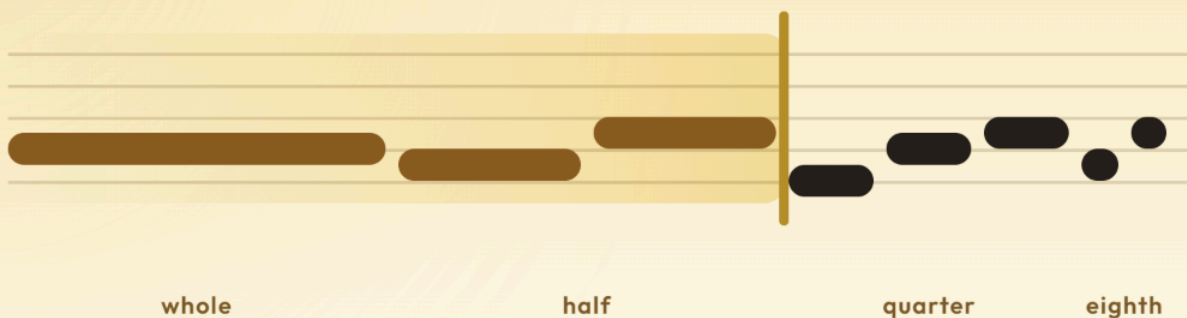


— FROM NOTATION TO SOUND

Reading music, decoded

Turn written notation into sound, with
progressive sight-reading that builds accuracy
and fluency.



Before you begin

Start with a small clear goal

Reading music turns written symbols into an imagined or performed sound. Sight reading adds a challenge: the music is unfamiliar, preparation is limited, and you keep going instead of stopping to repair every detail.

This book develops pitch reading, rhythm, expression, navigation, and practical reading habits. The examples use keyboard-friendly notation, but most skills also apply to other instruments and singing. At Chord Compass Academy, we teach landmarks, shapes, and rhythmic groups so you can recognize patterns instead of decoding every note from scratch.

What you need

Use a keyboard, another suitable instrument, or your voice for pitch work. Clapping and tapping are enough for rhythm lessons. A metronome helps, but a slow spoken count is a useful starting point.

C4 means middle C. Higher octave numbers mean higher pitches. These numbers are not fingerings. The examples leave fingering open so they can serve different learners.

A clear path through each lesson

Read the idea, inspect the picture, put it in your hands, and check the result. During learning practice, stop to isolate a problem. During a sight-reading attempt, keep moving and rejoin at the next clear beat. A second pass is useful practice, but it is no longer a fresh reading test.

The study course

The foundations and short study collection lead into studies 19–67, a graded course of original eight-bar studies. Each study provides preparation, an opening line, a fresh continuation, and pitch checks. The course advances from landmarks to rhythm, key signatures, additional clefs, and two-staff coordination.

Cover the pitch checks until after playing. Their numbers identify bars; a plus sign joins simultaneous chord tones, and rest marks silence. Repeated names remain separate written events unless a printed tie joins them into one sustained sound.

Preview the written register, count a full bar, then read all eight bars without stopping. Keep the pitch check covered until after the first pass. Count every rest and continue the pulse across the page turn. Then practice the smallest useful connection.

Your course map

Contents

1 A quick tour of the page	6
2 Treble clef landmarks	8
3 Bass clef and the grand staff	10
4 Read shapes and intervals	12
5 Note values and an even pulse	14
6 Rests are counted music	16
7 Dots, ties and slurs	18
8 Time signatures you can feel	20
9 Sharps, flats and naturals	22
10 Key signatures and useful preparation	24
11 Chords and vertical reading	26
12 Reading two staves together	28
13 Expression is part of reading	30
14 Repeats, endings and road signs	32
15 Triplets, syncopation and swing	34
16 Lead sheets and other notation systems	36
17 A reliable sight-reading routine	38
18 A four-week reading plan	40
Study collection	42
Studies C and D	43
Studies E and F	44
Studies G and H	45
Fresh reading one	46
Fresh reading two	47
Fresh reading three	48
Study 19 Landmarks without counting every line	49

