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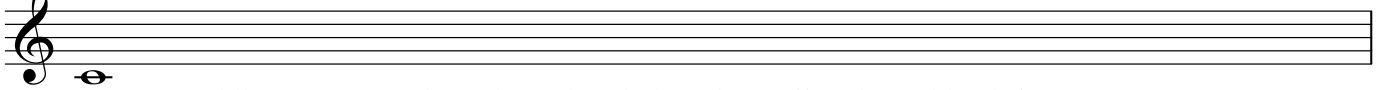
Basic Rudiments of Music Theory: PITCH

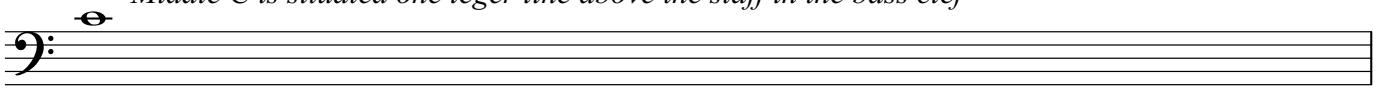
This is a **TREBLE** or **G CLEF** - generally it is used to notate notes written ABOVE Middle C.
It is used for PITCH indication, and does not necessarily mean the right hand!



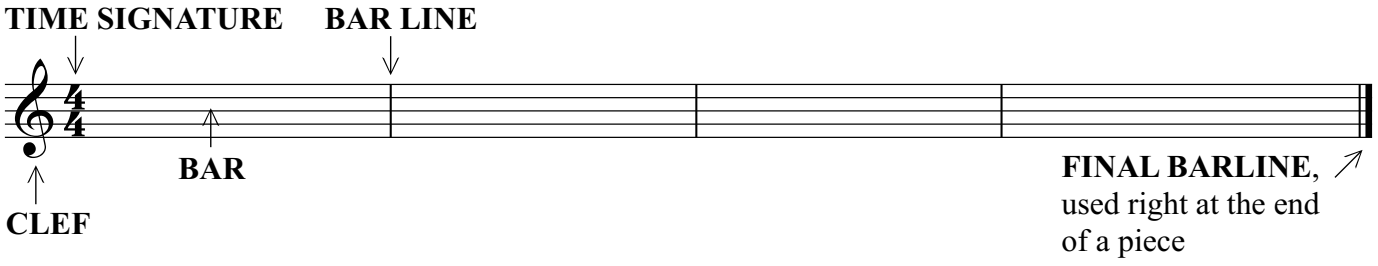
Middle C is situated one leger line below the staff in the treble clef

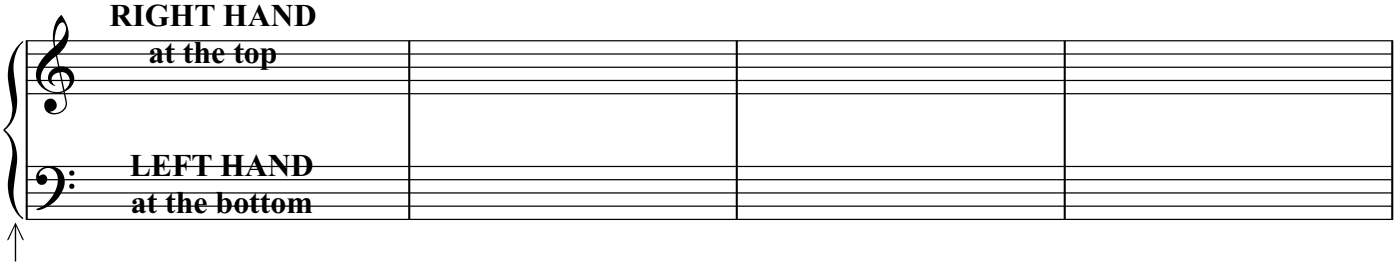
This is a **BASS** or **F CLEF** - generally it is used to notate notes written BELOW Middle C.
It is also used for PITCH indication, and does not necessarily mean the left hand!

Middle C is situated one leger line above the staff in the bass clef



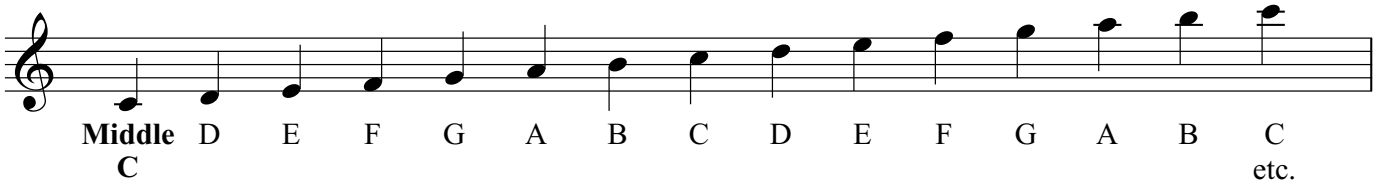
The notes are written on a **STAVE** or STAFF (the 5 lines), which are divided into **BARS**, seperated by **BARLINES**. The length of each bar is determined by the **TIME SIGNATURE**.



