

All You Need To Know About Note Reading...

...To Play Piano Like A Pro!

This pamphlet contains all you need to know to successfully attend "Scott the Piano Guy's" workshop or get started playing in a creative, chord style approach.

Here's some great news for people interested in learning how to play creative, lead sheet based piano ... you don't need to be a great music notation reader to be a great player! Think about it... when is the last time you saw a professional playing a piece of sheet music? Never, right? Good notation reading does not equal good piano playing.

All you need to know about note reading for this lead sheet based style of piano is the same thing they teach kids in the very first week of band or choir: to be able to name the notes in the treble clef, and play a one at a time sequence of notes with one hand.

First, let's look at a keyboard. No matter what the total number of keys you have on your keyboard (a full size piano has 88) all keyboards are just made up of 12 notes that repeat over and over. They look like this...

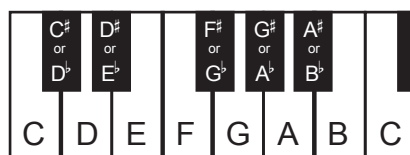


Notice that the black notes come in sets of 2 and 3. You can find a "C" note on a piano quickly because it is the white note directly to the left of a set of 2 black notes. Middle C is the C closest to the center of your keyboard.

Now let's figure out the names of the black notes. Notice that you can describe the same black note by saying it is either up (to the right) from its nearest white note or down (to the left) from its nearest white note. Because it can be described both ways, each black note has 2 names. It is exactly the same key, it can simply be called 2 different names.

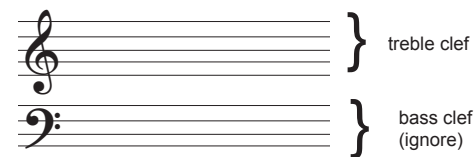
If you are describing it as being up from a white note you call it a "sharp" of the white note, such as "C-sharp." If instead you want to describe it as being down from the white note, you call it a "flat" of the white note, such as "D-flat". Remember, sharps go up & flats go down.

Finally, the symbols used to denote sharps and flats look like this: # (sharp), or ♭ (flat)



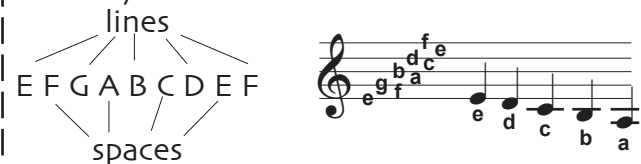
Now we need to figure out the correlation between the names of the notes themselves and how they are represented in music notation.

When you look at most sheet music you will see two symbols at the beginning of a set of 5 lines:



The set of 5 lines on top is called the treble clef and is the only one you will be interested in for our style of piano. Classical players use both of them, but you will NEVER have to read the lower one (called the bass clef). You can totally ignore it.

Looking at only the treble clef, each of the 5 lines represents a different key on the piano, and each of the 4 spaces between the lines also represents a different key. The five lines, from the bottom to the top, represent E, G, B, D, and F. The spaces between the lines, (again from the bottom to the top) represent F, A, C, and E. If you go sequentially up every line and space, you will find that they represent the keys one after another on a keyboard.



Which line or space that a note head (the little solid or hollow ovals you see all over music) is sitting on tells you what key on the piano to play. If a note is above or below the 5 lines, you need to keep counting step-wise every other line & space up or down the keyboard until you get to the note in question. You read music just like a book, from left to right.

You know what key to play based on what line or space the note is sitting on. Now we'll look at how long to hold it down. Keep in mind that unlike classical music, in which it is vital to play rhythms exactly as written, in non-classical playing it is actually incorrect to play things exactly as written. Music in this style is meant only as a guide, from which you can stray a bit to interpret it as you desire. So do not get hung up trying to "count" perfectly as do so many "ex"-piano students. Try to play the rhythms as you would whistle or hum them if you were leisurely walking down the street.

Having said that, here are the guidelines for what notes look like and their duration relative to each other:

♩ = Whole Note – 4 beats

♪ = Half Note – 2 beats

♫ = Quarter Note – 1 beat

♬ = Eighth Note – 2 of them equals 1 beat
- they can also be connected like this



♭ = Sixteenth Note – 4 of them equals 1 beat
- they can also be connected like this



If you ever see a dot after a note, just increase its duration by half of its original value. For example, if a half note equals 2 beats, a dotted half note equals 3.



Also, stems of notes can go up or down. They both mean the same thing...



Finally, when we refer to beats, many find it simpler to think of beats in terms of tapping your foot. For example, a half note is two foot taps while a quarter note is only one. The important thing is to keep the tapping steady and consistent so that all the different note durations stay in the correct proportion to one another.

Now take a look at these familiar melodies. Take advantage of the fact that you probably already know what these tunes sound like. Now connect what you just learned about notation with what you know these songs should sound like. Try to play these simple melodies on your keyboard with your right hand.

Don't worry about what fingers to use. Just use what feels most natural to you. The bigger objective is to quickly identify what keys to play, and how long to play them, based on the notes you are reading.

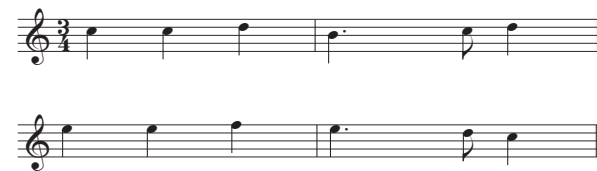
Row, Row, Row Your Boat



Jingle Bells



My Country 'Tis of Thee



Joy to the World



If playing these melodies seems a bit daunting at first, don't panic. You simply need to get proficient at quickly identifying which note in the treble clef represents which key on a keyboard.

To get the rest of the story on how to have FUN playing piano and how to sound good right away, we urge you to try and make it to a workshop, or find a certified teacher that is familiar with this creative, lead sheet based approach.

You can always find more info on our website at:

www.scottthepianoguy.com

