 1 1 2 3 2 3 2 2 1 2 2 3 3 4 4

Find all the notes of this melody on your guitar fretboard.

D.C. al Coda

D B A G# E A C# E E B E A C# E E F# E A
 2 2 3 3 4 5 5 4 4 5 6 3 2 1 1 1 1 3

	Open String	Fret 1	Fret 2	Fret 3	Fret 4	Fret 5	Fret 6	Fret 7	Fret 8	Fret 9	Fret 10	Fret 11	Fret 12
1	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E
2	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B
3	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G
4	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D
5	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
6	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E

Stave Breakthrough

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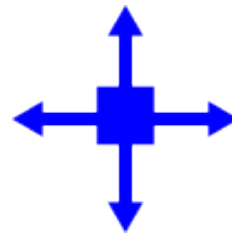
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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

The Stave Breakthrough method

Now we are at the heart of The Music Readers Toolbox.

It is the unique Stave Breakthrough Method I created to make reading music fast.

In the example below each note has its note name written below and the length of time before the next event takes place above.

This is the key to sight reading music.

It's how you read it that makes the difference.

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings and durations written above them. The notes and their durations are: A (1), C# (1), E (1), E (1), B (1), G# (1), B (2), A (2½), C# (½), D (½), E (½), D (½), B (½), A (2), G# (1), E (3), and E (1). The first note 'A' and its fingering '1' are circled in red. The note names are written below the staff, and the durations are written above the staff.

Put away your instrument!

Learning the Stave Breakthrough method to sight read music will help you become more than just a guitar player or singer.

Sight reading music you will make you into a true musician.

We start by taking the unusual step of putting away your instrument. We don't need it for now.

The stave is something to learn from, to play from and to enjoy. It is an amazingly useful tool.

Whether you are an instrumentalist or a vocalist, Stave Breakthrough is for you.

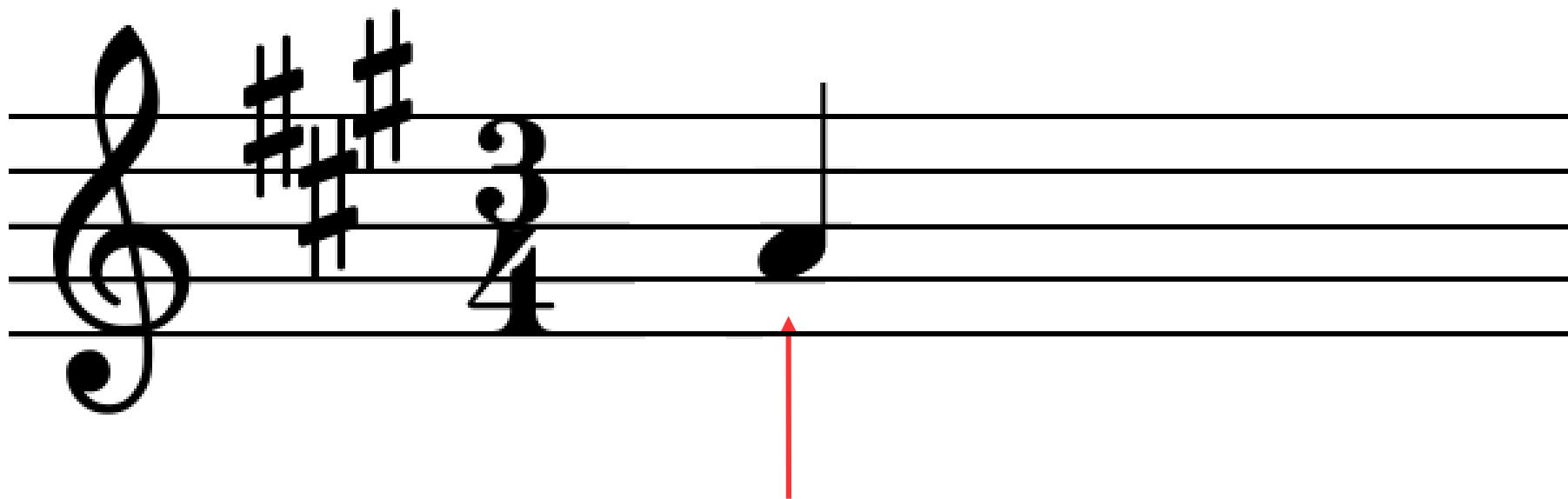
Before using Stave Breakthrough

Music students will need a basic understanding of the stave before using Stave Breakthrough to increase their sight reading capabilities.



Two into one

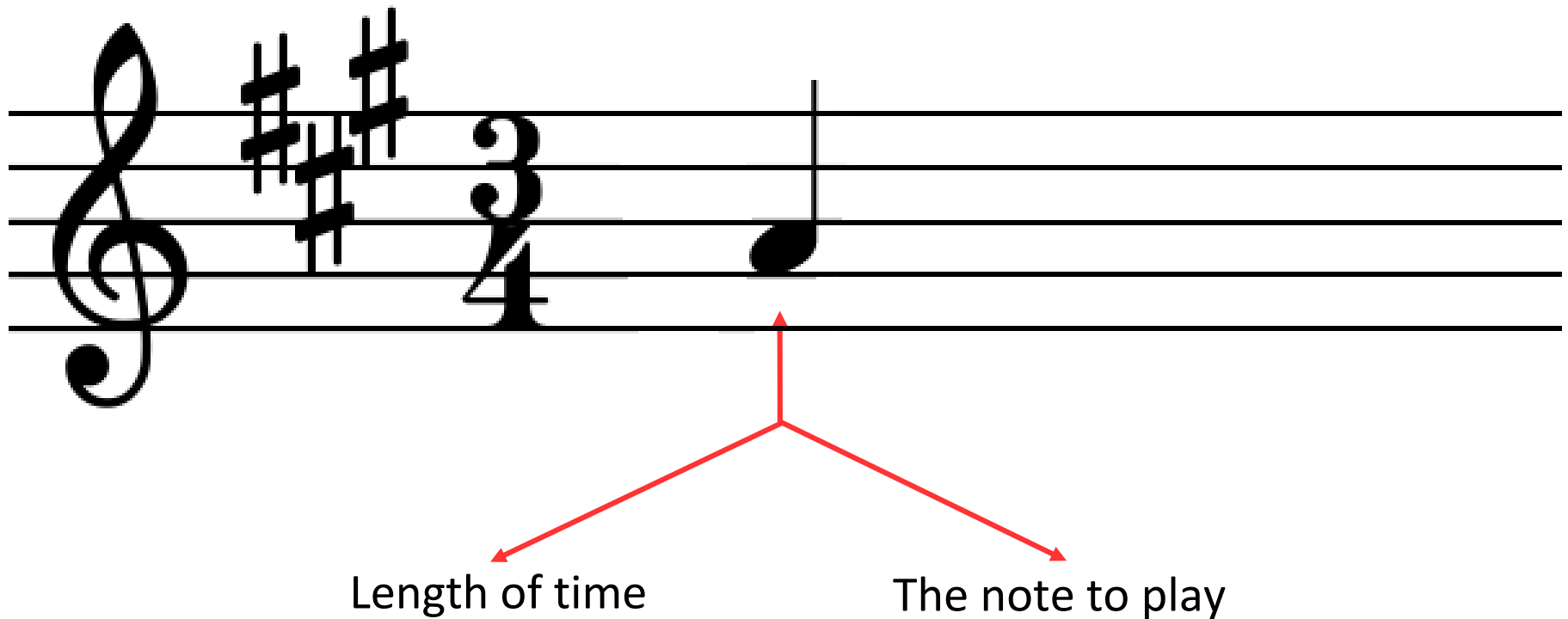
Every note placed on the staff contains two vital pieces of information. Both essential for sight reading music quickly.



One symbol – two instructions

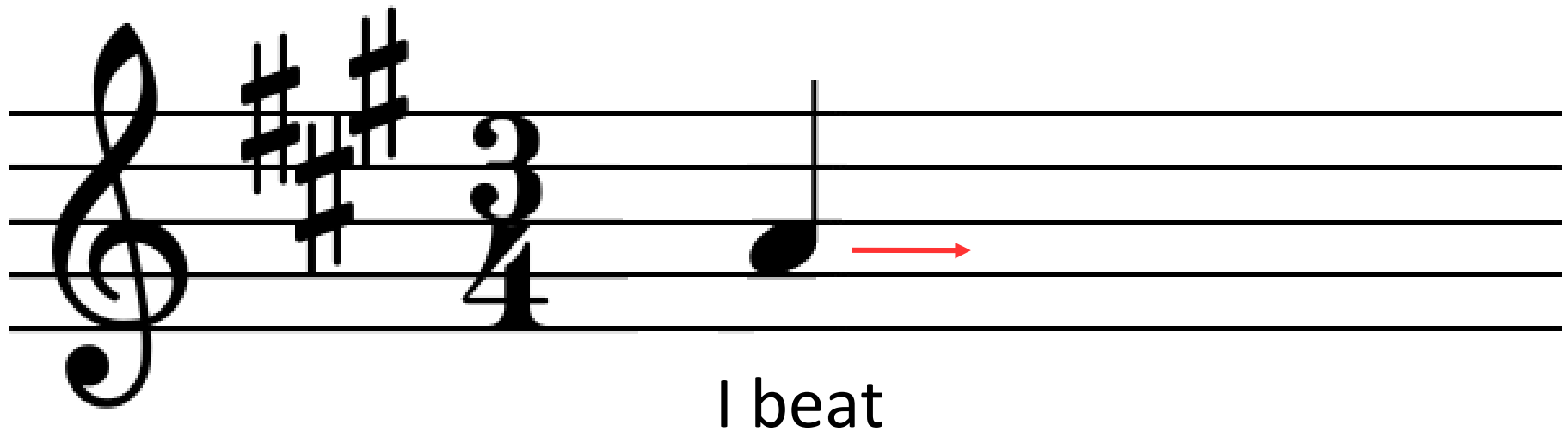
Timing and the Name of Notes

When reading from the stave a musician has to think about the length of time between one note and another and to know for the name of the note to be played or sung.



Timing first

In this example the type of note used is a one beat note.

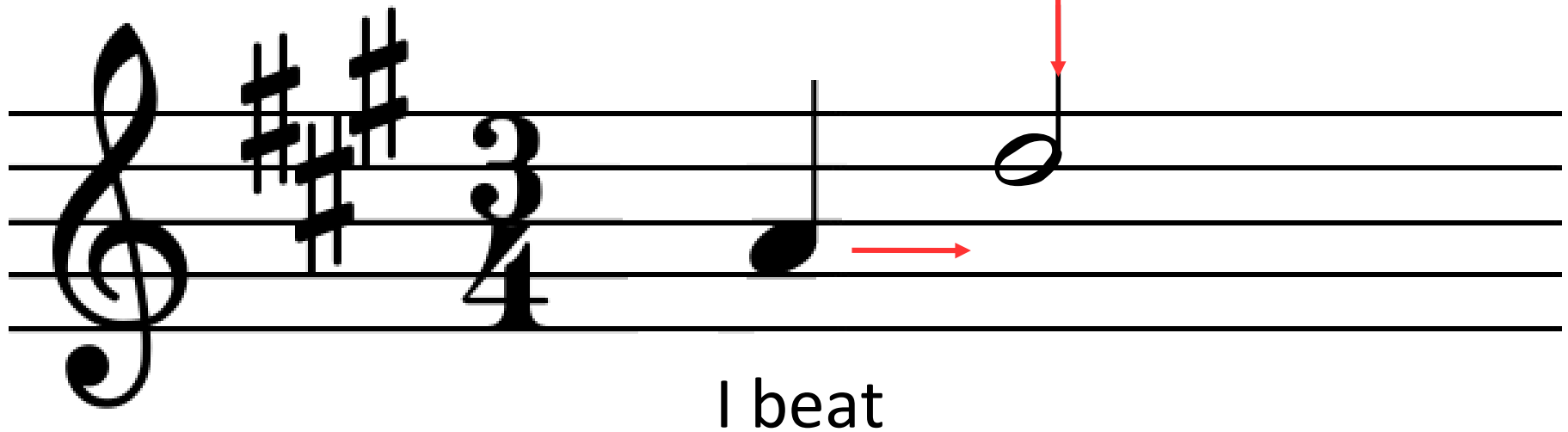


That means in 1 beats time the next note will arrive.

Timing first

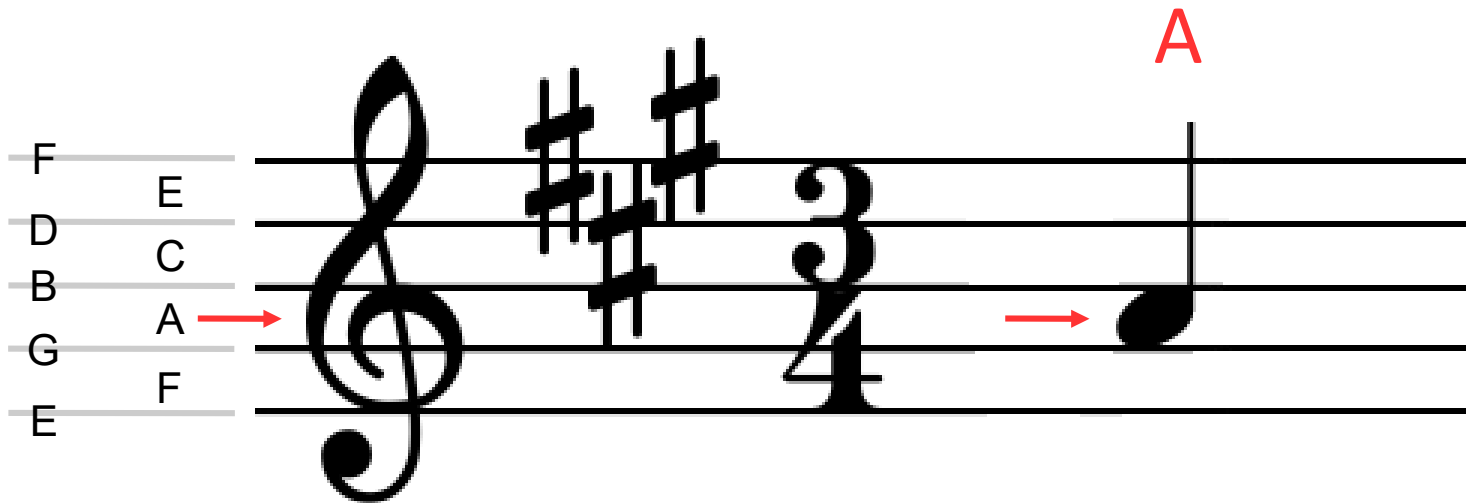
The next note has arrived

Here it is!!!



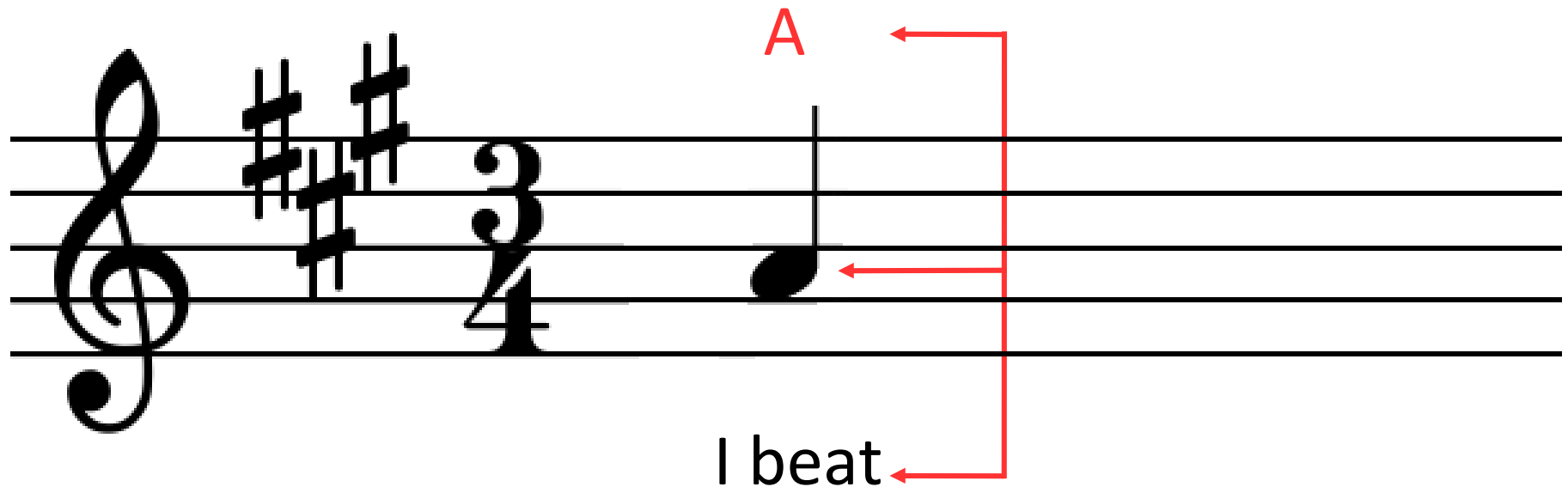
At the same time

At the same time, a musician must quickly identify the note to play or sing next. This is vital to be able to sight read a piece of music. In this example the note is an A.

