Music Theory Basics

A. Staff, Clefs, and Notes

1. Staff: playing field
   - Five horizontal lines, equally spaced, with four spaces in-between
   - Vertical dimension: pitch – how high or how low the note sounds
   - Horizontal dimension: time – how long each note lasts, how many notes in a measure, etc.

2. Clefs: tell us what pitches go where
   - Treble Clef/G-Clef: Identifies the note G
     - Wraps around the G note (second line from bottom)
   - Bass Clef/F-Clef: Identifies the note F
     - Two dots sit on either side of the F note (fourth line)
   - Grand Staff
   - Other clefs (Alto, Tenor, etc.)

3. Note Names: Every line and space has a letter name
   - Identified by the first seven letters of the alphabet
     - A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A…
   - Denotes the pitch
   - Mnemonics

4. Key Signature
   - Indicates the key
   - Shown in sharps or flats (or none)

5. Time Signature
   - Indicates how many beats in one measure
   - Indicates what type of note gets one beat
   - Measure bars – vertical lines that separate each measure

6. Ledger Lines
   - Placed above or below the staff to extend the staff
   - Just long enough for one note
   - Need enough to continue the lines to your note
   - Special Leger Line: Middle C

7. Accidentals -- change the note for the duration of that measure
   - = sharp: raises the note a half-step
   - = flat: lowers the note a half-step
   - = natural: negates either a previous accidental or a sharp or flat in the key
   - x = double sharp
   - = double flat
8. Keyboard:

B. Time, Beat, Rhythm, Meter

1. Time Signature
   a. Provides the time structure
   b. Top number: how many beats in the measure
   c. Bottom number: what type of note gets one beat

2. Beat or Pulse:
   a. Equal division of time, like the ticking of a clock
      i. Like tapping your toe to the music
      ii. Metronome
   b. Can range from slow to fast
   c. Provides the foundation around which the rhythm is built

3. Note and Rest Values:

   a. Flags & beams
   b. Dotted values: a dot adds half the value
4. Measure or Bar
   a. Divides up the music based on time signature
   b. Suggests common stresses
      i. 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8

5. Rhythm: the arrangement of note durations
   a. Common rhythmic patterns

6. Other components of time
   a. Slurs – indicate a smooth connection between two or more different notes
   b. Ties – indicate combining two or more notes of the same pitch across bar lines

7. Meter
   a. Simple – can be subdivided into 2 or 4
   b. Compound – can be subdivided into 3

Scales, Chords and Key Signatures

A. Scales
   1. Combination of whole and half steps from a pitch to the same pitch an octave above
   2. Major – whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half
   3. Minor
      a. Natural – whole, whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole
      b. Melodic Ascending – whole, half, whole, whole, whole, whole, half
      c. Melodic Descending – like Natural Minor
      d. Harmonic – whole, half, whole, whole, half, augmented 2\textsuperscript{nd}, half
   4. Chromatic – all half steps
   5. Whole Tone – all whole steps
   6. Pentatonic – five-note scale
   7. Flat keys

B. Chords
   1. Typically the 1, 3, 5 of the scale
      a. Major
      b. Minor
      c. Augmented & Diminished
      d. Seventh Chords
   2. Inversions – the chord is built on a note other than the tonic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Position</th>
<th>Built on the Root or Tonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Position</td>
<td>Built on the Third of the chord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Position</td>
<td>Built on the Fifth of the chord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Position</td>
<td>Built on the Seventh (if any) of the chord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Key Signatures

1. Collection of sharps or flats that indicate the key of a piece of music
2. Used at the beginning of a piece so we don’t have to put a sharp or flat symbol in front of every note that would need to be sharp or flat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Signature</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C Major</td>
<td>No flats or sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>Two sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Major</td>
<td>Four sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Major</td>
<td>One flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Major</td>
<td>One sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Major</td>
<td>Three sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Major</td>
<td>Five sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Flat Major</td>
<td>Two flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Flat Major</td>
<td>Three flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Flat Major</td>
<td>Four flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Sharp Major</td>
<td>Six sharps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Flat Major</td>
<td>Six flats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Key Signature Tricks for Major keys
   a. No key signature = Key of C Major
   b. Sharps: To find the key, go up a half step from the last sharp in the key signature
   c. Flat keys: Look at the second to last flat – that is the key
      i. Key of F has one flat

