



BEGINNER · BEFORE GRADE 1

Theory Pack

Six short lessons for a first-year musician: the stave, note names, how long notes and rests last, counting beats, the first Italian words, and making up a tune of your own. A test paper and answers at the back.

Everyone who ever wrote music started on this page.



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Joseph Haydn

A choirboy who taught himself from borrowed books, and ended up teaching Mozart and Beethoven. He began exactly where you are beginning.

How this pack works

Every lesson has two pages. The first one teaches — read it slowly, out loud if that helps. The second one has exercises to write straight onto the page. Nothing here needs an instrument, though it is more fun with one.

01	The stave, and high and low	Pages 3–4
02	Note names on the treble stave	Pages 5–6
03	How long notes and rests last	Pages 7–8
04	Beats, bars and counting to four	Pages 9–10
05	Loud and soft, fast and slow	Pages 11–12
06	Steps, skips and your first tune	Pages 13–14
—	Test paper, then the answer key	Pages 15–16

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

	Lesson read on	Exercises done on
Lesson one	_____	_____
Lesson two	_____	_____
Lesson three	_____	_____
Lesson four	_____	_____
Lesson five	_____	_____
Lesson six	_____	_____

WHAT YOU NEED

A pencil with a rubber on the end. That is all. Write lightly — everyone rubs things out, including composers.

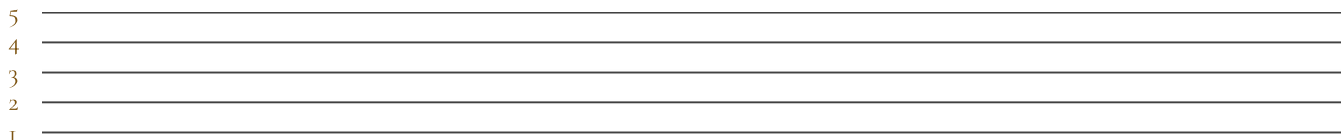
WHEN YOU FINISH

The test paper on page 15 is marked out of thirty, and page 16 has all the answers. When you can do it, you are ready for the Grade 1 pack.

The stave, and high and low

Music is written on five lines called a stave. Notes sit either *on* a line or *in* a space between two lines. The higher up the stave a note sits, the higher it sounds.

FIVE LINES, FOUR SPACES — COUNTED FROM THE BOTTOM



LINE NOTES AND SPACE NOTES

A line note has the line running right through the middle of it. A space note fills the gap between two lines and touches both.

THE TREBLE CLEF

The curly sign at the start of the stave. It tells you which notes the lines and spaces stand for — you will learn them in the next lesson.

REMEMBER

- Lines and spaces are always counted from the bottom upwards.
- Higher on the stave means a higher sound; lower means a lower sound.
- Draw noteheads as small ovals, a little wider than they are tall — not as circles.

CHECK YOURSELF 1 How many spaces does a stave have? 2 Which sounds higher — a note on the first line or on the fourth?

Answers: four; the note on the fourth line. · Marks go missing here: Drawing noteheads as round circles. Make them small ovals, so it is obvious whether the note sits on a line or fills a space.

The stave

Write your answers on the lines. Use the staves at the foot for drawing.

1 How many lines does a stave have? How many spaces?

2 Do we count the lines from the top or from the bottom?

3 Which sounds higher — a note in the first space or a note on the fourth line?

4 What is the curly sign at the start of the stave called?

5 On the staves below, draw a treble clef three times — as neatly as you can.

6 Draw a note on the third line, then one in the second space, then one on the fifth line.

YOUR WORKING

Note names on the treble stave

Music uses only seven letters: A B C D E F G. After G it starts again at A. Two little sayings give you every note on the treble stave.

The five lines

F _____
D _____
B _____
G _____
E _____

E G B D F — *Every Good Boy Deserves Football.*

The four spaces

E _____
C _____
A _____
F _____

F A C E — the spaces simply spell the word *face*.

MIDDLE C

The note just below the stave, with a tiny line of its own through it. That little line is called a ledger line. Middle C sits in the middle of the piano.

STEPPING UP

Line, space, line, space — as you move up one at a time, the letters go up one at a time too: E, F, G, A, B and onwards.

REMEMBER

- Only seven letters exist in music: A B C D E F G, then back to A.
- Lines are E G B D F; spaces spell FACE.

CHECK YOURSELF 1 Which letter comes after G? 2 What word do the four spaces spell?

Answers: A; the spaces spell FACE. · Marks go missing here: Counting the lines from the top. Always count from the bottom line upwards.

Note names

Say each letter out loud as you write it.

- 1 Write the seven letters of the musical alphabet in order.

- 2 Which letter comes after G?

- 3 Name the five line notes of the treble stave, bottom to top.

- 4 Name the four space notes, bottom to top.

- 5 Where is middle C written, and what is its little line called?

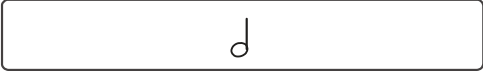
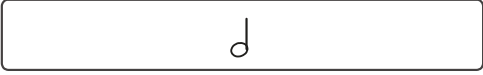
- 6 On the staves below, draw a treble clef and then write the notes C, E, G and B.

- 7 Write your own name using only the letters A to G — then write those notes on the stave.

YOUR WORKING

How long notes and rests last

A note's shape tells you how long to hold it. Each one lasts exactly twice as long as the next one down — that doubling is the whole secret of reading rhythm.

 Semibreve · 4 beats				
 Minim · 2 beats				
 Crotchet · 1 beat				

The note shapes

	Semibreve — an empty oval, no stem	4
	Minim — an empty oval with a stem	2
	Crotchet — a filled oval with a stem	1
	Quaver — filled in, with a tail	½

The rests that match

	Semibreve rest — hangs below the line	4
	Minim rest — sits on the line	2
	Crotchet rest — a squiggle	1
	Quaver rest — a stroke with one hook	½

A REST IS A SILENCE

A rest means *don't play* — but keep counting, because the beat carries on without you. The two blocks that look alike are easy to muddle: the semibreve rest *hangs* from the line, and the minim rest *sits* on top of it.

REMEMBER

- One semibreve = two minims = four crotchets = eight quavers.
- Stems go up on the right of the notehead, or down on the left.

Notes and rests

Count in crotchet beats — one beat each.

1 How many beats does a semibreve last? And a minim?

2 How many crotchets are there in a semibreve?

3 How many quavers are there in a minim?

4 Which rest hangs below the line, and which rest sits on it?

5 What does a rest tell you to do?

6 On the staves below, draw four crotchets, then two minims, then one semibreve.

7 Draw a crotchet rest and a minim rest underneath them.

YOUR WORKING

Beats, bars and counting

Music has a steady pulse, like footsteps or a heartbeat. Those beats are grouped by bar lines, and the two numbers at the start tell you how many beats go in each bar.



Two beats

Count *1 2, 1 2*. The feeling of marching.



Three beats

Count *1 2 3*. The feeling of a waltz, or a swing.



Four beats

Count *1 2 3 4*. The most common of all.

BAR LINES

A single upright line divides one bar from the next. Two thin lines together show the end of a section, and a thin line beside a thick one shows the end of the piece.

BEAT ONE IS THE STRONGEST

Tap your foot and you will find you press hardest on the first beat of every bar. That is how a listener knows where a bar begins.

REMEMBER

- The top number is how many beats fit in a bar.
- A bottom number of 4 means the crotchet is the beat.
- Every bar must add up exactly — no more beats and no fewer.

CHECK YOURSELF 1 How many beats are in a bar of 3/4? 2 Which beat of the bar feels strongest?

Answers: three; the first. · Marks go missing here: Bars that do not add up. Count every bar through before you move on to the next one.

Beats and bars

Check that every bar you write adds up.

1 What does the top number of a time signature tell you?

2 How many crotchet beats are there in a bar of 3/4?

3 Which beat of the bar feels the strongest?

4 A bar of 4/4 has a minim in it already. Which single note would complete it?

5 What does a bar line do?

6 On the staves below, write four bars of 4/4 using crotchets and minims. Add the bar lines.

7 Clap what you wrote, counting 1 2 3 4 out loud.

YOUR WORKING

Loud and soft, fast and slow

The notes tell you *what* to play. Italian words written above and below the stave tell you *how* — how loud, how fast, and how the notes should feel.

How loud

<i>piano</i> · <i>p</i>	softly
<i>forte</i> · <i>f</i>	loudly
<i>mezzo forte</i> · <i>mf</i>	medium loud
<i>crescendo</i>	getting louder
<i>diminuendo</i>	getting softer

How fast

<i>adagio</i>	slowly
<i>andante</i>	at a walking pace
<i>moderato</i>	at a medium speed
<i>allegro</i>	fast and cheerful
<i>rallentando</i>	gradually slowing down

TWO SIGNS TO KNOW

A dot above or below a note means *staccato* — short and separated. A curved line joining different notes means *legato* — smooth and joined.

WHY ITALIAN?

Printed music began in Italy, so its words travelled with it. Musicians everywhere have used them ever since.

REMEMBER

- *p* is soft and *f* is loud — the letters, not the words, are what you will see in the music.
- Speed words go at the very start; loud and soft marks go wherever the music changes.

CHECK YOURSELF 1 What does *f* mean? 2 Which is faster, *allegro* or *adagio*?

Answers: *loudly; allegro*. · Marks go missing here: Writing the speed word halfway through the piece. It belongs above the very first bar.

Loud and soft, fast and slow

Answer in English words.

1 What do *p* and *f* stand for, and what do they mean?

2 What does *crescendo* mean? And *diminuendo*?

3 Put these in order from slowest to fastest: allegro, adagio, moderato.

4 What does *rallentando* ask you to do?

5 What does a dot above a note mean?

6 Choose a piece you are learning. Write down two Italian words you can find in it, and what they mean.

YOUR WORKING

Steps, skips and your first tune

A melody moves in only three ways: it steps to the next note, it skips over one or more, or it stays where it is. Good tunes mostly step, and save the skips for the exciting moments.

STEP

Line to the very next space, like C to D. Smooth and easy to sing.

SKIP

Line to line or space to space, like C to E. Brighter, and it needs a reason.

REPEAT

The same note again. Useful for insisting on something.

The C major scale

C D E F G A B C — all the white notes from one C to the next. A tune built from these notes will always sound at home.

C is the *tonic*: the home note. Ending on it is what makes a tune sound finished.

Making up four bars

- 1 Choose 4/4 and clap a rhythm you like.
- 2 Start on C, and mostly step up and down.
- 3 Give it one high note — the tune's high point.
- 4 Come home to C on the last beat.

REMEMBER

- Sing what you write. If you cannot sing it, it is probably leaping about too much.
- One high point per tune is plenty — that is what makes it a high point.

CHECK YOURSELF 1 Is C up to E a step or a skip? 2 Which note is home in C major?

Answers: a skip; C. • Marks go missing here: Ending a tune on any note but the tonic — it will sound as though it stopped rather than finished.

Your first tune

Use the staves at the foot – this is the page where you compose.

- 1 Name the three ways a melody can move.

- 2 Write the notes of the C major scale, going up.

- 3 Which note is the home note – the tonic – of C major?

- 4 Is C to D a step or a skip? Is C to E a step or a skip?

- 5 Write a four-bar tune in C major in 4/4 on the staves below. Start on C and end on C.

- 6 Add a dynamic mark and a speed word to your tune, then play or sing it to somebody.

YOUR TUNE

Beginner test paper

Total 30

Name _____ Date _____

QUESTION 1 · THE STAVE

8 marks

- a Name the five line notes and the four space notes of the treble stave.

QUESTION 2 · NOTES AND RESTS

8 marks

- a How many beats does each of these last: semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver? Which rest hangs below the line?

QUESTION 3 · BEATS AND BARS

6 marks

- a Write two bars of 3/4 on the stave below, using crotchets and minims, with a bar line between them.

QUESTION 4 · WORDS AND SIGNS

8 marks

- a What do these mean: *p*, *f*, *allegro*, *adagio*? And what does a dot above a note mean?

ROUGH WORKING

The answers are on the next page. Twenty or more out of thirty and you are ready for the Grade 1 pack.

Mark

/ 30

Answers

Where an exercise asks for drawing, clapping or composing, accept any answer that follows the rule being practised.

LESSON ONE

1 Five lines, four spaces. 2 From the bottom. 3 The note on the fourth line. 4 The treble clef. 5–6 Drawing — check the notehead sits properly on its line or fills its space.

LESSON THREE

1 Four; two. 2 Four. 3 Four. 4 The semibreve rest hangs below the line; the minim rest sits on it. 5 Stay silent, but keep counting the beats. 6–7 Drawing.

LESSON FIVE

1 *Piano*, softly; *forte*, loudly. 2 Getting louder; getting softer. 3 Adagio, moderato, allegro. 4 Gradually slow down. 5 Play the note short and detached. 6 Their own answer.

LESSON TWO

1 A B C D E F G. 2 A. 3 E G B D F. 4 F A C E. 5 Just below the stave, on a ledger line. 6–7 Writing.

LESSON FOUR

1 How many beats are in each bar. 2 Three. 3 The first. 4 A minim. 5 It divides one bar from the next. 6–7 Writing and clapping — check each bar adds to four.

LESSON SIX

1 Step, skip, repeat. 2 C D E F G A B C. 3 C. 4 A step; a skip. 5–6 Composing — check it starts and ends on C and every bar adds to four.

TEST PAPER · 30 MARKS

Q1 (8) Lines E G B D F; spaces F A C E. *Four marks for each set, taken as a whole.*

Q3 (6) Two bars each adding to three crotchet beats, with a bar line between and correct notehead shapes. *3 marks per bar.*

WHAT COMES NEXT

The Grade 1 pack picks up here: the bass clef, dotted notes and ties, key signatures, intervals and the tonic triad.

Q2 (8) Four beats, two beats, one beat, half a beat; the semibreve rest hangs below the line. *1–2 marks each.*

Q4 (8) Softly; loudly; fast and cheerful; slowly; play the note short and detached. *2 marks each for the first three, 1 each for the last two.*

WHERE MARKS ARE USUALLY LOST

Noteheads drawn as circles, bars that do not add up, and rests muddled between the semibreve and the minim.

FIVE MINUTES OF REVISION

Say the line notes up and down: E G B D F, F D B G E.

Name a rest for every note value.

Give the English for p, f, allegro and adagio.

Clap four steady beats, then four in threes.

Point out middle C on a keyboard.

Sing the C major scale up to C and back home.