



# Overview of Music Reading for Choral Singers

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STAFF, SYSTEM, RHYTHM, PITCH,  
AND INTERVALS

# Where does notation come from?

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1

Notation in Europe was first written sometime between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries

2

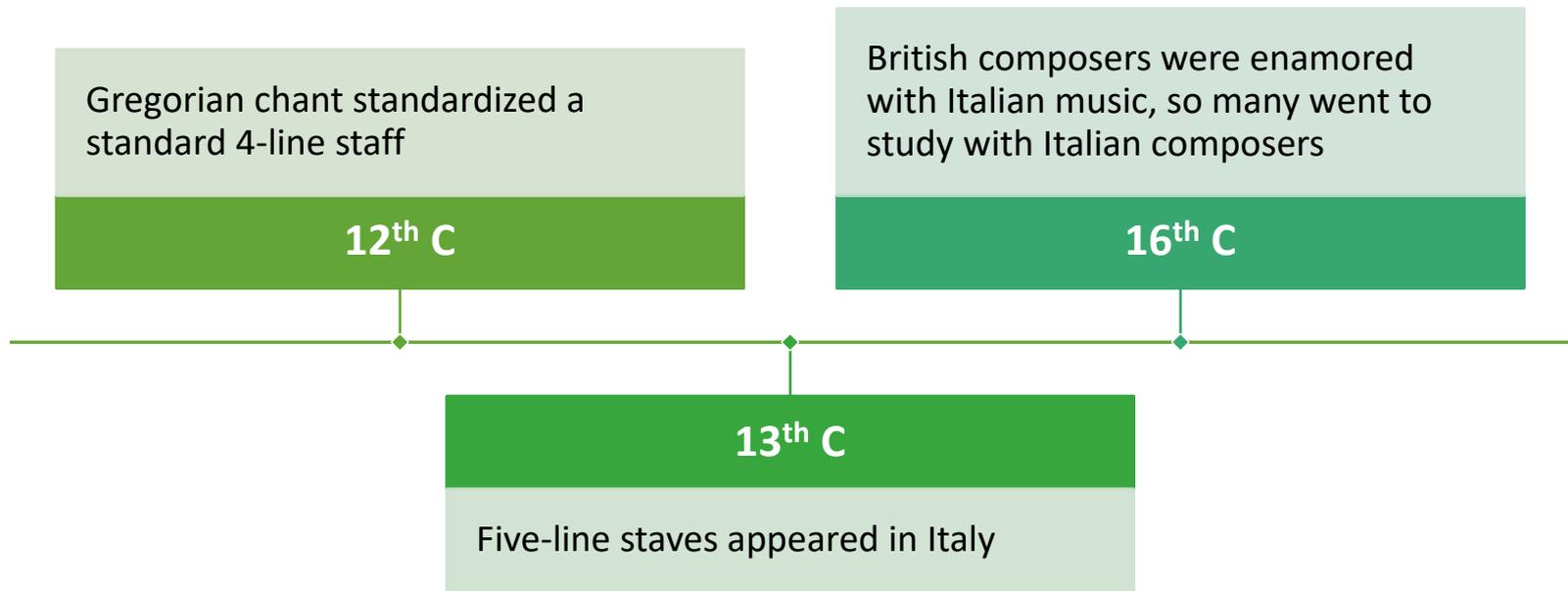
The first notation was written on one line, and only showed the contour of the song

3

Gradually, more lines were added

# Where does notation come from?

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Music notation  
in American  
choral music is  
basically just  
16th century  
Italian notation.

# Starting from zero

SEEING THE  
“MAP” HIDDEN  
IN THE DOTS



Title

Recorded by TOTO

# Africa

For SATB\* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50



Arranger

Arranged by  
**ROGER EMERSON**



Composer

Words and Music by  
**DAVID PAICH and  
JEFF PORCARO**

With a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )

Piano

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

$B^b$  Am Dm

Recorded by TOTO

# Africa

For SATB\* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by  
ROGER EMERSON

Words and Music by  
DAVID PAICH and  
JEFF PORCARO

With a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )

One Staff

Piano

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

*mp*

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

*mp*

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

$B^b$

Am Dm

*mp*

9

Staff System

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# Africa

For SATB\* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by  
ROGER EMERSON

Words and Music by  
DAVID PAICH and  
JEFF PORCARO

One measure

with a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )

Piano

8

8

8

8

*Trax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.*

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor *mp*

Bass *mp*

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

B<sup>b</sup> Am Dm

*mp*

9

Measure numbers

Recorded by TOTO

# Africa

For SATB\* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by  
ROGER EMERSON

Words and Music by  
DAVID PAICH and  
JEFF PORCARO

With a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )

Clef

Time signature

Key signature

The musical score is presented in a standard format with piano accompaniment at the top and SATB vocal parts below. The piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a common time signature. The vocal parts are for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, with lyrics written below the notes. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *mf*. A box containing the number '9' is placed above the Soprano staff to indicate the start of the vocal entry. A note at the top right of the piano part states: "ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9." The key signature is one flat (Bb), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is indicated as "With a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )".