Your course map

Contents continued

Study 20 Bass landmarks across the staff	51
Study 21 Middle C and nearby ledger notes	53
Study 22 Reading above the treble staff	55
Study 23 Reading below the bass staff	57
Study 24 Seconds and thirds as visual shapes	59
Study 25 Fourth and fifth leaps with preparation	61
Study 26 Octave recognition without panic	63
Study 27 Repeated notes with changing durations	65
Study 28 Mixed contour in a wider phrase	67
Study 29 Quarter rests inside the phrase	69
Study 30 Eighth notes in pairs	71
Study 31 Dotted quarters with a clear subdivision	73
Study 32 Sixteenth notes in small groups	75
Study 33 Eighth rests and offbeat entries	77
Study 34 Three-quarter time with a moving accent	79
Study 35 Two-quarter time with quick bar lines	81
Study 36 Six-eight time in two large beats	83
Study 37 Nine-eight time in three large beats	85
Study 38 F sharp carried by the key signature	87
Study 39 B flat across more than one octave	89
Study 40 Two sharps without extra hesitation	91
Study 41 Two flats and a bass line	93
Study 42 Three sharps in a lyrical line	95
Study 43 Three flats with clear inner steps	97
Study 44 Four sharps and quiet preparation	99
Study 45 Four flats with a stable home note	101

Your course map

Contents continued

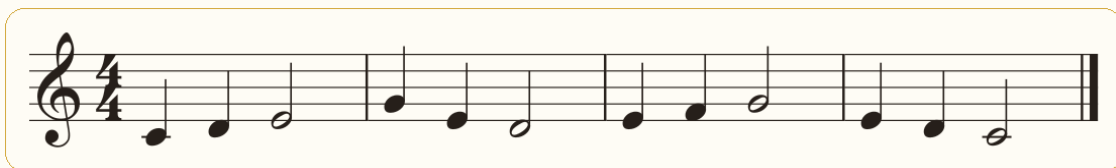
Study 46 Chromatic neighbors within a bar	103
Study 47 Minor reading with a raised seventh	105
Study 48 Triplet groups against a steady beat	107
Study 49 Offbeat accents without changing meter	109
Study 50 Short articulation with full rhythmic space	111
Study 51 Slurs that show phrase groups	113
Study 52 Ties across the beat	115
Study 53 Dynamics over a longer line	117
Study 54 Alto clef as a movable reference	119
Study 55 Tenor clef without a register jump	121
Study 56 Reading chord shapes from the bottom	123
Study 57 Broken chords read as one shape	125
Study 58 Two staves with aligned attacks	127
Study 59 A moving bass under a held melody	129
Study 60 Contrary motion on two staves	131
Study 61 Chord symbols above a melody	133
Study 62 An eight-bar route with repeat signs	135
Study 63 Five-eight time grouped two plus three	137
Study 64 Seven-eight time grouped two, two, three	139
Study 65 Cut time in two half-note beats	141
Study 66 A slow reading with long range preview	143
Study 67 A final mixed reading challenge	145
Answers for lessons 1 to 9	147
Answers for lessons 10 to 18	148
Study notes and pitch checks	149
Quick reading reference	150

Find your way · Chapter 01

A quick tour of the page

A staff has five lines and four spaces. Notes may sit on either, and short ledger lines extend the same pattern above or below. The position tells you about pitch; the note's shape tells you about duration.

The clef tells you how positions map to pitches. The key signature supplies recurring sharps or flats. The time signature tells you how durations fit into bars. Tempo tells you the speed of the chosen beat.



Read the opening from left to right: treble clef, 4/4 time, then notes grouped into four bars.

What a note tells you

The vertical position of the notehead tells you pitch once the clef is known. The notehead's fill, stem, flags, beams, and dots tell you duration. A note can be high and long, low and short, or any other combination.

Bar lines divide the music into measures. A final bar line usually pairs a thin line with a thicker one. A double thin bar line can mark a section boundary or other structural change without necessarily ending the piece.

Read instructions before playing

Check the title, instrument, clef, key signature, time signature, tempo, and opening dynamic. Scan for repeats and changes. A few seconds of preparation can prevent a wrong starting register or an unexpected page jump.

