Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

# Reading music notation

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## Clefs and note names

- The **treble clef** is for higher notes. Its lines are E, G, B, D, F and its spaces spell F, A, C, E.
- The **bass clef** is for lower notes. Its lines are G, B, D, F, A and its spaces are A, C, E, G.
- Ledger lines extend the stave for very high or low notes. Middle C sits on a ledger line between the two staves.

## Note and rest values

- **Semibreve**: 4 beats. **Minim**: 2 beats. **Crotchet**: 1 beat. Quaver: half a beat. Semiquaver: a quarter of a beat.
- A dot adds half the note's value: a dotted **minim** lasts 3 beats; a dotted **crotchet** lasts 1½ beats.
- Each note has a matching rest of the same length.

## Keys and accidentals

- Sharps (♯) raise a note by a semitone, flats (♭) lower it, and naturals (♮) cancel them.
- The **key signature** at the start of each stave shows which notes are always sharp or flat. G major has one sharp (F♯); F major has one flat (B♭).
- Accidentals are sharps, flats or naturals written in the music, lasting until the end of the bar.

## Other signs

- Repeat signs, first- and second-time bars, slurs (play smoothly, legato), **staccato** dots (short and detached), and accents.

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## Key terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Treble clef** | A clef for higher notes. |
| **Bass clef** | A clef for lower notes. |
| **Semibreve** | A note worth 4 beats. |
| **Minim** | A note worth 2 beats. |
| **Crotchet** | A note worth 1 beat. |
| **Quaver** | A note worth half a beat. |
| **Key signature** | Sharps or flats at the start of the stave showing the key. |
| **Staccato** | Short, detached notes. |

## Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. How many beats is a minim?
2. How many beats is a dotted minim?
3. How many beats is a crotchet?
4. What are the notes on the lines of the treble clef, from the bottom?
5. What are the notes in the spaces of the treble clef, from the bottom?
6. What does a sharp do?
7. How many sharps are in the key signature of G major?
8. What do staccato dots mean?

### Answers

1. 2
2. 3
3. 1
4. E, G, B, D, F
5. F, A, C, E
6. Raises a note by a semitone
7. One (F sharp)
8. Play the notes short and detached

## What to do next

**Practise 10 questions on this topic**

**Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes**

**Read the lesson, one step at a time**

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