Recorded by TOTO

# Africa

For SATB\* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by  
ROGER EMERSON

Words and Music by  
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With a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )

Piano

8

8

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

Divisi "Split"

9

Soprano

Alto

Soprano

Alto

*mp*

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

Tenor

*mp*

Bass

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

B<sup>b</sup>

Am Dm

*mp*

9

# Reading Tip #1: Highlight your part!!

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Digital sheet music or personal copies

Recorded by TOTO

# Africa

For SATB\* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

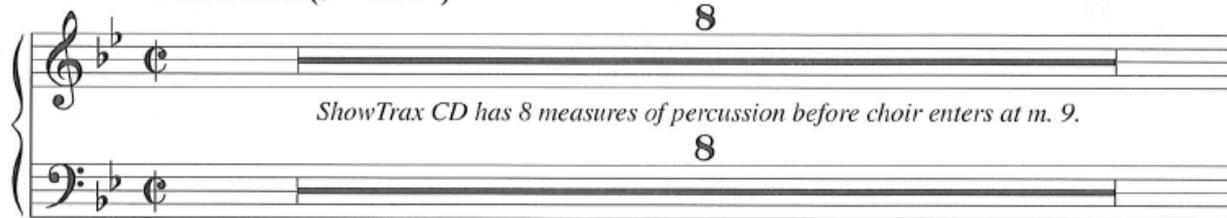
Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by  
ROGER EMERSON

Words and Music by  
DAVID PAICH and  
JEFF PORCARO

With a beat ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$ )

Piano



8

8

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

Detailed description: This block shows the piano introduction for the first system. It consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef, in B-flat major. Both staves have a whole rest for 8 measures, indicated by a horizontal line with the number '8' above and below. A note below the staves states: 'ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.'

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

*mp*

*mp*

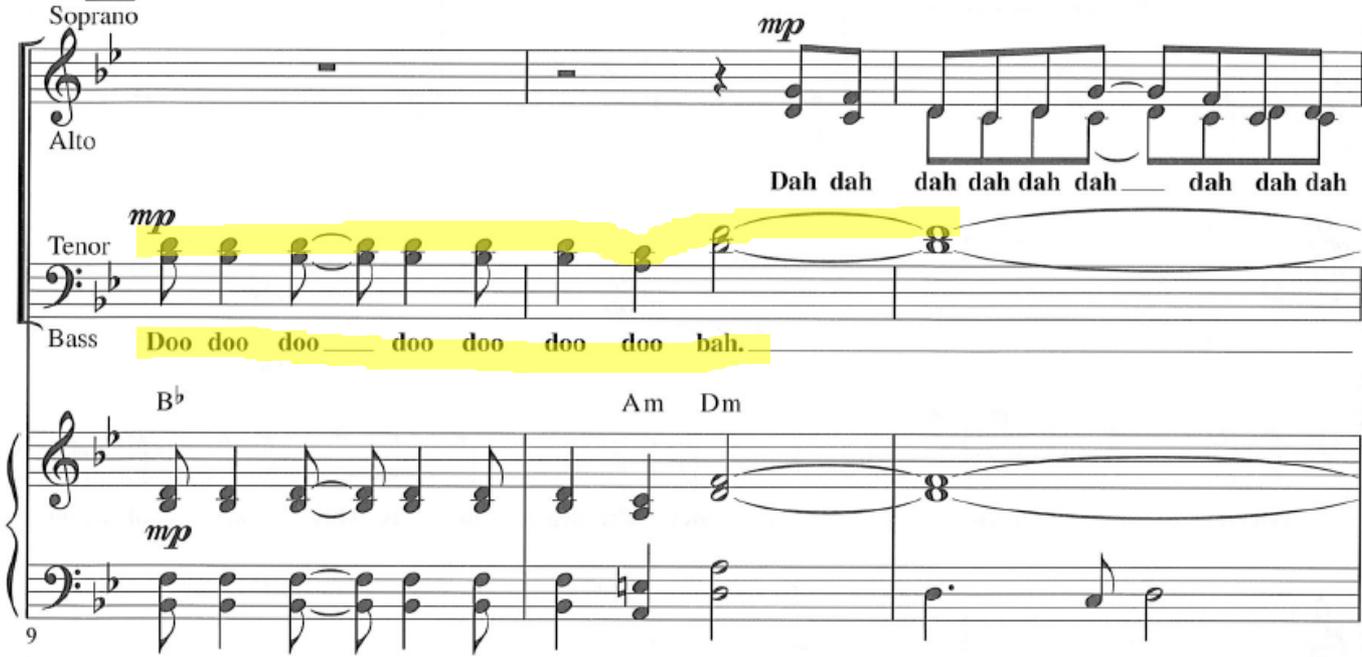
Doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