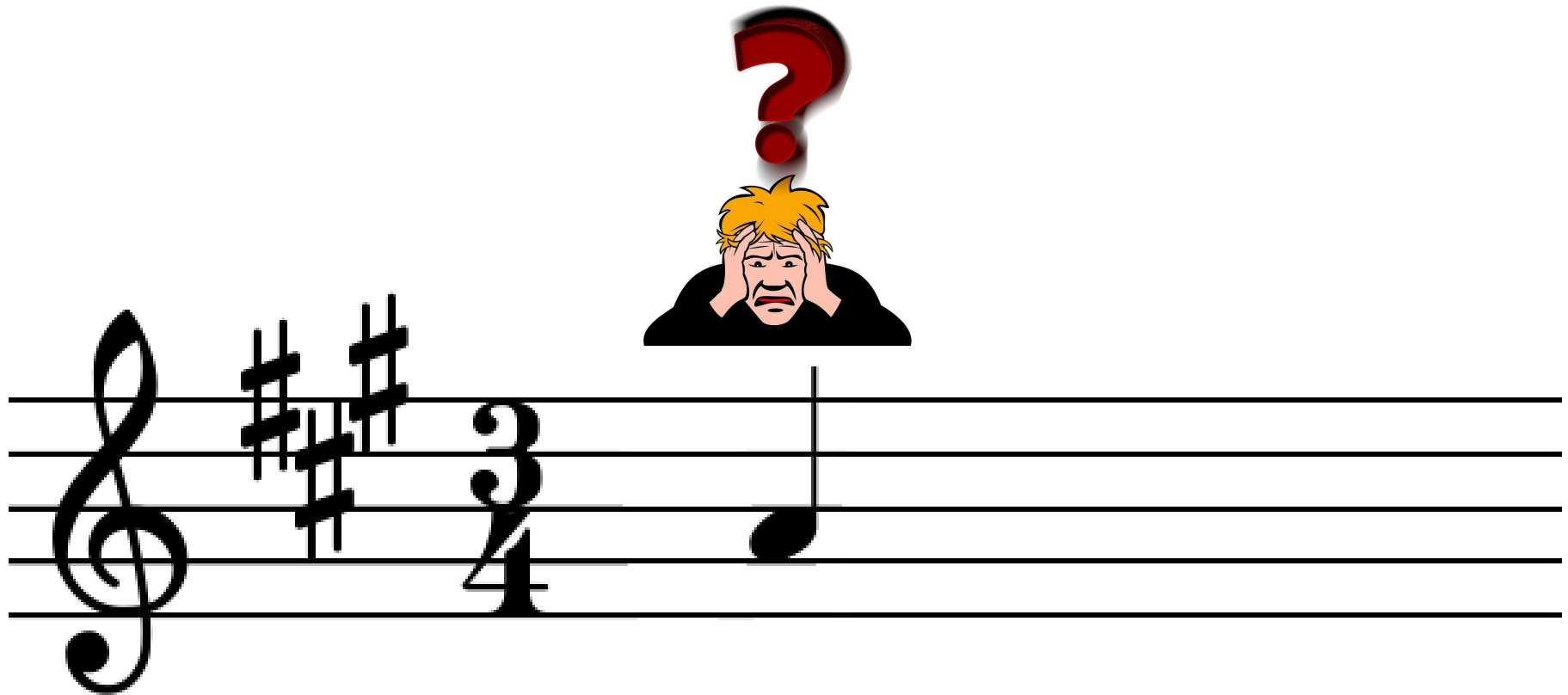


An A note that lasts for 1 beat

The two pieces of information, the length of time and name of the note must be processed simultaneously. This is the key to sight reading music.



It's a lot to think about



There is only one beat before the next note has to be played.

Timing is Everything!

1 Beat 2 Beats 2 Beats 1 Beat
REST

The next note will come and go before the calculations are finished

1/2 beats make it worse!!

1 Beat 1 Beat 1/2 Beat 1/2 Beat 2 Beats 1/2 Beat 1/2 Beat

For years musicians and music teachers have struggled to find a way to make sight reading easier and quicker.

Music is fast to play!!

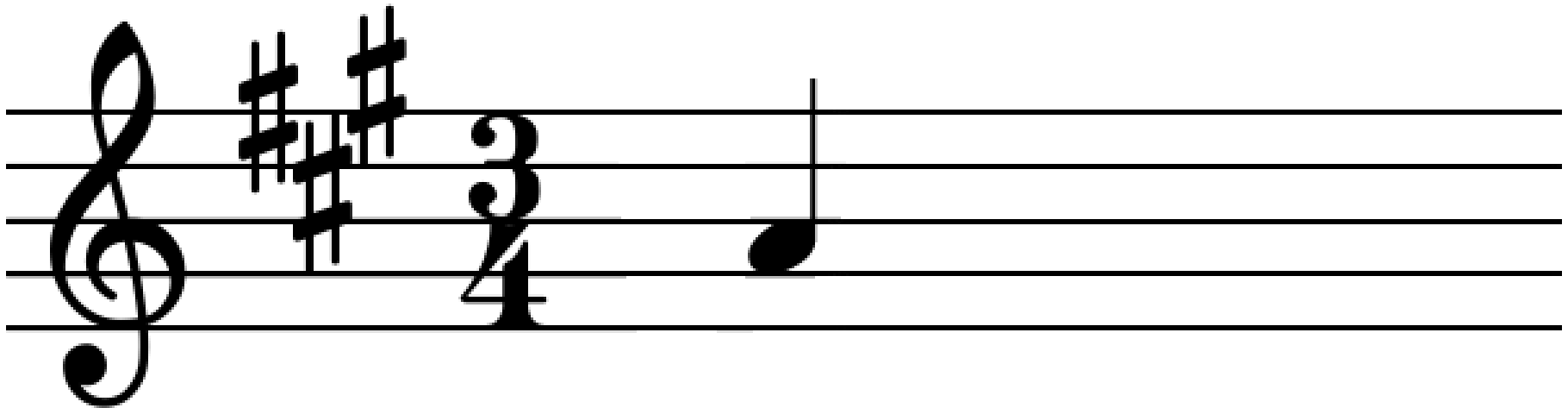


Music reading is faster!!!



What do we see here?

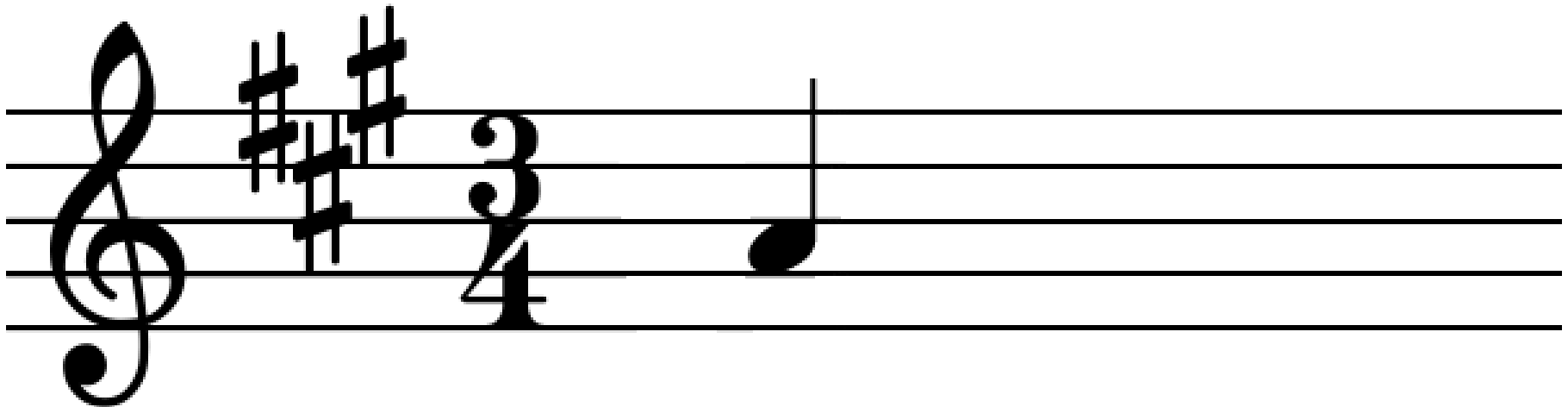
If we look at the note written on the staff below what do we see?



The Stave Breakthrough Breakthrough

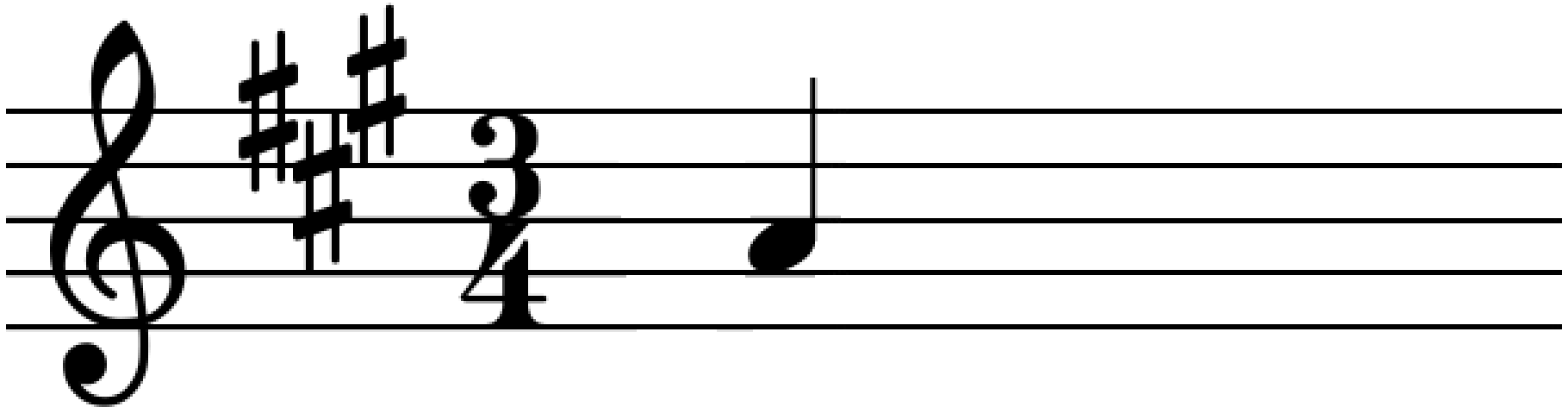
This is an A note that lasts for 1 beat.

That's the message from the stave: An A note that lasts for 1 beat.



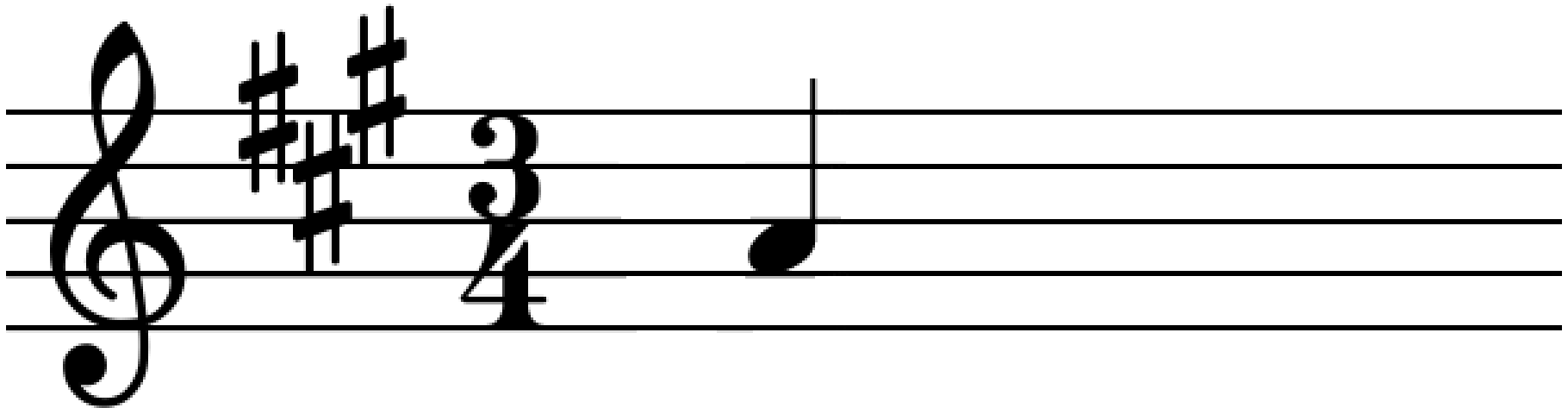
Not a helpful message

The message is too long. Time too short.



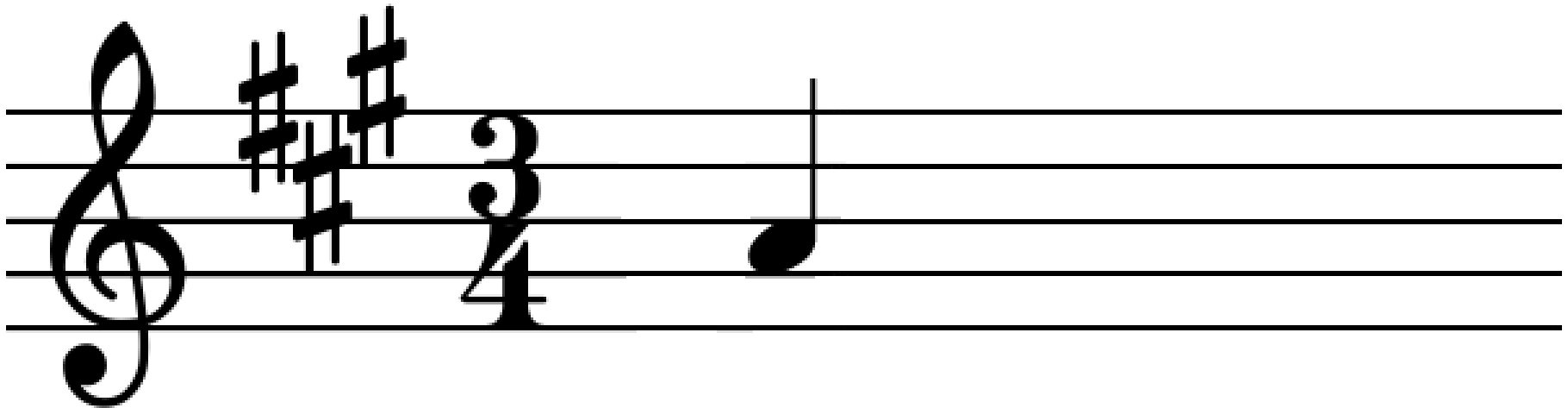
Reading out loud

Read aloud the message from the stave, clap in time while you're saying it. Say it out loud, "an A note that lasts for 1 beat."



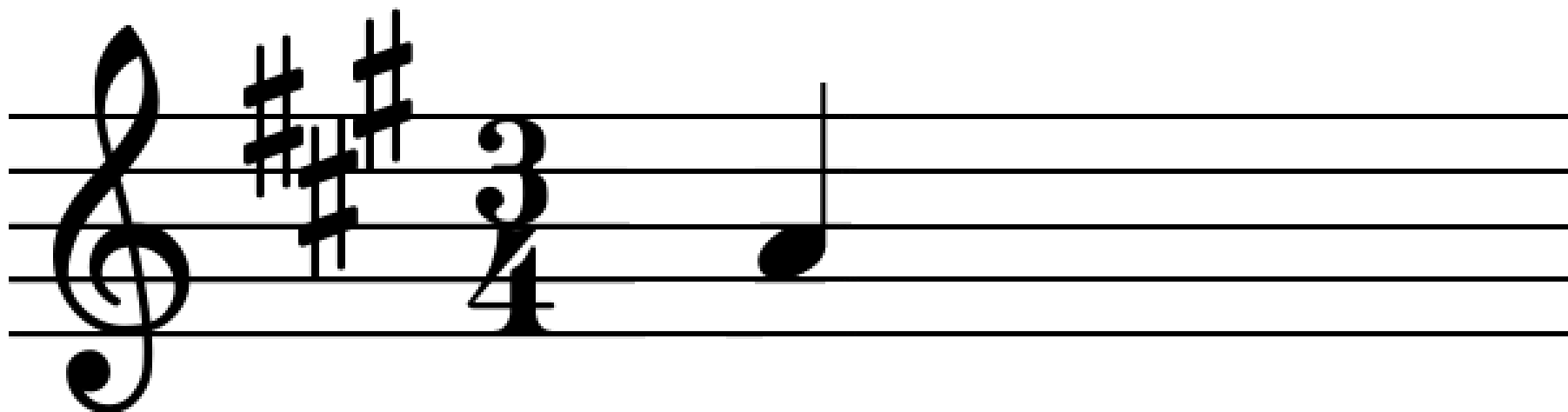
Too many beats

You will find an A note that lasts for 1 beat takes 4 beats to say.



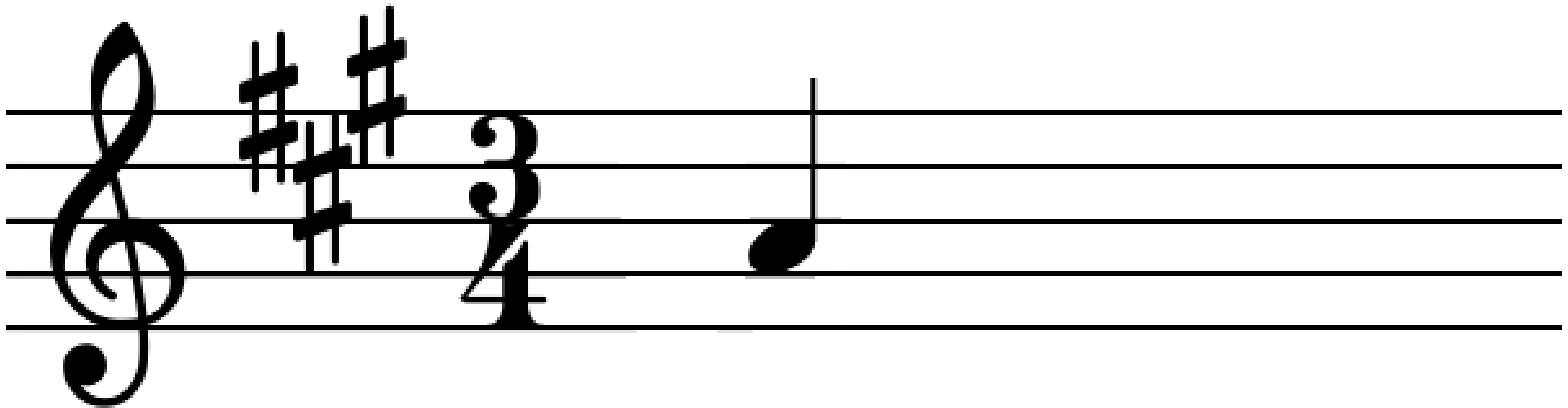
It would seem to be impossible

If your brain takes 4 beats to say a note, in this example a note that only lasts 1 beat, sight reading music would appear to be an impossible dream.



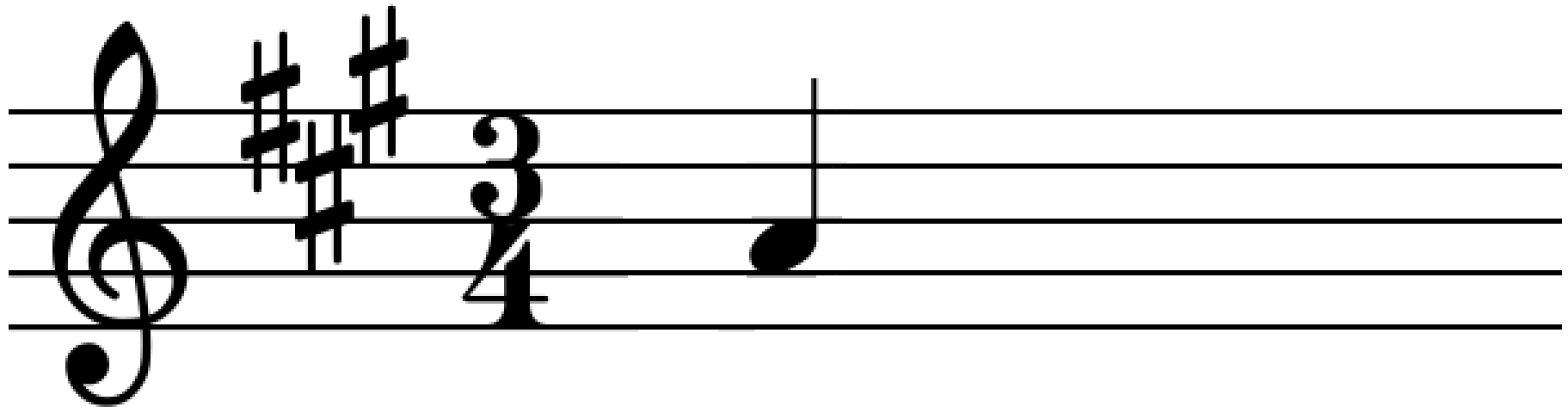
Making the impossible, possible

That's before I thought of a solution.



