

Musical Staff: The skeleton upon which musical notation is hung.



The Musical Staff is comprised of a clef (5 lines and 4 spaces) on which notes or rests are placed. At one time the staff was made up of 11 lines and 10 spaces.

It proved very difficult to read many notes quickly and modern brain research has demonstrated that human perception actually does much better at quick recall when it can “chunk” information into groups smaller than 7.

Historical Musical Staff

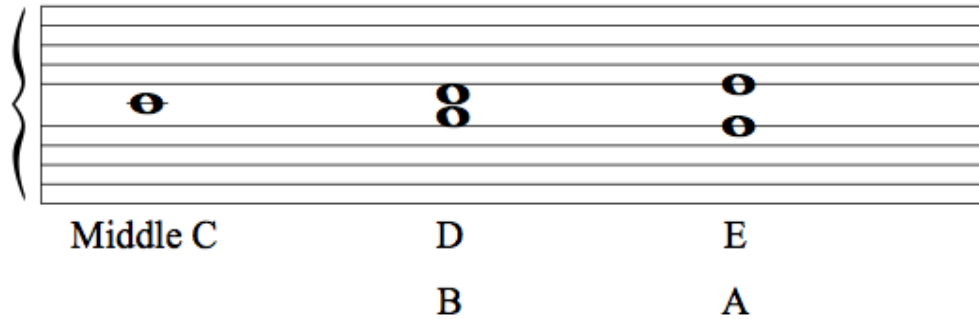
Spaces'	Lines'
Names: E	Names: F
C	D
A	B
G	G
D	E
B	A
G	F
E	D
C	B
A	G

C=Middle C

How hard is it to pick out notes on this?

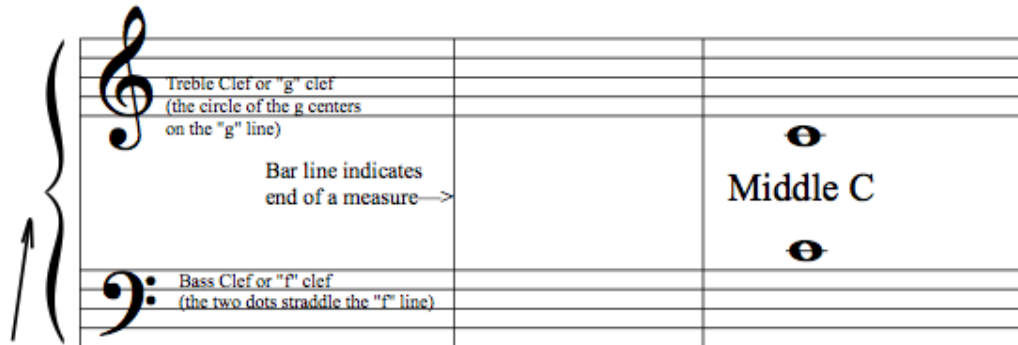
Many years ago, the people developing musical notation created a helpful modification by removing the line that designated where “Middle C” goes on the staff and ending up with two clefs that straddle middle C. The treble clef includes C and all the notes above it. The Bass clef includes C and all the notes below it. (See *Transitional Musical Staff*):

Transitional Musical Staff



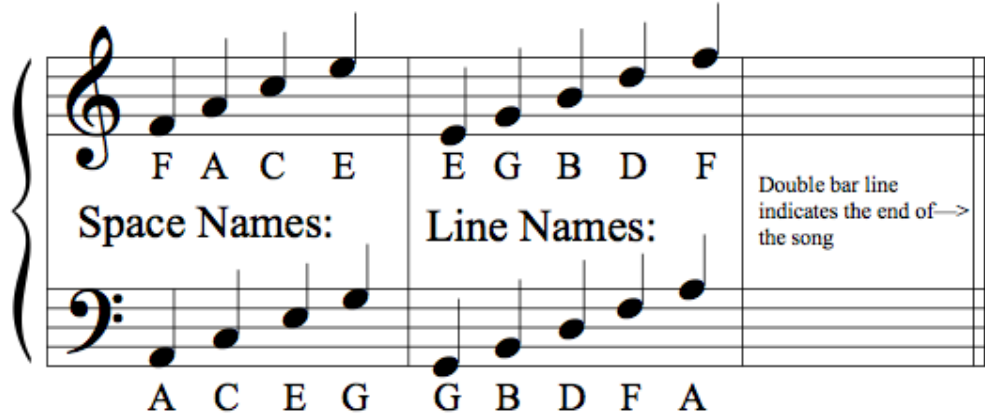
Now the current musical staff has separated the top staff and the bottom staff further apart, but they represent the same pattern of notes as above, now with room for lyrics between the staves. (*Staves* is the plural form of *Staff*)

Musical Staff



The bracket means these measures are played at the same time

The treble and bass clefs grouped together are called the "Grand Staff"



The Staves are distinct from each other by their "Clef Sign." (See above) This example shows the two most commonly used Clef Signs. Compare the Space and Line names in the Historical example and this one. The information is now "chunked" into less than 7 bits of information (which turns out to be the natural limit in the human brain!) on each staff. Isn't this much easier to read?!

The Musical Staff in relation to dulcimers:

Mountain Dulcimer: The lowest (bass) string is usually now tuned to D below middle C, the middle string tuned to A on the top of the bass clef (or using ledger lines below the treble clef). If the

melody string(s) are tuned to A, they are at the same pitch at the middle string. If they are tuned to d (an octave above the bass string) they are on the first space below the treble clef or using a ledger line above the bass clef.

Notes on Mountain Dulcimers

The image shows two musical staves, Treble Clef and Bass Clef, illustrating notes on mountain dulcimers. The first staff is labeled "DAA tuning" and shows notes D (on the first space below the bass clef), A (on the first space of the bass clef), and A (on the second space of the bass clef). The second staff is labeled "DAd tuning" and shows notes D (on the first space below the bass clef), A (on the first space of the bass clef), and d (on the first space below the treble clef). A note below the 'd' has a text annotation: "(the lower case 'd' indicates a higher octave than the bass D)".

Hammered Dulcimer: If your lowest bass course is a D, it is normally tuned to the same D below middle C as the mountain dulcimer. If your lowest bass course is a G, it is normally tuned to the G which is the first space at the top of the bass clef, or using ledger lines below the treble clef.

Notes on Hammered Dulcimers

The image shows two musical staves, Treble Clef and Bass Clef, illustrating notes on hammered dulcimers. The first staff is labeled "The 1st (4) notes on the bass bridge of a smaller hammered dulcimer" and shows notes G (on the first space below the treble clef), A (on the first space of the bass clef), B (on the second space of the bass clef), and C (on the third space of the bass clef). The second staff is labeled "The 1st (4) notes on the bass bridge of a larger hammered dulcimer" and shows notes D (on the first space below the treble clef), E (on the first space of the bass clef), F# (on the second space of the bass clef), and G (on the third space of the bass clef). A treble clef with a "3" below it is positioned above the first staff.