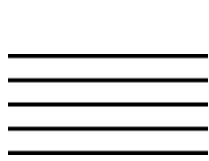


Musical Symbols



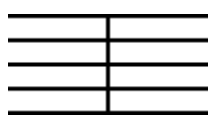
Staff

The staff is the fundamental latticework of music notation, on which symbols are placed. The five staff lines and four intervening spaces correspond to pitches of the [diatonic scale](#); which pitch is meant by a given line or space is defined by the [clef](#). In British usage, the word "stave" is often used.



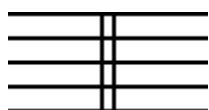
Ledger or leger lines

These extend the staff to pitches that fall above or below it. Such ledger lines are placed behind the note heads, and extend a small distance to each side. Multiple ledger lines can be used when necessary to notate pitches even farther above or below the staff.



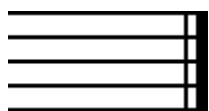
Bar line

These separate measures (see [time signatures](#) below for an explanation of *measures*). Also used for changes in [time signature](#). Bar lines are extended to connect multiple staves in certain types of music, such as keyboard, harp, and conductor scores, but are omitted for other types of music, such as vocal scores.



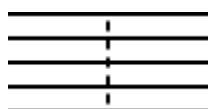
Double bar line, Double barline

These separate two sections of music or are placed before a change in [key signature](#).



Bold double bar line, Bold double barline

These indicate the conclusion of a movement or an entire composition.



Dotted bar line, Dotted barline

Subdivides long measures of complex meter into shorter segments for ease of reading, usually according to natural rhythmic subdivisions.



Bracket

Connects two or more lines of music that sound simultaneously. In general contemporary usage the bracket usually connects the staves of separate instruments (e.g., flute and clarinet; two trumpets; etc.) or multiple vocal parts in a choir or ensemble, whereas the *brace* connects multiple parts for a *single* instrument (e.g., the right-hand and left-hand staves of a piano or harp part).



Brace

Connects two or more lines of music that are played simultaneously in piano, keyboard, harp, or some pitched percussion music.^[1] Depending on the instruments playing, the brace (occasionally called an **accolade** in some old texts) varies in design and style.



G clef (Treble clef)

The centre of the spiral assigns the second line from the bottom to the pitch G above middle C.^[2] The treble clef is the most commonly encountered clef in modern notation, and is used for most modern vocal music. Middle C is the first ledger line below the staff here.

C clef (Alto, and Tenor clefs)

These clefs point to the line representing middle C. As illustrated here, it makes the *center line on the staff* middle C, and is referred to as the "alto clef". This clef is used in modern notation for the [viola](#). While all clefs can be placed anywhere on the staff to indicate various tessitura, the C clef is most often considered a "movable" clef: it is frequently seen pointing instead to the fourth line and called a "tenor clef". This clef is used very often in music written for [bassoon](#), [cello](#), [trombone](#), and [double bass](#); it replaces the bass clef when the number of ledger lines above the bass staff hinders easy reading.



Until the classical era, the C clef was also frequently seen pointing to other lines, mostly in vocal music, but today this has been supplanted by the universal use of the treble and bass clefs. Modern editions of music from such periods generally transpose the original C clef parts to either treble (female voices), octave treble (tenors), or bass clef (tenors and basses). It can be occasionally seen in modern music on the third space (between the third and fourth lines), in which case it has the same function as an octave treble clef. This unusual practice runs the risk of misreading, however, because the traditional function of all clefs is to identify staff lines, not spaces.

F clef (Bass clef)

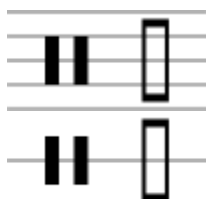
The line between the dots in this clef denotes F below middle C.^[2]

Positioned here, it makes the *second line from the top* of the staff F below middle C, and is called a "bass clef". This clef appears nearly as often as the treble clef, especially in choral music, where it represents the bass and baritone voices. Middle C is the first ledger line above the staff here. In old music, particularly vocal scores, this clef is sometimes encountered centered on the third staff line, in which position it is referred to as a *baritone clef*; this usage has essentially become obsolete.



Neutral clef

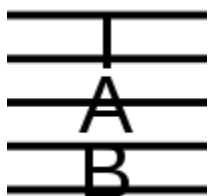
Used for pitchless instruments, such as some of those [used for percussion](#). Each line can represent a specific percussion instrument within a set, such as in a drum set. Two different styles of neutral clefs are pictured here. It may also be drawn with a separate single-line staff for each untuned percussion instrument.



Octave clef

Treble and bass clefs can also be modified by octave numbers. An eight or fifteen above a clef raises the intended pitch range by one or two octaves respectively. Similarly, an eight or fifteen below a clef lowers the pitch range by one or two octaves respectively. A treble clef with an eight below is the most commonly used, typically used for guitar and similar instruments, as well as for tenor parts in choral music.





