

*Show me thy ways, O Lord;
teach me thy paths.
Psalm 25:4 (KJV)*



Easy Music Theory

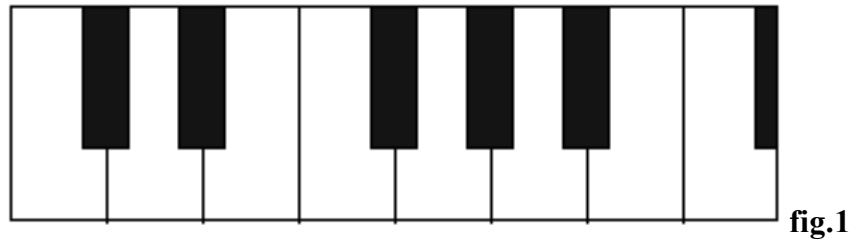
Just in case you picked up this book and know nothing about reading music or how to find the notes on a piano. I am including this section to get you started. This is easy music theory and not exhaustive so if you have a hankering for more you'll have to pick up one of the other good resources out there. This will help you if only want to pick up one resource for the time being and this is the one you've chosen. I will try to make it worth your while.

If you already have a good grasp of reading sheet music or understanding basic music theory move on to chapter three for *Choosing Your Songs*.

Visually Finding Your Way Around the Piano

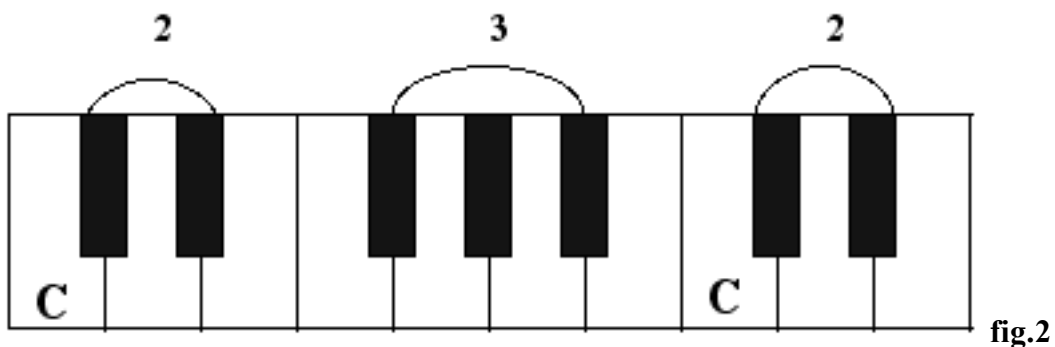
Before even taking a look at sheet music we will start by becoming familiar with the piano itself.

Each piano has a total of 88 keys (electric keyboards can have less). These keys are both black and white and are set in a specific pattern up and down the piano. As you move to the left on the piano the sounds get lower and deeper. As you move to the right the sounds become higher.



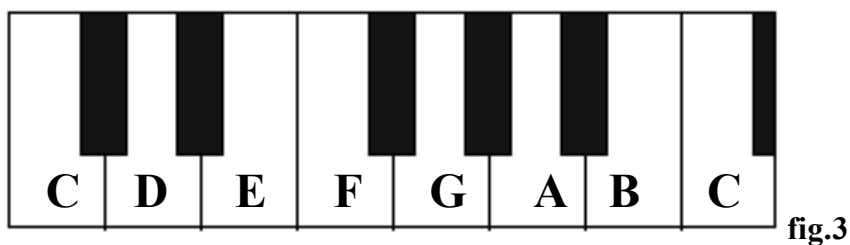
The first part of this specific pattern has two black keys. The key to the left of the first black key in the two black key pattern is the note **C**^{fig.2}. For some reason this is the easiest note to remember and find on the piano.

The black key pattern sets are what enable you to find your way quickly around the piano.



The white piano keys are named for the first 7 letters of the alphabet. Although the alphabet begins with A when thinking musically you will find that your starting point will be the letter C. As you move along your musical path in life this C will become as familiar as the A.

If you look at figure 3, paying attention to the white keys from left to right, starting at C, in order, the keys are **C-D-E-F-G-A-B** ^{fig. 3} and then back again to C.

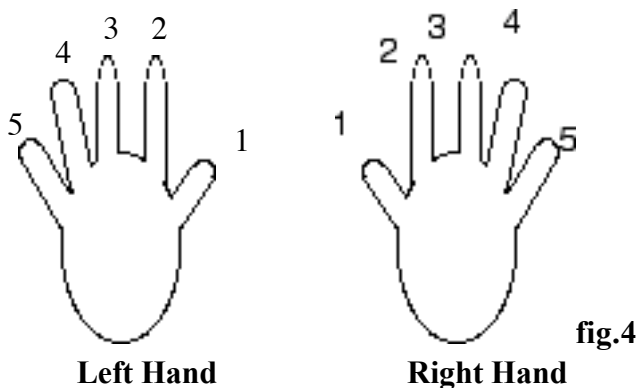


This specific pattern repeats itself all along the piano.

PRACTICE: To help familiarize yourself with the keys play them up and down the keyboard saying the letter names aloud as you play.

The Five Finger Position for C Major

Let's number the fingers of your right and left hands 1 to 5 ^{fig.4} for easy reference.



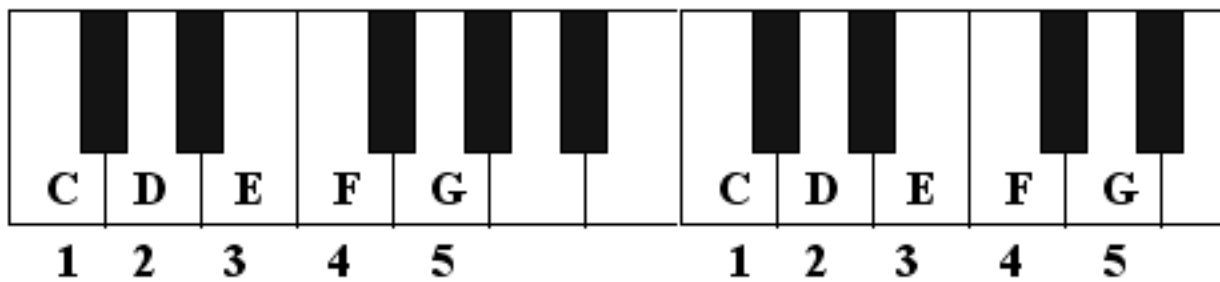




fig.5

PRACTICE: Line up your fingers on the piano keys as shown in figure 5. Play and say the note names as you play each key. Start with your right hand and then your left. Work up to to play both hands at the same time while moving from the C key to the G key.

Rhythms

There are different shapes of notes that will tell you how long to play a note

Whole Note =  = 4 counts, clap four times


Half Note =  = 2 counts, clap twice

Quarter Note =  = 1 count, clap once

PRACTICE: Clap out loud while counting. Next count out loud while clapping the following song.

God is So Good

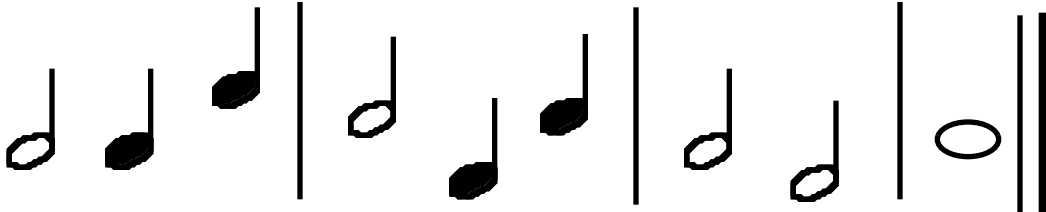
C C E D D D F E

L.H. 

5 5 3 4 4 4 2 3

God is so good, God is so good,

E E G F D F E D C

R.H. 

God is so good, He's so good to me.

fig.6

PRACTICE: Now play the song above. God is So Good^{fig.6}. Using the five finger position for Major C. Place your hands on the keyboard and match the finger numbers to notes. Make sure to count out the rhythm. Also note that the first set is using the Left Hand and the second set uses the Right Hand.

Woo hoo! So now you're comfortable playing a simple melody on the piano. Let's go explore more about music.

Finding Your Way Around the Rest of the Piano

The black keys^{fig 7}, positioned above the white keys are where you play what are known as “sharps” and “flats”. A “sharp” is added to a note if you are moving to the right of a white key. A “flat” is added if you are moving to the left of a white key. For example. The black key to the right of the white key “A” is known as A-sharp or A# and the black key to the left of “E” is known as “Eb” .

You see how the black keys are labeled with two kinds of notes? This is known as **En-harmonic** and it means to have the same sound or tone but different names. More on this later.

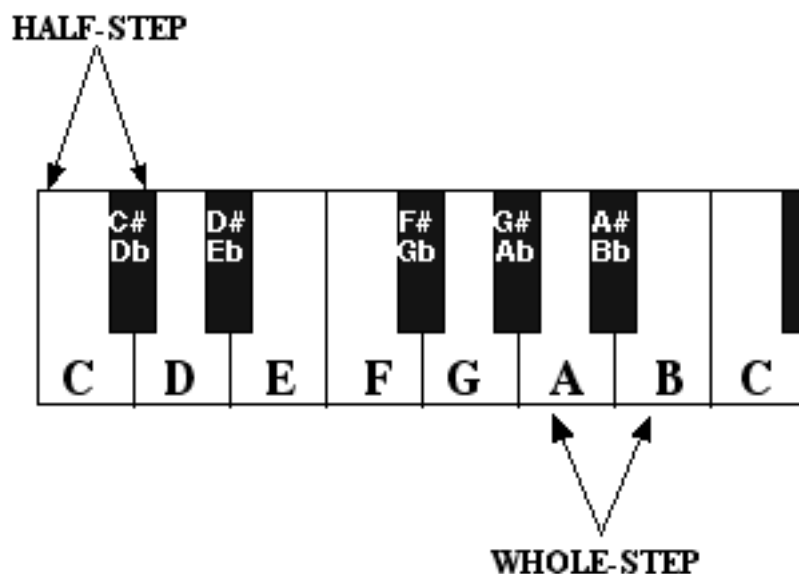


fig.7

There are two exceptions to this ...

There are two instances, or sections on the piano where the sharp and the flat keys are white keys instead of black. The white keys “B” and “C” are each other’s flat and sharp. “B” is also “Cb” and “C” is also “B#”. Also the key “E” is “Fb” and “F” is “E#”. You will won’t see this much in music but I thought I would alert you just in case.

Moving along the keyboard from one key to the one right next to it is known as a **Half-**

Step^{fig.7} If you move two keys to the right or to the left it is known as a **Whole-Step**^{fig.7}.

PRACTICE: Go to your piano and test your skills in finding these keys on the piano. See if you can find all the black keys and name them.

We'll end there for now on finding your way around the piano.

Reading Sheet Music

You are about to learn a new language.

Music is written on a set of lines and spaces with some nice pretty designs holding them together. These lines and spaces are called the **Grand Staff** ^{fig.8}.

Grand Staff

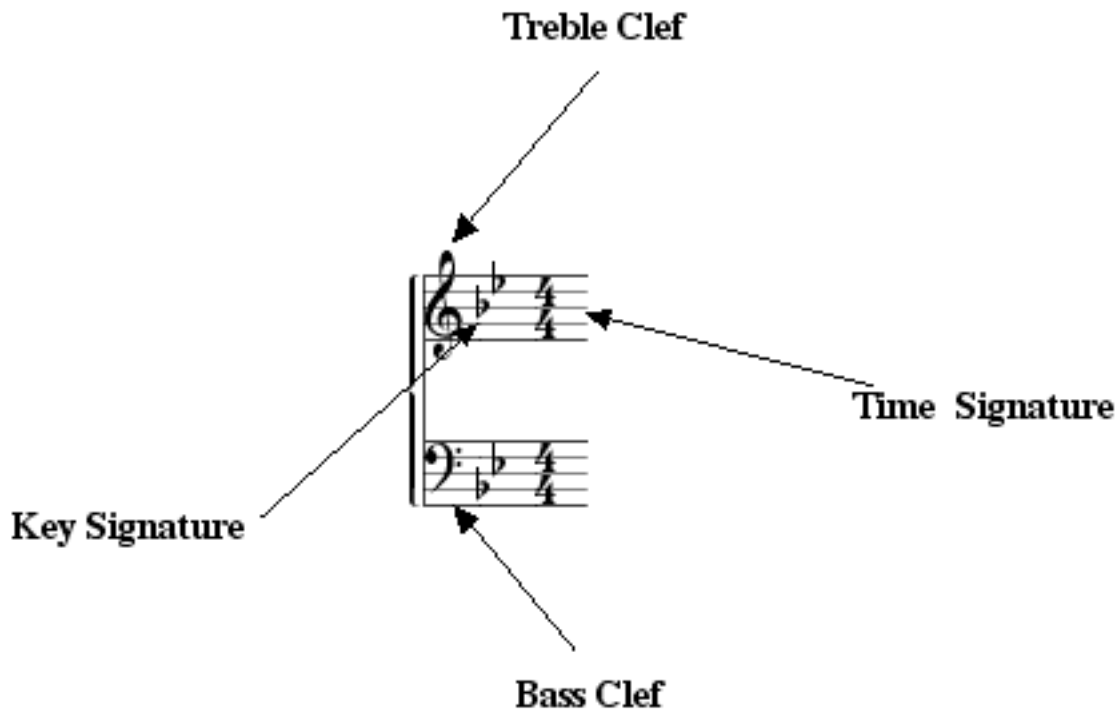


fig.8

First we will only concern ourselves with the top half of the **Grand Staff** known as the **Treble Clef**. The notes displayed here are what you play with your right hand, and what you play on the top half set of keys on the piano, the higher sounding notes. The inner most circle of this swirly design rests right on the G line or the line that denotes the note

of G. It is sometimes known as the **G Clef**.

Reading from the bottom to the top of the **Treble Clef** the notes that land on the **spaces** spell the word **F-A-C-E** ^{fig.9} in that order going up.



fig.9

Reading from the bottom to the top of the **Treble Clef** the notes that land on the **lines** are known as **E-G-B-D-F** ^{fig.10} in that order. Otherwise known as...

Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge.

Or whatever else helps you to remember.



fig.10

The notes that you read on the **Treble Clef** of a piece of sheet music match up with the keyboard as pictured in Figure 11. **Middle C** on your keyboard will coincide with the **C** with the line through it just below the lines of the **Treble Clef**.

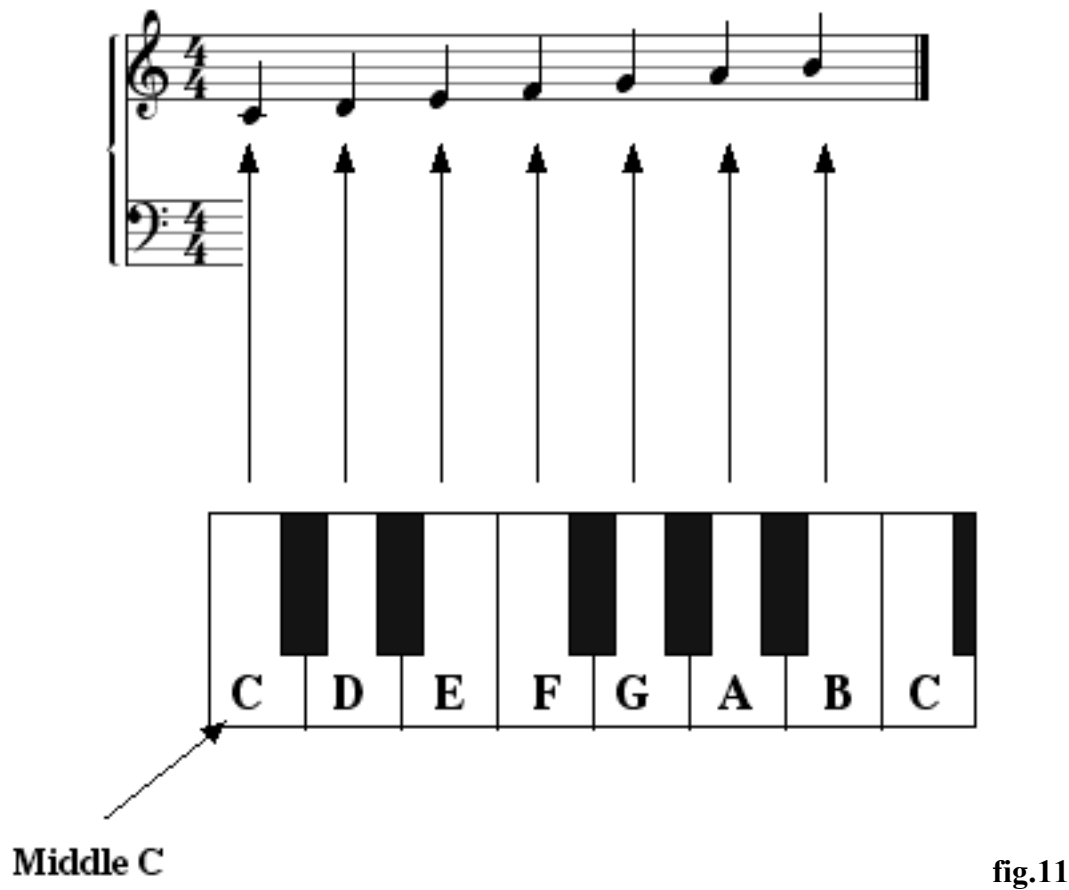


fig.11

The bottom half of the **Grand Staff** is the **Bass Clef** otherwise known as the **F Clef**^{fig.8}
The notes here^{fig.12} are patterned out differently from the **Treble Clef**.
A good rhyme to help you remember the notes on the lines starting from the bottom is.

Good Boys Do Fine Always

And the spaces starting with the first note completely enclosed by lines is...

All Cows Eat Grass

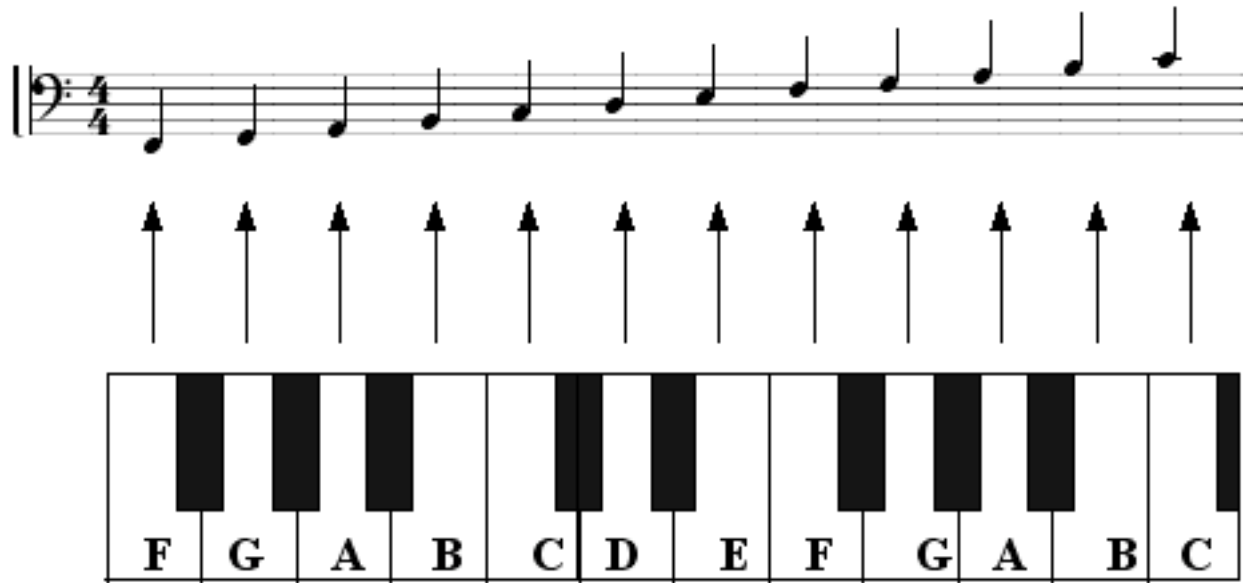


fig.12

Once again Middle C is the note located at the top of the staff with the line through it.

Types of Notes

You already learned about counting rhythms and the types of notes or note values earlier in this chapter. One note value not mentioned is the Eighth Note^{fig.13}. The value for this note is a little different. This is half of a quarter note and I have found to count it effectively count it as one-and or 1&.

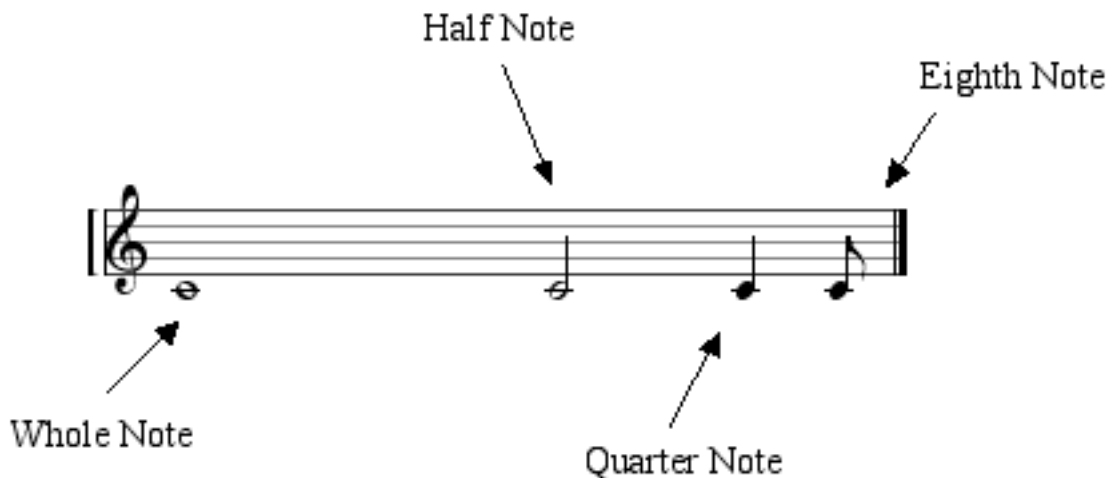


fig. 13

There are also different shapes to tell you how long to rest from playing. They will always be at the same position of the staff as you see listed.

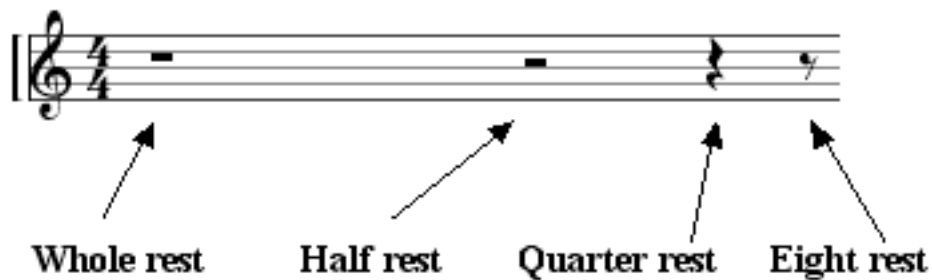


fig.14

In sheet music there are numbers at the beginning of a score that tell you what kind of rhythm to play with the music. This is called a **Time Signature**^{fig. 8}. The easiest and most common **Time Signature** is 4/4. Figure 8 shows you a 4/4 **Time Signature**. The top number tells you to play your music with four beats per measure (coming up). The bottom number tells you what note gets what beat. For example 4/4 tells you that each measure gets four beats and the quarter note gets one beat. This helps if you don't know what a piece sounds like.

There are lines within music that tell you where a measure ends, when to repeat a line. These are known as **bar lines**^{fig. 15}. Those pictured in figure 15 are the basic bar lines notated in most sheet music.

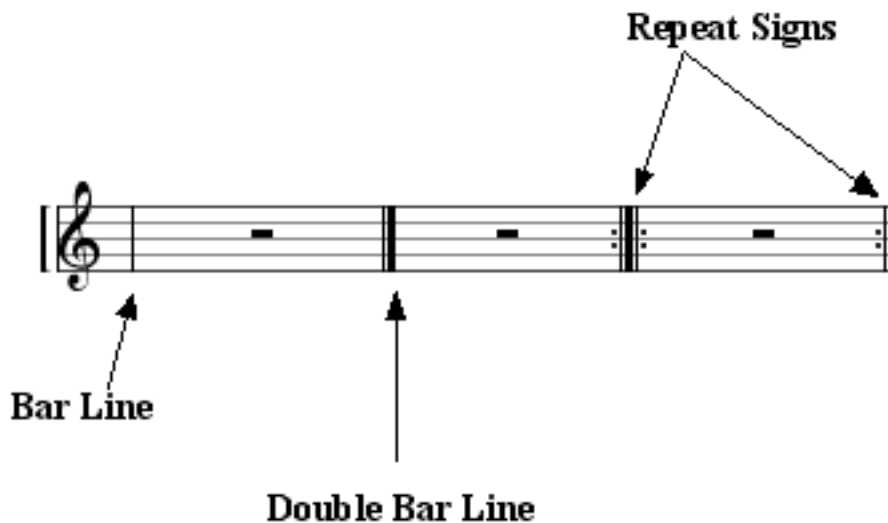


fig. 15

The **Bar Line**^{fig. 15} separates your music into even measures. It helps to keep you on track while playing. The space between two of these lines is known as a **Measure**.

The **Double Bar Line**^{fig. 15} is often seen at the end of music. Sometimes the word *Fine* will be above it. If you see the *D.C. al Fine* above it then that means go back to the beginning and play again to the word *Fine*. **D.C.** stands for **Da Capo** which in Italian

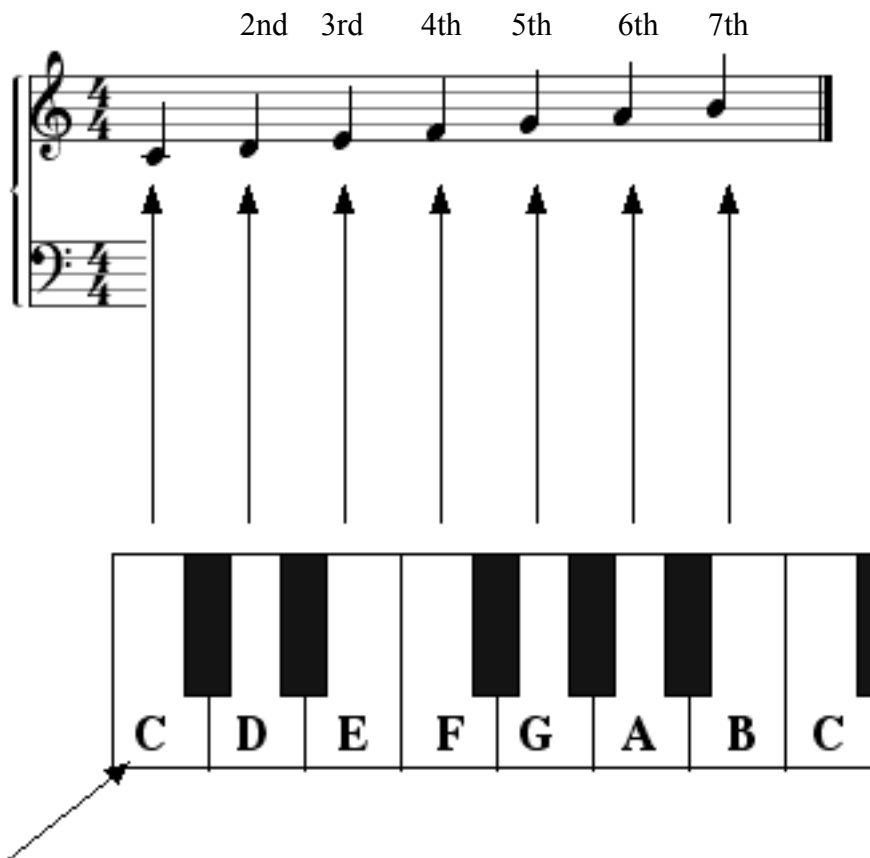
means **The Head**.

The Double Bar Lines with the dots or the **Repeat Signs** ^{fig.15} mean to repeat what is between the lines with the dots. If you just see one set of lines with dots then play back to the beginning and then to the end.

Viola! Now you know the basics on how to read sheet music. There is infinitely more to reading sheet music than what I have outlined here but my school of thought on that is learn it as you need it or as you come upon it. If you notice a symbol in music that you are unfamiliar with then take some time to research it. It is a good idea to have either a music encyclopedia or several music theory texts at your disposal.

Combining Your Hands and the Sheet Music

Next we'll work at putting it all together. Or putting it to your hands.



Middle C

fig.16

As you move from note to note on sheet music the distance between the notes is known as an **interval**. This can help to speed up your sheet music reading. If we just think about the white notes the interval between **C** and **D** is known as a **2nd** and the interval between **C** and **E** is known as a **3rd**.

If you look at Figure 16 the names above the notes are the names of each interval in relation to the **C** note. The **D** note is an interval of a Second (2nd) from the **C** note. The **A** note is an interval of a Sixth (6th) from the **C** note.

When reading sheet music intervals that are made up of notes that are placed on a space

and a line are **even intervals**^{fig.16}. Intervals that are made up of notes placed on a line and another line or a space and another space are **odd intervals**^{fig.16}.

How can this help you? An example is if you are playing, in what you will come to know as the wonderful easy key of **C**, you can pick out notes much faster on the sheet music if you know that a 3rd above **C** is **E** and an 8th above **C** is another **C**. With time you won't even have to think about it, it will just come. Playing them, in terms of intervals, on your piano will also help you in training your fingers to find keys quickly.

PRACTICE: So go to your piano and play 2nds, then 3rds, then 4ths etc. When you play these play the notes together at the same time so your fingers get accustomed to the feel of the notes.