

Theory Guide

Introducing Theory and Notation in KS2

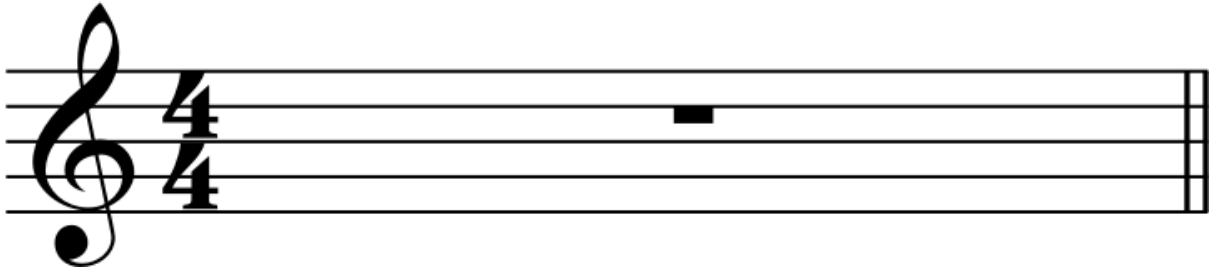
In KS1, the children will begin to recognise a connection between sound and symbol. They will embed an understanding of pulse, rhythm and pitch, laying the foundations for KS2 where they will start to formally read music. The **Musical Elements** documents for Years 1 and 2 will provide an overview of all the information you will need for those year groups.

In KS2, the children will learn that one way of writing music down is through Western notation. This document will show you how to do that. It will also explain key musical words and concepts.

Theory	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Crotchets	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paired Quavers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minims	✓	✓	✓	✓
Semibreves		✓	✓	✓
Semiquavers			✓	✓
Rests	✓	✓	✓	✓
Time signatures 2/4, 3/4, 4/4	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dynamics	Piano, Forte Crescendo Diminuendo	Piano, Forte Crescendo Diminuendo	Piano Forte Crescendo Diminuendo Mezzo forte Mezzo piano	Piano Forte Crescendo Diminuendo Mezzo forte Mezzo piano
General theory: stave, barline, clef	✓	✓	✓	✓
Keys, key signatures and scales covered	C major G major F major A minor E major	C major G major F major A minor D major D minor	C major G major F major A minor D major D minor A major Eb major	C major G major F major A minor D major D minor A major F minor

What is a Stave?

In Western notation, music is written on a ladder of five lines called a **'stave'**. When music is written down, it is placed on a stave. You can see that the stave has five lines:



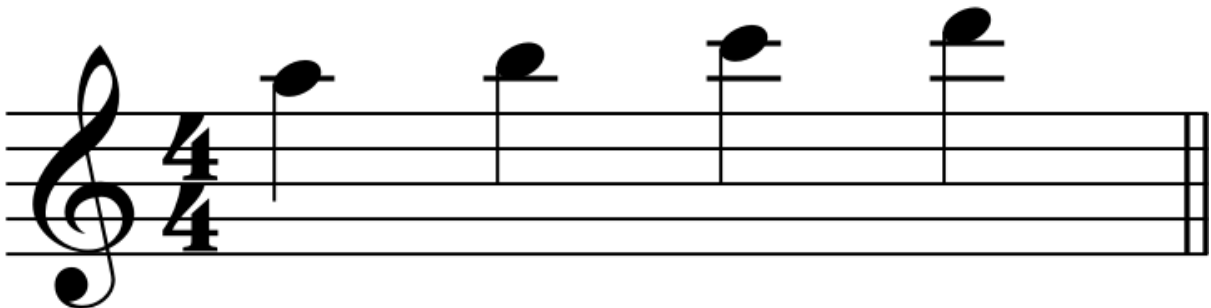
Notes can be in the spaces between the lines:



They can also be on the lines:

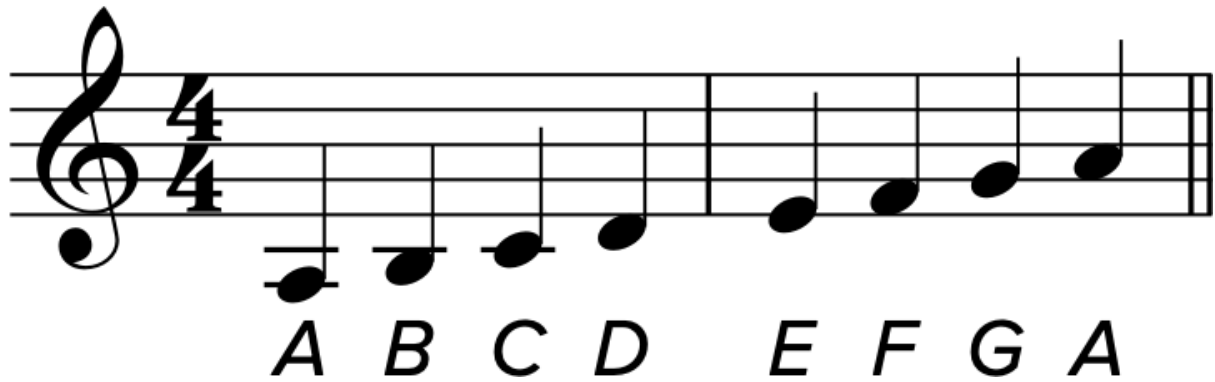


When you run out of lines, the notes jump onto a stepping stone, which takes them up to the next stave. These stepping stones are called **'ledger lines'**:



The higher the note is on the ladder/stave, the higher the sound or pitch.

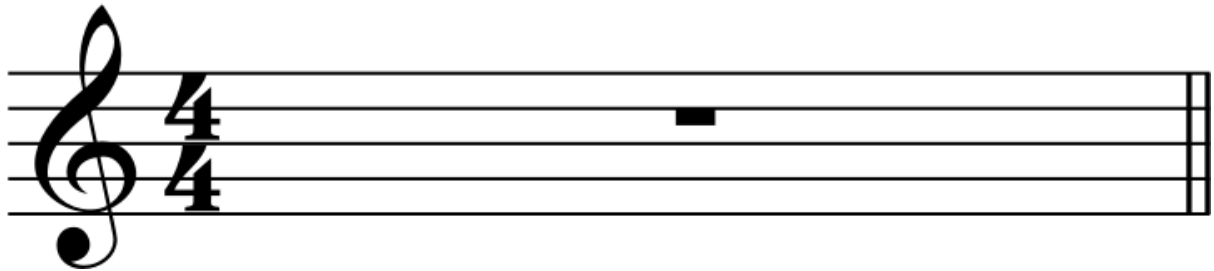
The names of the notes are from the musical alphabet, from A through to the following A:



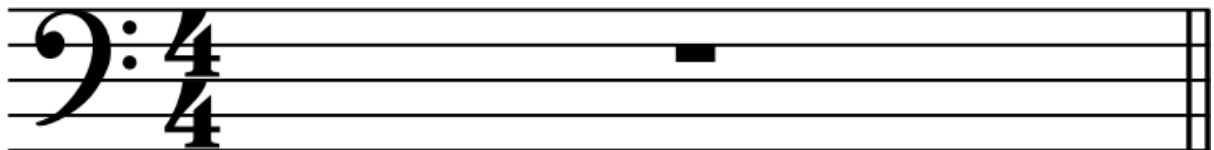
What is a Clef?

A sign called a '**clef**' is placed at the start of the staff to show whether the notes are low, like a tuba or a double bass, high, like a trumpet or a flute, or in the middle, like a viola.

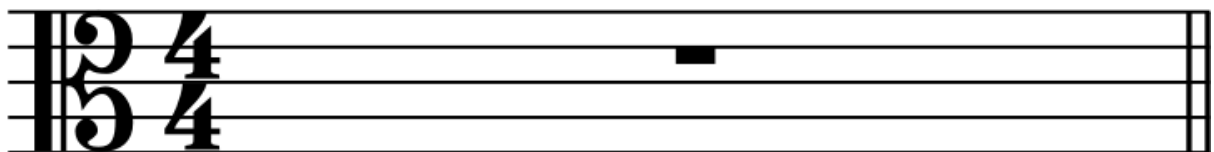
The high clef is called the '**treble clef**' and this is the clef you will be mainly using:



The low clef is called the '**bass clef**':



The middle clef is called the '**alto clef**':



Key Signatures, Keys and Scales

On the staff and after the clef sit symbols called **'sharps'** or **'flats'** (sometimes there will be no sharps or flats). These symbols tell us what **'key'** the music is in – which notes are sharp or flat. These relate to a group of notes called a **'scale'** – a set of eight notes that travel stepwise, up and then down.

