

Teaching Music Theory

Level 1- This level involves mostly memorization of foundational theory concepts.

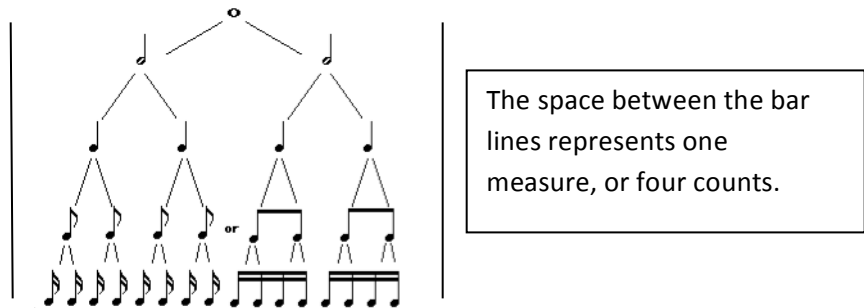
Section 1.1

♪ Note names ON the treble (G) clef (Every Good Boy Does Fine/ FACE)

- i. Always recite from the bottom to the top. Begin by making sure students can identify notes as being space or line notes. Practice correctly numbering the lines and spaces.
- ii. Treble clef phrases relate to people, whereas bass clef phrases relate to animals
- iii. An alternate approach is to teach up the alphabet starting from the bottom line and continuing up the staff: the bottom line (E), the space (F), the line (G), the space (A), etc. As long as students do not skip any lines or spaces, they should proceed alphabetically up the musical scale. The grand staff can be introduced here and registers/octaves discussed. (See *Grand Staff hand-out*)

♪ Identify notes / rests and give values in common time (whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth)

- i. Rhythm should be discussed as space (value) in time with the whole note occupying the most space. The value mathematically decreases by half as you go down the rhythm tree.
- ii.



- iii. Have students use combinations of above notes to compose measures of 4 counts. Beam the eighth notes in pairs and the sixteenth notes in fourths/quads, in order for the students to see entire beat units.

♪ Time Signature (top # = beats/measure; bottom = the note that receives one beat OR the value of the whole note)

- i. The top number can be anything, but the bottom number can only be 2, 4, 8, 16 (or 32) in common notation practices.
- ii. Explain that 4/4 is called “common time” because it is used the most. As long as 4 is in the denominator, the note values are as in the tree above. Four represents the quarter note receiving one beat. Another way to view the denominator of your time signature is as the value of the whole note. In this case, the other values are still mathematically related in the same way as discussed above. Other meters will be discussed in levels 4 and 5.

♪ Definitions:

Measure: Space between two bar lines

Bar Line: Lines that separate measures

Clef: Symbol at beginning of staff denoting names of lines and spaces

Staff: System of 5 lines & 4 spaces upon which music is written

Dynamics: Volume

Tempo: Speed

Articulation: How you attack & release a note

Unison: Everyone on same part

Section 1.2

♪ Note names ON the bass (F) clef (Great Big Dogs Fight Alligators / All Cows Eat Grass)

- i. See note on 1.1.

♪ Dotted notes (dot BESIDE note means to add half the value of the note)

- i. Teach students that the value of the dot changes depending on the note it accompanies.
- ii. It helps to remind students that they will now be dealing with fractions of beats.

♪ Symbols: ♮ Fermata - Hold as long as conductor specifies

 // Cesura - Grand pause

 ’ Breath Mark

 :|| Repeat

 Tie- connects two notes of the same pitch

Section 1.3

♪ Dynamics and all related symbols (*ff-f-mf-mp-p-pp, cresc./decresc.*)

♪ Tempos and all related terms and symbols (*rit., rall., a tempo, accel.*, metronome markings and basic Italian terms:

Largo → Adagio → Andante → Moderato → Allegro → Vivace → Presto (slowest to fastest)

- i. Students often confuse *adagio* with *andante*. Remind them that those two words in particular are in alphabetical order. *Allegro* is a type of car, which means that it would fall towards the end of the sequence because it is fast.
- ii. These are the most commonly used tempo terms. There are hundreds of others, so it is efficient to have a music dictionary in your classroom.

Section 2.1

♪ **Ledger lines:** Lines that extend the staff up and down (How to read ledger notes)

- i. When teaching ledger notes, begin with the closest line on the staff, and use the alphabet. When the note is above the staff, proceed up the alphabet. When the note is below the staff, proceed backwards through the alphabet.
- ii. Be careful not to skip any lines or spaces when naming the ledger notes.

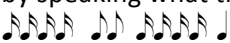
♪ Texture: **Monophonic (unis.)** - all parts same pitch and same rhythm

Homophonic - Same rhythm, different pitches (like chorales → harmony)


Polyphonic - Different rhythm & pitches; completely independent parts

- i. Use examples from your musical repertoire to demonstrate these concepts.

♪ Basic counting in common time using above notes/rests (without dotted rhythm)

- i. Use dashes for notes worth more than one count. Example: A whole note is 1-4 when writing rhythm.
- ii. For notes that are fractions of beats like eighth notes and sixteenth notes, emphasize that the number is always the beginning of the beat. The syllables represent the rest of the beat/the remaining parts of the beat. Eighth notes are counted “1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &...” Sixteenth notes are counted “1 e & a 2 e & a...” with the number falling on your foot tap.
- iii. Each syllable (in counting) represents a note. Therefore, there should not be more syllables than notes in the rhythm.
- iv. Have the students dictate rhythm by speaking what they hear. For example, “1e& 2& 3e&a 4” is written 

Section 2.2

♪ Accidentals: 

- i. Teach accidentals using a piano and half steps.

♪ Articulation terms and related notational symbols: staccato, legato (slur), accent, marcato

- i. Explain that articulation is how you attack and release a note. Again, find examples in your music.
- ii. Definitions: Staccato: short and detached
Legato: smooth and connected
Slur: connects two different pitches (like a legato marking between 2 notes)
Accent: with emphasis
Marcato: accented and staccato

♪ *D.C. al Coda* versus *D.S.^{al} al Coda* ☺

- i. Del capo (D.C.) means “from the beginning.”
- ii. Del segno (D.S.) means “from the sign.”
- iii. Al coda ☺ means “to the coda.”

Section 2.3

♪ Intervals (5th, octave, 2nd, etc.)- Distance between two notes

- i. Always count the bottom note as “1”. Then count “line, space, line, space” all the way to the top note.

Section 3.1

♪ Endings and order of performance with various “road signs”

♪ Rhythms/Counting: ♩ ♪ (“1-2 &”) and ♩ ♪ (“1 a”)

- i. To teach the dotted quarter-eighth, the teacher should approach it as a quarter note followed by two eighth notes, with the first two notes being tied together.
- ii. When teaching the dotted eighth-sixteenth, present it as four sixteenth notes, with the first three being tied together.
- iii. Be sure that students are mentally subdividing the beat.

Section 3.2

♪ Enharmonic spelling

- i. Use the piano to show that any note can be spelled more than one way using accidentals. Begin with black keys.