$B^b$  Am Dm

*mp*

9



Detailed description: This block contains the vocal and piano parts for measures 9, 10, and 11. Measure 9 is marked with a box containing the number '9'. The Soprano and Alto parts have whole rests. The Tenor part has a melodic line starting on G4, moving up to D5, with lyrics 'Doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.' The Bass part has a similar melodic line. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Chords are labeled as B-flat, Am, and Dm. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano). The Tenor and Bass parts have a yellow highlight under the first seven notes of their respective lines. The piano part has a large brace under measures 10 and 11, with an '8' above it, indicating an 8-measure phrase.

# Common “Map” Terms

REPEATS,  
ENDINGS, AND  
THE “DA’S”

*Often, just following along is the hard part!*

# Repeat Sign

16

*p* The storm is pass-ing o - ver. The storm is pass-ing o - *mf*

*mf* The storm is pass-ing o - ver. The storm is pass-ing o -

*p* The storm is pass-ing o - ver. The storm is pass-ing o - *mf*

*p* *mf*

20

- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu. *f*

- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu. *f*

- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu. *f*

*f*

# Endings

46

1.

Clap

good, good good I feel good. Clap

good I feel good. Clap

good, good good I feel good.

Then repeat

This block shows the first ending of the song. It consists of three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "good, good good I feel good. Clap". The first ending is marked with a first ending bracket and a "1." sign. A green arrow points to the end of the first ending with the text "Do these measures once". Another green arrow points to the beginning of the piano accompaniment with the text "Then repeat".

Skip to here the 2<sup>nd</sup> time

2.

*sfs* *f*

good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...

good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...

good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...

2.

*sfs* *f*

This block shows the second ending of the song. It consists of three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...". The second ending is marked with a second ending bracket and a "2." sign. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings *sfs* and *f*. A green arrow points to the beginning of the second ending with the text "Skip to here the 2<sup>nd</sup> time".

# The “Da’s”

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Da Segno (D.S.)



Da Capo (D.C.)

DC al Coda

*2nd time to Coda* 

DS al Coda

 *Coda*

Example: Lydia, the  
Tattooed Lady



# Familiar Dynamic Terms

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- *ppp*
- *pp*
- *p*
- *mp*
- *mf*
- *f*
- *ff*
- *fff*

Forte  
Piano  
Mezzo

# Unfamiliar Dynamic Terms

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Subito: literal - “suddenly”

- Ex: *sub. p*

Sforzando: literal - “trying hard, struggling”

- Ex: *sfz* or *sf*

# Making Changes

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## VOLUME

Crescendo (“rising”)

- “Cresc.”



~~Decrescendo (“falling”)~~

Diminuendo (“getting smaller”)

- “Decresc.” or “Dim.”



## SPEED

Ritardando (“delaying”)

- “Rit.”

Rallantando (“slowing”)

- “Rall.”

Accelerando (“quickenning”)

- “Accel.”

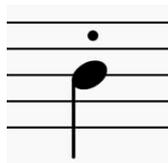
Piu mosso (“more motion”)

Meno mosso (“less motion”)

# Common Articulations

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Staccato (“detached”)



Marcato (“march”)



Fermata (“stop ,



Tenuto (“held”)



Accent

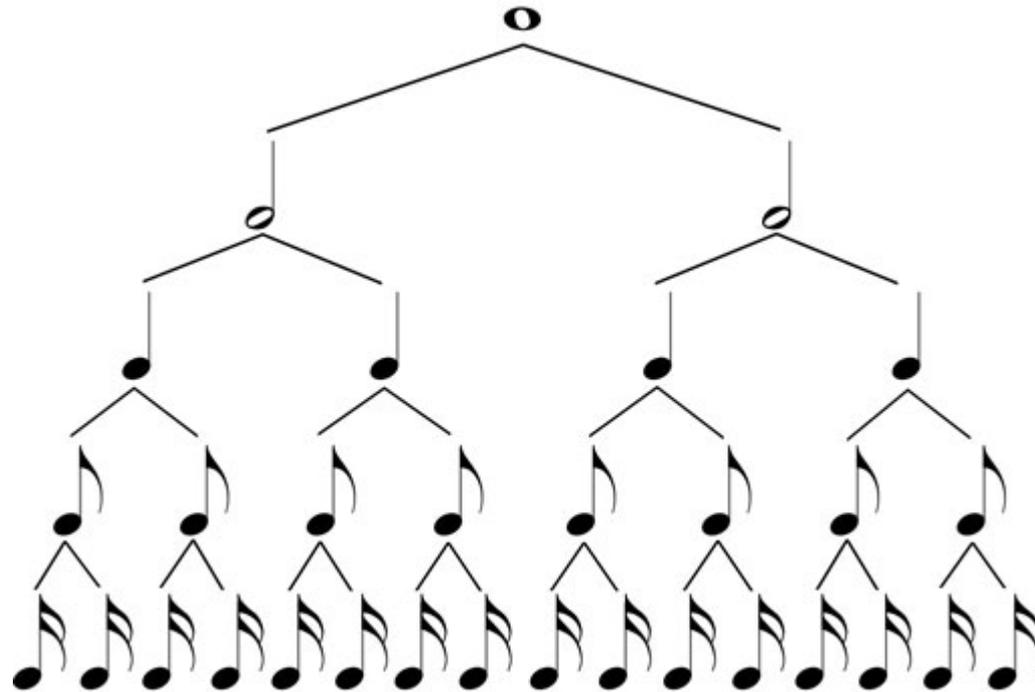


# Rhythm symbols

Name	Note	Rest	Equivalents
Breve (Double Whole Note)			Two Whole Notes
Whole Note			Two Half Notes
Half Note			Two Quarter Notes
Quarter Note			Two Eighth Notes
Eighth Note			Two Sixteenth Notes
Sixteenth Note			Two Thirty-second Notes
Thirty-second Note			Two Sixty-fourth Notes
Sixty-fourth Note			Two One Hundred Twenty-eighth Notes

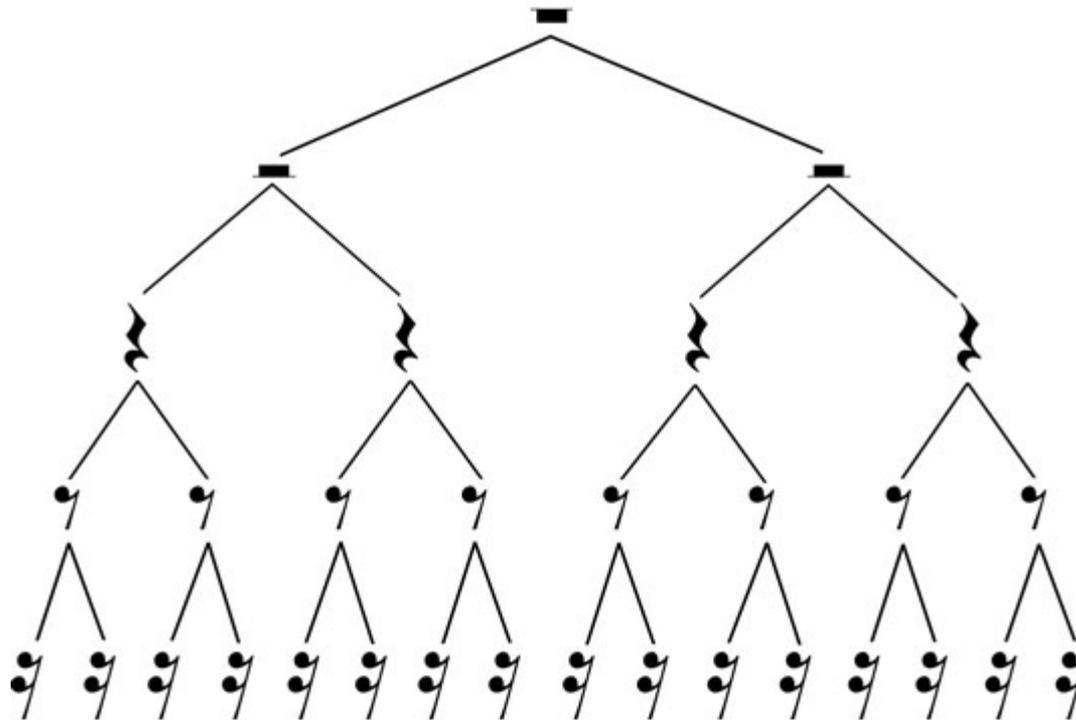
# Rhythms are ratios

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# Rhythms are ratios

---



# Common rhythm mistakes

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Notes are ratios, not specific values