The notes you learn will always relate to a scale. You will learn the notes from these scales:

C Major – used in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6



F Major – used in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6



G Major – used in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6



E Major – used in Year 3



E^b Major – used in Years 5 and 6



A Major – used in Year 6



A Natural Minor and A Minor – used in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6



D Minor – used in Years 4, 5 and 6



C Minor – used in Year 5



F Minor – used in Year 6

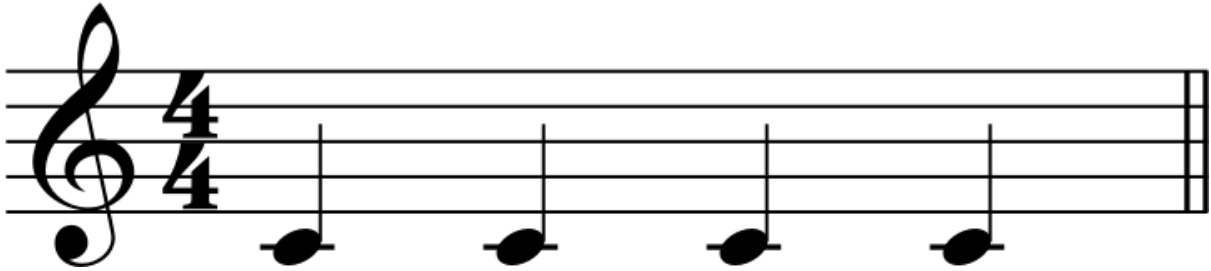


Duration

In music, some notes are long, some are short and some are in-between.

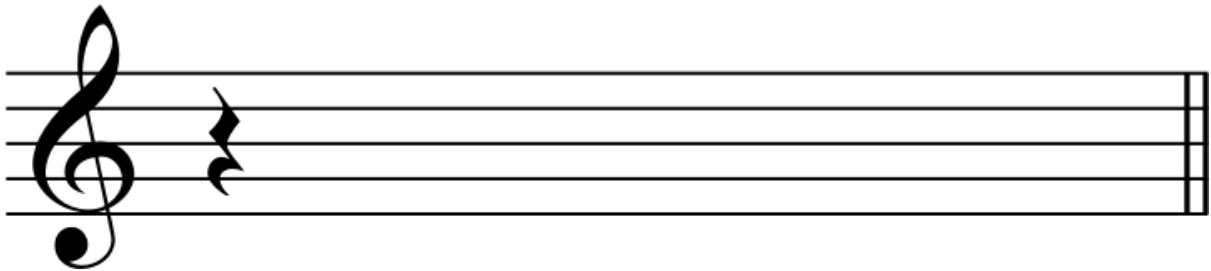
Duration – Crotchets

These are **crotchets** and they are each worth one count.



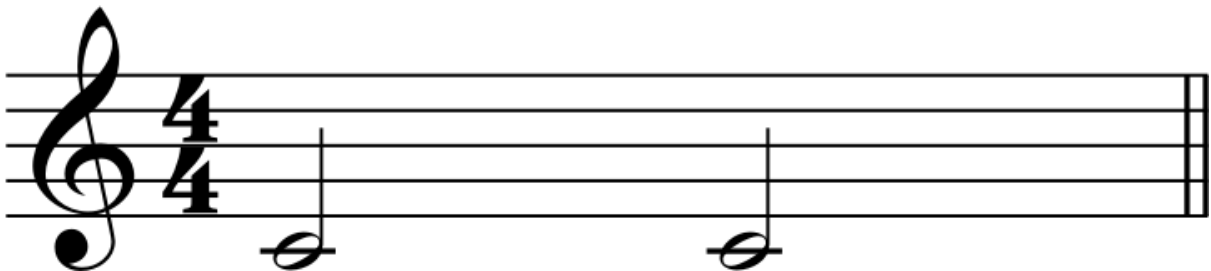
Duration – Crotchet Rest

This is a **crotchet rest** and it is worth one count.