The title is not a playing instruction, but it may suggest character. A tempo word is only part of the picture: a metronome mark states which note value gets the printed beats per minute.

Chapter 01 • Practice

Find before you name

Look at the example again. Point to a bar line, a stem, a filled notehead, an open notehead, and the final bar line. You do not need to name the pitches to identify these parts.

A useful reading order

First find where the music begins and ends. Then identify its pulse and pitch area. Finally notice patterns: repeated notes, rising lines, or matching bars. This gives you a map before you deal with details.

The check

- How many lines does a standard staff have?
- Which symbol assigns pitch names to staff positions?
- Does a time signature by itself tell you the speed?

In your hands

Tap four steady beats. Follow the first bar with your eyes while saying “one, two, three, four.” The first two notes last one beat each. The last note lasts two beats. Keep counting even when no new note begins.

Avoid a common habit

Do not measure duration by the amount of white space after a note. Engraving spacing can suggest timing, but the written note value is the authority. A half note lasts twice as long as a quarter note at the same tempo, even when page spacing looks uneven.

A first milestone

If you can locate the start, count the bar, and notice that the last note lasts longer, you are already reading useful musical information. Pitch names are the next layer.

Find your way · Chapter 02

Treble clef landmarks

The treble clef gives the staff an anchor: G4, on the second line from the bottom. Its curl surrounds that line. Learn the anchor first, then use nearby steps and shapes to find your way.

The line notes from bottom to top are E4 G4 B4 D5 F5. The spaces are F4 A4 C5 E5. A mnemonic can help at first, but you should also learn to recognize a few positions directly.



The notes climb by letter from E4 to F5. Moving to the next line or space advances one letter.

Three anchors to know

Middle C, C4, sits on one ledger line below the treble staff. G4 is on the second line. C5 is in the third space from the bottom. Learn those three positions so you can find nearby notes without restarting a mnemonic.

From G4, the space above is A4 and the next line is B4. The space below is F4 and the next line down is E4. Practice in both directions so downward reading feels as familiar as upward reading.

Stems do not determine pitch

A note with its stem pointing down is not a different pitch from the same notehead with a stem pointing up. In a single melodic voice, stem direction generally changes around the middle of the staff to keep notation tidy.

When a score has multiple voices on one staff, stem direction may help distinguish them. For now, focus on the notehead's position.

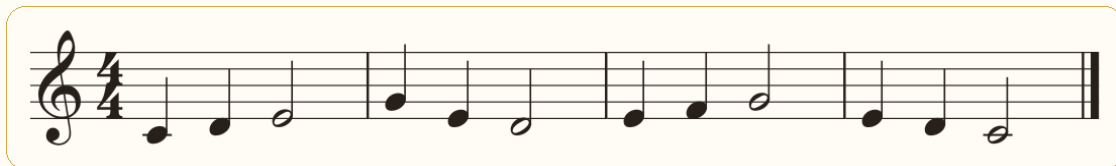
Treble staff · bottom to top

E4	F4	G4	A4	B4	C5	D5	E5	F5
line	space	line	space	line	space	line	space	line

Chapter 02 · Practice

Read from the nearest landmark

Use the first note in the example below as C4. Read its motion before naming every note: step up, step up, hold; leap up, leap down, step down, hold.



Study A uses a small range and repeated rhythmic shapes.

Three passes

First, speak the note names without a pulse. Next, tap the rhythm using one pitch. Finally, combine pitch and rhythm at a comfortable speed. These passes isolate the two tasks before putting them together.

The check

- What note sits on the second line of the treble staff?
- What note sits in the third space from the bottom?
- Where is middle C written in treble clef?

In your hands

Write or point to C4, G4, and C5. Then find D4, A4, and B4 by moving one staff position from a landmark. Repeat in a different order so you are recognizing positions rather than remembering a sequence.

When note naming gets slow

Look for direction. If you know a note is G and the next note moves up one adjacent staff position, it must be some kind of A. The key signature or accidental will later tell you whether it is A natural, sharp, or flat.

Progress target

Recognize the three landmarks immediately and work out nearby notes calmly. You do not need instant recognition of the whole staff before playing short music.