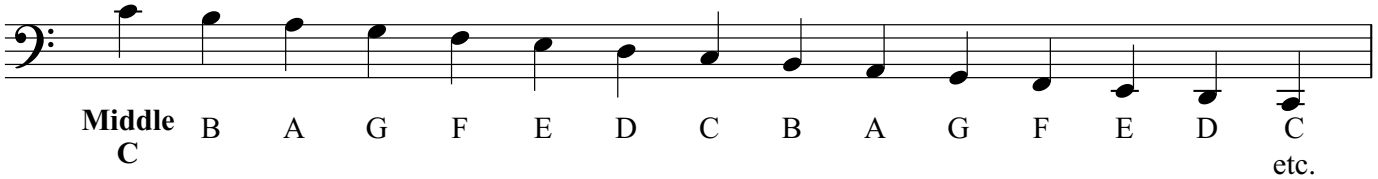


Piano music usually uses two staves (although more can be used), which are bracketed together (and are played at the same time). We read the music from left to right.

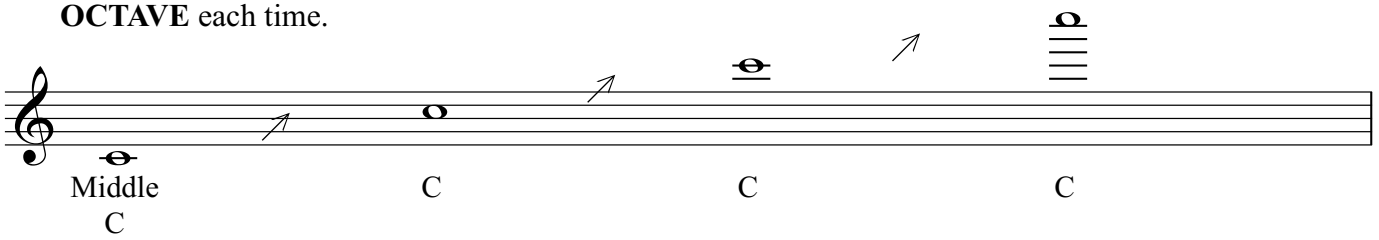
Keyboardists usually take their bearings from **Middle C**. The musical 'alphabet' - *all white notes* - starts on a 'C' and goes upwards: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and after that, the whole sequence repeats over and over...



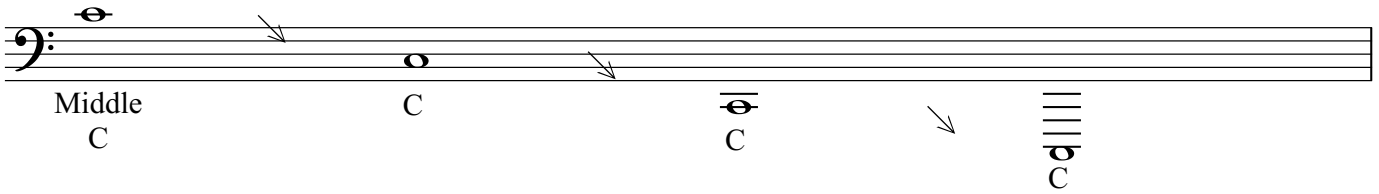
And in the Bass Clef, working backwards...



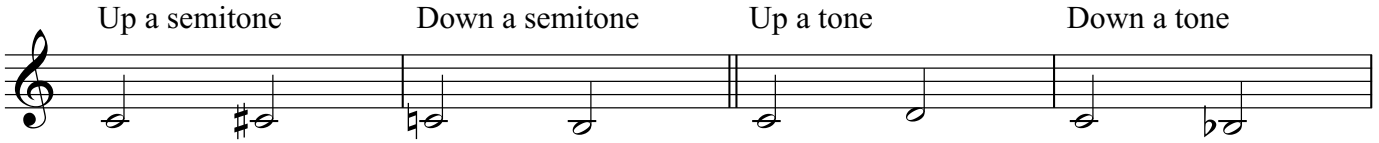
2 In the Treble Clef, the following notes are all 'C' notes, but we say that we've gone UP an **OCTAVE** each time.



And, in the Bass Clef, all the following notes are also C's, but we say that we've gone DOWN an **OCTAVE** each time.

