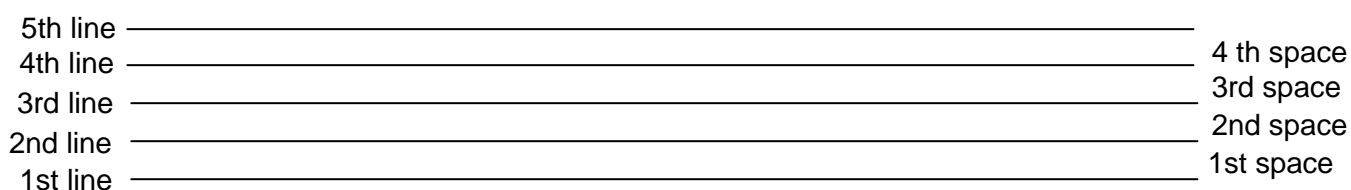


A brief introduction to the standard music notation

This brief introduction to the standard (classical) music notation considers only a minimum of concepts necessary to start reading melodies transcribed using this system.

The staff

In the standard music notation melodies are written on a staff consisting of a pattern of five lines equidistant from each other and four spaces between them. Lines and spaces on this staff are counted from bottom to top:



Representation of musical notes

Melodies are written on the staff as sequences of musical notes and rests. A musical note (or note) has information about the duration of the corresponding sound and its frequency, or *pitch*.

The duration of the notes is indicated using the symbols described below:

Notes duration

Name	Symbol	Duration	Equivalence
Whole note		1	2 half notes, or 4 quarter notes, or 8 eighth notes or 16 sixteenth notes
Half note		1/2	2 quarter notes, or 4 eighth notes or 8 sixteenth notes
Quarter note		1/4	2 eighth notes or 4 sixteenth notes
Eighth note		1/8	2 sixteenth notes
Sixteenth note		1/16	

These symbols can be followed by a point, called a *dot*, which adds half of its duration; for example, indicates a duration of $1/4 + 1/8 = 3/8 = 3$ eighth notes.

Representation of musical rests

The duration of the music rests (silences) is indicated using the symbols described below:

Rests durations

Name	Symbol	Duration	Equivalences
Whole rest		1	2 half rests, or 4 quarter rests, or 8 eighth rests or 16 sixteenth rests
Half rest		1/2	2 quarter rests, or 4 eighth rests or 8 sixteenth rests
Quarter rest		1/4	2 eighth rests or 4 sixteenth rests
Eighth rest		1/8	2 sixteenth rests
Sixteenth rest		1/16	

Dots can also be used to increase the duration of each of these silences by one half.

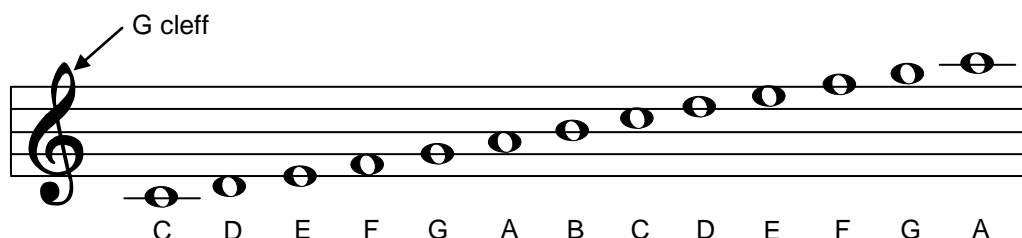
The two previous tables have been limited to show the durations of the notes and silences that we will use in these pages, but there are shorter durations: fusa, semifusa,...

As you will see in the following staves, the height of a note is determined by its position on the staff and also by the following three factors:

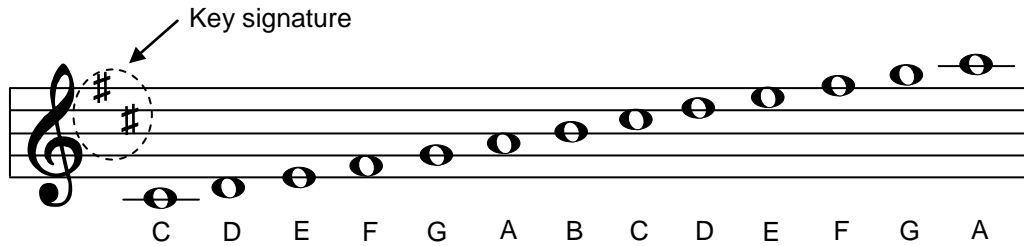
1. The clef used, which is written at the beginning of the staff and serves to set the name of the notes.
2. The *key signature*, which consists of *sharps* (\sharp) and *flats* (b) placed immediately after the key and serves to indicate alterations corresponding to the scale used in the construction of the melody.
3. The alterations, sharps, flats, and *naturals* (\natural) used throughout the staff.