# Time Signatures

Assigning specific values the ratios

The image illustrates time signatures with two examples of musical notation. The first example shows a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 4/4 time signature. Two green arrows point to the 4/4 signature: the top arrow is labeled "4 beats per measure" and the bottom arrow is labeled "Quarter = 1". The second example shows a grand staff with a 12/8 time signature. Two green arrows point to the 12/8 signature: the top arrow is labeled "12 beats per measure" and the bottom arrow is labeled "Eighth = 1".

# Counting: Rhythm Reading for Adults

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A musical staff in 4/4 time, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The staff contains 12 measures of music. The first four measures are quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5. The next four measures are quarter notes: B4, A4, G4, and F4. The final four measures are chords: G4-A4, G4-F4, G4-F4-E4, and G4-F4-E4. Above the staff, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are written above each measure, repeated three times. Two vertical green lines are placed between the 4th and 5th measures, and between the 8th and 9th measures, indicating the end of two 4-measure phrases.

2

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

Hills are wear-ing white, white cot-ton blan-kets,

# Both at the same time!

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37

The image shows a musical score for two voices, Treble and Bass clef, with lyrics. The Treble clef part has a melody of eighth notes and quarter notes, while the Bass clef part has a simple accompaniment of quarter notes. The lyrics are: buds that blossom, blossom flow'rs of white.

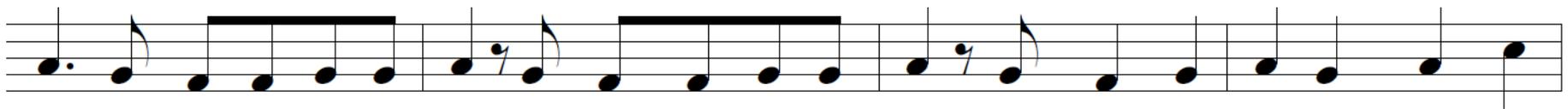
buds that blossom, blossom flow'rs of white.

buds that blossom, blossom flow'rs of white.



# Making it harder: Dots and Rests

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I was fol-low-ing the pack all swal-lowed in their coats with scarves of red tied 'round their

# Pitch

WE ARE NATURALLY DRAWN TO TONIC—LET'S SEE!

# Reading Pitch: Stepwise

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1



2



3



# How do you know where 1 is?

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For sharp keys, the last sharp is 7

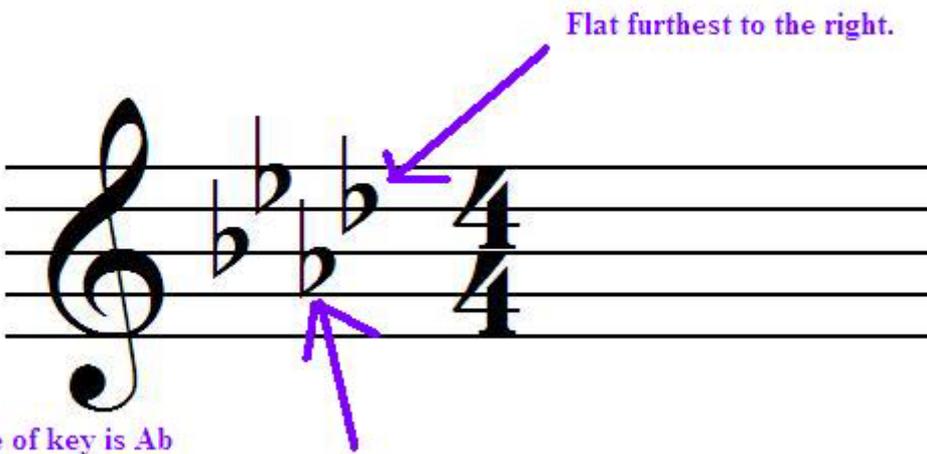
For flat keys, the last flat is 4

Key Signature



A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. A purple arrow points to the last sharp, C#, which is the 7th note of the scale.

Flat furthest to the right.



A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. A purple arrow points to the last flat, Eb, which is the 4th note of the scale. The text "Name of key is Ab" is written below the staff.

Name of key is Ab

# Reading Pitch: Intervals

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<https://www.sightreadingfactory.com/>