Tablature

For stringed instruments it is possible to notate [tablature](#) in place of ordinary notes. In this case, a TAB sign is often written instead of a clef. The number of lines of the staff is not necessarily five: one line is used for each string of the instrument (so, for standard 6-stringed guitars, six lines would be used). Numbers on the lines show which fret to play the string on. This TAB sign, like the percussion clef, is not a clef in the true sense, but rather a symbol employed instead of a clef. Similarly, the horizontal lines do not constitute a staff in the usual sense, because the spaces between the lines in a tablature are never used.

Beamed notes

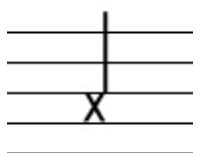


Beams connect eighth notes (quavers) and notes of shorter value and are equivalent in value to flags. In metered music, beams reflect the rhythmic grouping of notes. They may also group short phrases of notes of the same value, regardless of the meter; this is more common in ametrical passages. In older printings of vocal music, beams are often only used when several notes are to be sung on one syllable of the text – [melismatic](#) singing; modern notation encourages the use of beaming in a consistent manner with instrumental engraving, and the presence of beams or flags no longer informs the singer about the lyrics. Today, due to the body of music in which traditional metric states are not always assumed, beaming is at the discretion of composers and arrangers, who often use irregular beams to emphasize a particular rhythmic pattern.

Dotted note

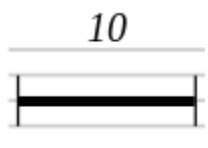


Placing a dot to the right of a note head lengthens the note's duration by one-half. Additional dots lengthen the previous dot instead of the original note, thus a note with one dot is one and one half its original value, a note with two dots is one and three quarters, a note with three dots is one and seven eighths, and so on. Rests can be dotted in the same manner as notes. In other words, n dots lengthen the note's or rest's original duration d to $d \times (2 - 2^{-n})$.



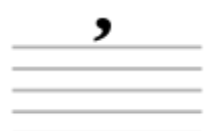
Ghost note

A note with a rhythmic value, but no discernible pitch when played. It is represented by a ([saltire](#)) cross (similar to the letter x) for a note head instead of an oval. Composers will primarily use this notation to represent percussive pitches.



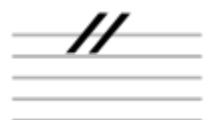
Multi-measure rest

Indicates the number of measures in a resting part without a change in meter to conserve space and to simplify notation. Also called *gathered rest* or *multi-bar rest*.



Breath mark

This symbol tells the performer to take a breath (or make a slight pause for non-wind instruments). This pause usually does not affect the overall tempo. For bowed instruments, it indicates to lift the bow and play the next note with a downward (or upward, if marked) bow.



Caesura

A pause during which time is not counted.



Flat

Lowers the pitch of a note by one [semitone](#).



Sharp

Raises the pitch of a note by one semitone.



Natural

Cancels a previous accidental, or modifies the pitch of a sharp or flat as defined by the prevailing key signature (such as F-sharp in the key of G major, for example).



Double flat

Lowers the pitch of a note by two chromatic semitones. Usually used when the note to modify is already flatted by the key signature.



Double sharp

Raises the pitch of a note by two chromatic semitones. Usually used when the note to modify is already sharpened by the key signature.



Flat key signature

Lowers by a semitone the pitch of notes on the corresponding line or space, and all octaves thereof, thus defining the prevailing major or minor key. Different keys are defined by the number of flats in the key signature, starting with the leftmost, i.e., B ♭, and proceeding to the right; for example, if only the first two flats are used, the key is B ♭ major/G minor, and all B's and E's are "flatted" (US) or "flattened" (UK), i.e., lowered to B ♭ and E ♭. ^[9]



Sharp key signature

Raises by a semitone the pitch of notes on the corresponding line or space, and all octaves thereof, thus defining the prevailing major or minor key. Different keys are defined by the number of sharps in the key signature, also proceeding from left to right; for example, if only the first four sharps are used, the key is E major/C# minor, and the corresponding pitches are raised.

**Demiflat**

Lowers the pitch of a note by one quarter tone. (Another notation for the demiflat is a flat with a diagonal slash through its stem. In systems where pitches are divided into intervals smaller than a quarter tone, the slashed flat represents a lower note than the reversed flat.)

**Flat-and-a-half (sesquiflat)**

Lowers the pitch of a note by three [quarter tones](#). As with a demiflat, a slashed double-flat symbol is also used.

**Demisharp**

Raises the pitch of a note by one quarter tone.

**Sharp-and-a-half (sesquisharp)**

Raises the pitch of a note by three quarter tones. Occasionally represented with two vertical and three diagonal bars instead.