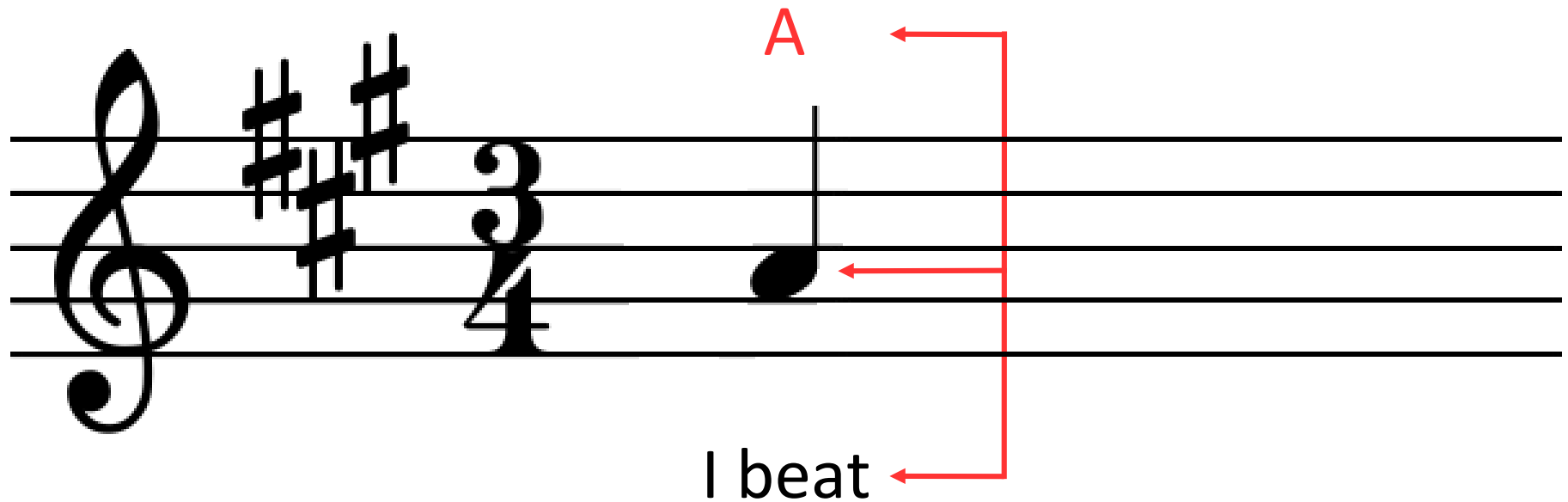
The Stave Breakthrough method

I created a new method for filtering the information from the stave into the brain without slowing everything down.



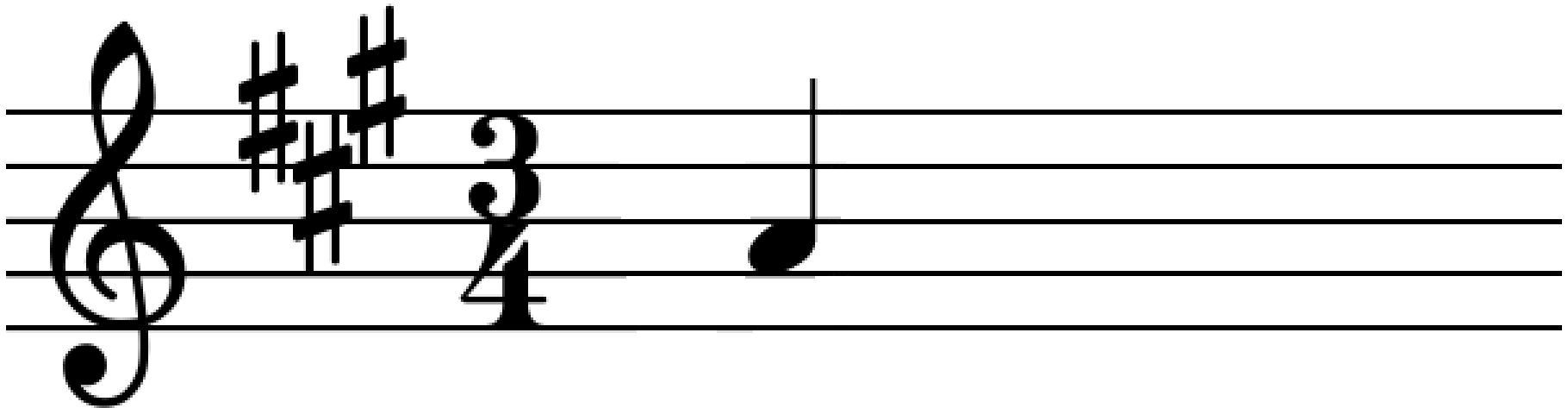
Stave Breakthrough saw something new

It is still an A note that lasts for 1 beat.



Rethinking the impossible

But, using the Stave Breakthrough method now we call it a ...



The Stave Breakthrough method



Eyes to brain - to play or sing - in no time at all!!



Why no guitar?

You progress as a guitar player still continues. Scales and chords still have to be played and perfected in preparation for the introduction of sight reading music.

Students of Stave Breakthrough first learn the method then learn to use it.



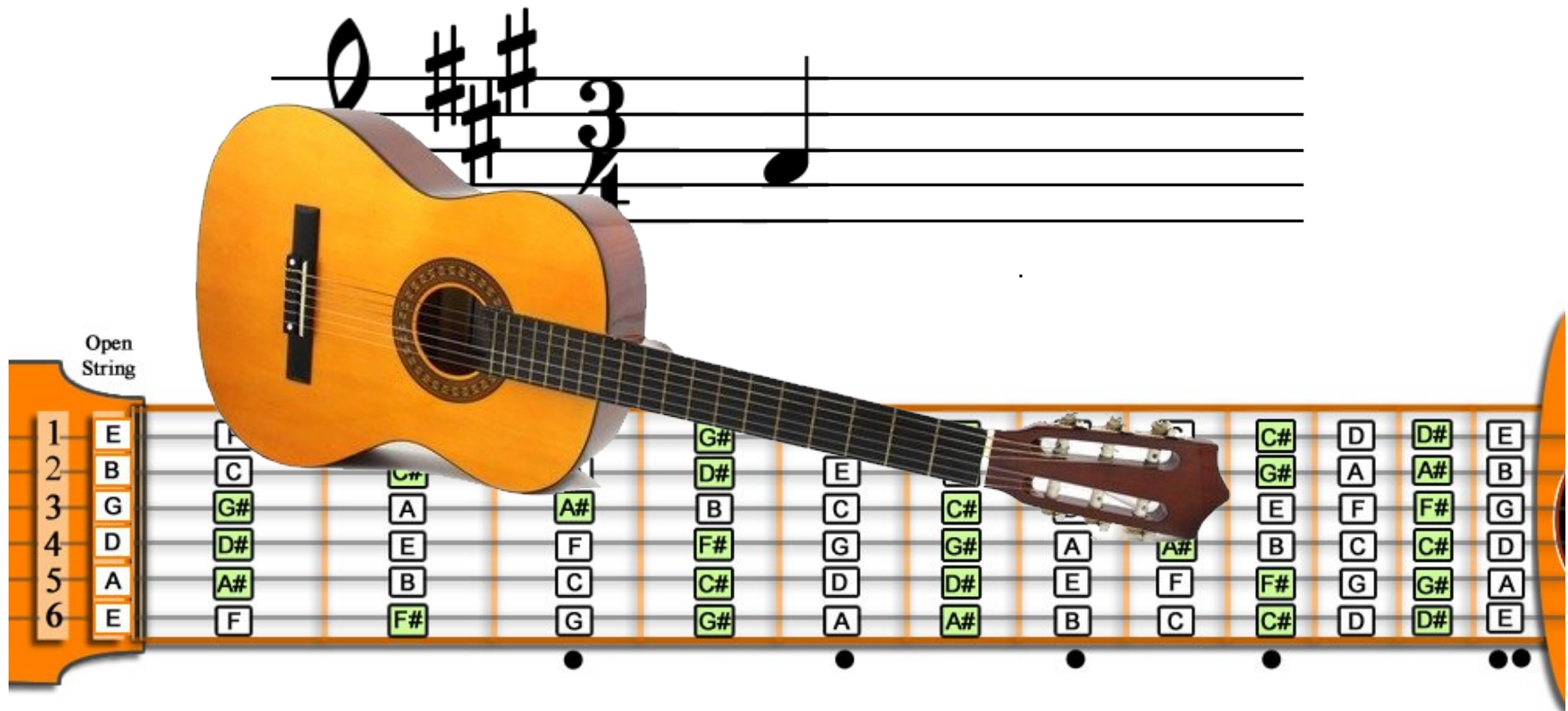
Read and say, not sing and play, yet

Before trying to play a piece of music I want you to read out loud the notes on the staff in Stave Breakthrough manner. It is a quick and easy method to learn and use.



Fluency

As soon as your sight reading music becomes fluent it will be time to join the stave and performance together.



It only takes a few minutes

Please remember Stave Breakthrough is a **read and say** method before you **sing and play**.

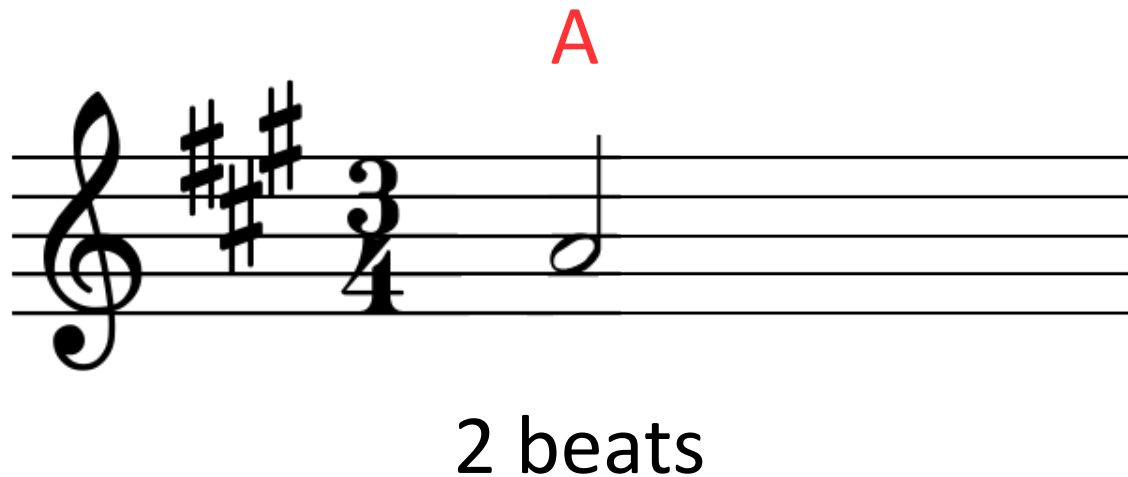
When presented with a piece of music, read the two instructions written into every single note on the stave and, as quick as you can **read the notes aloud**.

Whether you're at home, in a music lesson or at the start of a rehearsal **read the notes aloud**.

Also, record yourself reading the music aloud in the Stave Breakthrough manner. When the hesitancy stops - sight reading starts.

Speed reading is essential

When, for example, you are reading aloud a 2 beat A note - don't wait for 2 beats to go by. Move to and read aloud the next note as fast as you can.



2
Beat
A

Check the Key Signature

Look at the key signature – include the sharps or flats when calling out the notes.

Read aloud the beat value and note name.

Diagram illustrating the beat value and note name for each beat in a 4/4 measure:

I	I	I	I	I	I	4	1	1
beat	beat	beat	beat	beat	beat	beat	beat	beat
B	F#	E	D	C#	A	B	REST	REST



Always check
The key
signature

Read it out loud – including the sharps

Add the time values of the tied notes together.

In this example a 3 beat B is added to a one beat B creating a 4 beat note.

In this piece of music there are maximum of 3 beats in each bar.

						4		1	1
beat	beat	beat	beat	beat	beat	beat		beat	beat
B	F#	E	D	C#	A	B		REST	REST



Always check
the time signature.

Tied notes are counted
as one note just as
when they are
played.
Add the time values
together.

Read it out loud – including the rests

A rest is a note without a sound. Please, don't ignore them when playing a piece of music or using the Stave Breakthrough method.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The notes are: B (quarter), F# (quarter), E (quarter), D (quarter), C# (quarter), A (quarter), B (half), and two quarter rests. A red line with arrows points to each beat. The notes are labeled with their names: B, F#, E, D, C#, A, B. The two rests are labeled '1 beat REST' and '1 beat REST', with the first '1 beat REST' circled in red. Two red arrows point up to the rests on the staff.

1 1 1 1 1 1 4 1 1
beat beat beat beat beat beat beat beat beat
B F# E D C# A B REST REST

Read aloud the beat value and note name - Include the rests.

Stave Breakthrough in action

Call out the name of the timing + note name in the Stave Breakthrough manner.

| | | | | | 2 2½ ½ ½ ½ ½ ½ 2 1 3 1 1
 beat beat beat beat beat beat beat beat beat beatbeatbeat beatbeat beat beat beat
 A C# E E B G# B A C# D E D B A G# E REST E

1.

½ ½ 1½ ½ | 1 2
 beat beat beat beat beat beat
 D B A REST G# A

2.

Stave Breakthrough: no annotation

The previous example had the Stave Breakthrough method for sight reading music written above the stave. Please do not do this. Learn to read the music. one day you will be handed a song to play or sing without the time to look for a pencil

beat beat beat
A C# E

1.

2.

Stave Breakthrough is for every musician

Stave Breakthrough is for every type of instrumentalist and singer.

Choirs and orchestras can use Stave Breakthrough during rehearsals.
Individual music students can use the method at home and in music lessons.

Stave Breakthrough is for reading music quickly.

Stave Breakthrough brings fun into reading music.

No more taking days to finish a piece of music.

No more dreading the music lessons where music is to be taught.

Key Signatures

The Stave Breakthrough Method is for learning key signatures too.

As with the notes on the stave, I also changed the way of encouraging the brain to absorb the information concerning the recognition of each individual scale.

Whether on printed music or asked by another musician, knowing the scales means being able to use the scales.

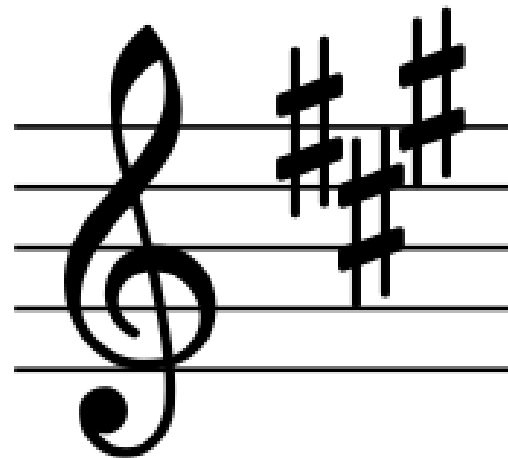
Everything being played needs speed of thought, confidence in your own ability and instant response to every challenge music sends your way.

The scale of A (major)

The scale of A (major) contains three sharps.

These three sharps are used to recognise the key when written on the staff.

A B C# D E F# G# A



We could say the scale of A has three sharps or, using the Stave Breakthrough method it will simply be called a...

The scale of A (major)

3

sharp

A

All key signatures can be given the Stave Breakthrough treatment.
Read aloud from scale list on the next page using the Stave Breakthrough method for quickly learning key signatures.

Scales containing Sharps

Read aloud



C D E F G A B C

0 sharp C

G A B C D E F# G

1 sharp G

D E F# G A B C# D

2 sharp D

A B C# D E F# G# A

3 sharp A

E F# G# A B C# D# E

4 sharp E

B C# D# E F# G# A# B

5 sharp B

F# G# A# B C# D# E# F#*

6 sharp F#

C# D# E# F# G# A# B# C#*

7 sharp C#

* Don't include the last sharp.

Read aloud the key signatures

Read aloud	Include the sharps
0 sharp C	
1 sharp G	(F#)
2 sharp D	(F# C#)
3 sharp A	(F# C# G#)
4 sharp E	(F# C# G# D#)
5 sharp B	(F# C# G# D# A#)
6 sharp F#	(F# C# G# D# A# E#)
7 sharp C#	(F# C# G# D# A# E# B#)

* Don't include the last sharp.

Flat scales

The scale of F (major) contains 1 flat this is the key signature.

F G A B^b C D E F

This is what we call it

1

flat

F

Scales containing Flats

Read aloud



F	G	A	B ^b	C	D	E	F	1 flat	F
B ^b	C	D	E ^b	F	G	A	B ^b *	2 flat	B ^b
E ^b	F	G	A ^b	B ^b	C	D	E ^b *	3 flat	E ^b
A ^b	B ^b	C	D ^b	E ^b	F	G	A ^b *	4 flat	A ^b
D ^b	E ^b	F	G ^b	A ^b	B ^b	C	D ^b *	5 flat	D ^b
G ^b	A ^b	B ^b	C ^b	D ^b	E ^b	F	G ^b *	6 flat	G ^b

* Don't include the last flat

Scales containing Flats

Read aloud Include the flats



1 flat	F	(B \flat)
2 flat	B \flat	(B \flat E \flat)
3 flat	E \flat	(B \flat E \flat A \flat)
4 flat	A \flat	(B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat)
5 flat	D \flat	(B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat)
6 flat	G \flat	(B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat C \flat)

* Don't include the last flat

Next – everything you need to read music

For those students who know how to read music the Stave Breakthrough method will already be working.

The pages that follow are for the those who can and those who can't read music from the stave.

Whatever your skill level please read through everything written here.

Music Symbols

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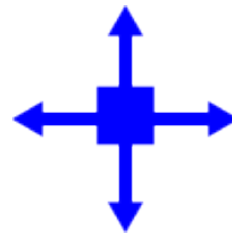
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What do the music symbols do?

You will have seen from the previous section knowing the note to play is an A is only half the story. The other half is the length of time a note must ring.

The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The notes are all on the 4th line, which is labeled 'A'. The notes are: a whole note (4 beats), a half note (2 beats), a quarter note (1 beat), and an eighth note (1/2 beat). Red arrows point from the notes to their respective beat symbols below. Above each note is the text 'This A has a'. To the left of the staff, the notes of the scale are listed: F, D, B, G, E, C, A, F, with 'A' circled in red. A red arrow points from the circled 'A' to the first note on the staff.

This A has a This A has a This A has a This A has a

F
D
B
G
E
C
A
F

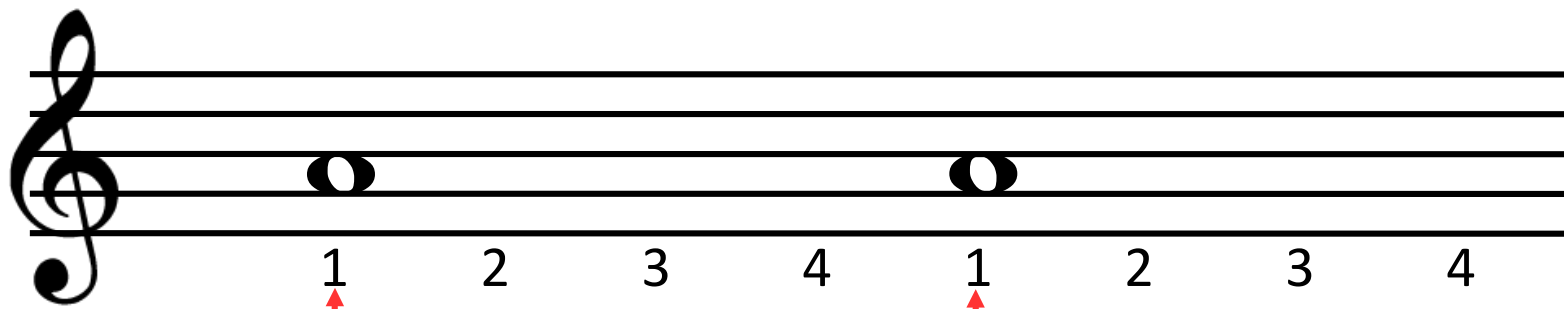
4 beat symbol 2 beat symbol 1 beat symbol 1/2 beat symbol

A very important explanation

This symbol  indicates the length of a note. Once played, the notes rings for **4 beats**.

We have to look at this in the context of a piece of music to fully understand its meaning.

This symbol  means in **4 beats time we have to play the next event**.




Play this note once.
Count for 4 even beats

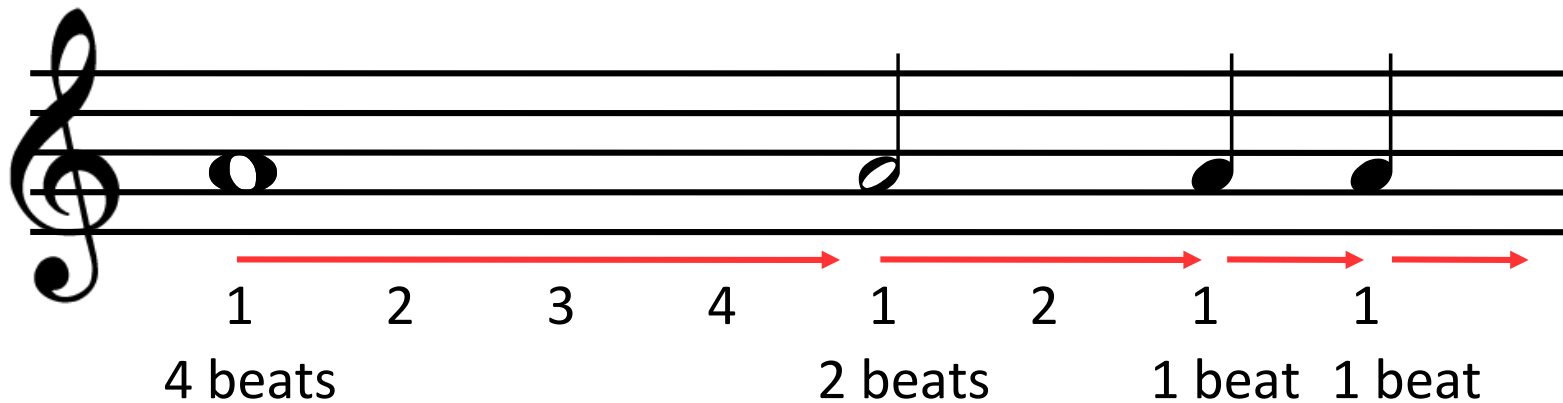
Then play this note

A very important explanation

This symbol  indicates the length of a note, once played it lasts **4 beats** before the next event takes place.

This symbol  indicates the length of a note, once played it lasts **2 beats** before the next event takes place.

This symbol  indicates the length of a note, once played it lasts **1 beat** before the next event takes place.




A musical staff in treble clef showing four notes. The first note is a whole note, followed by a half note, and two quarter notes. Red arrows below the staff indicate the duration of each note in beats: 4 beats for the whole note, 2 beats for the half note, and 1 beat for each quarter note.

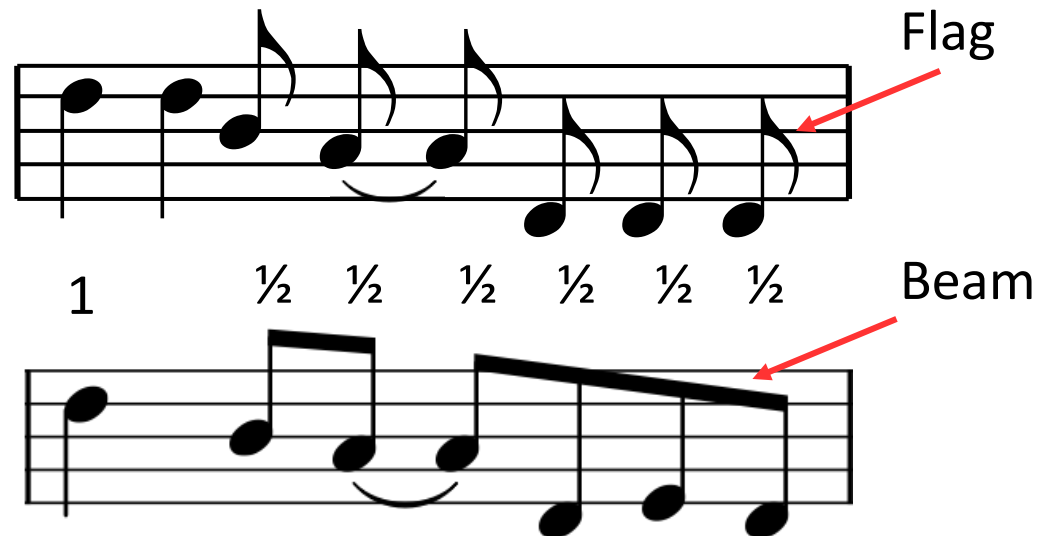
Note	Duration (beats)
Whole note	4
Half note	2
Quarter note	1
Quarter note	1

Count the beats between notes

1/2 Beat notes - Beams

This symbol  indicates a note lasts for half a beat, which means in half a beats time the next event must be played.

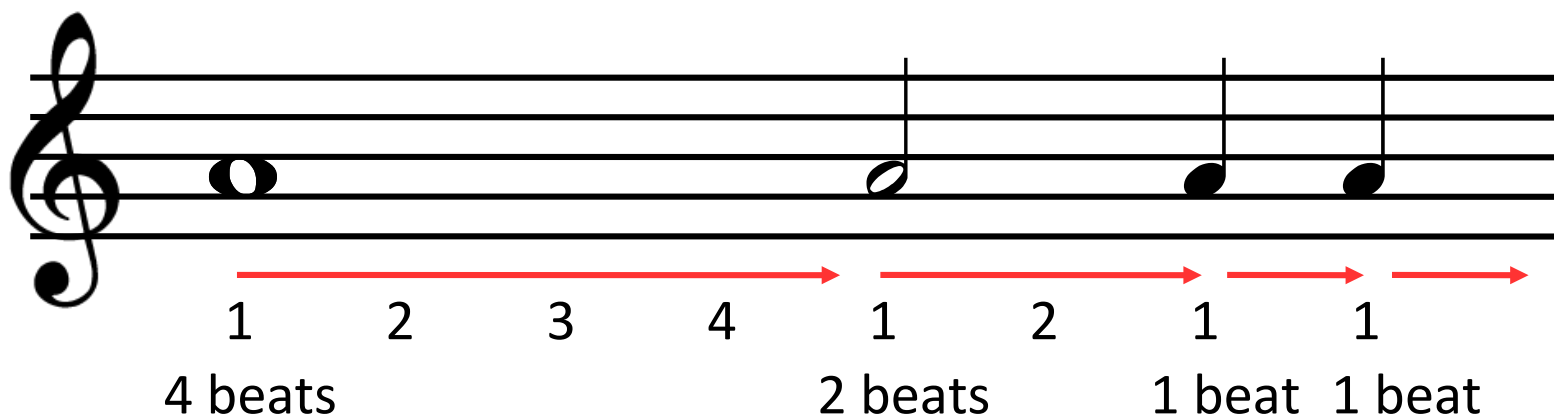
Because half beat notes can be difficult to read when they are close together the flags get turned into a beam. Teaming two or more together.



The diagram illustrates the transition from individual half notes to a beamed eighth note. The top staff shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note (labeled '1'), followed by six eighth notes (each labeled '1/2'). The eighth notes have flags, and a red arrow labeled 'Flag' points to the flag of the sixth eighth note. The bottom staff shows the same sequence, but the six eighth notes are grouped together with a thick black beam, and a red arrow labeled 'Beam' points to the beam. A slur is present under the first three notes in both staves.

Count and Clap

Count the beats.
Clap the beats.











A musical staff with a treble clef. The first note is a whole note on the second line (G4), with a red arrow below it spanning four beats, labeled '4 beats'. The second note is a half note on the second line (G4), with a red arrow below it spanning two beats, labeled '2 beats'. The third note is a quarter note on the second line (G4), with a red arrow below it spanning one beat, labeled '1 beat'. The fourth note is a quarter note on the second line (G4), with a red arrow below it spanning one beat, labeled '1 beat'.

Silent beats – Count, don't play or sing

Every Symbol has a matching
Silent symbol.



Beats per symbol

Symbol	Length	Silent Symbol	Length
	→ Pluck once. Count 4 beats Before the next event		→ Don't play. Count 4 beats Before the next event
	→ Pluck once. Count 2 beats Before the next event		→ Don't play. Count 2 beats Before the next event
	→ Pluck once. Count 1 beat Before the next event		→ Don't play. Count 1 beat Before the next event
	→ Pluck once. Count ½ beat Before the next event)		→ Don't play. Count ½ beat Before the next event

Alternative names

We refer to these symbols by the number of beats before the next event, because it makes sense to do so.

UK / European music teachers use Italian names.

USA music teachers refer to them as fractions of a semibreve. Later in this section we will be using the American version not for the length of time but for a different reason. You should learn the alternative names just in case one day you might need them.

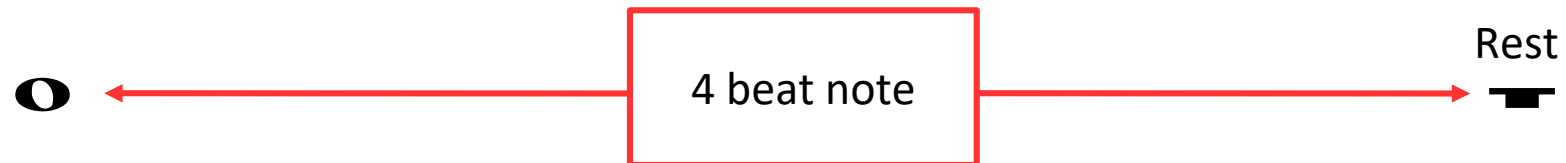


Alternative names: The reason why

The reason why I don't use either the UK / Europe or American names for the length of time of a note is because the names aren't clear as to what they stand for. It slows down the process of sight reading.



Saying a note is a 4 beat note is all you need to know.



Alternative names

4 beat note

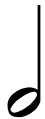


Whole note
Semibreve

4 beat rest



2 beat note



$\frac{1}{2}$ note
Minim

2 beat rest



1 beat note



$\frac{1}{4}$ note
Crotchet

1 beat rest



$\frac{1}{2}$ beat note



$\frac{1}{8}$ note
Quaver

$\frac{1}{2}$ beat rest

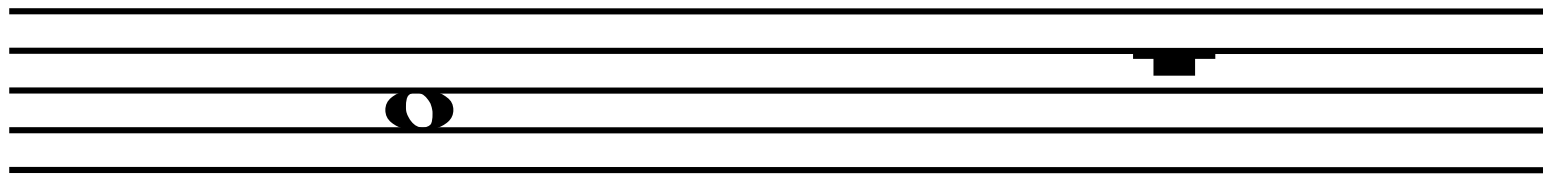


On the Stave – 4 beats

4 beat note.

Beats to count 4

Silent 4 beats



4 beat note

4 beat rest

Alternative name – Semibreve or whole note

On the Stave – 2 beats

2 beat note.

Beats to count 2

Silent 2 beats



2 beat note

2 beat rest

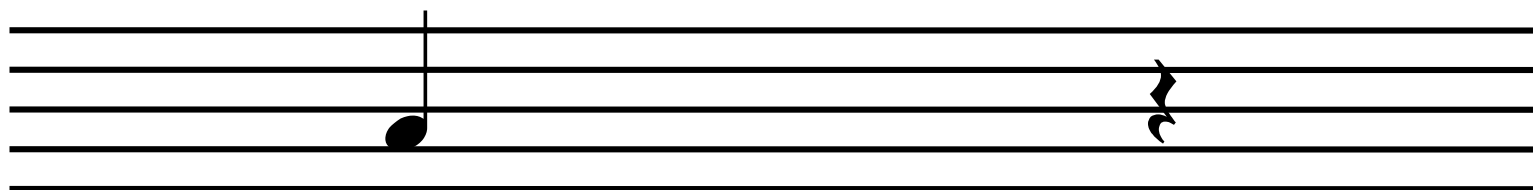
Alternative name – Minim or $\frac{1}{2}$ note

On the Stave – 1 beat

1 beat note.

Beats to count 1

Silent 1 beat



1 beat note

1 beat rest

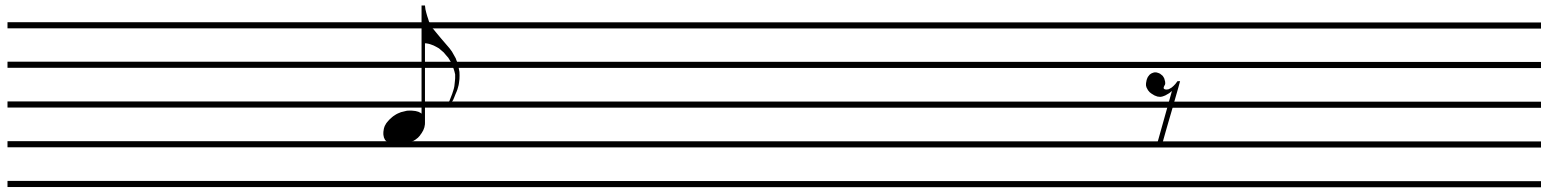
Alternative name – Crotchet or $\frac{1}{4}$ note

On the Stave – ½ beat

½ beat note.

Beats to count ½

Silent ½ beat



½ beat note

½ beat rest

Alternative name – Quaver or ¼ note

Dotted Notes

Dotted notes are very clever. They save time.

 This is a 4 beat note. What if you wanted a 6 beat note?

 This is a 2 beat note. What if you wanted a 3 beat note?

Dotted Notes

Adding another set of symbols would make reading music impossible.
Dotted notes come to the rescue.

The dot adds half
the original value



Length

4+2=6 beats

Silent Symbol
Rests



Length

6 silent beats

The dot adds half
the original value



Length

2+1=3 Beats









Silent Symbol
Rests



Length

3 silent beats

Lots of dotted notes

	Length	Silent Symbol Rests	Length
	Rings for 6 beats		6 silent beats
$\frac{1}{2}$ note Minim 	Rings for 3 beats		3 silent beats
$\frac{1}{4}$ note Crotchet 	Rings for $1\frac{1}{2}$ beats		$1\frac{1}{2}$ silent beats
$\frac{1}{8}$ note Quaver 	Rings for $\frac{3}{4}$ beat		$\frac{3}{4}$ silent beat

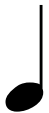
Fractions: Very important for what comes next



Whole Note
4Beats



$\frac{1}{2}$ of a whole note
2 beats each



$\frac{1}{4}$ of a whole note
1 beat each



$\frac{1}{8}$ of a whole note
 $\frac{1}{2}$ beat each

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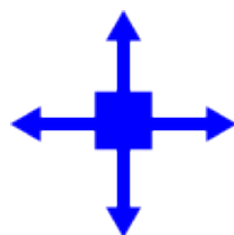
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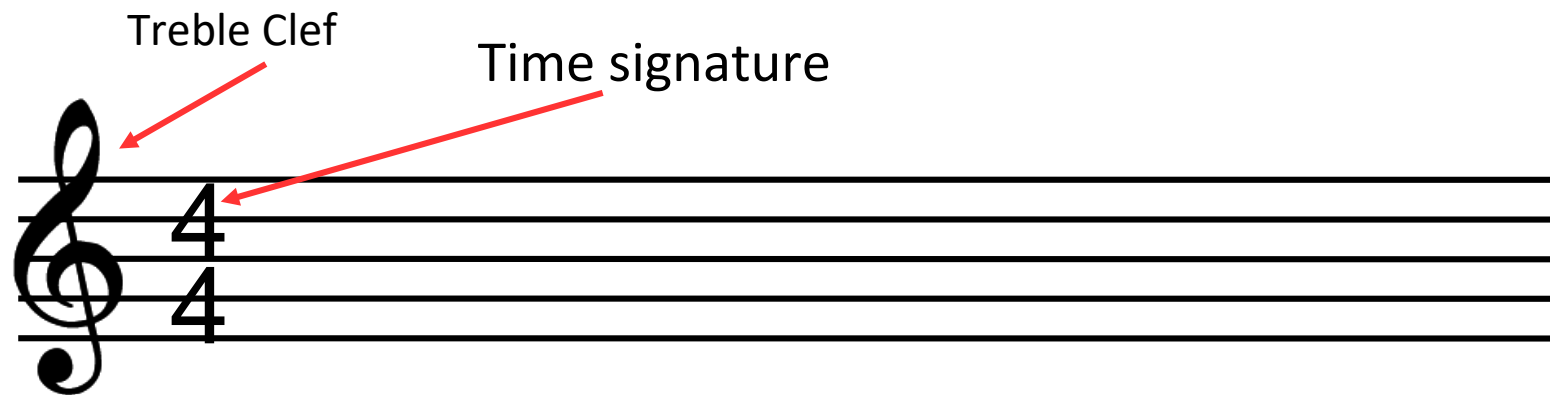


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Time Signatures

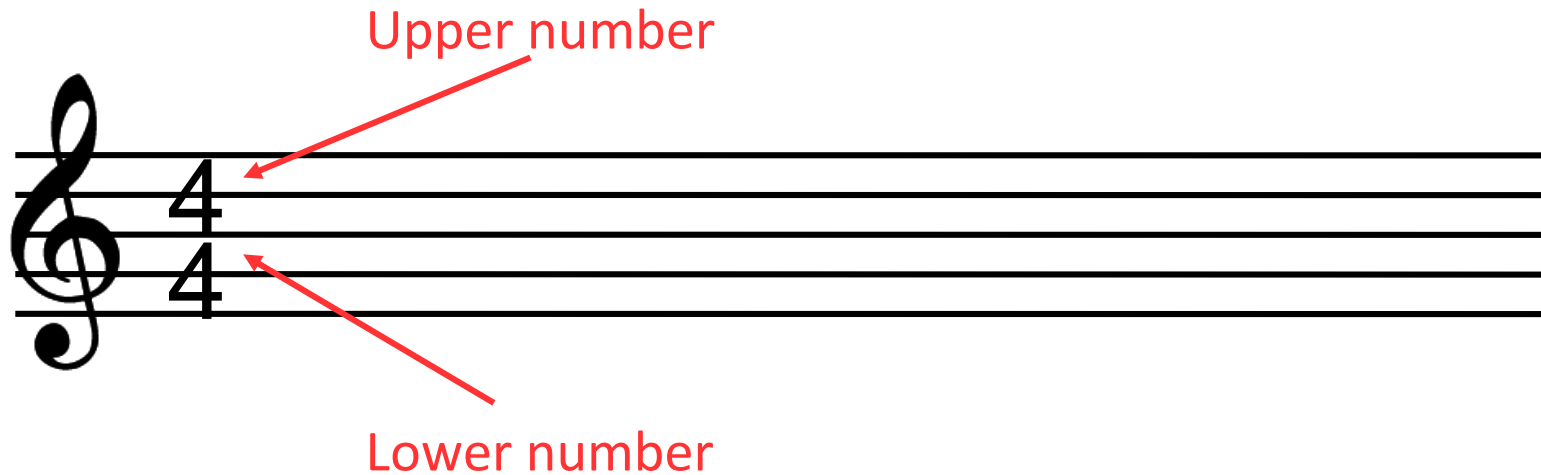
When looking at a piece of music there are two items to check before you begin playing. We looked at the treble clef, now we look at the time signature.



