

# Bonus Section: Jon Schmidt's Note-Reading Method

## Lesson #1

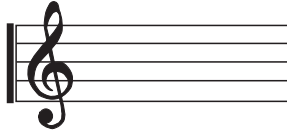
### What will be taught

- The staff
- The keyboard
- What is a step on each?
- What is a skip on each?
- The anchor lines

### The Staff

**Q: Do you know what this thing is called?**


(A: A staff)



**Q: Do you know how it works?**

(A: It works like a phone number):

**Explanation:** A phone number helps you know which keys to push on your phone. Similarly, dots on the staff help you push the right keys on the piano.

(This sign  means, I use my right hand.)

Note to teacher: The exception to this is explained on p. xiv.

**Reinforcement:** Have the student draw a dot on a few different lines and spaces on the empty staff above. In a fun way, briefly show them where the notes they drew "live" on the piano.

### The Keyboard

**Q: Do you know which way is up on the keyboard?**

(A: Motion to the right.)

**Q: Which way is down?**

(A: Motion to the left.)

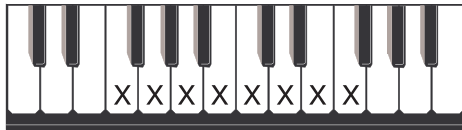
**Reinforcement:** Glissando either up or down and ask whether it sounded like rising or falling. Explain how a note that sits higher/lower on the staff "ladder" will also be higher/lower on the keyboard.

**Q: How are the black keys grouped?**

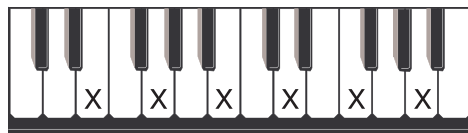
(A: Groups of three...groups of two...etc.)

**Q: What is a step and a skip on the keyboard?**

**Explanation:** A **step** is from one white key to the neighboring white key. (See below.)



A **skip** is when you skip over one (only one) white key. (See below.)



**Reinforcement:** Play notes on the piano. Ask the student to play steps and skips up or down from each.

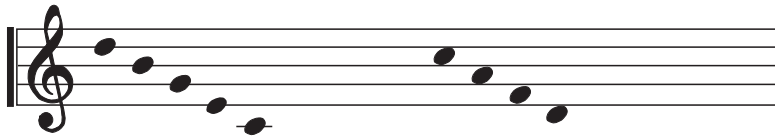
**Q: When you see a note on the staff, how do you know which key to push?**

(A: First you'll need to know **what a step and a skip look like on the staff**. Then I will introduce you to two friendly things called **anchor lines**. Then you will suddenly be able to find all the notes you will need.)

**Q: How do steps look on the staff?**

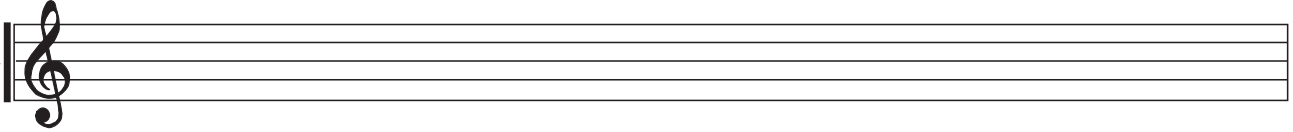


**Q: How do skips look on the staff?**



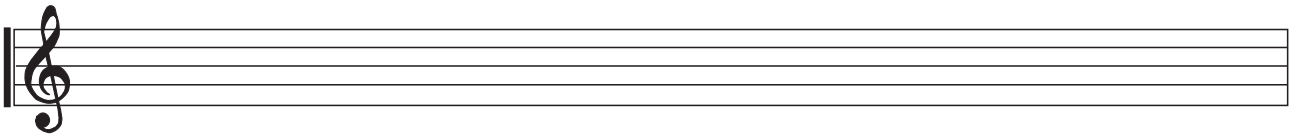
**Reinforcement:** Drawing notes with a pencil, have the student: 1. Skip **down** the lines, 2. Skip **down** the spaces, and 3. Step **down**.

They can start anywhere toward the middle or top of the staff. Have them end at a skip below the bottom line. (This is useful for identifying students that do not automatically grasp the continuation of the lines and spaces below the bottom line. You might need to take an extra minute to make sure they understand how the "extra lines" (ledger lines) work. Explain that extra lines are often added to the staff when the right hand needs to keep going lower than the bottom line, etc. Pay special attention to "bottom line skip down"- (C) and "bottom line step down"- (D).

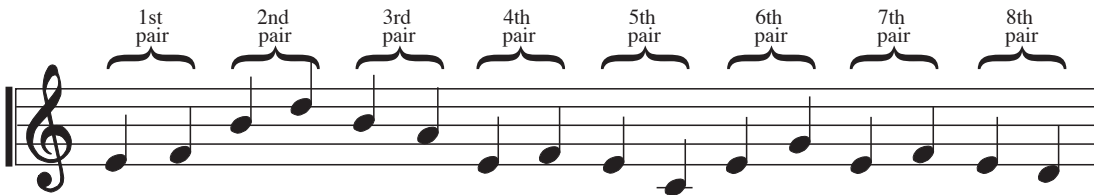


**Reinforcement:** Again, drawing notes with a pencil, have the student: 1. Skip **up** the lines, 2. Skip **up** the spaces, and 3. Step **up**.

(Have them start below the bottom line for the same reason as before.)



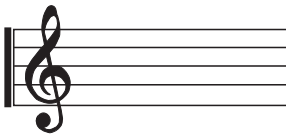
**Reinforcement:** Point to the following staff notes in pairs (8 pairs total). **Without playing**, have the student look at each pair and decide whether it is a step or skip and if it moves up or down. (Repeat as needed. Real music can also be used.)



**Q: Do you know which friendly lines in the staff help you find all the notes you need for the week?**

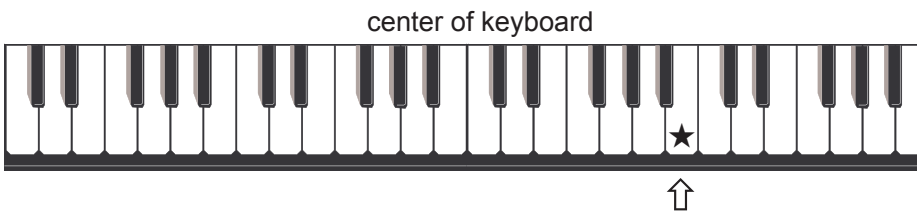
(A: The line in the very **middle** and the line on the **bottom** of the staff.)

**Q: Can you draw a note on the middle line of the staff?**



Have the student put a note on the middle line (position B on the staff).

**Q: Where does the MIDDLE LINE note live on the keyboard?**



(A: Point out that the middle line note lives next to a group of 3 black keys...the group of three closest to their right hand if they are sitting at the center of the keyboard.)

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that they need to learn where this note lives as well as they know their name. Close the lid...have them imagine where it is...have them tell you when they are ready...open the lid... have them play it without hesitation. Repeat as needed.

Q: Which notes does the middle line help you find?

(A: Middle line **step** up, middle line **skip** up, middle line **step** down, middle line **skip** down.)

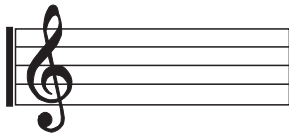


**Reinforcement:** Have the student write a descriptive label underneath each note. (For example: "middle line skip up", etc.)

**Reinforcement:** In random order, have the student describe and then play each of these notes on the keyboard.

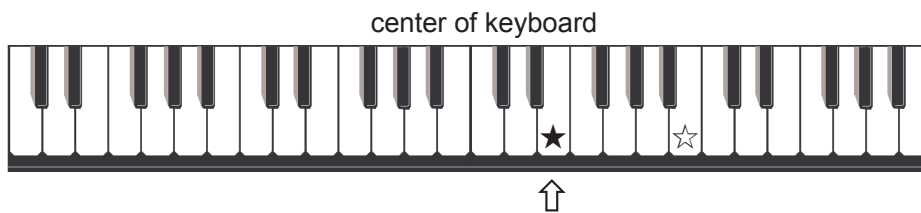
*If you run out of time, this is a good place to split the lesson. (In this case, simply give the student the assignment of finding the middle line and the four notes shown above every day until the next lesson.)*

Q: Can you draw a note on the BOTTOM LINE on the staff?



Have the student put a note on the bottom line (position E on the staff)

Q: Where does the BOTTOM LINE note live on the keyboard?

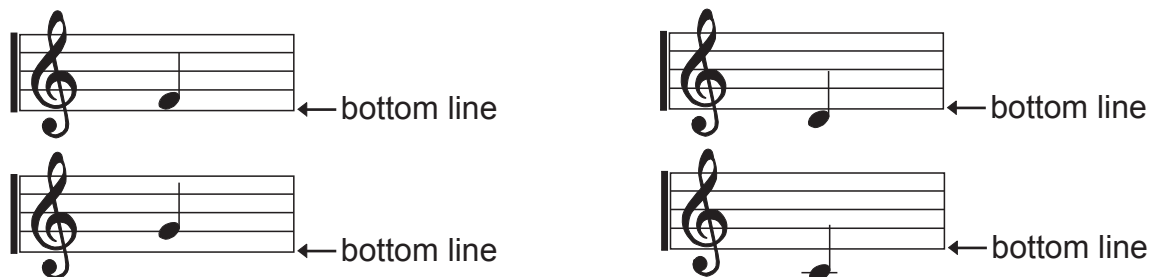


(A: Point out that the bottom line note lives next to a group of 2 black keys...the group of two just below the middle line.)

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that they need to learn where this note lives as well as they know their name. Close the lid...have them imagine where it is...have them tell you when they are ready...open the lid... have them play it without hesitation. Repeat as needed.

Q: Which notes does the BOTTOM line help you find?

(A: bottom line **step** up, bottom line **skip** up, bottom line **step** down, bottom line **skip** down.)



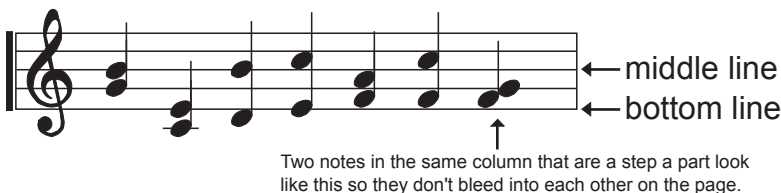
**Reinforcement:** Have the student write a descriptive label underneath each note. (For example: "bottom line skip up", etc.)

**Reinforcement:** In random order, have the student describe and then play each of these notes on the keyboard.

**The "Blow Up" Game** — Find the following notes on the keyboard (use the bottom and middle lines for help). **Very important:** Tell your brain it needs to be careful to get it right on the first try. Pretend you will blow up if you miss...take your time...touch the note...double check...play. (Repeat as needed.)



**Two Notes at a Time** — See if you can find two at a time on the first try. Touch one...touch the other...double check... play. Again, be very careful. (Pretend you will blow up if you miss.)



**Have them try part of a real song** — Pick a song in Weeks One and Two (see p.1) and have them sight-read a line just as carefully as they did during the blow up game (ignore the left hand). Using a piece of paper, you might want to reveal a single note column at a time to help them go slow (as well as keep their place). **Again, training the brain to expect to get it right the first time is of utmost importance!** This means that it will be **painfully** slow. Allow 10 to 20 seconds per note column, possibly longer if there are two notes in a column. Try to get to at least get to the point where they have successfully read an entire line with no "blow ups". Tell the student: "take your time...touch the note...double check...play". If they do blow up, have fun with it. (Make a blow up sound or something to that effect... keep it light.)

## Assignment for Week One

1. Review the bottom and middle line each day. (Close the piano lid between finding each.)
2. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - Turn to the section of songs titled "Weeks One and Two" on p.1. Using brackets or a highlighter mark **any** 3 to 6 lines (for each day) that you want the student to note-read. (Mark the right hand portion only.)
  - Considerations such as the age of the student will determine the number and difficulty of the lines assigned. (Keep it to 10-15 minutes per day.)
  - Emphasize the importance of note-reading just as slowly and carefully as they did in the lesson.
  - Explain that they are not expected to master these pieces; they need only to note-read each marked line once. (Have them check off each line so you can be sure they have completed the assignment.)
  - It is helpful to have the assignment clearly laid out in a separate note book. You might want to create some sort of daily chart so there is no question as to what you want done each day. Have them explain the assignment back to you to make sure they understand.

(In the case of smaller students using grand pianos, it is recommended that the student sit on a raised seat in order to better see the music. Often the music stand can also be adjusted, or the book can be placed in the tuning pegs so as to be closer to the student.)

## It is most helpful to invite a parent to attend the first lesson

This will enable the parent to:

1. Sit with the child each day to help them take things one note column at a time, making sure they are note-reading slowly and accurately. (This is only necessary for the first week or two, until the student can better keep their place on their own and has developed careful habits.)
2. Avoid confusion especially with those parents who are accustomed to traditional approaches. (i.e. it's okay at first for the child to ignore rhythm, fingering, hand position, letter names, proper terminology, phrasing, staccatos, pedaling, posture, dynamics, ties, repeats, accidentals, etc. etc. It is a glorified flash cards regimen... period. It is helpful for the parent to know that the rest of the above will be added later.)

## FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) about Lesson #1

### Q: Should they be expected to perfect the songs assigned?

(A: No. They simply "type" the assigned lines for the day into the keyboard and then they are through. It is like a type class. One reason why you evaluate their progress in the lesson using music they have never seen, is so they won't feel pressure to perfect the assigned music for the week. The emphasis is 100% note reading; not ear training, memorization, or anything else. (Working toward perfecting pieces is introduced at the seven week mark.)

## FAQ about Lesson #1 (cont'd)

### Q: We shouldn't care how bad the songs sound, really?

(A: It is not going to sound anything like the real song. It is simply a process of becoming familiar with how note reading works. At the seven week mark you will start focusing on making things sound good, but until then, the playing you hear will be painfully slow and will not resemble music at all. It will require a certain amount of patience. The good news is that it is surprising how much the beginner enjoys it.

### Q: How can we be sure they are reading accurately during the week?

(A: During the week, there will of course be some trouble with the student missing notes and losing place without realizing it. But the average student gets enough correct to learn the concepts introduced. The program will still work based upon an accuracy level of about 70%. (Obviously, have them shoot for 100% accuracy.) You will be able to tell at the next lesson if you need to reinforce and repeat a week or if they are basically grasping the concepts taught.

### Q: What age do you recommend starting this program?

(A: With the average student, I have learned from experience that it is best to start at age eight. (The earliest would be age seven if they are exceptionally gifted.) Disadvantages in starting sooner include confusion between up and down, right hand and left hand, steps and jumps, as well as a lack of cognitive ability and attention span. (These same factors are present with traditional methods of note reading as well.) Any method (including this one) may be watered down to accommodate a younger student, but the question is whether it is the best way to spend the initial enthusiasm "budget". Generally what takes 2 years to accomplish starting at age 6, could be accomplished in a matter of months starting at age 8.

### Q: Don't beginners need to see bigger notes?

(A: Since it is not that much easier to read this word: "Hello" as opposed to this word: "Hello", it actually is an advantage to have them read standard size notes right from the start. They can handle it just fine and it avoids unnecessary note size intimidation down the road. (Make sure they sit (or even stand) high enough so that the music is directly in front of their eyes.)

### Q: Does this program work well with current students that struggle with note reading?

(A: They will love it! Here are some tips: Take a break from everything else and do this program only. In order to avoid the need of unlearning anything, allow them to use the method they are familiar with for the notes they can confidently find. Then fill in the gaps with the anchor note approach. You may want to supplement the earlier weeks with harder music if necessary.

### Q: Is it really possible for a student to note read hands together by the second week?

(A: Definitely. Strange as our traditional methods make it seem, it really works for students of all different abilities time and time again. This first week is the only week they note read using only one hand.

### Q: Is it really okay at first for the student to disregard rhythm, fingering, hand position, letter names, proper terminology, phrasing, staccatos, pedaling, posture, dynamics, ties, repeats, accidentals, etc. etc? Won't they form habits that are impossible to fix?

(A: I have found that all of these things can be introduced later with no problem. (Many times, things develop naturally.) Tell them they are graduating to a higher level when you introduce these things... the music they will now be playing will require proper posture, strong fingers, extra practice time, etc. etc. (More specific ideas on introducing these things down the road are included on p. xviii.) I have also found that introducing these things more gradually instead of all at once is much less intimidating for the student. It also allows every ounce of that beginning enthusiasm to be channeled to the hardest aspect of playing the piano, which is note reading. This is the secret of this method.

## Lesson #2

### Review and evaluate

- Make sure the student can find both anchor notes without hesitation. (close piano lid between finding each.)
- In order to assess understanding, have them sight read music they have not seen. ("Masterpiece Theatre" in the "Additional Music" section on p. 13 has been provided for this purpose.) (You can also use music from another book if you'd like.)
- If they are not grasping the first week concepts reasonably well, spend the lesson reviewing and repeat last week's assignment.

### What will be taught

- The proper names of the clefs
- How to read notes with the left hand
- The bass clef anchor lines
- The bass clef top line (treble clef top line comes in lesson #3)
- Note reading hands together

### The names of the clefs

This sign means I use my right hand.  
This sign is called the "Treble Clef".



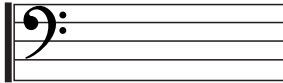
This sign means I use my left hand.  
This sign is called the "Bass Clef".



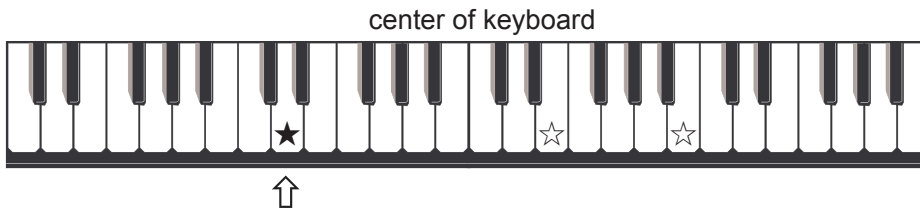
## How to read notes with the left hand

You thought the right hand anchor notes were easy to learn? The left hand anchor notes are even easier because **their name is a hint which describes their position on the keyboard.**

Q: Can you draw a note on the bass clef middle line?



Q: Where does the bass clef MIDDLE LINE live on the keyboard?

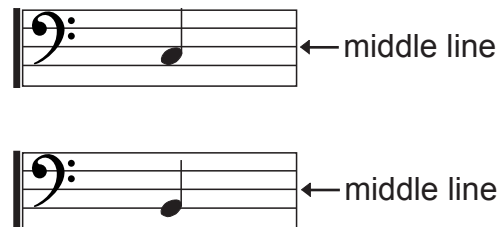
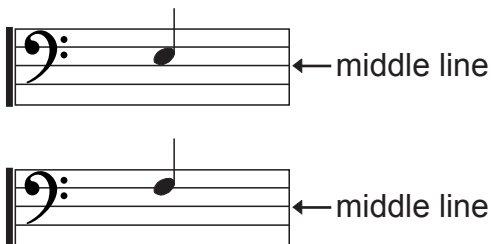


(A: Point out that the bass clef **middle** line lives in the **middle** of 2 black keys...the group of two closest to their left hand if they are sitting at the center of the keyboard.)

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that they need to learn where this note lives as well as they know their name. Close the lid...have them imagine where it is...have them tell you when they are ready...open the lid... have them play it without hesitation. (Repeat as needed.)

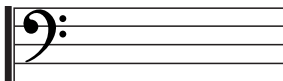
Q: Which notes does the bass clef middle line help you find?

(A: middle line **step** up, middle line **skip** up, middle line **step** down, middle line **skip** down.)

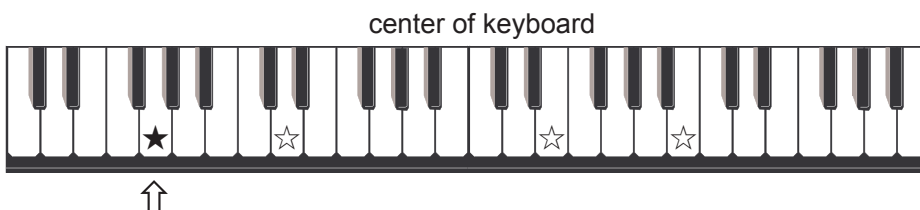


**Reinforcement:** In random order, have the student describe and then play each of these notes on the keyboard.

Q: Can you draw a note on the bass clef bottom line?



Q: Where does the bass clef BOTTOM LINE live on the keyboard?



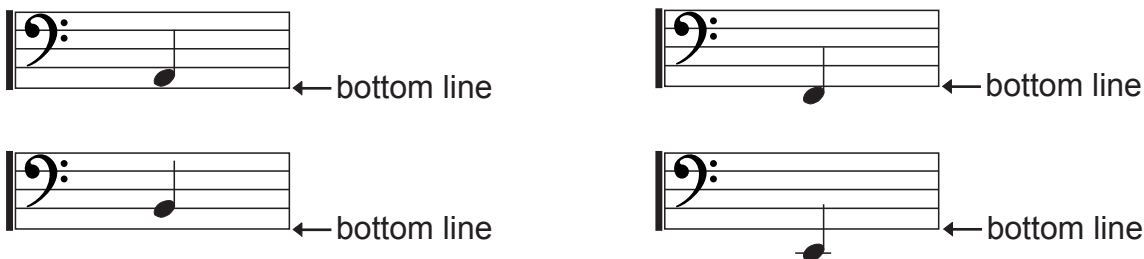
(A: Point out that the **bottom** line is the **bottom** white note inside a group of 3 black keys...the group of three black keys just below the middle line.)

**Reinforcement:** Show the student the group of three black keys. Ask them how many white keys live inside the group. Have them play both of these white keys. Ask them which of the two white keys they played was on the top (higher) and which one was on the bottom (lower). Be sure they make the connection that the note they said was on the bottom is called the bottom line.

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that they need to learn where this note lives as well as they know their name. Close the lid...have them imagine where it is...have them tell you when they are ready...open the lid... have them play it without hesitation. Repeat as needed.

**Q: Which notes does the bass clef BOTTOM line help you find?**

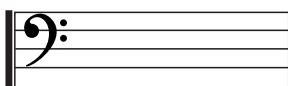
(A: bottom line **step** up, bottom line **skip** up, bottom line **step** down, bottom line **skip** down.)



**Reinforcement:** In random order, have the student play each of these notes on the keyboard.

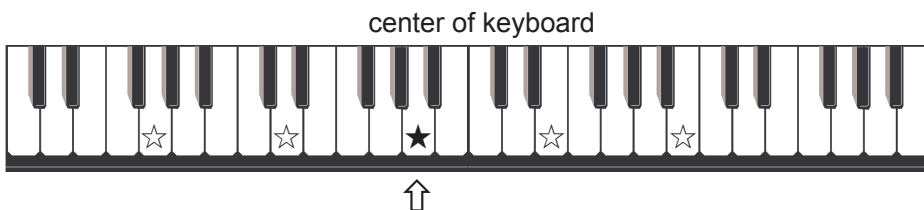
### The Bass Clef Top Line

**Q: Can you draw a note on the bass clef top line?**



(Treble clef top line is introduced in lesson #3)

**Q: Where does the bass clef TOP LINE live on the keyboard?**



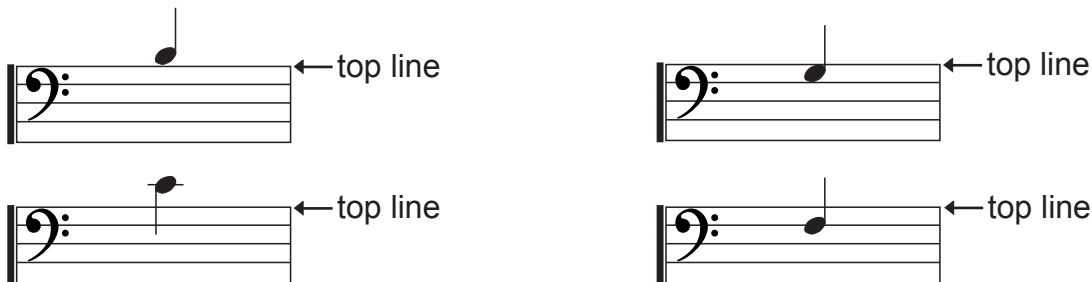
(A: Point out that the **top** line is the **top** white note inside a group of 3 black keys...the group of three black keys just above the middle line.)

**Reinforcement:** Show the student the group of three black keys. Ask them how many white keys live inside the group. Have them play both of these white keys. Ask them which of the two white keys they played was on the top (higher) and which one was on the bottom (lower). Be sure they make the connection that the note they said was on the top is called the top line.

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that they need to learn where this note lives as well as they know their name. Close the lid...have them imagine where it is...have them tell you when they are ready...open the lid... have them play it without hesitation. Repeat as needed.

**Q: Which notes does the bass clef TOP line help you find?**

(A: top line **step** up, top line **skip** up, top line **step** down, top line **skip** down.)



**Reinforcement:** In random order, have the student play each of these notes on the keyboard.

**The "Blow Up" Game** - Find the following notes on the keyboard. Pretend you will blow up if you miss...take your time...touch the note...double check...play.



**Two Notes at a Time** — See if you can find two at a time on the first try.



**Have them try the bass clef line of a real song** — Pick a song in Week one (key of C) and have them sight-read the bass clef just as carefully as they did during the blow up game (ignore the treble clef). Again, training the brain to expect to get it right the first time is of utmost importance. Tell the student: "take your time...touch the note...double check...play".

## Note-reading Hands Together

For the balance of the lesson pick lines in Weeks One and Two. Have them note-read **hands together** column by column just as carefully as they did during the blow up game). Again, training the brain to expect to get it right the first time is very important. Tell the student: "take your time...touch the note...double check...play". Tell them to see if they can do it without help. If they miss you can correct saying "check your left/right hand."

## Assignment for Week Two

1. Review all 5 anchor notes each day. (Close the piano lid between finding each)
2. Note-read the same lines as last week. **Note-read hands together this week.**
  - Emphasize the importance of note-reading just as slowly and carefully as they did in the lesson.
  - Explain that they are not expected to master these pieces; they need only to note-read each line once.

## Lesson #3

### Review and evaluate

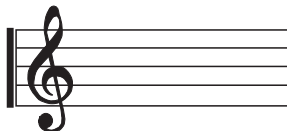
- Make sure the student can find all five anchor notes without hesitation. (close piano lid between finding notes)
- In order to assess mastery of lesson 2, have them note-read any lines in "week one and two" that have **not** been assigned ("Masterpiece Theatre" in the "Additional Music" section on p. 13 can be used again.) If they are not grasping the second week concepts reasonably well, spend the lesson reviewing and repeat last week's assignment.

### What will be taught

- The treble clef top line
- Ledger notes
- The sharp
- The flat
- The accidental rule that everyone accidentally forgets

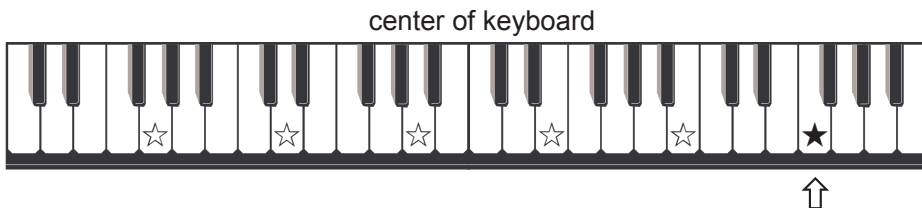
## The treble clef top line

**Q: Can you draw a note on the treble clef TOP LINE?**





**Q: Where does the treble clef TOP LINE live on the keyboard?**



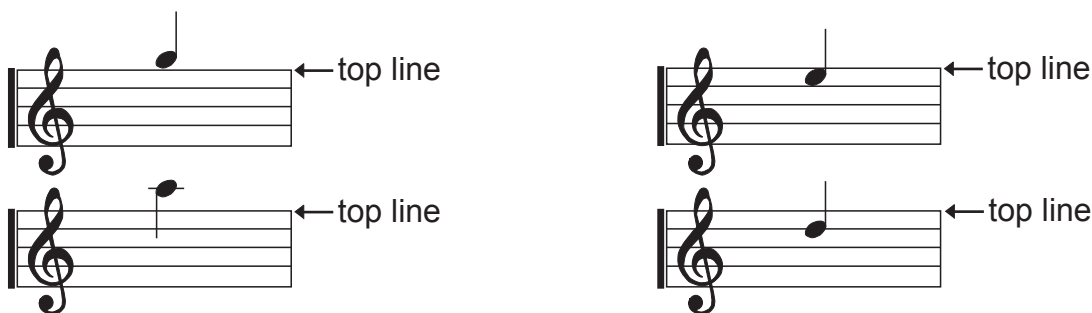
(A: Point out that the top line note lives **next to** a group of 3 black keys...the next group of three adjacent to the middle line)

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that they need to learn where this note lives as well as they know their name. Close the lid...have them imagine where it is...have them tell you when they are ready...open the lid... have them play it without hesitation. Repeat as needed.

**Reinforcement:** Quickly have them find all six anchor notes in random order. Make sure they know them independent of one another.

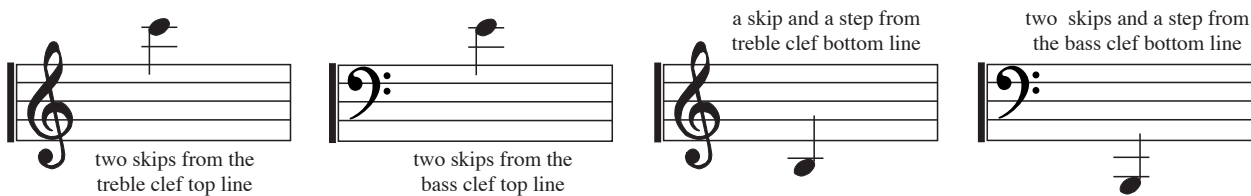
**Q: Which notes does the treble clef TOP line help you find?**

(A: top line **step** up, top line **skip** up, top line **step** down, top line **skip** down.)



## The Ledger Notes

Extra lines are often added to the staff when a certain hand needs to play lower than the bottom line or higher than the top line. For example:



**Explanation:** Explain how to find each above example by skipping and stepping from the anchor note.

**Reinforcement:** Point out more examples of ledger notes for them to find in the songs for Week Three. Repeat as needed.

## The Sharp

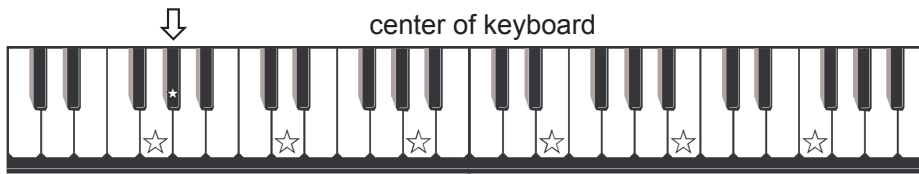
**Q: Do you know what this thing  $\sharp$  is called?**

(A: A sharp.)

**Reinforcement:** To avoid **name** confusion between sharps and flats, have the student pretend that the two points at the top and bottom are **sharp** enough to poke something.

**Q: Do you know what to do when you see a sharp in front of a note?**

(A: It means that you play the black key **above** the note.)



**Reinforcement:** In the book find some notes with sharps on them and have the student play them. (Repeat as needed) (When a sharp is in front of two notes close together, tell them to look at the center of the sharp to decide what line or space the sharp is on.)

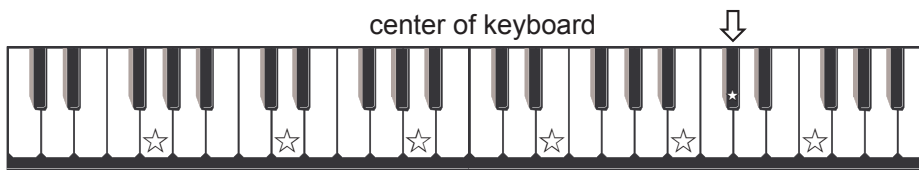
## The Flat

**Q: Do you know what this thing ♭ is called?**

(A: A flat.)

**Q: Do you know what to do when you see a flat in front of a note?**

(A: It means that you play the black key **below** the note.)



**Reinforcement:** To avoid **directional** confusion between sharps and flats, ask the student if their tire goes up or down when they get a flat. A music flat goes the same direction.

**Reinforcement:** In the book find some notes with flats on them and have the student play them. (Repeat as needed.) (Point out that when a flat is in front of two notes close together, the belly of the flat will tell what line or space the flat is on.)

## The Accidental Rule That Everyone Accidentally Forgets

**Q: What is an accidental?**

(A: It is a fancy name for sharps and flats)

The factual nature of the following explanation has yet to be confirmed:

In the old days, composers had to write all their music out by hand. Let's say a composer wanted to write these notes:



The composer would have to draw a lot of flats. So to save time they invented a rule that made it so they didn't have to write so much. The rule is this: **When an accidental gets put on a note, it sticks to that line or space for the rest of the measure.** (Explain that "measure" is a fancy name for the "boxes".) With this rule, instead of needing to write twelve flats, the composer only had to write two flats:



**Reinforcement:** Tell the student that even though we are not sure if the story is true, the rule is an actual rule. Then in a fun way, explain that hardly any piano player remembers this rule all the time. Tell them how amazed you will be if they could be smart enough to remember this tricky rule.

**Reinforcement:** Find some passages in Week #3 where they will encounter the Accidental Rule. Find a note that is effected by a sharp which occurs earlier in the measure. Point out the first sharp note and ask if the recurring note will be sharp or natural. (Repeat as necessary using flats as well.)

**Reinforcement:** Have them read some of these passages with both hands. If they remember the accidental rule, make a huge deal out of it. If they miss, review the rule in a fun way. (We all struggle with this rule. The point here is to minimize that struggle.)

**Q: Can accidentals be cancelled?**

(A: Yes. The composer can cancel an accidental by putting this sign  in front of a note.)

**Explanation:** This sign is easy. It is called a "natural". It means to play the note normal again.

**Reinforcement:** Find some passages where naturals are involved and have the student practice reading them.

*Spend the balance of the lesson note reading in "Week Three"*

## Assignment for Week Three

1. Review all 6 anchor notes each day. (Close the piano lid between finding each)
2. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - Turn to the section of songs titled "Week Three" on p.7. Using brackets or a highlighter, mark any 3 to 6 lines (for each day) that you want the student to note-read.
  - Emphasize the importance of note-reading just as slowly and carefully as they did in prior weeks.
  - Explain that they are not expected to master these lines; they need only to note-read each line once.

**NOTE:** If all of the lines on a particular day seem a bit too challenging for younger students, you instead might want to assign lines from the "Additional Music " section (p. 13), which is easier. Repeating lines from other days or occasional supplementation with music from other books is also a possibility.

## Lesson # 4 (Automatic Flat)

### Review and evaluate

- Make sure the student can find all six anchor notes without hesitation. (Close the piano lid between finding each.)
- In order to assess mastery of Lesson #3, have them sight read any lines in the section of the book titled "Week Three" that have not been assigned. ("You Have a Friend" on page 13 can be used for this purpose.) If they are not grasping the third week concepts reasonably well, spend the lesson reviewing and repeat last week's assignment.

### What will be taught

- The automatic flat

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### The Automatic Flat

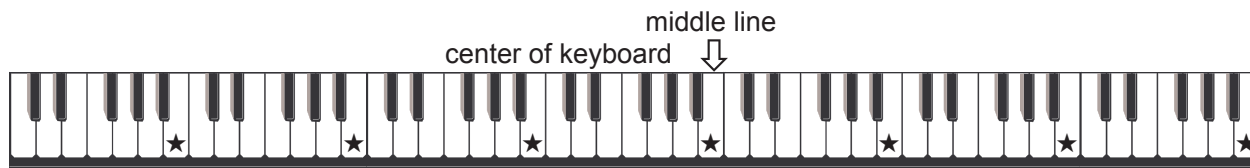
**Q: Do you know what it means when a composer puts ONE flat at the beginning of the staff by itself like this?**

(A: It means that a certain note on the keyboard is going to get an automatic flat if that note occurs.)



**Q: So when you have ONE flat at the beginning of the staff, which note will get an automatic flat if it occurs?**

(A: The treble clef middle line... as well as every note all over the keyboard that looks like the treble clef middle line. See below.)



**Explanation:** In other words, any note above (on the top side) of a group of three black keys will have an automatic flat. You can think of all of these notes (that sit on top of a group of three black keys) as being "one and the same" or "in the same family" since they all look the same on the keyboard and even kind of sound the same. (You might even mention that, down the road, you will teach how these notes also share the same name.)

**Reinforcement:** In a fun way, have the student pretend that any note above a group of three black keys will cause an electric shock if played. Have them note read some lines in "Week Four". If they play a note that should be flat, have fun with it. (Startle them by making a funny buzzing noise, etc. For best results, don't do the shock thing on regular note misses, just on flat mistakes.)

*Spend the balance of the lesson note reading in "Week Four" (The goal is to have them be somewhat used to automatic flat by the end of the lesson so that they can be reasonably successful in automatic flat sight reading during the coming week.)*

**Important note to parents, teacher and student:** It should still be painfully slow to find each column of notes. As before, rhythm should be disregarded. It shouldn't sound anything like the song at this point. It is still simply a glorified flash cards program.

## Assignment for Week Four

1. Find all six anchor notes each day. (Close the piano lid between finding each.)
2. Find a few "electric shock" notes each day.
3. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - In the section titled "Week Four" (p. 15) mark any three to six lines as before.
  - Emphasize the importance of note-reading just as slowly and carefully as they did in prior weeks.
  - Tell them that the goal is to see if they can come back next week and sight read new music with one automatic flat with no help from you.

**NOTE:** If all of the lines on a particular day seem a bit too challenging for younger students, you instead might want to assign lines from the "Additional Music" section (p. 22), which is easier. Repeating lines from other days or occasional supplementation with music from other books is also a possibility.

## Lesson #5 (Automatic Sharp)

### Review and evaluate

- Make sure the student can find all six anchor notes without hesitation. (Close the piano lid between finding each.)
- Have them find a few "electric shock" notes. (Have fun with this.)
- In order to assess mastery of Lesson #4, have them sight read any lines in "Week Four" that have not been assigned. ("Serenade" on p. 22 can be used for this purpose.) If they are not grasping "Week Four" concepts reasonably well, spend time reviewing and repeat last week's assignment.
- If it is a close call, a little reinforcement may be all that is needed before moving on, as "Week Five" reinforces "Week Four" to a certain extent.

### What will be taught

- The automatic sharp

### The Automatic Sharp

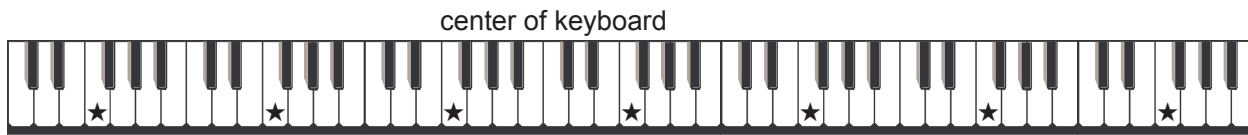
**Q: Do you know what it means when a composer puts ONE sharp at the beginning of the staff by itself like this?**

(A: It means that a certain note on the keyboard is going to get an automatic sharp if that note occurs.)



**Q: So when you have ONE sharp at the beginning of the staff, which note will get an automatic sharp if it occurs?**

(A: Any note below (on the **bottom** side) of a group of three black keys will have an automatic sharp. It is a **mirror image** of last week. See below.)



**Reinforcement:** In a fun way, have the student pretend that any note below a group of three black keys will cause an electric shock if played. Have them note read some lines in "Week Five". If they play a note that should be sharp, do the funny "shock thing" again.

*Spend the balance of the lesson note reading in "Week Five" (As before, the goal is to have them be somewhat used to automatic sharp by the end of the lesson.)*

**If you have time:** It usually is not necessary, but at this point, you may want to teach all or part of a simple fun song by rote, if you think the student (or parent) needs a little something to work on during the week that actually sounds like music. **If this is a strong enough concern, you may already want to implement the format change that occurs in "Week Seven".**

(See p. xv under "A Few Tips for Perfecting the First Song" and "Assignment for Week Seven".)

## Assignment for Week Five

1. Find all six anchor notes each day. (Close the piano lid between finding each)
2. Find a few "electric shock" notes each day.
3. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - In the section titled "Week Five" (p. 24) mark any three to six lines as before.
  - Emphasize the importance of note-reading just as slowly and carefully as they did in prior weeks.
  - Tell them that the goal is to see if they can come back next week and sight read new music with one automatic sharp with no help from you.

**Note:** If some of the music seems too challenging for younger students, you might want to assign lines from "additional music" on p. 31.

## Lesson #6 (Two Automatic Sharps)

### Review and evaluate

- Have them find a few of last week's "electric shock" notes. (Have fun with this)
- In order to assess mastery of Lesson #5, have them sight read any lines in "Week Five" that have not been assigned. (See "additional music" on p. 31.) If they are not grasping the fifth week concepts reasonably well, spend the lesson reviewing and repeat last week's assignment.

### What will be taught

- Two automatic sharps

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## Two Automatic Sharps

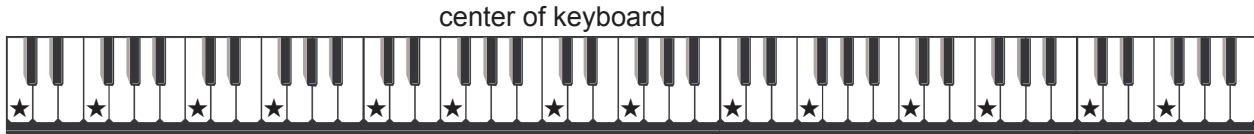
**Q: Do you know what it means when a composer puts TWO sharps at the beginning of the staff like this?**

(A: It means that **TWO** notes on the keyboard are going to get an automatic sharp **if they occur**.)



**Q: So when you have TWO sharps as shown previously, which notes will get automatic sharps if they occur?**

(A: Any note below (on the **bottom** side) of **any** group of black keys (**groups of two included**) will have an automatic sharp. See below.)



**Reinforcement:** As before, have the student pretend that any note below a group of **two or three** black keys will cause an electric shock. Have them note read some lines in "Week Six". If they play a note that should be sharp, do the funny "shock thing" again.

*Spend the balance of the lesson note reading in "Week Six" (As before, the goal is to have them be somewhat used to two automatic sharps by the end of the lesson.*

## Assignment for Week Six

1. Find all six anchor notes each day.
2. Find a few "electric shock" notes on the keyboard each day (include both sharps).
3. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - In the section titled Week Six (p. 33) mark any three to six lines as before.
  - Emphasize the importance of note-reading just as slowly and carefully as they did in prior weeks.
  - Tell them that the goal is to see if they can come back next week and sight read new music with two automatic sharps with no help from you.

## Lesson #7 (Two Automatic Flats)

### Review and evaluate

- Have them find a few of last week's "electric shock" notes.
- Have them sight read in the "Additional Music" section on p. 41. Some of the lines have two treble clefs. If you feel the student is ready for two treble clefs, take a few minutes and introduce the concept (Easy explanation below.) With young students, you may want to postpone the double treble clef issue and evaluate using only the lines with bass and treble clef.

### Easy Guide for Playing Two Treble Clefs

Explain that on p. 38, the left hand plays so many high notes that writing ledger notes would be a real pain for everyone. Therefore, the composer has told the left hand to "hop up" into "right hand territory".

The following approach to introducing two treble clefs is very helpful:

**Step 1:** Take the first line only and have the student's **right hand** play the notes on the lower treble clef staff (the staff that usually has a bass clef). Tell the student that the right hand will use the treble clef anchor notes as usual. (The left hand does not play anything.)

**Step 2:** Tell the student to see if their left hand can use the treble clef anchor notes and play the exact same thing that their right hand just played. (The right hand does not play anything) You might say, "See if your left hand can pretend that it is a right hand for a moment." (Repeat step 2 until it seems easy.)

**Step 3:** Now, play the passage hands together with the left hand on the lower treble clef (still), and the right hand on the upper treble clef.

### What will be taught

- Two automatic flats
- A few tips for perfecting the first song

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## Two Automatic Flats

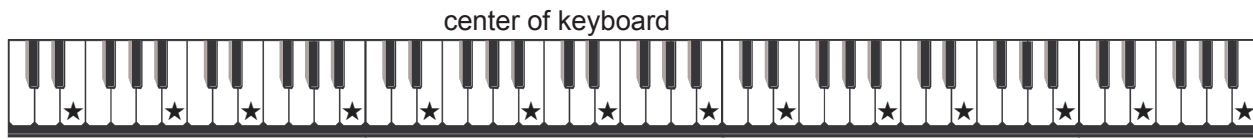
**Q: Do you know what it means when a composer puts TWO flats at the beginning of the staff like this?**

(A: It means that two notes on the keyboard are going to get an automatic flat if they occur.)



**Q: So when you have TWO flats as previously shown, which notes will get automatic flats if they occur?**

(A: Any note above (on the **top** side) of **any** group of black keys will have an automatic flat.) (**Mirror image of last week.**)



**Reinforcement:** As before, have the student pretend that any note above a group of two or three black keys will cause an electric shock. Have them note read some lines in "Week Seven" (p. 44).

**Reinforcement:** Tell the student to think: "**top of black key groups**". Point out that it is a mirror image of last week.

*Spend time sight reading music with two flats. Save about 10 minutes to introduce and practice the song they will work on perfecting during the week.*

### **A Few Tips on Perfecting the First Song:**

This week, **cut back to two to four lines of sight reading per day**. The extra practice time will be spent perfecting any fun song chosen from any previous key. Choose one song for the week.

**Note:** Cutting back the sight reading in order to perfect a piece is a shot in the arm that certain students may need earlier (around week five or six). (See p. xiii in the section titled: "If You Have Time" )

**Tip #1:** Be a little lenient about the rhythm: (**Pick an easy song with which the student is familiar** so that the rhythm will largely take care of itself with little or no help from you. By this point, the average student should be ready to tackle many of the songs in this book. If rhythm help would be beneficial, keep it to a simple demonstration/mimic approach at first. A better approach to teaching rhythm can be introduced gradually over the next few weeks. See p. xix)

**Tip #2:** Don't assign too much: (If the song is long, assign only 2 lines or so.)

**Tip #3:** Anticipate any vital fingering and spend some time addressing it in the lesson. This will decrease the formation of bad habits.

**Tip #4:** Most students will attempt horrible fingering. This improves quickly in a matter of weeks. In the mean time, **be lenient**. Yet do try to help them go home using the smartest fingering of which you think they are capable. Save greatest emphasis for where fingering is vital. For example, I have needed to use the following phrases with students that attempt playing the entire song with one finger: "All of your fingers want a turn to play...don't let one finger hog all the notes." -and "What do you think a smarter fingering would be?"

**Tip #5:** Explain that every song has spots that are harder than the rest of the song. Explain that these sections need extra training. You might say: "It is like training a pet to do a new trick. It takes a lot of patience and you have to do it over and over. But when you have trained your fingers to conquer a hard spot, it is very fun, and it makes you much better at the piano". Then mark any spots that will require extra work. Tell them to practice those spots extra... until they get five good ones each day, for example. (If they haven't gotten five good ones after five minutes, they can be done and try again the next day.)

**Tip #6:** Don't worry too much about things like hand position, posture, dynamics, etc. (unless you feel they can handle a little of it.) These things can be incorporated at any time down the road when they are more established.

## **Assignment for Week Seven**

1. Find a few "electric shock" notes on the key board each day (include both flats).
2. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - In the section titled "Week Seven" (p. 44) mark any **two to four** lines.
3. Work on the fun song every day.
  - Each day have them: 1. Play the whole song (or the entire assigned section of the song). 2. Work the "extra practice spot" for five minutes or five good ones, whichever comes first. 3. Play the whole song again one or two more times.

**Note:** Again, it is very important to clearly and simply itemize the above assignment with format and language the student can both read and understand. (Have them explain back their understanding of exactly what they are supposed to do each day to make sure they understand.)

# Lesson #8 (Three Automatic Flats)

## Review and evaluate

- Have them find a few of last week's "electric shock" notes (include both flats).
- Have them sight read in the "Additional Music" section (p. 49).

## What will be taught

- Three Automatic Flats
- Evaluate and Practice Together on the Song They Worked on During Week
- Introduce and Practice Together on an Additional Fun Song to be Added This Week

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## Three Automatic Flats

**Q: Do you know what it means when a composer puts THREE flats at the beginning of the staff like this?**

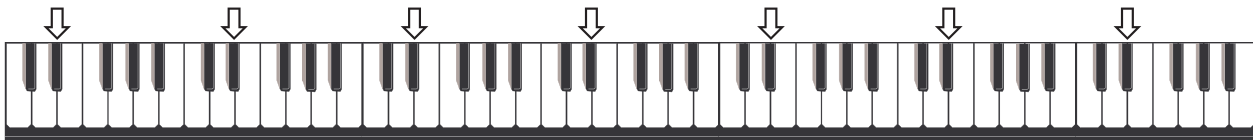
(A: It means that **THREE** notes on the keyboard are going to get an automatic flat if they occur.)



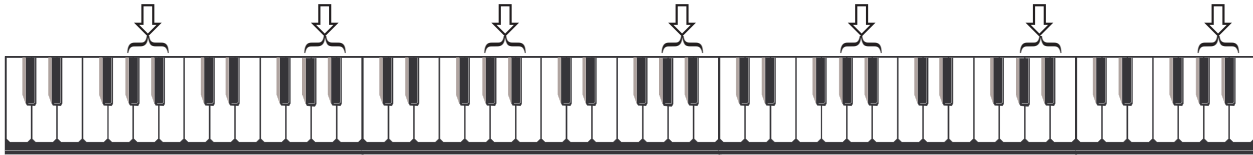
**Q: So when you have THREE flats, which notes will get automatic flats if they occur?**

(A: You can still think "Top of Black Key Groups")

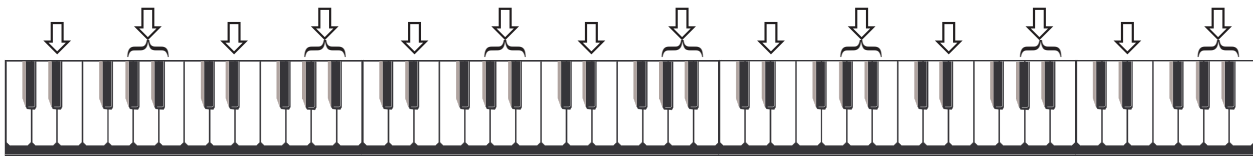
**Explanation:** The top black key in this group:



And the **TOP TWO** black keys in this group:



**Reinforcement:** Tell the student to think "Top of Black Key groups".



**Reinforcement:** Do the "electric shock" thing again with the above notes. Note read some lines in "Additional Music (3 Flats)" (p. 48).

*Save fifteen to twenty minutes for the balance of the lesson.*

## Evaluate and Practice Together on the Assigned Fun Song for the Week

- Have them play the song for the week. If there are problems, practice together with the student.

## A Few More Practice Tips

- Focus primarily on fixing vital fingering and wrong rhythm issues. Where rhythm help is necessary, keep it to a simple demonstration/mimic approach this week. A better approach to teaching rhythm can be introduced gradually over the next few weeks. (See p. xix)



## A Few More Practice Tips (cont'd)

- Aim only for the level of perfection of which they are comfortably capable. (Be lenient and expect this ability to evolve more quickly with some students than others.) For example, some students will be able to eliminate all pauses in the very first song, where others will not. The endurance of some students is such that they will immediately tolerate working on a song until it is pause free. Others will need to work up to this level of endurance over a matter of months.
- **Tools for fixing problems in the song:** Isolate the problem area. Try it very slowly. Perhaps you might need to try it hands alone. Keep trying until they play one good one. (Pause-free is a good standard to shoot for.) Say "That was great! Now we need three more just like that." (or four or five etc). Now practice the spot from one measure back so they can get used to coming right into it. Again, go for three to five good ones. Tell them how many good ones per day they will need until their fingers have conquered that spot. Make it part of the week's assignment.
- **Adapt all of this to the tolerance of the student.**

## Introduce and Practice Together on an Additional Fun Song to be Added This Week.

(This week, **cut back to one to two lines of sight reading per day.** The extra time will be spent perfecting an additional fun song.)

- Introduce about two new lines of music in a new song. (Assign more of last week's song if only a part of that song was assigned.)
- Introduce important fingering and spots that will require extra work as before. Take a minute to practice together on these.

*All or part of the balance of this note reading program may be postponed. (At this point you actually could transition your student to the method you have always used, picking it up two years into the game. Or you could simply begin a program working on two to three songs per week indefinitely (merging or not merging into your regular method at some point). However, it might be more preferable to first complete at least one more week of the note reading program, unless you think a change would be more beneficial. In that case you can refer to the balance of this preface information as a resource at the time you encounter the remaining key signatures.)*

## Assignment for Week Eight

1. Find a few "electric shock" notes every day.
2. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - In the section titled Additional Music (Three Automatic Flats) (p. 50) specify any one to two lines of note reading for each day.
3. Work on the Two fun songs.
  - Each day have them: 1. Play the whole song (or the whole assigned section). 2. Work the extra practice spots each for five minutes or five good ones. 3. Play the whole song again one or two more times. (This is done for each of the two songs assigned)

# Lesson #9 (Three Automatic Sharps)

## Review and evaluate

- Have them find a few of last week's electric shock notes.
- Have them sight read from the "Additional Music" Section (p. 50.)

## What will be taught

- Three Automatic Sharps
- Evaluate and Practice Together on the Song for the Week
- Introduce and Practice Together on New Music for the Coming Week (If something is passed off today.)

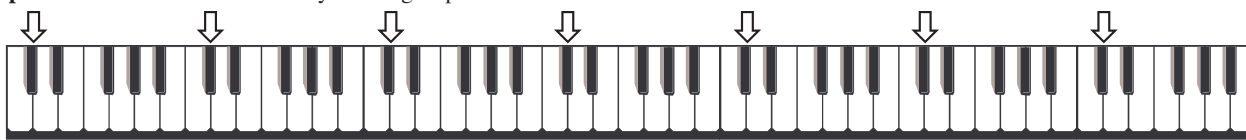
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## Three Automatic Sharps

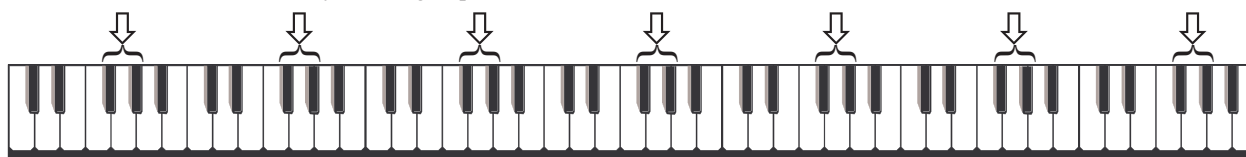
**Q: When you have THREE sharps, which notes will get automatic sharps if they occur**  
(A: It is a mirror image of three flats. This week think: "**Bottom of Black Key Groups**")



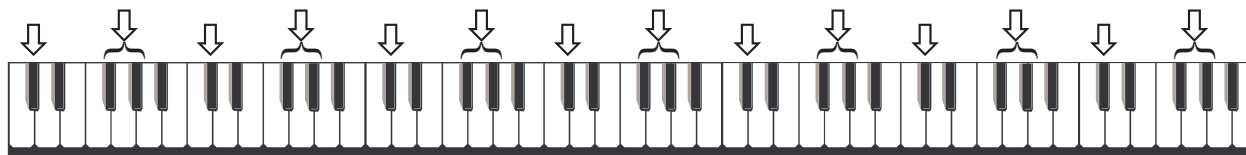
**Explanation:** The bottom black key in this group:



And the **BOTTOM TWO** black keys in this group:



**Reinforcement:** Tell the student to think "Bottom of black key groups".



**Reinforcement:** Do the "electric shock" thing again with the above notes. Note read some lines in "Additional Music (3 Sharps)" (p. 52).

*Save fifteen to twenty minutes for the balance of the lesson.*

#### Evaluate and Practice Together on the Two Assigned Fun Songs For the Week

- Have them play the assigned songs for the week. If there are problems, practice together with the student. Use the same practice tips as last week.
- You may want to begin implementing some more advanced rhythm explanations found on the next page.
- Introduce and practice together on a new song to be assigned for the coming week. (Only if a song is passed off.)
- If a new song is assigned, keep it to about 2 lines as before. (Or assign more of last week's song if only a part of that song was assigned.)

## Assignment for Week Nine

1. Find a few electric shock notes every day.
2. Note-read the marked lines for each day.
  - In the section titled "Additional Music (3 Sharps)" (p. 52), specify any **1 to 2** lines for sight reading each day.
3. Work on the two assigned fun songs every day.
  - Each day have them: 1. Play the whole song (or the whole assigned section). 2: Work the extra practice spots each for five minutes or five good ones. 3: Play the whole song again one or two more times. (Do this for both songs)

## Send off — transition to the traditional method

1. At this point, transition your student to the method you have always used, picking it up two years into the game. Or you could simply begin a program working on two to three songs per week indefinitely (merging or not merging into your regular method at some point).
2. Introduce the following any time they are ready by dedicating 5-10 minutes in consecutive lessons until they understand: Letter names for staff and keyboard (teach the sayings and quiz them for a few weeks), more sophisticated rhythm approaches (explain standard terminology when they understand fractions), proper posture and hand position, pedaling, dynamics, phrasing, increased practice time, finger exercises, etc. etc.
3. Necessary tips for the remaining key signatures so that the approach of this method can be applied across the board if needed:
  - **Five Sharps:** Every note to the left of a black key is a shock note. Think "**lean right**" and send everything sharp (except B and E of course, we would not be tempted to sharp those).
  - **Five Flats:** Every note to the right of a black key is a shock note. Think "**lean left**" and send everything flat (except C and F of course, we would not be tempted to flat those).
  - **Four Flats:** The same as five flats with the exception of G (Quickly teach them how the letter names work on the keyboard if you have not already by this point.) Think: "**everything flat except G.**"
  - **Four Sharps:** The same as five sharps with the exception of A. Think: "**everything sharp except A.**"
  - **Six sharps or six flats:** If you ever see these keys, think Five sharps or Five flats and have fun explaining the addition of the ever popular white colored sharp/flat.

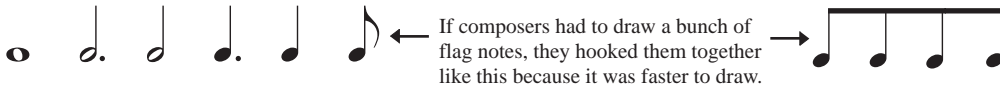
# Handy tips to take the headache out of teaching rhythm (a new approach for the early years)

## Explain that music is one of many things in life that has a beat

**Reinforcement:** What other things have beats? (walking, being on a swing, big sprinklers in the park, counting to 10, a jump rope, etc.) Imagine taking the beat out of any of these. (Have fun with this). Music is the same way. It simply has to have a beat or it won't sound too great.

## Explain the different kinds of notes (Do not give their proper names. This is best taught later.)

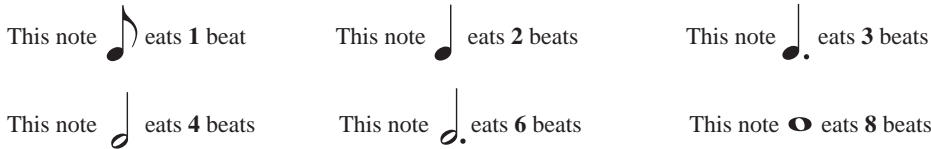
These are the notes you will see in the first few years (from biggest to smallest):



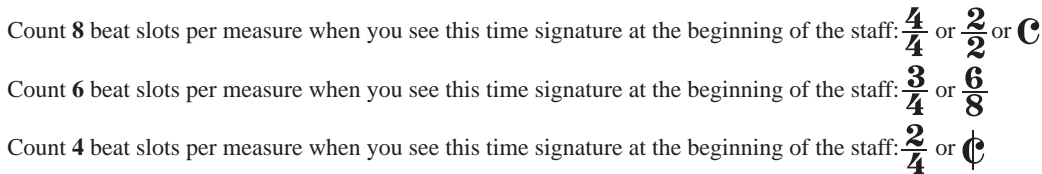
## A Simple, Consistent, Step-by-step Approach to Rhythm (if you can believe it!)

Can be applied 90% of the time in the first few years. The exceptions (see below) are few and easy to deal with.

### Step 1: How many beats does each note "eat"?:



### Step 2: How many beat slots fit into each measure?



### Step 3: Keep track of the beat slots by counting. (Remember: it won't be music unless you count with a **beat**).

**Step 4:** While **counting with a beat**, see if you can "drop" each note into the beat slot where it belongs. Choose a slow enough tempo to make it easy. (If, at first you have trouble figuring out both hands simultaneously, figure out one hand at a time.)

## Reinforcement:

count 8 beats

### London Bridges Falling Down

Remember to count with a beat.

### It's Raining, It's Pouring

**Q: Can beat slots be empty sometimes?**

(A: Yes, this is the purpose of rests.)

**Explanation:** For every note shown above there is a rest that is the same size. They operate the same way as notes. Think of rests as silent notes or notes that don't make a sound.

This rest  eats 1 beat.

This rest  eats 2 beats

This rest  eats 3 beats



This rest  eats 4 beats

This rest  eats 6 beats

This rest  eats 8 beats

**NOTE:** Composers usually do not bother to print rests if those rests (empty beat slots) occur before the beginning note of the song. (This is why some beginning measures don't have the right amount of beat slots.) In this case supply a mental beat for the notes in the incomplete first measure and start counting on the full measure that follows. (These are called "pick-up notes".)

**An even simpler approach that works quite often**

A high percent of early rhythm problems fall within switches between this size  and pairs of notes that are this size: 


A quick fix at this level is to assign words to each.

Example: any single syllable word such as "pear" could be used for this note



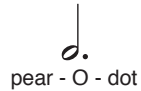
And any double syllable word such as "apple" could be used for a pair of these notes



This note  can be included using the word "pear - O" (since it looks like a hollow pear).



This note  can be included using the word "pear - O - dot" (since it looks like a "pear - O" with a dot).



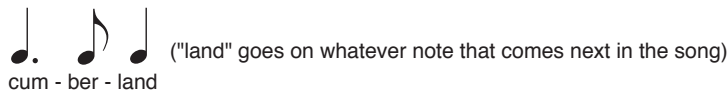
Example rhythm (say the words with a beat, as if in a jump rope saying):



Another frequently encountered early rhythm for which a word can be used is



The word "Cumberland" (pronounced in the typical way with a longer emphasis on the first syllable followed by a shorter emphasis on the second syllable) can be inserted thus:



**If the student doesn't seem ready for either of the above approaches:**

Keep it to a simple demonstration/mimic approach. More sophisticated approaches to teaching rhythm can be introduced gradually as they are ready.

**A Combination of all of the above approaches tailored to the individual student can cover almost all rhythms encountered in the first few years.**

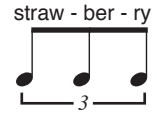
## Exceptions

### The Triplet

Early on, you may encounter three notes grouped together with a triplet bracket that looks like this:



In this case simply use the word "strawberry" (or any other three syllable word that places equal stress on each syllable.)



### The Double Flag



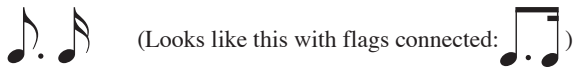
Two double flag notes  fit into one single flag note .

If the double flag notes come in pairs (as they usually do in the early years), a simple "remedy" can be applied by inserting the word "and" into the counting like this (see Pachelbel's Canon p. 39):

flags look like this when connected



Another common double flag rhythm is as follows:



The word "Cumberland" works for the above as well:



Sometimes, this rhythm repeats, in which case you do this:

















(See "If You're Happy and You Know It" p.15)



Usually, these simple fixes will work. However, there is one last method of handling double flag rhythms that is the most comprehensive, although a bit more complicated.

**Step One:** With a beat, count to 4, over and over. (This applies to all time signatures. If you want to switch your counting from single flag to double flag during a song, the counting for double flag needs to be twice as fast as the counting for single flag.)

**Step Two:** Plug in the following formula:

This note  eats 1 beat.	This note  eats 2 beats	This note  eats 3 beats	This note  eats 4 beats
This note  eats 6 beats	This note  eats 8 beats	This note  eats 12 beats	This note  eats 16 beats
This rest  eats 1 beat.	This rest  eats 2 beats	This rest  eats 3 beats	This rest  eats 4 beats
This rest  eats 6 beats	This rest  eats 8 beats	This rest  eats 12 beats	This rest  eats 16 beats