4. Major or minor – How do I know?
   a. Relative Major and minor keys have the same key signature
   b. Look at the Key Signature
   c. Look at the starting and ending chords
      i. If the starting/ending chord matches the Major key, it’s probably Major
      ii. If the starting/ending chord matches the minor key, it’s probably minor
   d. The “relative” minor is a minor third below its relative major key
Tempo, Dynamics, Articulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grave</td>
<td>Very, very slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largo</td>
<td>Very slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lento</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Walking speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderato</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegretto</td>
<td>Somewhat quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivace</td>
<td>Lively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presto</td>
<td>Very fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritardando</td>
<td>Slow down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerando</td>
<td>Speed up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dynamics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>piano</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pianissimo</td>
<td>pp</td>
<td>very soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mezzo piano</td>
<td>mp</td>
<td>slightly soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forte</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortissimo</td>
<td>ff</td>
<td>very loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mezzo forte</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>slightly loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortepiano</td>
<td>fp</td>
<td>loud then soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sforzando</td>
<td>sfz</td>
<td>sudden accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crescendo</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
<td>gradually louder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diminuendo</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>gradually softer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Intervals — Distance between two pitches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval name</th>
<th>What it looks like in key of C</th>
<th>Tips &amp; Tricks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unison</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Unison" /></td>
<td>Twinkle (Twinkle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Half step                              | ![Half step](image)            | I Left My Heart in San Francisco
Jaws
O Little Town of Bethlehem            |
| Whole step                             | ![Whole step](image)           | Happy Birthday
Yesterday                                           |
| Minor Third                            | ![Minor Third](image)          | To Dream the Impossible Dream
Greensleeves (What Child Is This?)
Frosty the Snowman                       |
| Major Third                            | ![Major Third](image)          | Kumbaya
Oh When the Saints Go Marching In
Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony              |
| Perfect Fourth                         | ![Perfect Fourth](image)       | Here comes the Bride
O Come All Ye Faithful                           |
| Augmented Fourth, Diminished Fifth, Tritone | ![Augmented Fourth](image) | Maria (West Side Story)                                                    |
| Perfect Fifth                          | ![Perfect Fifth](image)        | Twinkle, Twinkle
Flintstones Theme                                      |
| Minor Sixth                            | ![Minor Sixth](image)          | The Entertainer                                                           |
| Major Sixth                            | ![Major Sixth](image)          | My Bonnie Lies Over...
Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen |
| Minor 7th                              | ![Minor 7th](image)            | There’s a Place for Us (Somewhere)                                    |
| Major 7th                              | ![Major 7th](image)            | Take On Me                                                                |
| Octave                                 | ![Octave](image)               | Somewhere Over the Rainbow
No Business Like Show Business             |
Examples for Interval and Key Signature Practice

1. Lord, have

2. O un-dis

3. mf Al - le - lu

4. Allegro

5. Lord, have

   (Fa-ther,bless.

7. Lord, now


9. Re - joice.

10. Lord, now
Sight Reading Tips

1. Look over the music first
2. What is the clef?
3. What is the key?
   a. Look at key signature
   b. Look at the starting & ending notes
4. Sing the tonic triad to establish the key in your ear
5. What is the time signature?
6. What is the first note? Is it the tonic, third, fifth, or something else?
7. Look over the structure
   a. Are there repeated passages?
   b. Does the key stay the same, or does it change?
   c. Are there accidentals?
   d. Does the time signature stay the same, or does it change?
8. Sing the starting pitch
9. Establish a beat – start out slowly
10. Sing it on Loo, Loo, Loo
11. Say the words in rhythm without notes
12. Put it all together!

Music Theory Online Resources

1. www.musictheory.net
   a. Free Online lessons & exercises
   b. Apps for iPhone, iPad, IPod Touch - $2.99

2. www.Teoria.com
   a. Free, more advanced content than musictheory.net

3. Apps for Phone or Tablet
   a. Piano apps
   b. Pitching apps
   c. Tuning apps
   d. Metronome apps