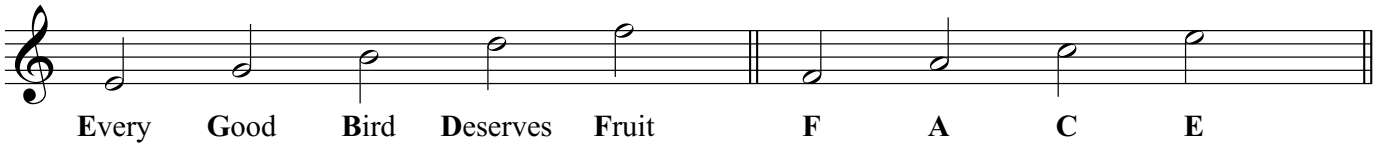


In each musical OCTAVE, there are **12 CHROMATIC NOTES**, or 12 small steps, called **SEMITONES**. The white notes are NOT more important than the black notes - all are EQUALLY important, but we use more of one or the other, depending on the musical **KEY**. It's important to remember that if we go up or down a **SEMITONE**, we are simply moving up or down one small, tiny step.
A **TONE** is equal to two semitones, so if we go up or down a TONE, we are going up or down TWO semitones!!!!!

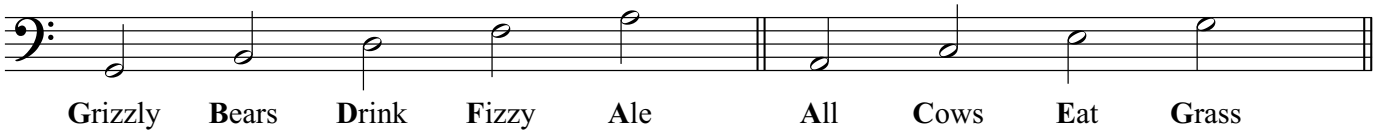


Now, as each musical staff consists of 5 lines, we can write notes on either a line or in a space. As each line or space can only indicate ONE actual note or pitch, we use **LEGER LINES** to indicate notes above or below the staff. This is a way of *extending* the staff - if we had more than 5 lines in each staff, it would be very confusing to read!

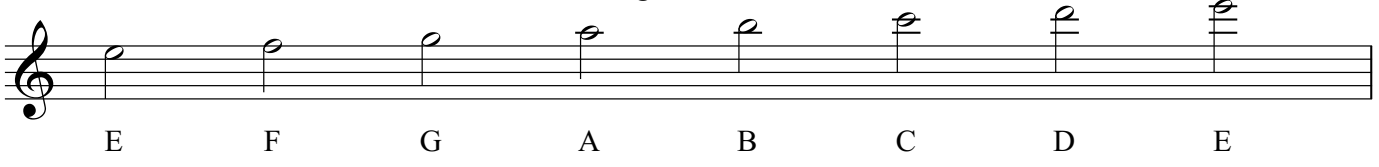
There are some simple rhymes that you can use to remember the note names of the lines and spaces in both the treble and bass clefs:



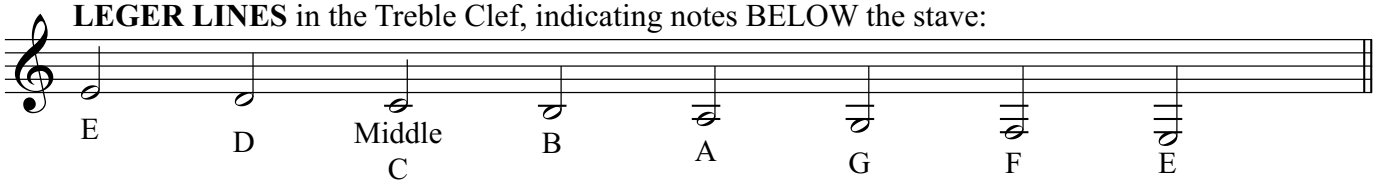
(for the lines) *(for the spaces)*



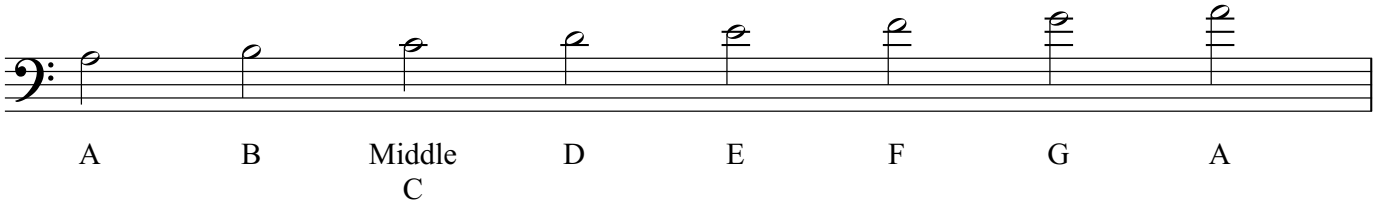
LEGER LINES in the Treble Clef, indicating notes ABOVE the stave:



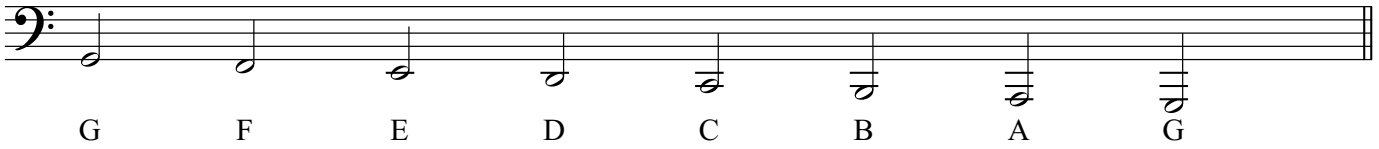
LEGER LINES in the Treble Clef, indicating notes BELOW the stave:



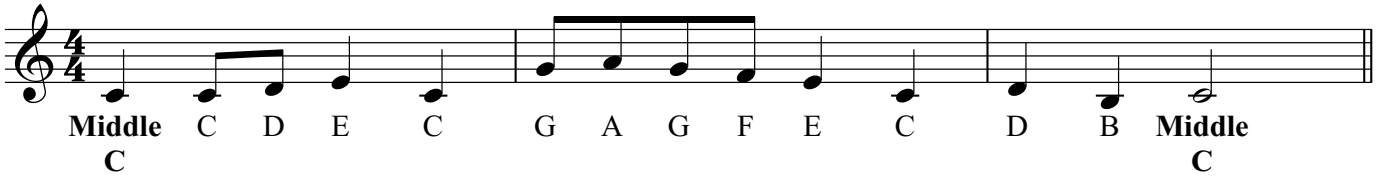
LEGER LINES in the Bass Clef, indicating notes ABOVE the stave:

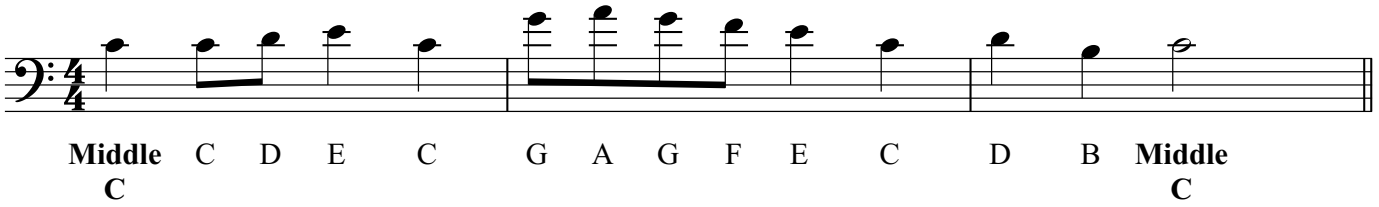


LEGER LINES in the Bass Clef, indicating notes BELOW the stave:

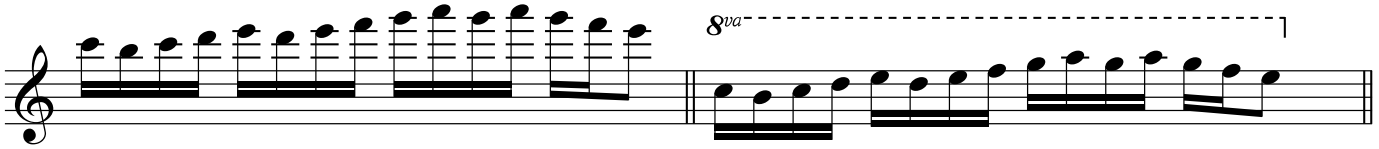


You can see in the examples below that this melody is written twice, at exactly the **SAME** pitch in each clef, but the bass clef obviously needs and uses many more ledger lines!



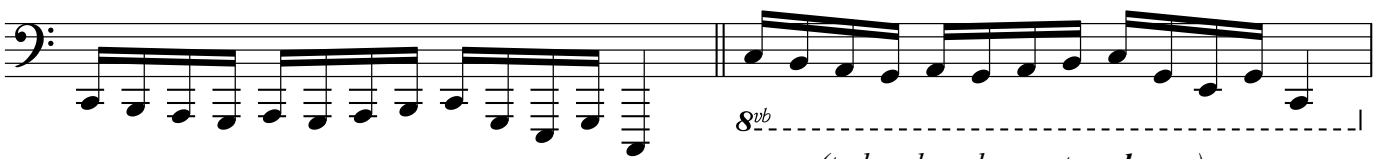


The use of too many leger lines, above or below the stave, can make reading very difficult, so we have a sign that indicates that something is to be played an octave higher, or an octave lower than it is actually written:



This very high passage can also be written as:

*(to be played an octave **higher**)*



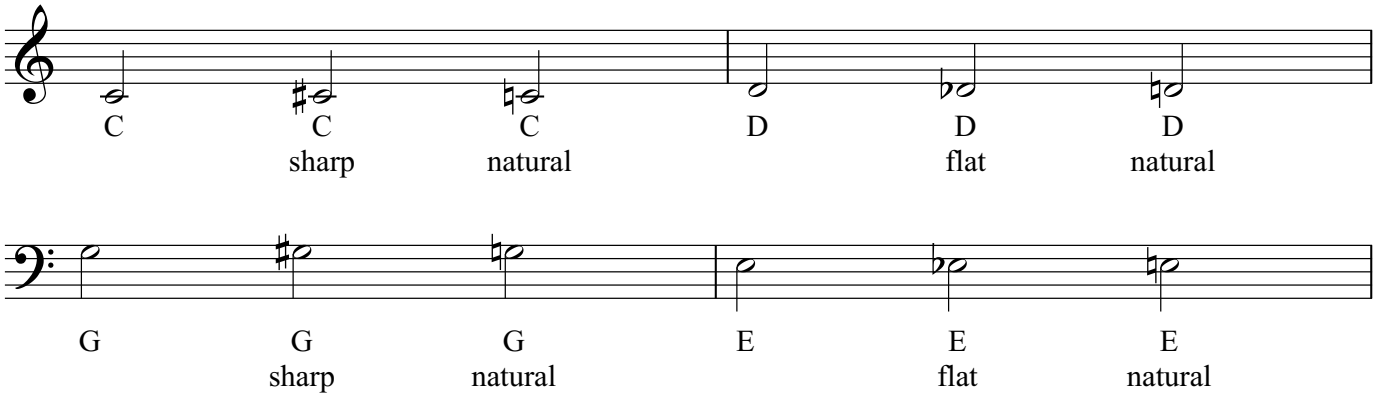
Or this very low passage can also be written as:

*(to be played an octave **lower**)*

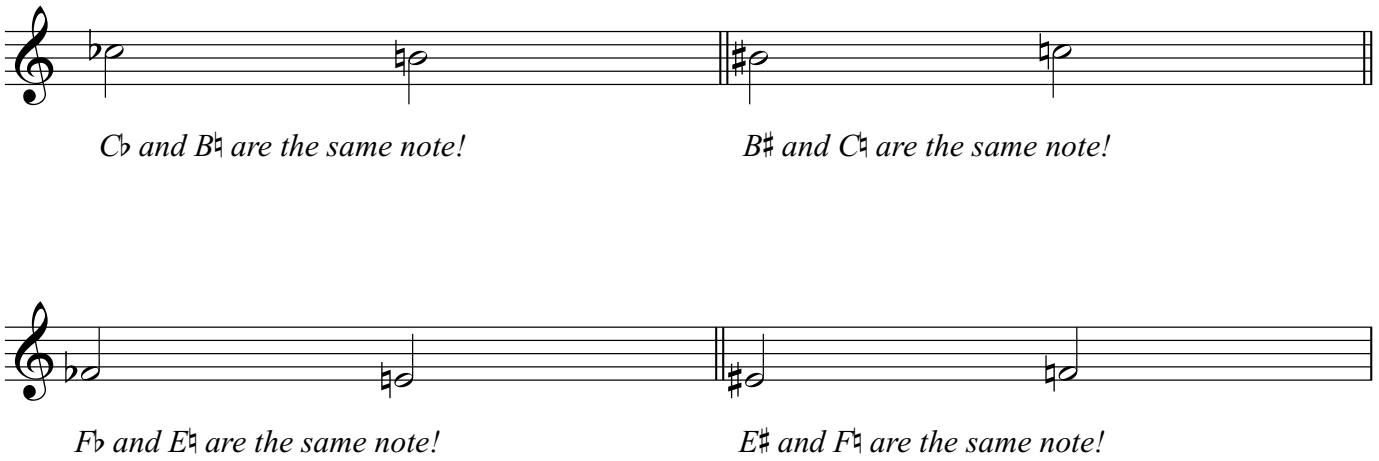
SHARPS, FLATS AND NATURALS

♯ ♭ ♮

The black notes on the piano take their names from the white notes too. If they are to the right (higher in pitch), they are said to be **SHARP**, and are indicated by a ♯. If they are to the left (lower in pitch), they are said to be **FLAT**, and are indicated by a ♭. To return to the original white note after a sharp or flat has been used, we use a **NATURAL** sign, indicated with a ♮. Any accidental (sharp, flat or natural sign) lasts for **ONE BAR ONLY**!



Please remember that a sharp (♯) raises a note by one semitone only, and a flat (♭) lowers a note by one semitone only. This means that, sometimes, a sharp or a flat can actually be a 'white' note! (On the keyboard there are no black notes in between B and C, or in between E and F!)
That means that, in reality, a C♭ is really just a B♮, a B♯ is a C♮, an F♭ is an E♮, and an E♯ is an F♮!