There are different clefs used in musical writing, but for the music to be considered in these pages it is enough with the G clef in the second line, which assigns the second line to the note G.

For the C scale, in which there are no alterations in the notes:

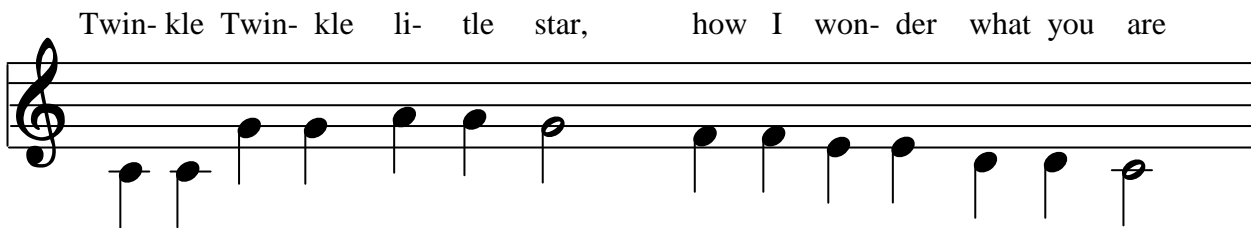


For the D scale, in which there are alterations for C and F:



At this point we have enough knowledge to tackle the writing of the first musical phrase of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," in C major, in this notation:

Andante: ♩ = 100



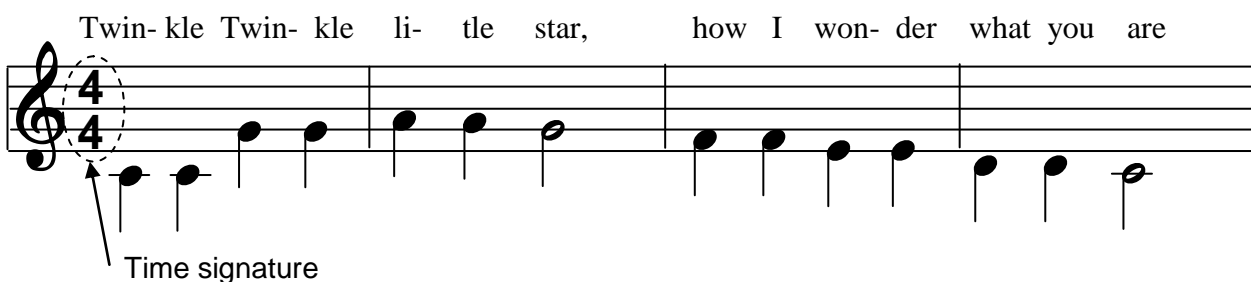
An indication of an *Andante* movement with a tempo of 100 quarter notes per minute is included. Sometimes only the movement or only the tempo is indicated.

Note that since this transcript is in C major, its scale does not show alterations, so there is no key signature following the clef.

Separation in measures

The description of the initial phrase of the melody of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" that we have just elaborated is almost complete, but it lacks information regarding a very important point: just as the writing and reading of a literary, scientific or technical work is simplified if it is separated into parts, chapters, sections, etc., so too is the writing and reading of a piece of music simplified if it is properly divided. Every piece of music is divided into parts of equal length called *measures*. These divisions are indicated by vertical dividing lines running through the staff, called *bars*. The type of measures is indicated by the *time signature* display consisting of two numbers: the lower one (denominator) indicates the duration of notes taken as the unit and the upper one (numerator) indicates the number of these units in the measure:


Andante: ♩ = 100



In this case there are 4/4 measures: four quarter notes per measure.

If this phrase is transposed to the key of D major, it will be necessary to include the key signature to indicate the alterations found in this key, so the score will be as follows:

Twin- kle Twin- kle li- tle star, how I won- der what you are



Another example of a score

Below we use the transcription of the first sentence of "Amazing Grace" to show other details that appear in some scores:

A- ma- zing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wrech like me



Note the following:

- According to the bar indication, there should be three-quarter notes per bar, but in the first measure there is only one note, with a quarter note duration; therefore, a silence with a quarter note duration should be placed before it. Thus, there is an anacrusis measure.
- In the eighth measure, there is a dotted half note, equivalent to the three quarter notes required by the measure. But this note G is linked to the next one by a ligature, so it has a total length of five quarter notes.
- The last measure does not show the note E in the third space and with a duration of quarter note corresponding to the word "I" which begins the second phrase.

Final remark

This summary of the classical notation includes only the details considered necessary to get you started on the study of the content of the [iMusicMate](#) website. You will need to expand your study through other sources; The website [The Method Behind The Music](#) is a good one