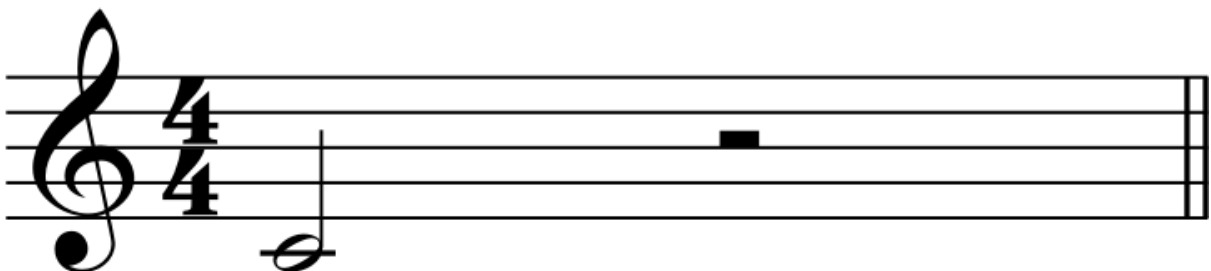
Duration – Minims

These are **minims** and they are each worth two counts.



Duration – Minim Rest

This is a **minim rest** and it is worth two counts.



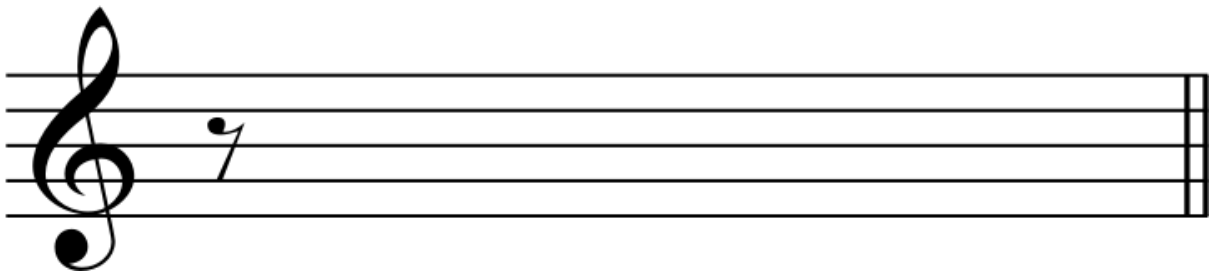
Duration – Quavers

These are **quavers** and they are each worth half a count.



Duration – Quaver Rest

This is a **quaver rest** and it is worth half a count.



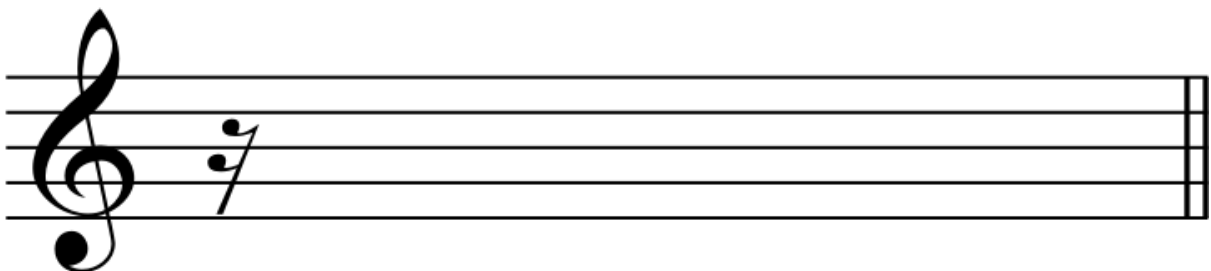
Duration – Semiquavers

These are **semiquavers** and they are each worth a quarter of a count.



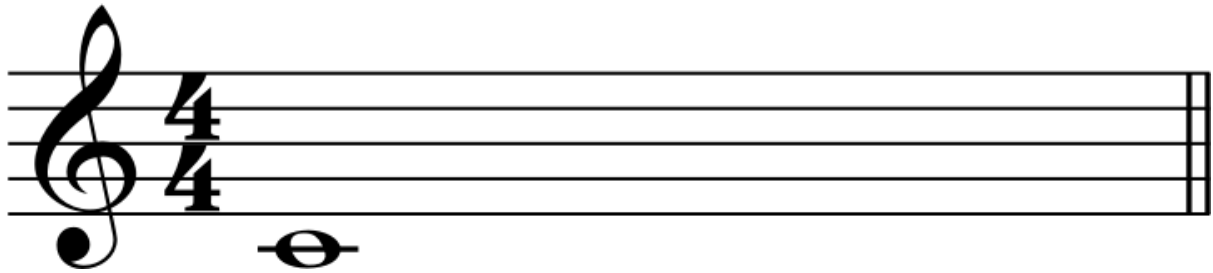
Duration – Semiquaver Rest

This is a **semiquaver rest** and it is worth a quarter of a count.



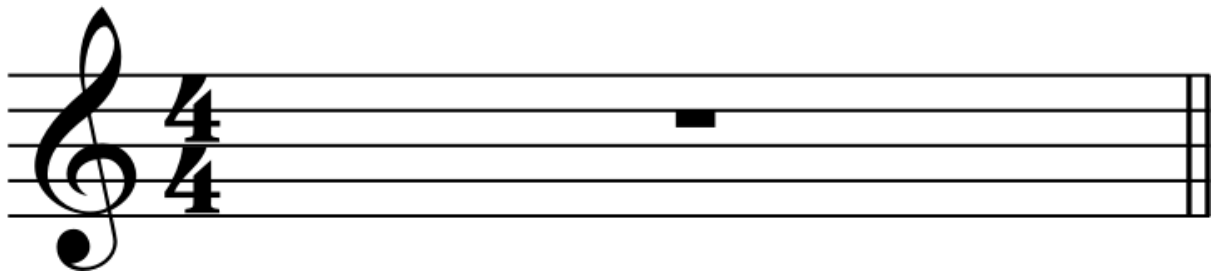
Duration – Semibreve

This is a **semibreve** and it is worth four counts.



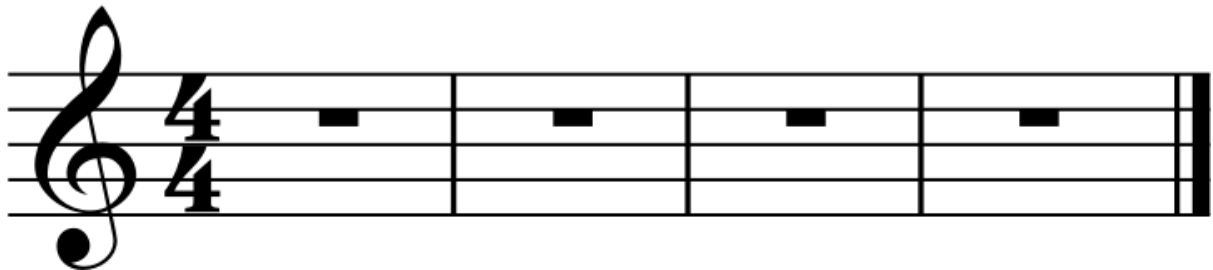
Duration – Semibreve Rest

This is a **semibreve rest** and it is worth four counts.



Barlines

The music you read is broken up into smaller blocks called '**bars**'. All of the bars are separated from one another with lines called '**barlines**'. The end of a piece is shown by a final barline:



Time Signatures

You know that a piece of music has its own '**beat**'.

The '**pulse**' can be in four, which feels different from the pulse being in groups of three. It can even be in seven – or anything else!

Here is a piece with a pulse in groups of four:



The numbers, or **'time signature'**, at the start of the piece show you how the pulse is grouped. The top number tells you how many beats there are in a bar and the bottom number tells you how long each beat is.

As we know, each group of beats is called a 'bar' and each bar is separated by lines called 'barlines'. So, a piece in four has four beats in each bar.

Time Signature 2/4

The time signature in this piece is **2/4**:



This means that the note-values and rests in each bar add up to two crotchet counts or beats.

Time Signature 3/4

The time signature in this piece is **3/4**:



This means that the note-values and rests in each bar add up to three crotchet counts or beats.

Time Signature 4/4

The time signature in this piece is **4/4**.



This means that the note-values and rests in each bar add up to four crotchet counts or beats.

Dynamics

Look out for these symbols that tell you how expressively, or how loudly and quietly to play.

Expressions – *p* and *f*

p and *f* belong to a family of symbols that add interest and expression to the way you play.

p is short for 'piano', which is an Italian word describing something soft or gentle.



f is short for 'forte', which describes something strong or hard.



When you meet one of these signs on a musical score, you should immediately start playing in that way – and keep on playing like that until another sign tells you to change.

Remember – when you see *p*, the music is quiet and gentle.

When you see *f*, play out loud and strong.

Expressions – *mp* and *mf*

mp and *mf* are in between the *p* and *f* symbols because they are a medium level.

mp is short for 'mezzo piano', an Italian expression describing something moderately soft.



mf

is short for '**mezzo forte**', which describes something moderately loud.

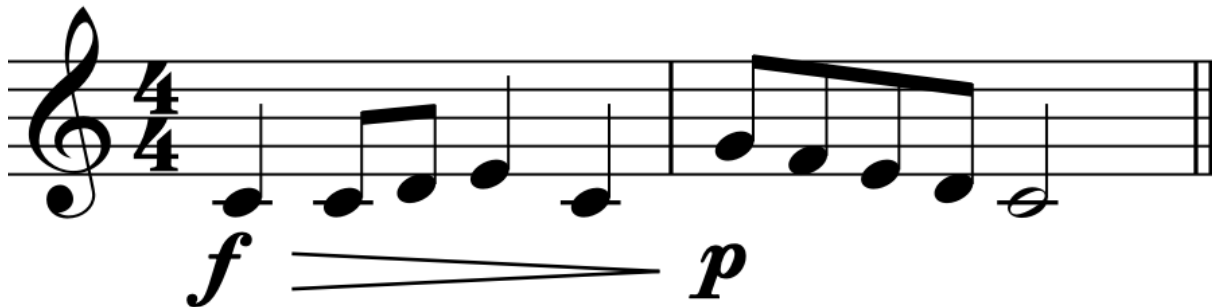


Crescendo/Diminuendo

'**Crescendo**' is an Italian word which means 'gradually getting louder'. The symbol for crescendo is an opening 'hairpin':



'**Diminuendo**' is an Italian word which means 'gradually getting quieter'. The symbol for diminuendo is a closing 'hairpin':



Why Do We Have Dynamics?

Dynamics help us to understand volume (how loud or quiet the music is) and expression (the feeling and emotion with which notes are played/sung). They have the power to change the entire mood or feel of a piece of music and can play an important part in getting the intended meaning or message across to the listener.

Dynamics can support the structure/form of a piece of music (how it is put together) – for example, the music may start with a quiet section, followed by a louder section, and close with another quiet section.

Dynamic contrast and changes help to shape not only the structure of the music, but also the texture. For example, if lots of instruments are playing at the same time, the music will likely be louder – therefore the texture will be thicker than when only one or two instruments are playing.

Summary of dynamic terms

Piano = ‘soft’ (quiet). This is written *p*

Forte = ‘strong’ (loud). This is written *f*

Mezzo Forte (moderately loud). This is written *mf*

Mezzo Piano (moderately quiet). This is written *mp*

Crescendo = gradually getting louder

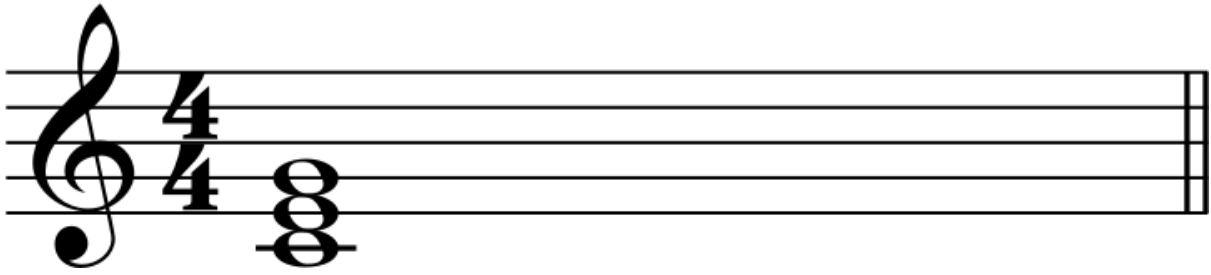
Diminuendo = gradually getting quieter

These dynamics are all Italian words – this is because the early rules for music notation in Western Classical music were developed by Italian composers in the 18th century (approximately).

Chords

- A **chord** is a group of notes that sound together. They lay the foundations in a piece of music and describe the **harmony**.
- The notes in a bassline usually match the chords of the song, and they will often use the root (lowest) note of each chord. For example, these are the notes that make up some basic chords, with the root note in bold.
- A small ‘m’ means the chord is a minor chord.
- You can play these chords on the piano or keyboard.

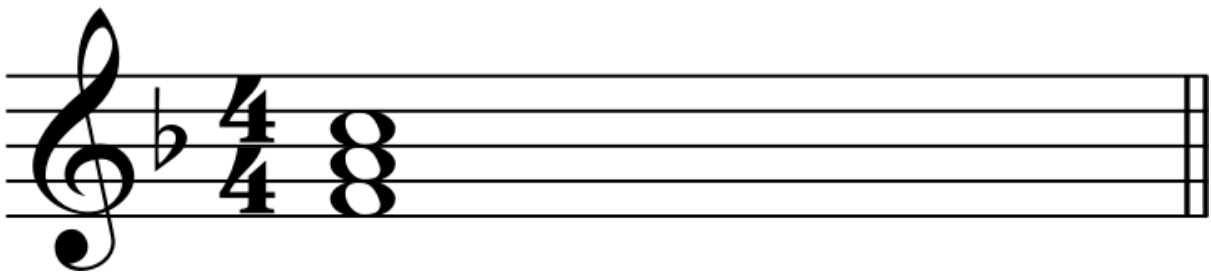
C Major Triad – C, E, G



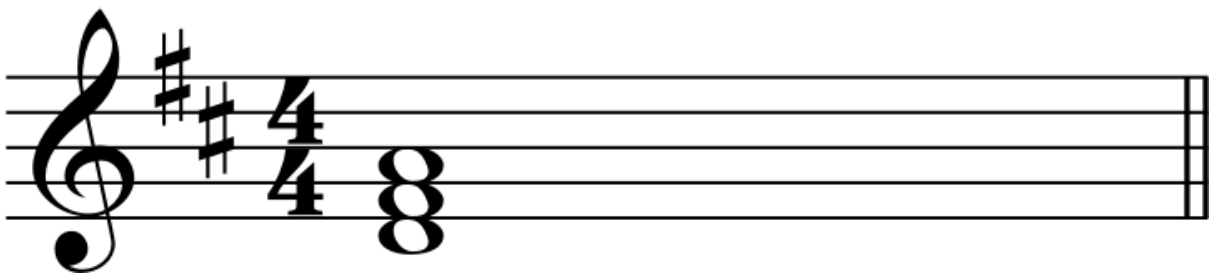
G Major Triad – G, B, D



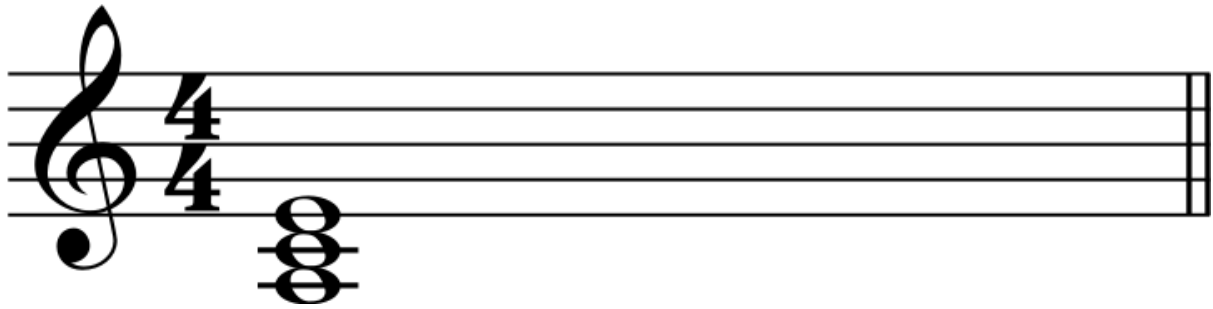
F Major Triad – F, A, C



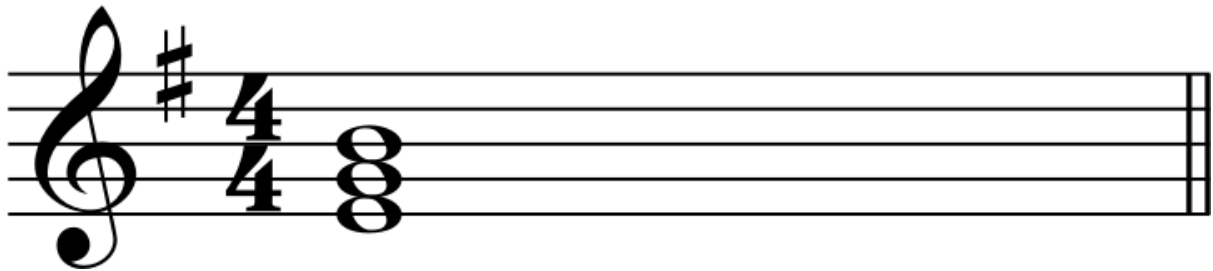
D Major Triad – D, F#, A



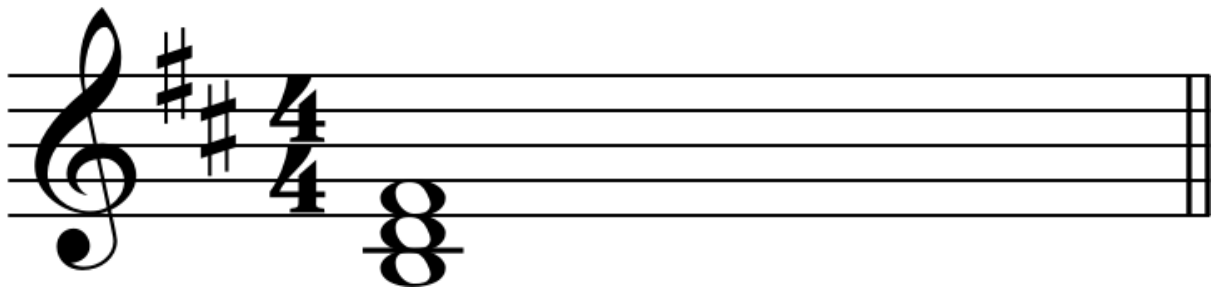
Am Triad – A, C, E



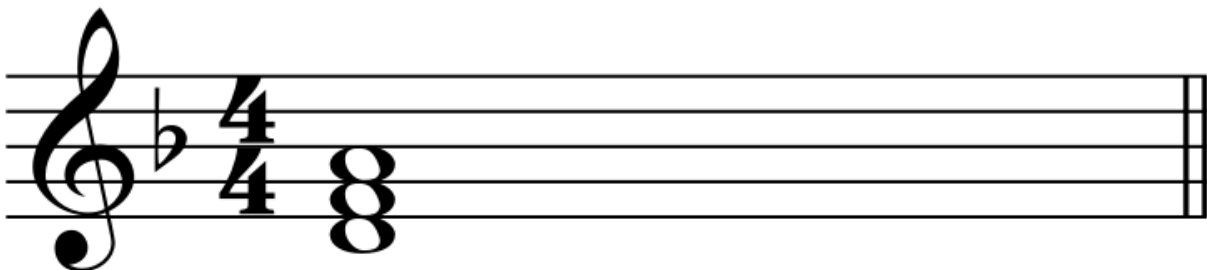
Em Triad – E, G, B



Bm Triad – B, D, F#



Dm Triad – D, F, A



Chord Progressions

Here are some chord progressions you can use to help you start getting familiar with different chords.

Common Pop song progression (I, IV, V)

Musical notation for a common pop song progression in 4/4 time. The progression consists of four measures: I, IV, V, and I. Each measure contains a single chord symbol below a treble clef staff.

Common Jazz progression (12-bar blues)

Musical notation for a 12-bar blues progression in 4/4 time. The progression is divided into three systems of four bars each. The first system starts with a treble clef, 4/4 time signature, and a chord symbol 'I' below the first bar. The second system starts with a measure number '5' and a chord symbol 'IV' below the first bar. The third system starts with a measure number '9' and a chord symbol 'V' below the first bar. Each system contains one chord symbol followed by three bars of rhythmic notation (diagonal slashes).