When two notes have the same sound, but have different names, they are called **ENHARMONIC** notes. Therefore, C♯ is the *enharmonic* equivalent of D♭, and vice versa.

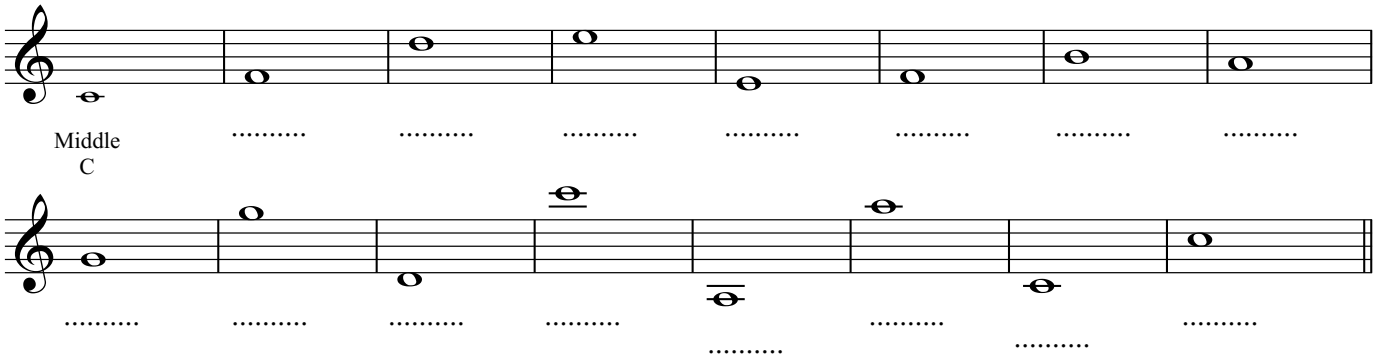
You will occasionally encounter some other **accidentals** in more complicated music:

A **double sharp** 𝄪 raises a note by TWO semitones, and a **double flat** 𝄫 lowers a note by TWO semitones. You are unlikely to encounter these accidentals very often in the beginning!

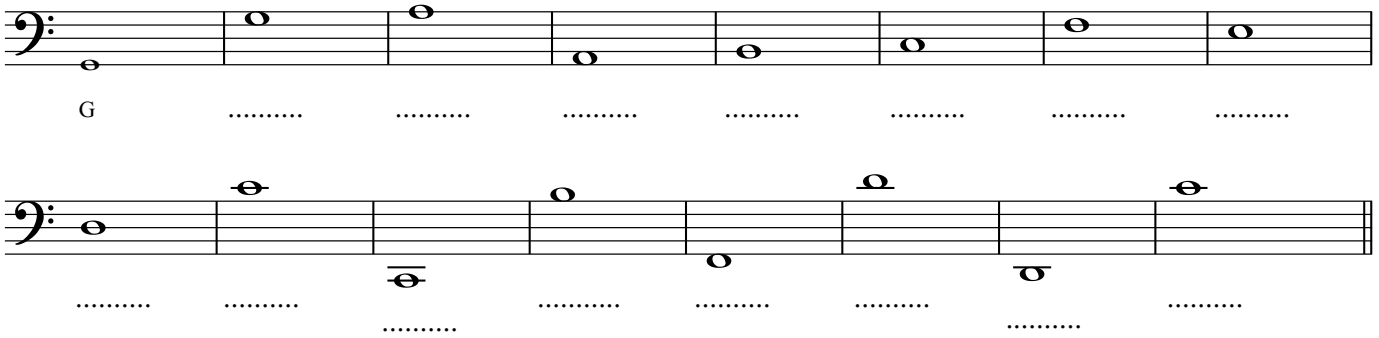
Exercises

1. On some **manuscript paper**, please practise drawing your musical clefs. Give us four lines of treble clefs and four lines of bass clefs...

