

First Steps.

A gentle start: reading notes and rhythm, scales and your first chords.

Free printable · 24 × 36 in

RHYTHM

Note & Rest Values

NOTE	REST	NAME	BEATS IN 4/4
		Whole note	4 beats
		Half note	2 beats
		Quarter note	1 beat
		Eighth note	½ beats
		Sixteenth note	¼ beats

A dot adds half the note's value: a dotted half note = 2 + 1 = 3 beats.

Time signatures

Top number: how many beats in a measure. Bottom number: which note gets the beat (4 = quarter, 8 = eighth).

TIME	WHAT IT MEANS	USED FOR
4 4	4 quarter-note beats per measure	Most pop, rock and hip-hop C (common time)
3 4	3 quarter-note beats per measure	Waltz
2 4	2 quarter-note beats per measure	March, polka
6 8	6 eighth notes, felt as 2 beats of 3	Litting, rolling (compound time)

FOUNDATIONS

Note Names on the Staff

Read from the bottom line up.

Treble clef

Lines: Every Good Boy Does Fine · Spaces: FACE

Bass clef

Lines: Good Boys Do Fine Always · Spaces: All Cows Eat Grass

PRACTICE TIP

Say the note names out loud as you read.

SCALES & KEYS

Major Scale

C D E F G A B C

W W H W W W W H

W = whole step (2 semitones), H = half step (1 semitone)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Tonic Supertonic Mediant Subdominant Dominant Submediant Leading tone

Every major key uses the notes of its major scale. C major uses only white keys, so it has no sharps or flats.

FOUNDATIONS

Piano Keyboard

One octave from C. Each black key has two names: the sharp of the white key to its left and the flat of the white key to its right.

FOUNDATIONS

Intervals

The distance between two notes, counted in half steps (semitones).

	INTERVAL	HALF STEPS	FROM C	SOUND
P1	Unison	0	C–C	consonant
m2	Minor 2nd	1	C–D♭	dissonant
M2	Major 2nd	2	C–D	dissonant
m3	Minor 3rd	3	C–E♭	consonant
M3	Major 3rd	4	C–E	consonant
P4	Perfect 4th	5	C–F	consonant
A4 / d5	Tritone	6	C–F♯	dissonant
P5	Perfect 5th	7	C–G	consonant
m6	Minor 6th	8	C–A♭	consonant
M6	Major 6th	9	C–A	consonant
m7	Minor 7th	10	C–B♭	dissonant
M7	Major 7th	11	C–B	dissonant
P8	Octave	12	C–C	consonant

The perfect 4th counts as consonant here; in some classical harmony it's treated as a dissonance.

CHORDS & HARMONY

Chord Formulas

Numbers are scale degrees of the major scale built on the root.

SYMBOL	CHORD	FORMULA	NOTES
C	Major	1 3 5	C E G
Cm	Minor	1 ♭3 5	C E♭ G
C° · Cdim	Diminished	1 ♭3 ♭5	C E♭ G♭
C+ · Caug	Augmented	1 3 ♯5	C E G♯
Csus2	Sus2	1 2 5	C D G
Csus4	Sus4	1 4 5	C F G

SEVENTH CHORDS

C7	Dominant 7th	1 3 5 ♭7	C E G B♭
Cmaj7 · CΔ7	Major 7th	1 3 5 7	C E G B
Cm7 · C–7	Minor 7th	1 ♭3 5 ♭7	C E♭ G B♭
Cø7 · Cm7,5	Half-diminished 7th	1 ♭3 ♭5 ♭7	C E♭ G♭ B♭
C°7 · Cdim7	Diminished 7th	1 ♭3 ♭5 ♭♭7	C E♭ G♭ B♭

♭ lowers a degree by a half step, ♯ raises it.

SCALES & KEYS

Circle of Fifths

Clockwise, each key is a perfect 5th higher and adds one sharp. Counter-clockwise, each is a 5th lower and adds one flat.

Where a position has two names, the one with fewer sharps or flats is the main label and the other is smaller. At 6 o'clock both have six, so both are the same size.