Both the treble clef and the time signature have very important jobs to do.

Time Signatures: Upper / Lower

The time signature is made of two parts.
A lower number and an upper number.



Time Signatures: The Lower Number - 4

The diagram illustrates the relationship between note values and the lower number of a 4/4 time signature. On the left, a treble clef staff shows the time signature 4/4. A red arrow points from the lower '4' to a red text box that says "The lower number represents 1/4 notes". To the right, four levels of notes are shown, each with a label: a whole note (4 beats), two half notes (2 beats each), four quarter notes (1 beat each), and eight eighth notes (1/2 beat each).

Whole Note
4Beats

1/2 of a whole note
2 beats each

1/4 of a whole note
1 beat each

1/8 of a whole note
1/2 beat each

The lower number represents 1/4 notes

1/4 notes last for 1 beat each.

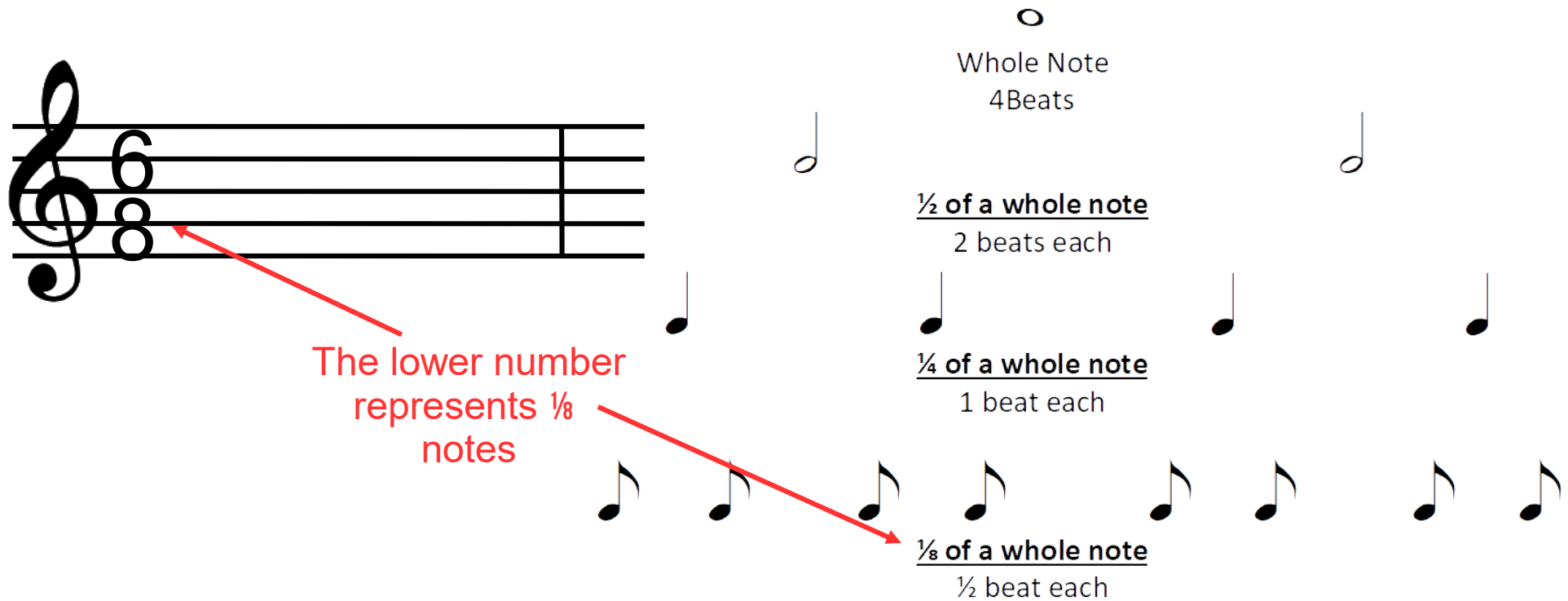
Time Signatures: The Lower Number - 2

The diagram illustrates the 2/2 time signature on a five-line staff. The time signature '2/2' is written at the beginning. A red arrow points from the lower '2' to the text 'The lower number represents 1/2 notes'. To the right of the staff, various note values are shown with their corresponding durations:

- A whole note (semibreva) is shown as a large open circle, labeled 'Whole Note 4Beats'.
- Two half notes (minims) are shown as open circles with stems, labeled '1/2 of a whole note 2 beats each'.
- Four quarter notes (crotchets) are shown as solid black circles with stems, labeled '1/4 of a whole note 1 beat each'.
- Eight eighth notes (quavers) are shown as solid black circles with stems, labeled '1/8 of a whole note 1/2 beat each'.

1/2 notes last for 2 beats each.

Time Signatures: The Lower Number - 8



The diagram illustrates the 6/8 time signature. On the left, a treble clef staff shows a 6/8 time signature. A red arrow points from the lower '8' to a group of eighth notes. To the right, four levels of note values are shown with their respective durations:

- Whole Note: 4 Beats
- $\frac{1}{2}$ of a whole note: 2 beats each
- $\frac{1}{4}$ of a whole note: 1 beat each
- $\frac{1}{8}$ of a whole note: $\frac{1}{2}$ beat each

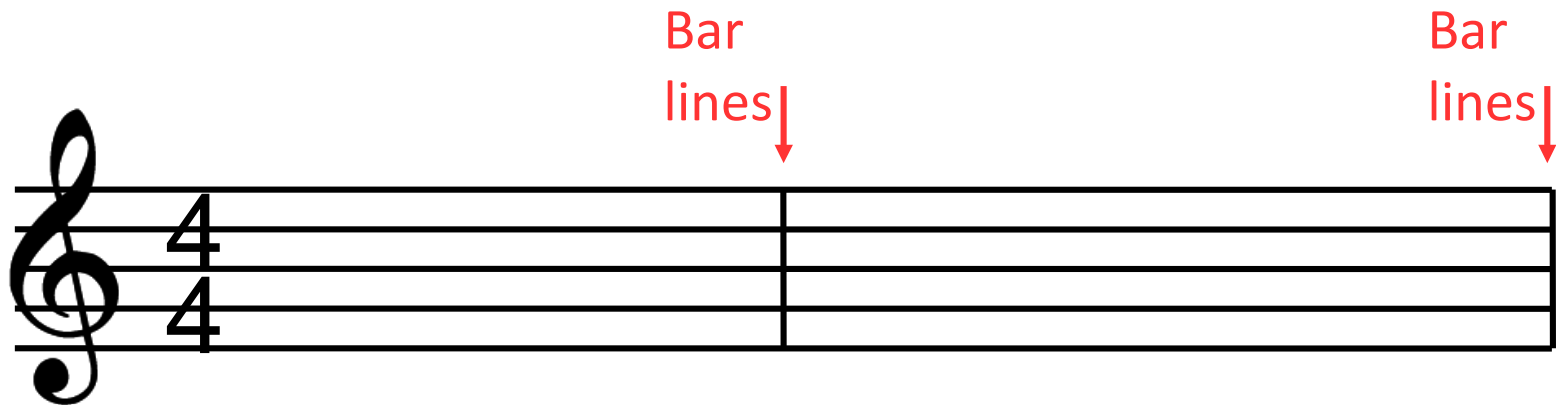
Red text with arrows explains: "The lower number represents $\frac{1}{8}$ notes".

$\frac{1}{8}$ notes last for $\frac{1}{2}$ beat each.

Bar Lines

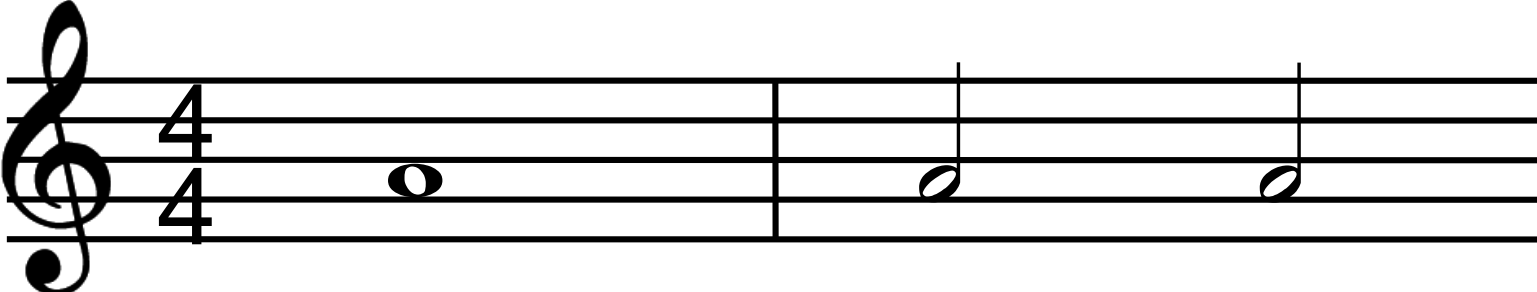
Time signatures keep the rhythm of a piece of music under control.

To control the rhythm of a piece of music the staff is divided into sections called bars, or measures. Time signatures work with Bar Lines.



Between the Bars

Between the bar lines a certain number of beats are counted. The number of beats in each bar is decided by the composer and written in the time signature. Here are some short examples each with 4 beats in the bar.



A musical staff in 4/4 time. The first bar contains a single whole note. The second bar contains two half notes.

4 beats 2 beats + 2 beats



A musical staff in 4/4 time. The first bar contains a quarter note followed by a two-beat rest. The second bar contains a quarter note, another quarter note, and a half note.

2 beats + 2 beat rest 1 beat + 1 beat + 2 beats

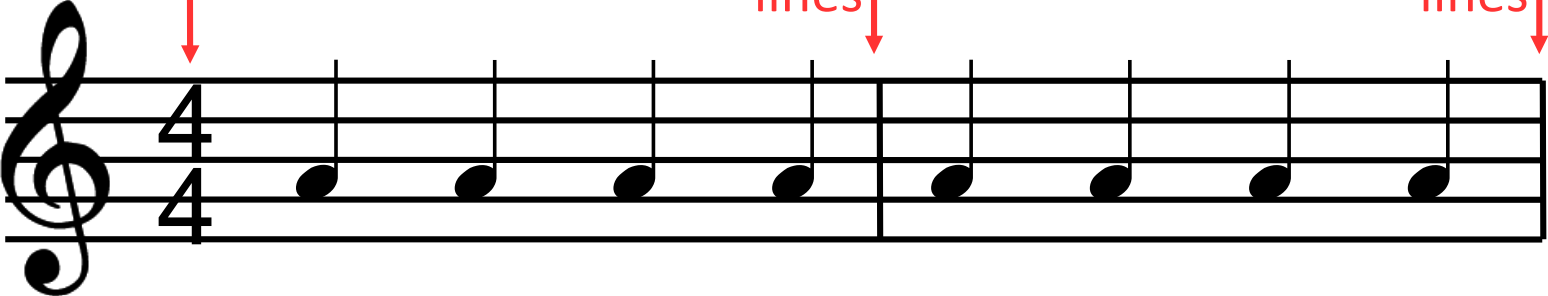
Time Signatures – The upper number

In this example the upper number indicates how many $\frac{1}{4}$ notes there will be in each bar.

Upper number
(How many $\frac{1}{4}$ notes)

Bar lines

Bar lines



A musical staff in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The upper '4' is highlighted with a red arrow pointing to the text 'Upper number (How many 1/4 notes)'. The lower '4' is also highlighted with a red arrow. The staff contains a sequence of eight quarter notes, with two bar lines dividing the staff into three measures of four notes each. Red arrows point from the text 'Bar lines' to the two bar lines.

4 → 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ notes in each bar

4 →

Time Signature - Common time $\frac{4}{4}$

In this example, 2 beat notes and 1 beat notes combine to add up to 4 beats

Upper number
(How many $\frac{1}{4}$ notes)

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

2 2 1 1 2

Lower number = $\frac{1}{4}$ notes

4 $\frac{1}{4}$ notes in each bar. Each $\frac{1}{4}$ note (\bullet) lasts 1 beat.

The time values must add up to 4 beats in a bar.

4/4 Red River Valley

Add the beats in each bar together. Between the bar lines the notes must equal four 1 beat notes. I have completed the first two bars for you.

These two notes start at the end of a bar on a weak beat. It's called a **Pick Up**.

Strong Beat 1

Tied notes. Add timings together

1 1/2 1/2 1 1/2 1/2 1/2 2 1/2 1/2 1/2

Bar Lines

5

$\frac{4}{4}$ is sometimes replaced by C

This sign means 4 beats in each bar

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). A red arrow points to the C symbol with the text "This sign means 4 beats in each bar". Above the staff, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are placed above the first measure, and 1, 2, 3, 4 are placed above the second measure. Below the staff, the numbers 2, 2, 1, 1, 2 are placed below the notes, indicating the number of beats each note takes. The first measure contains two quarter notes, and the second measure contains three quarter notes.

4 $\frac{1}{4}$ notes in each bar. Each $\frac{1}{4}$ note (\bullet) lasts 1 beat.

The time values must add up to 4 beats in a bar.

Time signature - C $\frac{4}{4}$ Dabbling

Add the beats in each bar together. Between the bar lines the notes must equal four 1 beat notes. I have included the timing of the notes in the first bar for you.

Pick Up.

Strong Beat 1

Bar Lines

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

3

5

7

$\frac{2}{2}$ is often replaced by C (Cut Time)

The image shows a musical staff in cut time (C). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has a cut time symbol, followed by two half notes. The second measure also has two half notes. Above the staff, a red bracket labeled "Heavy beat" spans the first and third beats of each measure. Red numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are placed above the staff to indicate the beat count. Below the staff, red numbers 2, 2, 2, and 2 are placed below the staff to indicate the duration of each half note. A red arrow points to the cut time symbol with the label "Cut Time symbol".

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ notes in each bar. Each $\frac{1}{2}$ (♩) note lasts 2 beats.

The time values must add up to 4 beats in a bar.

$\frac{2}{2}$ is often replaced by C (Cut Time)

Change the way you count.

Cut Time

The image shows a musical staff in cut time (C). It contains four measures, each with a single half note. Above the staff, the notes are counted as 1, 2, 1, 2, with plus signs between them. Below the staff, the notes are counted as 2, 2, 2, 2. A red bracket labeled 'Cut Time' spans the first two measures.

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ notes in each bar. Each $\frac{1}{2}$ (♩) note lasts 2 beats.

The time values must add up to 4 beats in a bar.

Cut Time C v Common Time C

Common time and cut time both have notes that are equal to $4 \frac{1}{4}$ beats between the bar lines. The difference is how the beat is emphasised.

A common time bar contains four evenly balanced beats with emphasis on beat 1.

Count **1** – 2 – 3 – 4 | **1** – 2 – 3 – 4 | during each bar.

Cut time places a heavy emphasis on the first and third beat.

Count **1** and **2** and | **1** and **2** and | during each bar.

This gives the rhythm of a song a bright, bouncy feel.

Lady on the green C (Cut Time)

Add the beats in each bar together. Between the bar lines the notes must equal two 2 beat notes. 4 beats in each bar with beat 1 and beat 3 strong.

1 and 2 and

Pick Up.

3

Strong Beat 1

Strong Beat 2

Strong Beat 1

Strong Beat 2

Strong Beat 1

Strong Beat 2

1 1/2 1/2 1 1/2 1/2 1/2 2 1/2 1/2 1/2

4

7

Lady on the green - Triplets

The pick up at the start of Lady on the green is a triplet.

A triplet

3


1 1/2 1/2 1 1/2 1/2 1/2 2 1/2 1/2 1/2

4

7

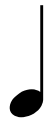
Triplets – 3 into 2 does go

There isn't a formal symbol written on the stave to represent a third of a note. Everything is half of something longer.


4 beats



Half of 4 beats is 2 beats



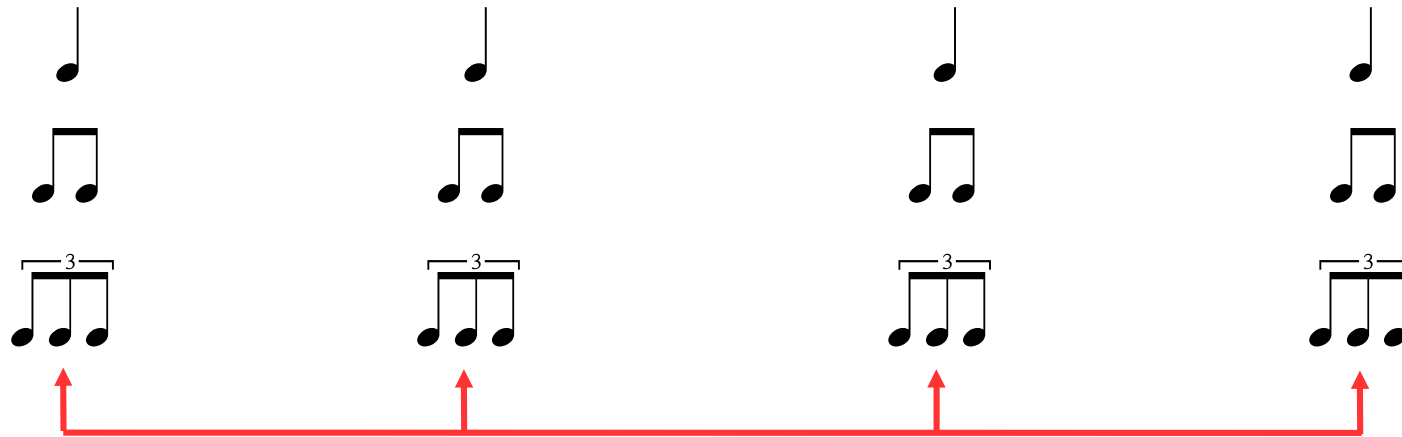
Half of 2 beats is 1 beat



Half of 1 beat is $\frac{1}{2}$ beat

Creating Triplets

A triple is when **three notes** of the same time value are played in the same time as **two notes** of the same time value. A triple has a small 3 written above the beam.



Example: Triplets – 3 ½ beat notes squeezed into the same time as 2 ½ beat notes



Clap once for each beat.
Count 1 2 3 as you clap.

3/4 Time Signature

In this example the total number of beats in each bar must add up to 3 ¼ notes.

Upper number
(how many)

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The time signature is 3/4. The first bar contains three quarter notes: G4 (fingered 1), B4 (fingered 2), and D5 (fingered 3). The second bar contains two quarter notes: G4 (fingered 1) and B4 (fingered 2). Red arrows point to the '3' and '4' in the time signature. Red numbers 1, 2, and 3 are placed above the notes in the first bar, and red numbers 1 and 2 are placed below the notes in the second bar.

Lower number = ¼ notes

3 ¼ notes in each bar. Each ¼ note (♪) lasts 1 beat.

The time values must add up to 3 beats in a bar.

3/4 My Bonnie

Add the beats in each bar together. Between the bar lines the notes must equal three 1 beat notes.



6/8 Time Signature

In this example the total number of beats in each bar must add up to 6 1/8 notes.

Upper number
(how many)

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

Lower number = 1/8 notes

6 1/8 notes in each bar. Each 1/8 note (♪) lasts 1/2 beat.

The time values must add up to two sets of 1 1/2 beats in a bar.

6/8 Greensleeves

Add the beats in each bar together. Between the bar lines the notes must equal six $\frac{1}{8}$ beat notes. You might need help with this one. Ask your teacher.

* There is something new here. $\frac{1}{4}$ beats

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

	Flag	Beam	Flag	Beam	Beam
*					
	1	$\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$	
	Beat	Beat each	Beat	Beat each	Beat each

Faster Notes

6/8 Time Signature

How to count $\frac{6}{8}$ time.

The image shows a musical staff in 6/8 time. The staff contains four measures, each with six eighth notes. Red arrows point to the first note of each measure, which is labeled '1'. The notes in each measure are grouped by brackets and labeled '1 2 3' above them. The time signature 6/8 is written at the beginning of the staff.

Don't count 1 2 3 4 5 6 it slows everything down

6 $\frac{1}{8}$ notes in each bar. Each $\frac{1}{8}$ note () lasts $\frac{1}{2}$ beat.

The time values must add up to two sets of 1½ beats in a bar.

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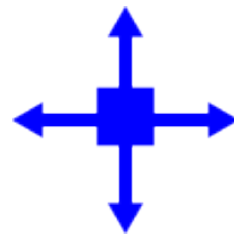
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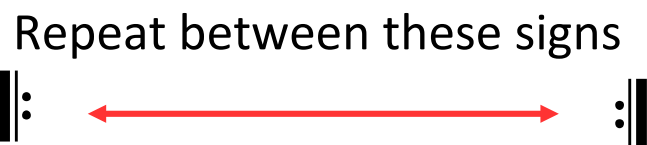


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The Music Readers ToolboxTM


Repeat Signs

Often during a piece of music a section is played twice, or more. Instead of writing the music out again, repeat signs are used to guide a musician from start to finish.




D.C. (Da Capo = Go back to the start of the music)

D.S. (Dal Segno = Go back to the sign) 

 This sign can be placed anywhere on the music before the instruction to go back to it.

Al means until

A Coda  sign is a junction that leads towards the end of the music.

Back to the start

Repeat from here
to the start once



Ignore the repeat sign this time

Repeating between the ||: :|| signs:

Step 1

In this example the music repeats between the repeat signs ||: :|| not from the beginning of the music.

1. Play from the start to the repeat sign. :||

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notation includes a first repeat sign (||:) and a second repeat sign (:||). A red arrow labeled "Start here" points to the beginning of the first measure. A red circle highlights the second repeat sign (:||), with a red arrow labeled "To here" pointing to it. The music consists of several measures, including a triplet of eighth notes.

Repeating between the ||: :|| signs: Step 2

2. Return to here. ||:

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. The notation starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note A4. The third measure contains a repeat sign (two vertical lines with two dots between them). A red vertical line is drawn to the left of this repeat sign, with a red arrow pointing to it from the text "To here". The fourth measure contains a quarter note B4. The fifth measure contains a quarter note C5. The sixth measure contains a quarter note B4. The seventh measure contains a quarter note A4. The eighth measure contains a quarter note G4. The ninth measure contains a quarter rest. The tenth measure contains a repeat sign. A red vertical line is drawn to the right of this repeat sign, with a red arrow pointing to it from the text "From here". A red horizontal arrow points from the "From here" sign back to the "To here" sign. The eleventh measure contains a quarter note G4. The twelfth measure contains a quarter note F4. The thirteenth measure contains a quarter note E4. The fourteenth measure contains a half note D4.

Repeating between the $\|$ $:$ $\|$ signs:

Step 3

3. Play to the end ignoring repeat sign. $:$ $\|$



The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a quarter note on G4. The second measure contains a quarter note on A4. A red repeat sign (two vertical lines with two dots) is placed at the end of the second measure. The third measure contains a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on C5, a quarter note on B4, and a quarter note on A4. The fourth measure contains a quarter note on G4. The fifth measure contains a quarter rest. A second repeat sign is placed at the end of the fifth measure. The sixth measure contains a quarter note on G4. The seventh measure contains a quarter note on F4. The eighth measure contains a half note on E4. A red arrow points from the first repeat sign to the end of the staff. Below the arrow is the text "Ignore the repeat sign".

1st Ending :|| 2nd Ending:

Step 1

Sometimes a melody is repeated with a slightly different ending to the second verse.

1. Play from the start to the repeat sign.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The melody consists of several measures. The first ending is marked with a box labeled "1st ending" and ends with a repeat sign (two vertical lines with two dots). The second ending is marked with a box labeled "2nd ending" and follows the first ending. A red arrow points from the text "Start here" to the beginning of the melody. Another red arrow points from the text "To here" to the repeat sign at the end of the first ending.

Continues next page.

1st Ending :|| 2nd Ending:

Step 2

2. Return to the start of the music

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. The first ending consists of a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The second ending consists of a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. A red arrow points from the end of the first ending back to the beginning of the first note. The text "Back to the start" is written below the arrow.

Continues next page.

1st Ending :|| 2nd Ending:

Step 3

3. Play to the end of the music ignoring the 1st ending bar.

There might be more than one bar to jump over in a piece of music.

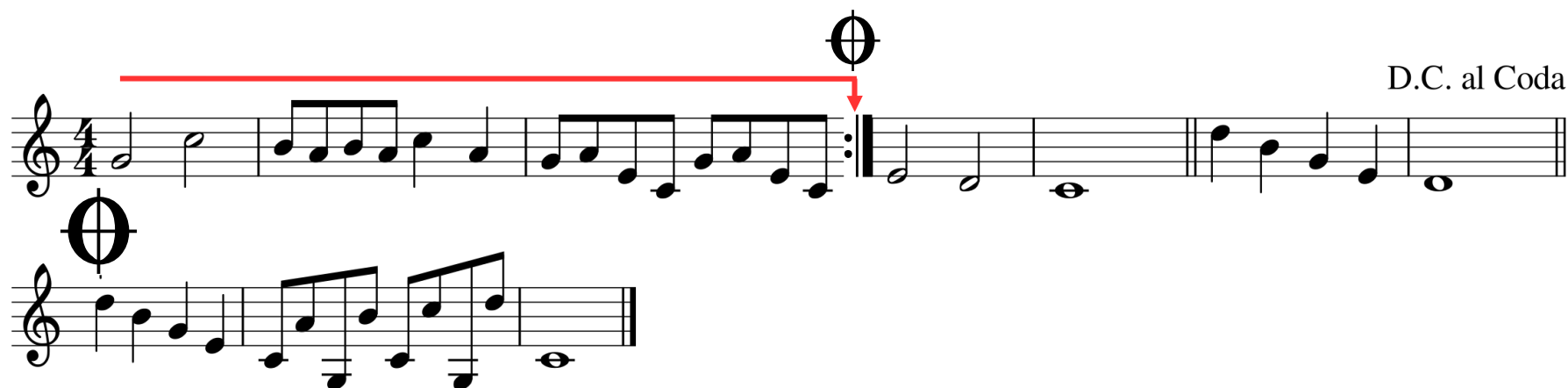
The diagram shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first four bars contain a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a beamed eighth-note pair on B4 and C5, a quarter note on D5, and a quarter note on E5. The fifth bar is the first ending, consisting of a quarter note on G4 followed by a whole rest, with a repeat sign (:||) above it. The sixth bar is the second ending, consisting of a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, and a half note on B4. A red arrow points from the text 'From here' to the end of the first ending bar. Another red arrow points from the text 'Jump this bar 2nd time' to the beginning of the second ending bar. A third red arrow points from the end of the second ending bar to the right.

DC al Coda

Step 1

A coda sign sends a musician from the small coda to the large coda to end the piece.

1. Play from the start to the repeat sign. 



D.C. al Coda

DC al Coda

Step 2

2. Return to start

D.C. al Coda

DC al Coda \oplus \ominus

Step 3

3. Play from start to D.C. al Coda

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in 4/4 time and contains a melody with a repeat sign. A red horizontal line with an arrow points from the start of the melody to a red-bordered box containing the text "D.C. al Coda". Above the repeat sign on the top staff is a small \oplus symbol. Below the first few notes of the top staff is a large \ominus symbol. The bottom staff continues the melody from the end of the first staff.

DC al Coda

Step 4

4. D.C. al Coda means from the start until the coda sign.

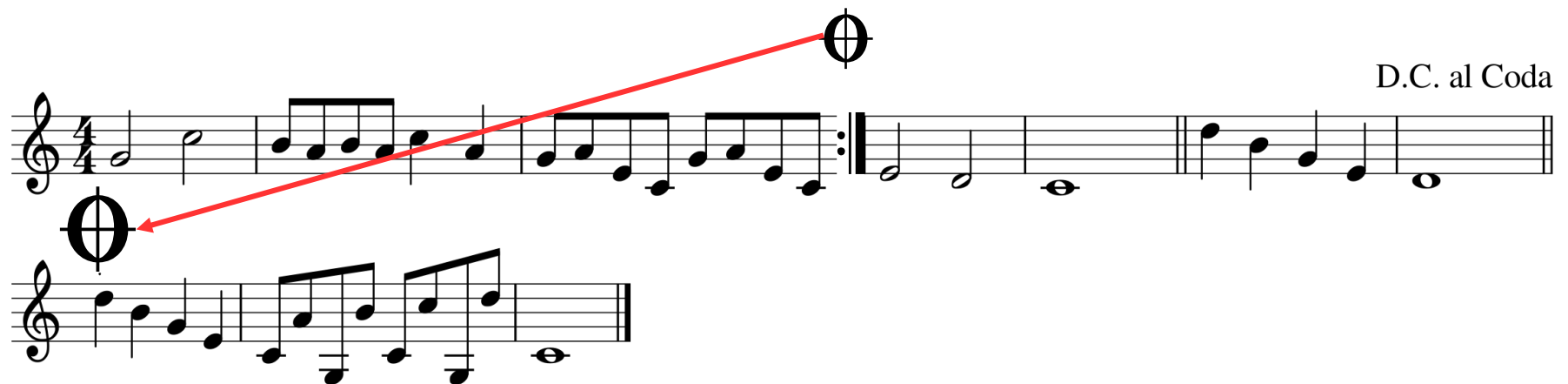
Back to the start

D.C. al Coda

DC al Coda

Step 5

5. Jump from the small coda sign  to the big coda sign 

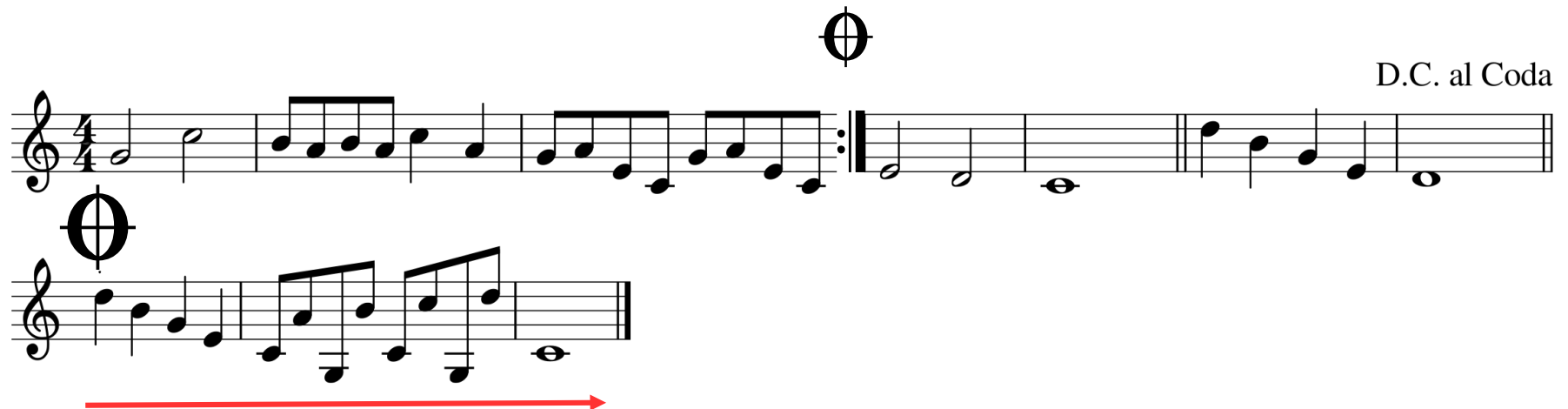


The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The top staff contains a melodic line with a repeat sign. A small coda sign is placed above the end of the first phrase. A red arrow points from this small sign to a larger coda sign placed above the beginning of the second phrase. The text "D.C. al Coda" is written to the right of the second phrase. The bottom staff shows a bass line with a large coda sign placed above the beginning of the first phrase.

DC al Coda

Step 6

6. Play from the big coda sign  to the end.



The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. This sequence is followed by a repeat sign (two dots and two vertical lines). After the repeat sign, there is a big coda sign (a circle with a cross) above the staff. To the right of the big coda sign, the text "D.C. al Coda" is written. The bottom staff begins with a treble clef and contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. A red arrow points from the left towards the end of the bottom staff.

D~~al~~ al Coda

Dal Segno means from the sign (This sign) ~~S~~ not the start.

The sign can be anywhere before the D.S al Coda.

This follows the same sequence as D.C. al coda except you play from the sign not the start.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, an eighth note B4, an eighth note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. Above the first measure is a Segno sign (S with a slash). Above the eighth measure is a Coda sign (circle with a cross). A double bar line with repeat dots follows. The second staff begins with a Coda sign above the first measure, followed by a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, an eighth note B4, an eighth note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. A red box highlights the text 'D.S. al Coda' in the upper right corner of the image.

Tied Notes

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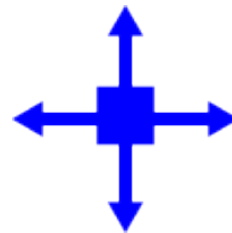
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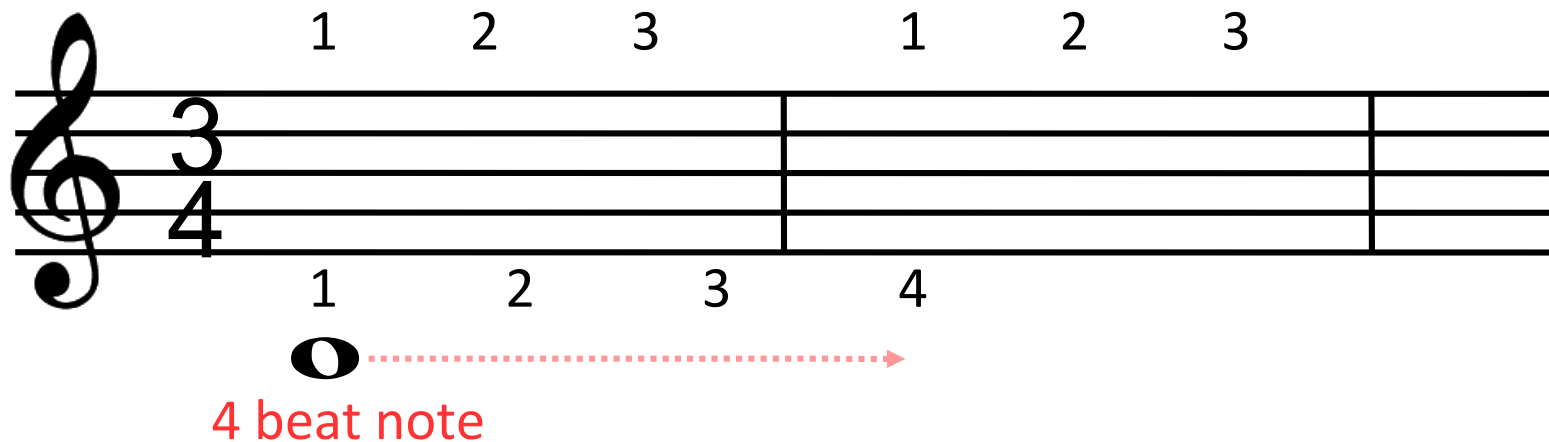
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Tied Notes

Another clever aspect of reading music used on the staff is the tied note.

Imagine you are composing a melody in $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

One of the notes you want to play is a 4 beat note.

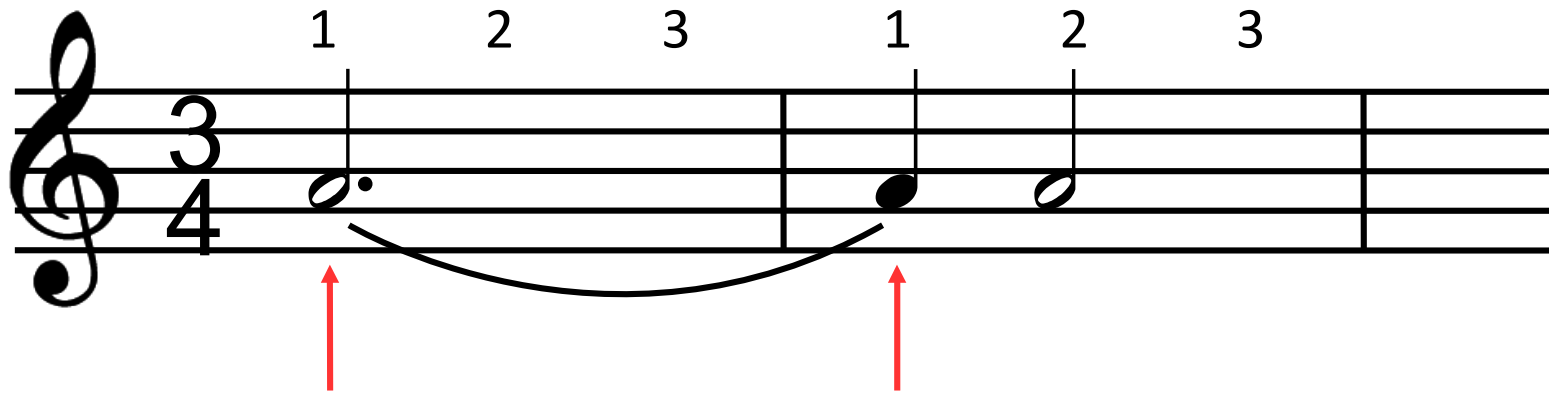


But, in this example the maximum beats in each bar is 3.

Tied notes solve the problem

To overcome the problem use tied notes.

Tied notes add the value of two or more notes together.



Add the values of these two notes
together to create a 4 beat note

$$3+1=4$$

Don't pluck the second note

The second note of a tied note **isn't played** - the sound is allowed to carry on without striking the string again.

1 2 3 1 2 3

3
4

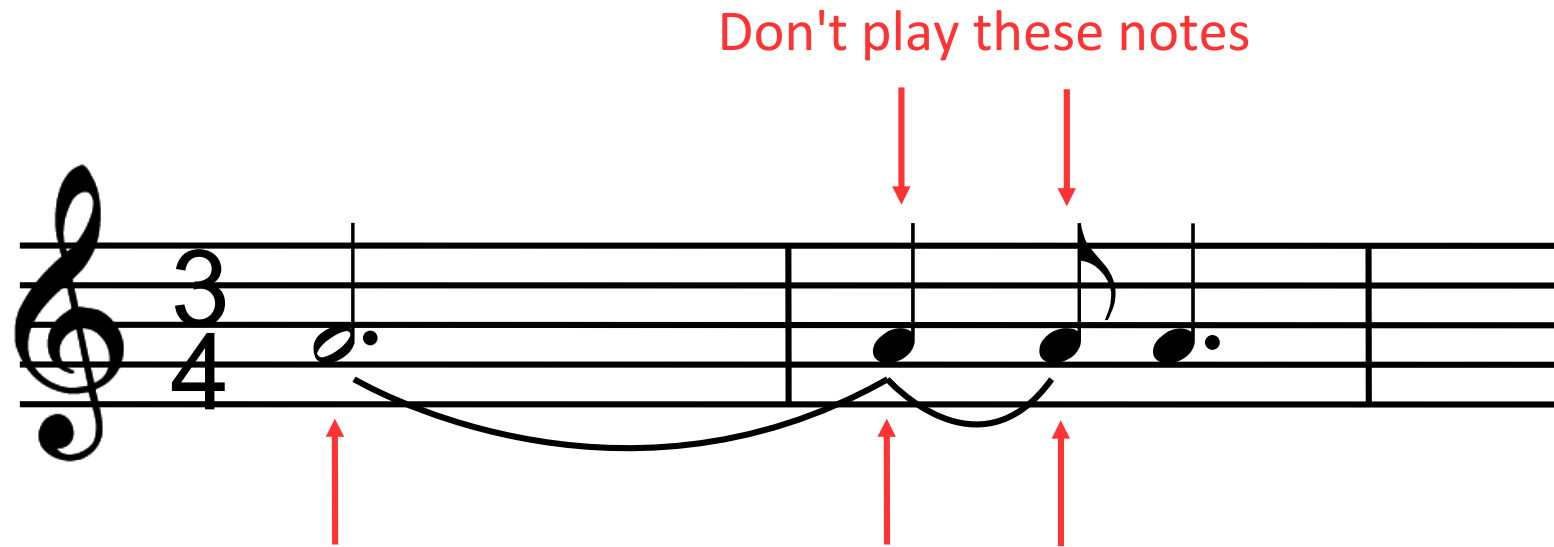
Don't play this note

Add the values of these two notes together to create a 4 beat note

$3+1=4$

Tie lots of notes together

Any number of notes can be tied together.



With Tied Notes any value of time can be achieved.

Slurs – Pull Off (PO)

When using tied notes, both notes have to be the same sound.

Slurs allow two **different** notes to be tied together, don't play the second note.

For example, play the A note on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string. Count 1 2 3 then lift your finger off the string without stopping the string from ringing.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. The first measure contains a dotted quarter note on the A line (A4), with a '1' above it. The second measure contains a dotted quarter note on the G line (G4), with a '1' above it. A slur connects the A note in the first measure to the G note in the second measure, with 'PO' written below the slur. Above the G note, there are two more notes: a quarter note on the A line (A4) with a '2' above it, and a dotted quarter note on the G line (G4) with a '3' above it. A red arrow points to the G note in the second measure with the text 'Don't play this note'.

Slurs. Hammer on (HO)

Hammering on is the opposite of pulling off.

For example, play the open G note on the 3rd string. Count 1 2 3 then quickly place your finger onto the 2nd fret (A) without stopping the string from ringing.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. The first measure contains a single quarter note G on the third line, with a '1' above it and a 'G' below it. The second measure contains a quarter note A on the second space, with a '1' above it and an 'A' below it. A slur connects the G and A notes, with 'HO' written below the slur. The third measure contains two eighth notes: A on the second space (finger 1) and G on the third line (finger 2), with '1' and '2' above them. The fourth measure contains a quarter note G on the third line (finger 3), with a '3' above it. A red arrow points to the A note in the third measure with the text 'Don't play this note'.

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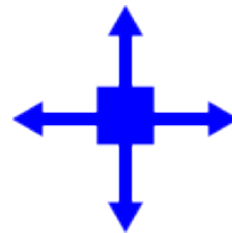
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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

Dynamics

The way a musician uses dynamics is the difference between a good musician and a brilliant musician.

Basically dynamics alter the volume of the performance.

p This means play softly

f This means play loud

Dynamics

These symbols control the volume of your playing.

ppp This means play very softly

p This means play softly

mp This means quite softly

f This means play loud

fffff This means play very loud

mf This means play quite loud

Dynamics

Read the words below aloud following the instructions of the dynamics.

ppp I must read this very quietly.

f I must shout this out so loud.

mp Not so quiet, can you hear me?

p Come closer, please stand near me.

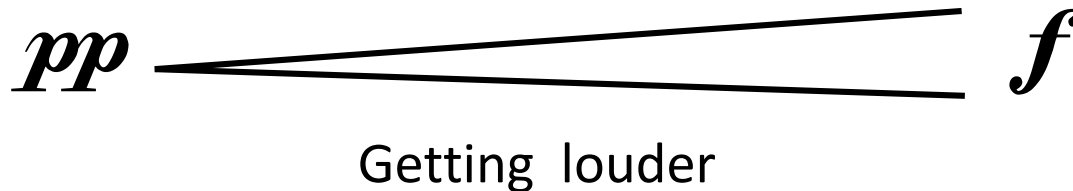
mf Move back! Move back! Don't come so near.

fff Wherever you stand, I'm sure you'll hear!

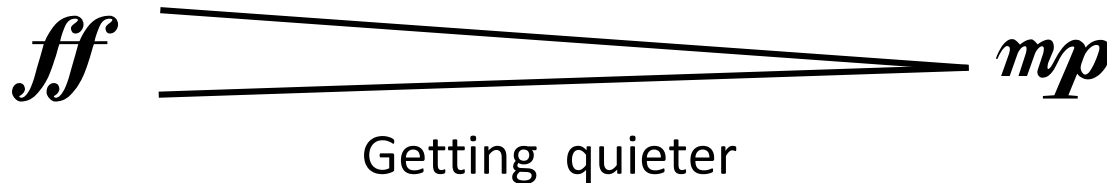
Dynamics

Read the words below aloud following the instructions of the dynamics.

Read this getting louder and louder



Read this getting quieter and quieter



Dynamics in action

Play My Bonnie using the dynamics.

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts with a *mp* marking and ends with a *mf* marking, with a red instruction: "Start quite quiet getting louder". The second staff starts with a *f* marking and has a red instruction: "Play loud - stay loud". The third staff starts with a *ff* marking and has a red instruction: "Play very loud - stay very loud". The fourth staff starts with a *mf* marking and ends with a *p* marking, with a red instruction: "Start quite loud end quiet".

Practice dynamics with scales

Read aloud scales.

beat C beat D beat E beat F beat G beat A beat B beat C

pp (Read very quiet) *fff* (Read very loud)

beat D beat C# beat B beat A beat G beat F# beat E beat D

fff (Read very loud) *ppp* (Read very quiet)

beat F beat G beat A beat B \flat beat C beat D beat E beat F

mp (Read quite quiet) *f* (Read loud) *mp* (Read quite quiet)

Read a poem out loud - add dynamics

SPRING

Read verse 1 quietly

p

Spring time is here with its sunshine and showers,
All nature is waking from its long winter sleep.
The gardens are blooming with beautiful flowers,
The song-birds are carolling melodies sweet.

SUMMER

Read verse 2 quite loud

mf

The summer comes with glaring heat,
And we will have vacation;
We pack our grips for the seashore trips,
Or other recreation.

AUTUMN

Read verse 3 loud

f

The harvest moon is shining bright,
The leaves are falling everywhere;
How glorious is the autumn night,
How cool and bracing is the air.

WINTER

Read verse 4 quite quiet

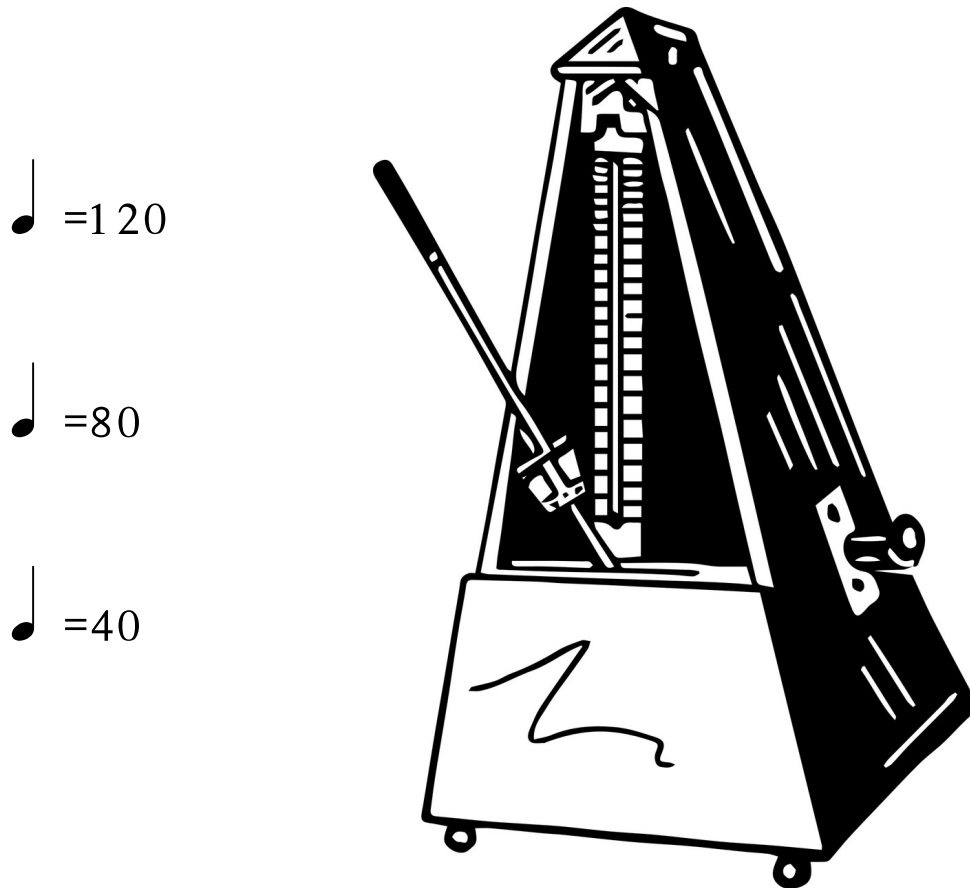
mp

Jack frost is stalking through the land,
The ground is covered white, with snow.
We like to sit beside the fire
And tell the tales of long ago.

Alan L. Strang

Tempo: Beats per minute (BPM)

The speed a piece of music is played is very important. The composer sets the tempo (BPM) . A metronome is often used to attain the correct speed.



Metronome Tempo markings

From slowest to fastest:

Larghissimo – very, very slow (24 bpm and under)

Adagissimo – very slowly

Grave – very slow (25–45 bpm)

Largo – broadly (40–60 bpm)

Lento – slowly (45–60 bpm)

Larghetto – rather broadly (60–66 bpm)

Adagio – slowly with great expression[9] (66–76 bpm)

Adagietto – slower than andante (72–76 bpm) or slightly faster than adagio (70–80 bpm)

Andante – at a walking pace (76–108 bpm)

Andantino – slightly faster than andante (80–108 bpm)

Marcia moderato – moderately, in the manner of a march[10][11] (83–85 bpm)

Andante moderato – between andante and moderato (thus the name) (92–98 bpm)

Moderato – at a moderate speed (98–112 bpm)

Allegretto – by the mid-19th century, moderately fast (102–110 bpm)

Allegro moderato – close to, but not quite allegro (116–120 bpm)

Allegro – fast, quickly, and bright (120–156 bpm)

Vivace – lively and fast (156–176 bpm)

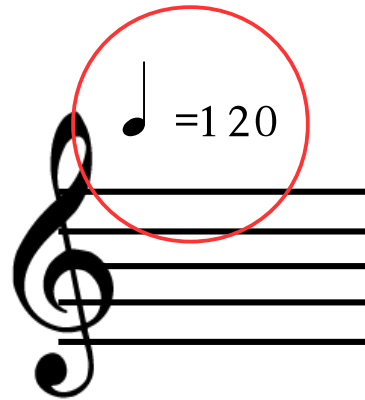
Vivacissimo – very fast and lively (172–176 bpm)

Allegro vivace or Allegro vivace – very fast (172–176 bpm)

Presto – very, very fast (168–200 bpm)

Prestissimo – even faster than presto (200 bpm and over)

Tempo markings



On the staff a tempo marking shows the speed of the music.

Tempo markings

Words can be used to describe the tempo.

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time. The first staff is divided into two sections. The first section is marked 'Slowly' and contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on C5, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on G4, and a quarter note on F4. The second section is marked 'Walking pace' and contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on C5, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on G4, and a quarter note on F4. The second staff is also divided into two sections. The first section is marked 'Fast' and contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on C5, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on G4, and a quarter note on F4. The second section is marked 'Very fast' and contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on C5, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on G4, and a quarter note on F4. The notes in the 'Fast' and 'Very fast' sections are spaced more closely together than in the 'Slowly' and 'Walking pace' sections.

An example of alternative names.

- Lento – slowly (45–60 bpm)
- Andante – at a walking pace (76–108 bpm)
- Allegro – fast (120–156 bpm)
- Presto – very fast (168–200 bpm)

Key Signatures

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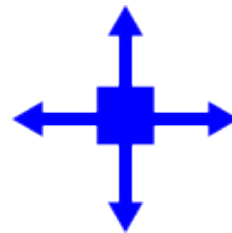
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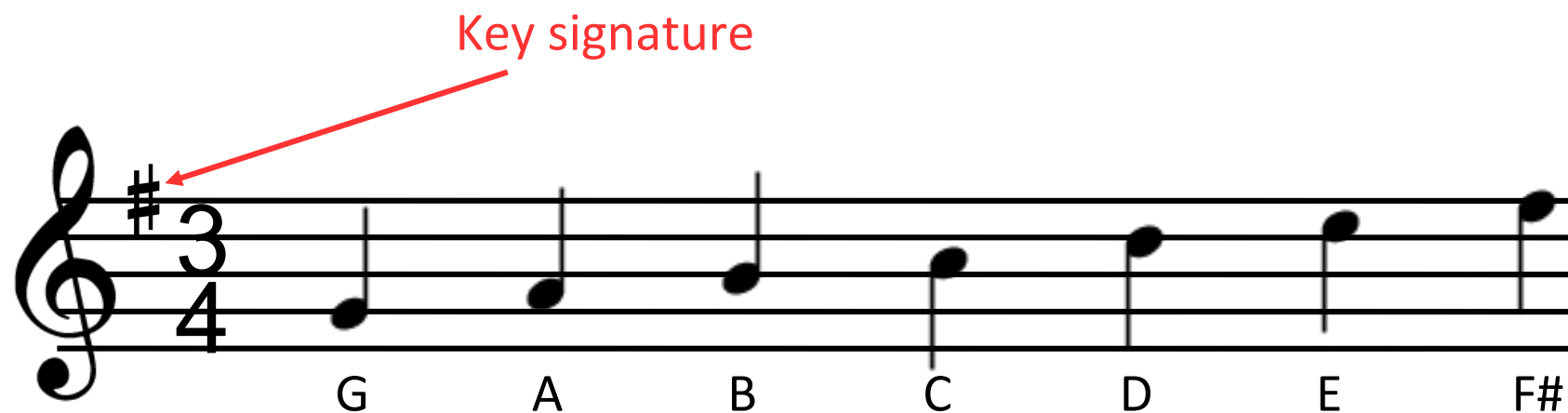
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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

Key signatures

I want to add another important aspect to the tools of the stave.

At the beginning of a piece of music there is a third item to be understood and used - it is called the **Key Signature**.



Where is the Key Signature?

The key signature can be found between the Treble Clef and the Time Signature.

Treble clef Key signature Time signature

3 4

G A B C D E F#

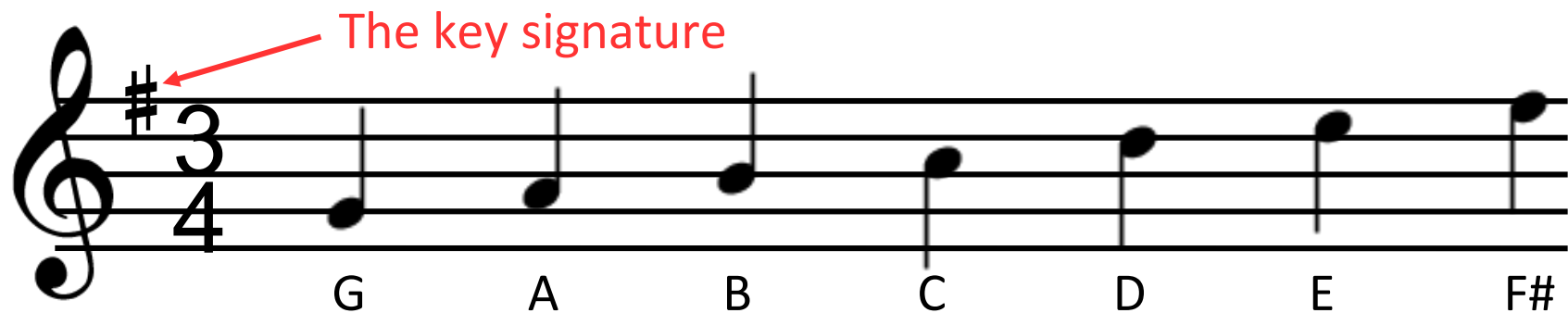
The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a time signature of 3/4. The notes G, A, B, C, D, E, and F# are written on the staff. Red arrows point from the labels 'Treble clef', 'Key signature', and 'Time signature' to their respective symbols on the staff.

Key signatures: Keeping the stave tidy

When reading from the stave, brain, fingers and eyes have to work rapidly together to read the note to be played and to locate the note on the fretboard.

Therefore the stave must be kept clean, free from clutter, at all times.

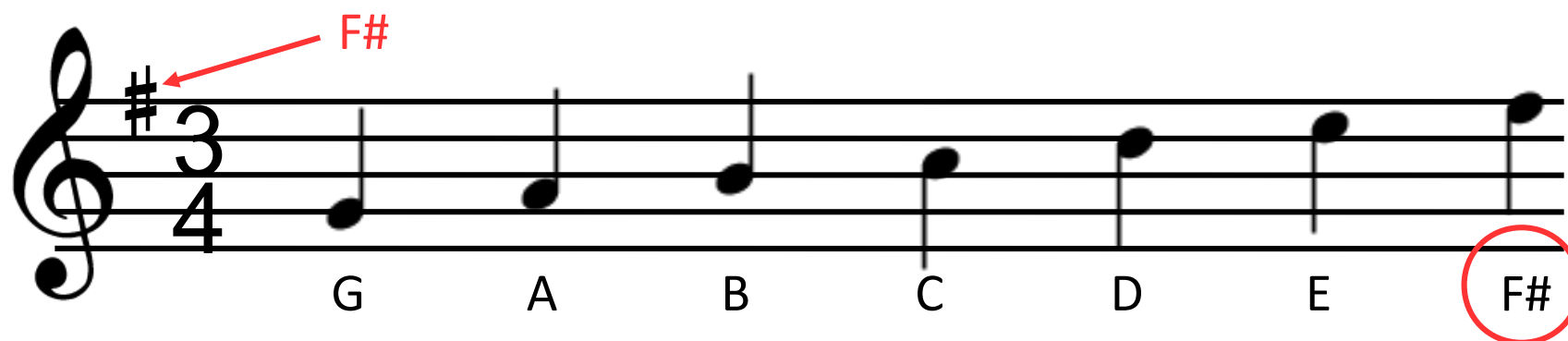
The task of keeping the stave clean falls to the key signature.



Key signatures: What do they do?

If, for example, all the F notes in a piece of music are to be played as F#, without the key signature the staff would soon be covered with # signs. To avoid this messy situation a message is placed at the start of the staff.

In this case, the sharp sign is placed in the position where an F note would normally be found. All, including higher or lower, F notes, unless otherwise stated, are to be played F#.



Key Signatures - The need for Keys

In this example, all the C notes, all the D notes, all the E notes, all the G notes and all the A notes are to be played sharp, making it impossible to read.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The notes are heavily sharped, making the key signature impossible to read. The notes are labeled with red text below them.

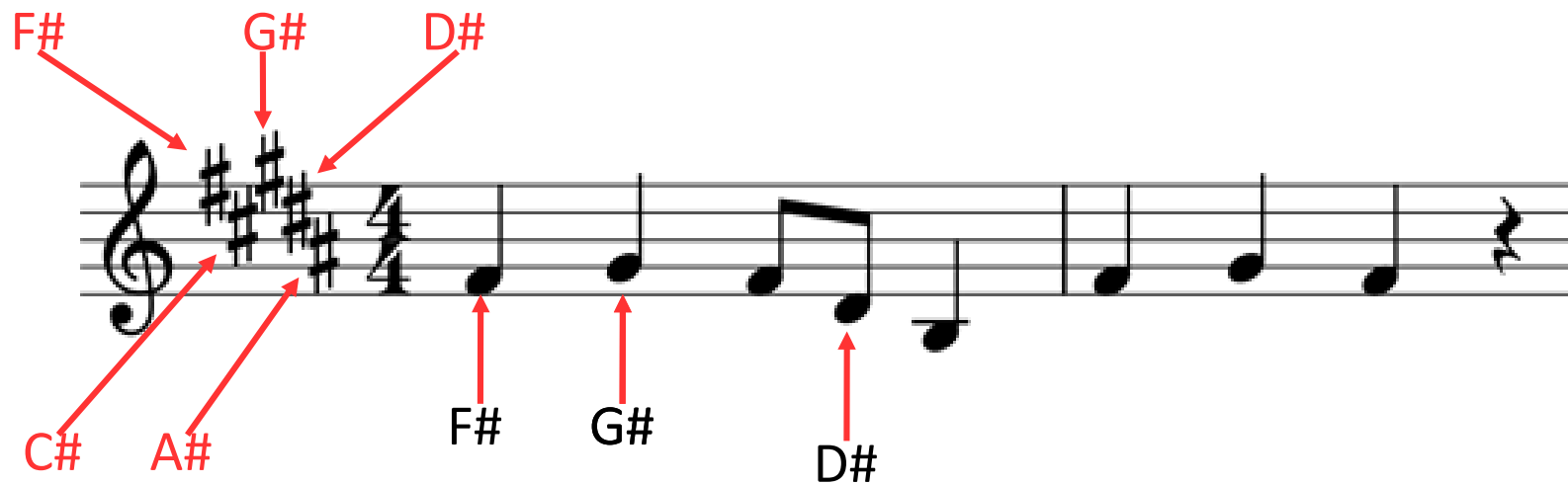
Staff 1 notes (from left to right): F#, G#, E#, D#, B, F#, G#, E#, F#, G#, E#, D#, B, F#, G#, E#, G#, F#

Staff 2 notes (from left to right): F#, G#, E#, D#, B, F#, G#, E#, F#, E, D#, C#, B, D#, E, F#, A#, B

Magic!!

The tools of the staff are here to help you play and read music fast.

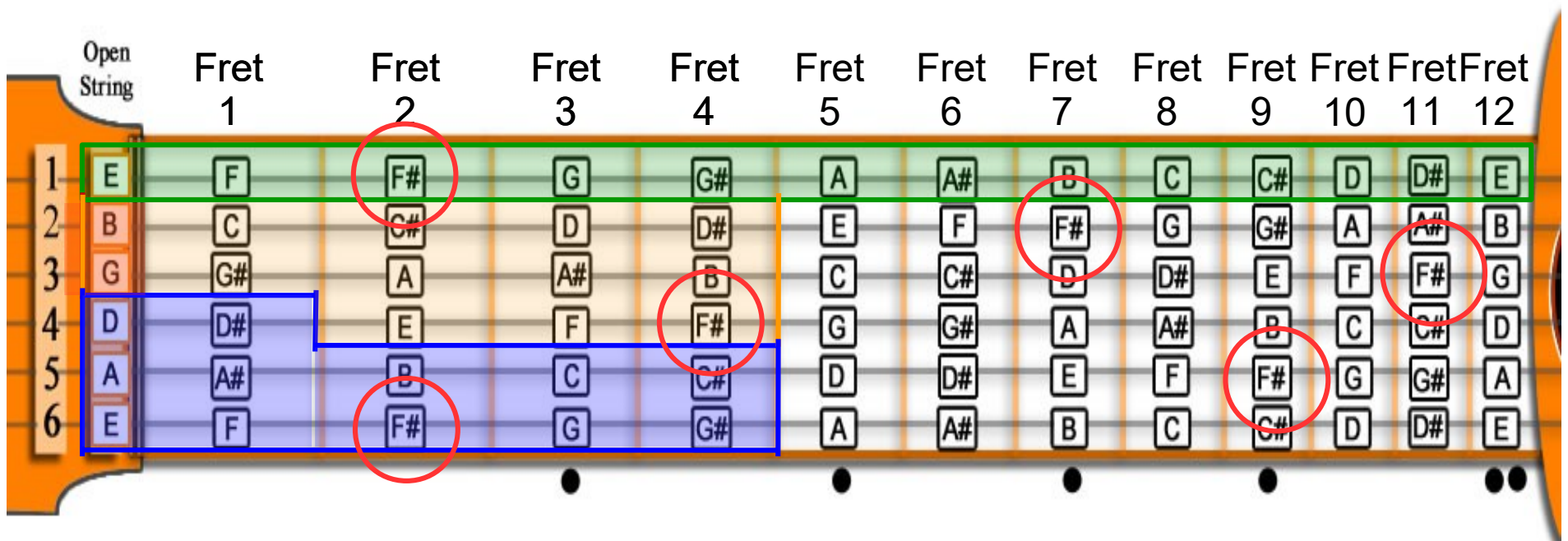
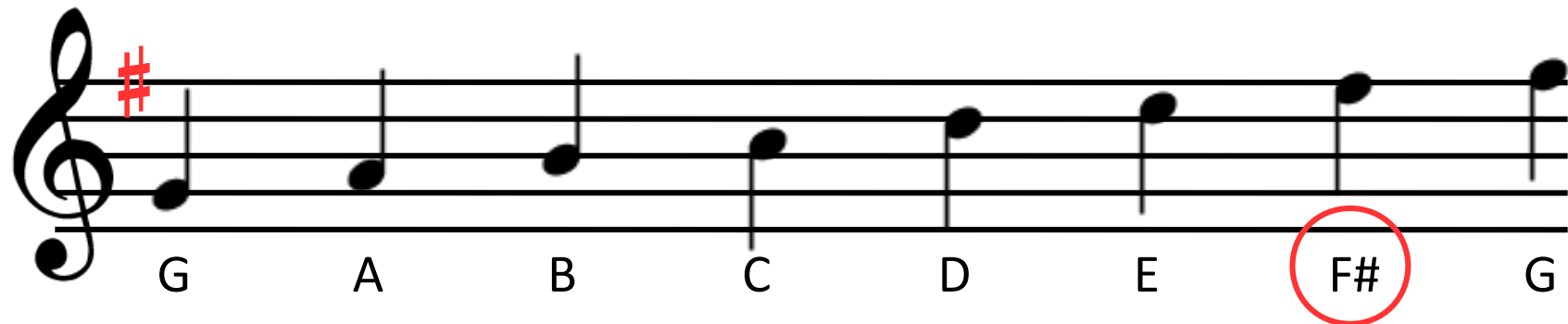
We have to get rid of all those sharp signs from the staff to make the music easier to read.



The key signature indicates, in this case, all F,C,D,G and A notes are to be played sharp wherever they appear on the staff or the ledger lines.

Moving the sharp

The # sign has moved to the beginning of the staff.
All the F notes are to be played F# anywhere on the fretboard not just the high F# in the example.



Accidentals # b ♮

An accidental is used when the composer wants to change the notes in the key signature just for a beat or two. An accidental stays until told to leave.

Key: 2 sharp D (F# - C#) - These two sharp notes are intended to be 'switched on' for the entire song.

The diagram illustrates a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). A bar line is placed after the second measure. The notes in the first measure are F# and G. The notes in the second measure are F and G. The notes in the third measure are F# and G. The notes in the fourth measure are F# and G. The notes in the fifth measure are C# and G. The notes in the sixth measure are C# and G. Red arrows point from the text 'At the bar line everything returns to the original key' to the bar line. Another red arrow points from the text 'Key: 2 sharp D (F# - C#) - These two sharp notes are intended to be 'switched on' for the entire song.' to the two sharps in the key signature. Below the staff, the notes are labeled: F# (first measure), F (second measure), F# (third measure), F# (fourth measure), and C# (fifth measure). The text 'Becomes A natural F' is under the F in the second measure, and 'is still turned off' is under the F# in the third measure.

At the bar line everything returns to the original key

F# F# C#

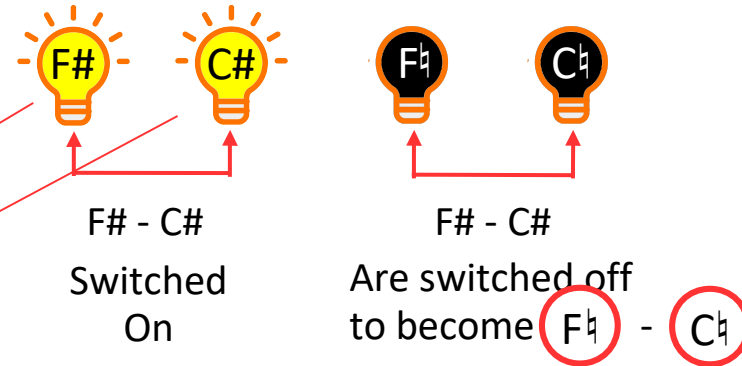
F# F# C#

Becomes A natural F is still turned off

Accidentals: Switch them on and off

Accidentals are added to the staff without changing the key signature.
In the example below the key is **2 sharp D**.
Every **F** and every **C** note is expected to be played sharp.

Now, imagine two light switches.



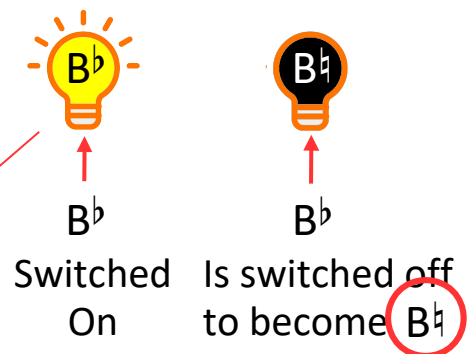
Bar line

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The staff contains seven notes: F#, F \flat , F#, F#, C \flat , C#, and C#. Above each note is a light bulb icon. The first F# note has a lit bulb. The F \flat note has an unlit bulb circled in red. The second F# note has an unlit bulb. A bar line is positioned between the second and third notes. The F# note after the bar line has a lit bulb. The C \flat note has an unlit bulb circled in red. The C# note has an unlit bulb. The final C# note has a lit bulb. Below the staff, the following text is written: 'F# Turned off', 'F# Still off', 'F# Back on', 'C# Turned off', 'C# Still off', 'C# Back on'.

Accidentals: Switch them on and off

In the example below the key is **1 flat F**.

Every **B** note is expected to be played flat.



Bar line

B \flat Turned off

B \flat Back on

B \flat Turned off

B \flat Back on

Accidentals in Action: Kansas City Blues

The image shows a musical score for 'Kansas City Blues' in 4/4 time, key of D major. The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains measures 1-4. The second system, starting at measure 5, contains measures 5-8. The third system, starting at measure 9, contains measures 9-12. In the third system, two accidentals are highlighted with red circles and arrows: a sharp sign (#) above the G note in measure 10, and a flat sign (b) above the G note in measure 11. The rest of the score is in standard notation.

Almost there...

We are almost at the end of the music reading section.

You are not expected to remember all this, just to know it's there.

Work with your music teacher and keep referring back to each section of Stave Breakthrough whenever you need.

On the next page there is a diagram of a fretboard and the piece of music from page 41.

See how much you know and, if possible, play.

Everything in one place. (Almost everything)

It's amazing how much information can be packed into a piece of music.

The image displays a musical score on two staves with various annotations in red. The first staff contains the following elements:

- Key signature:** Three sharps (F#, C#, G#).
- Time signature:** 3/4.
- 1st ending:** A bracketed section of music labeled '1.' with a repeat sign at the end.
- 2nd ending:** A bracketed section of music labeled '2.'.
- Coda 1:** A circled cross symbol.
- Coda 2:** A circled cross symbol.
- Tied notes:** A note in the first staff is tied to a note in the second staff.
- Pull off:** A note in the first staff is marked with a pull-off symbol.
- Repeat sign:** A double bar line with two dots.

The second staff contains:

- To the start:** A red arrow pointing from the Coda 2 symbol back to the beginning of the first staff.
- Until the coda:** A red arrow pointing from the Coda 2 symbol to the end of the first staff.
- D.C. al Coda:** A red arrow pointing from the Coda 2 symbol to the beginning of the second staff.

How much do you understand?

1.

2.

D.C. al Coda

	Open String	Fret 1	Fret 2	Fret 3	Fret 4	Fret 5	Fret 6	Fret 7	Fret 8	Fret 9	Fret 10	Fret 11	Fret 12
1	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E
2	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B
3	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G
4	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D
5	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
6	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E

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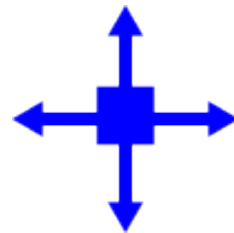
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The Music Readers ToolboxTM

Summary

The stave is a wonderful collection of tools created with the intention of helping musicians find sounds and locate them on their chosen instrument or within their voice.

The stave is challenging but it doesn't say, 'I dare you to play me.'

The stave offers those willing to take their time to learn the information written on the lines and spaces the fastest way to express yourself through music.

Reading music lets you play, listen to and learn from the melodies coming from your guitar. It guarantees nimble accurate fingers and a pathway to creativity.

It's a great way to learn how to improvise.

The Stave - A path to improvisation

A story from a long time ago.

During the time when I was learning to play the guitar, I found reading music a great way to remember the notes on the fretboard.

Using scales to master the fretboard didn't work. Scales taught me patterns. I could play scales at speed but they offered little in the way of finding the notes on the fretboard.

Through my constant use of the stave I began to remember various key signatures and where the notes were. When I started to play with other musicians the knowledge gave me the confidence to move forward.

One day, when I was playing live on stage one of the band shouted out, 'Play a guitar solo, Len.'

My first guitar solo

At that time I hadn't played an improvised guitar solo, ever.

Several hundred people turned to look at me. The song was in the key of F. I tried to control the panic building up inside my head. I thought of a melody I had read from a new songbook. It was in the key of F, so I used that for the basis of my guitar solo.

I changed the rhythm of the tune to fit the rhythm of the song. Everybody in the hall cheered and shouted my name.

This happened several times during the concert. I realised that a melody written on the stave is a muddled up scale, so is a guitar solo.

They are the same thing.

Learn the stave, it's where your future as a guitar player is.