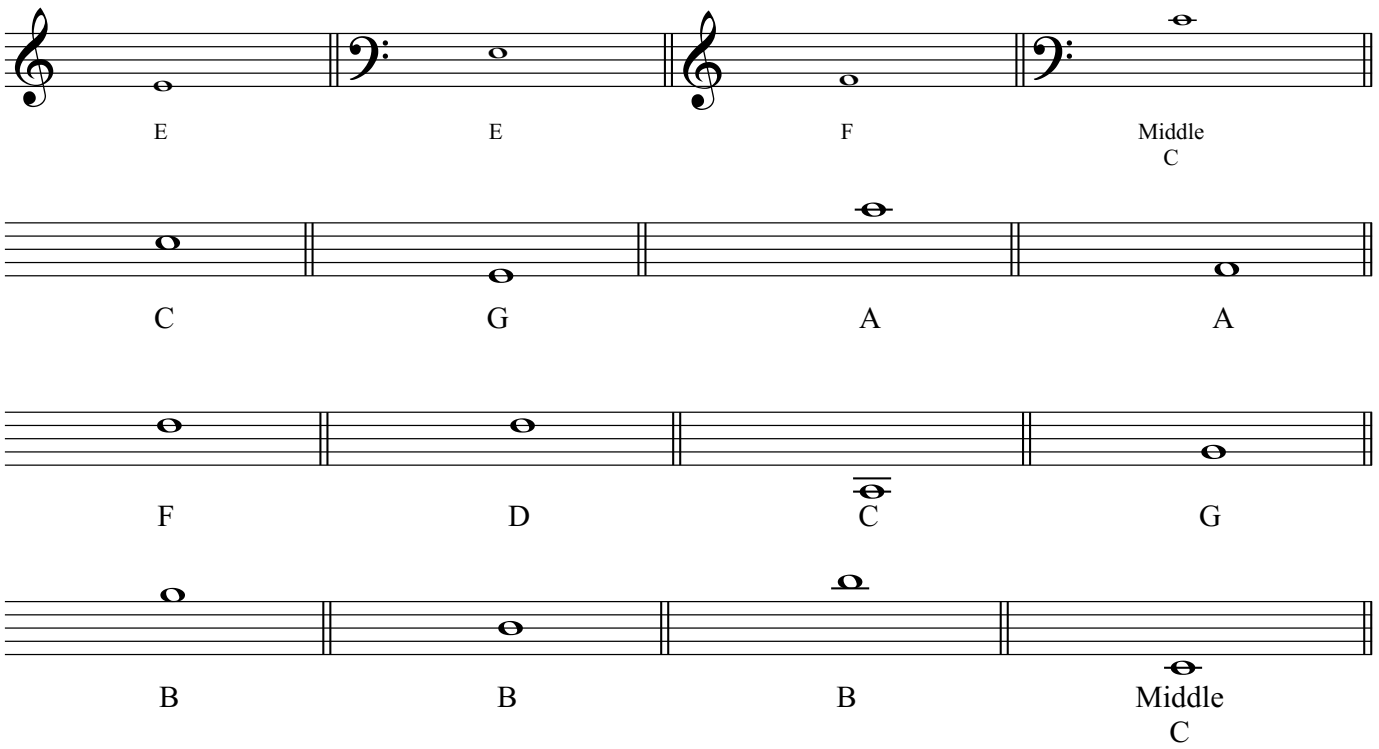
2. Name the following notes in the **treble clef**:



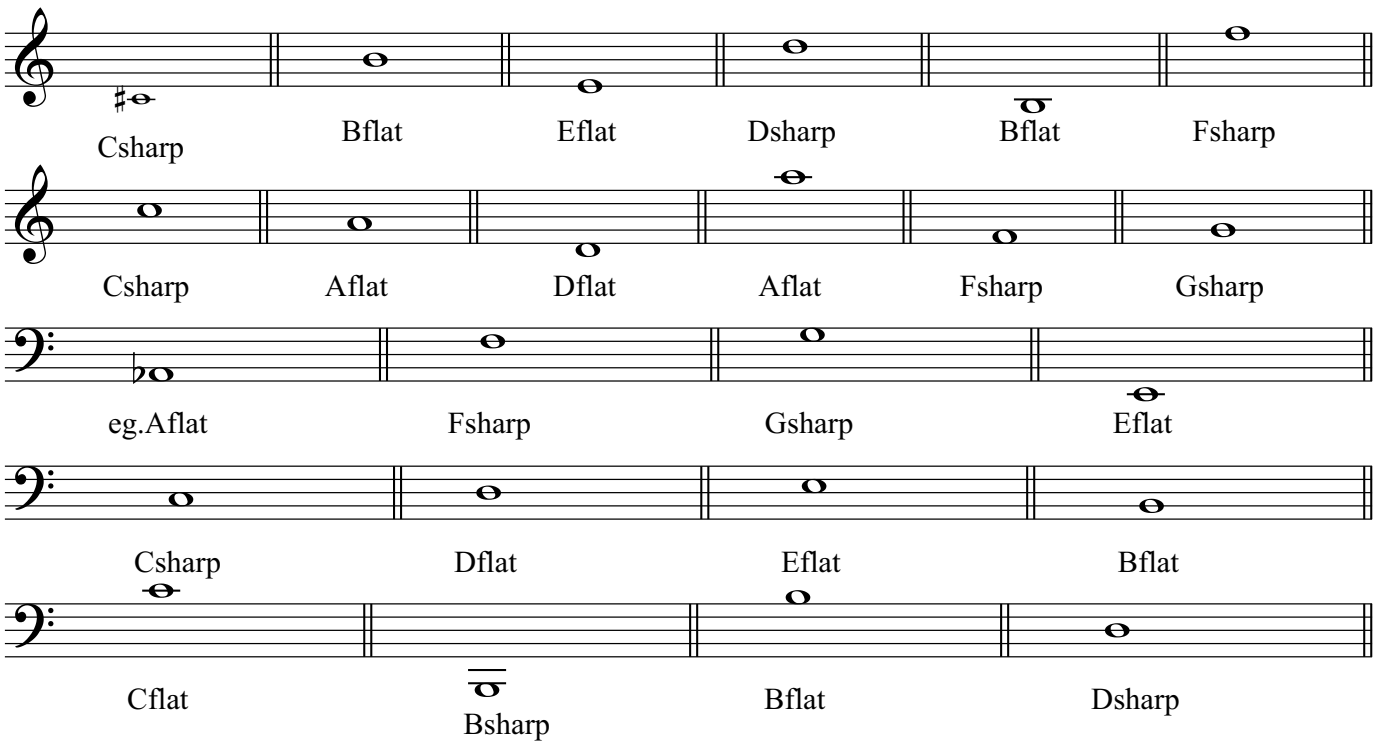
3. Name the following notes in the **bass clef**:



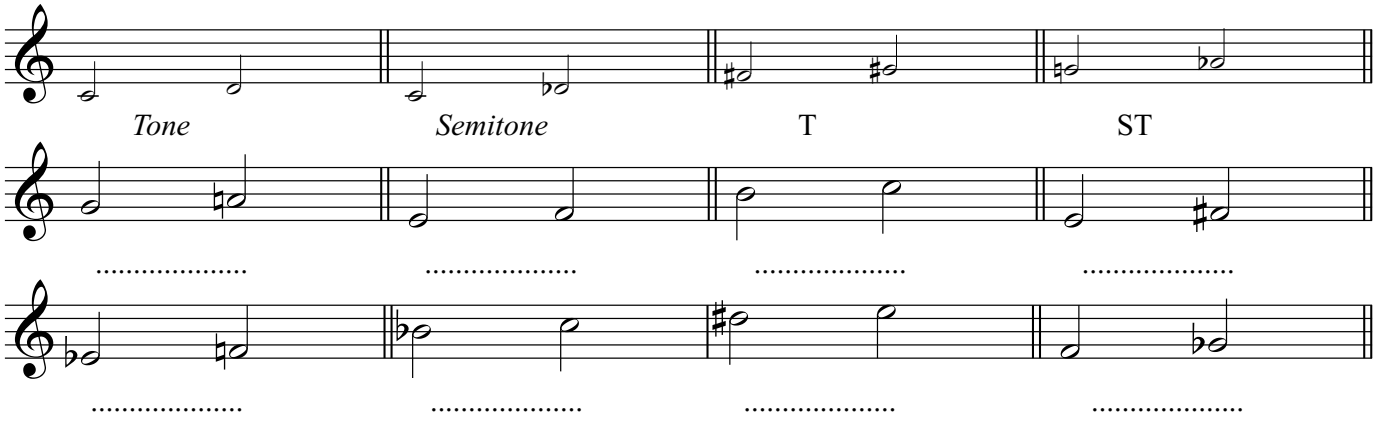
4. Draw the correct clef in front of each note to make the note name correct. The first four have been completed as examples...



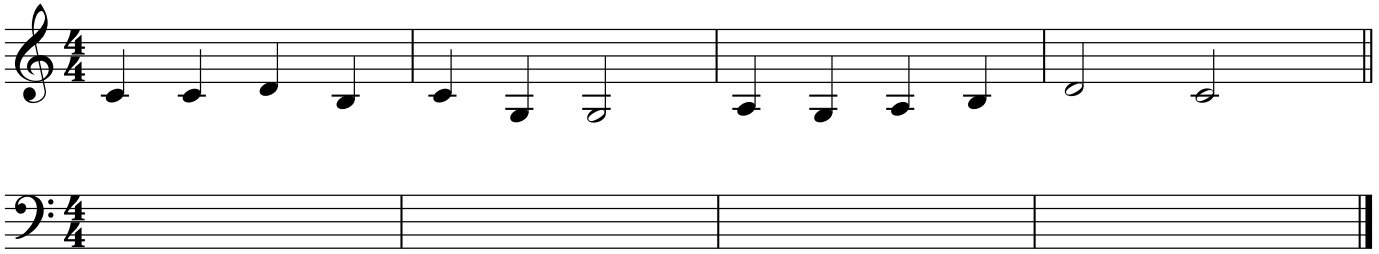
5. Place the correct **accidental** (♯/♭) in front of each note to make the lettername correct:



6. State whether the following notes are a **SEMITONE** or a **TONE** apart:



7. Rewrite the following passage on the staff below, at the exactly the same pitch, using the **bass clef**:



7. Rewrite the following passage on the staff below, at the exactly the same pitch, using the **treble clef**: