

Western Music

*History, Theory, Styles, Listening,
Exploration, and More!*

Gypsy Gameschooler

How To Use This Unit Study

This unit study contains many links, especially to music on YouTube. Please provide whatever supervision your family feels is necessary. All links contained here were safe when I linked them, but not all of YouTube is safe. However, if you print out this unit study, you won't be able to access the links and will miss a lot of the learning.

The lessons on fractions (pages 19-21) will need to be printed out, especially the fraction strips located on page 20. So will The Music Game on pages 27 to 30. Pages 20 and 28-30 will need to be printed single-sided as you will need to cut pieces out.

The rest of the unit study can be accessed digitally. Anytime something is underlined, that's a link, so make sure you have internet access while completing that page. Happy learning!

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Music History Overview

Humans have been playing music for a long time, probably far longer than we have records for. The oldest musical instrument (so far found) is a bone flute found in Slovenia; it is believed to be over 40,000 years old.

Music was an important part of **ancient Egyptian** society (c. 3,000 BCE) and **ancient Greece** (c. 1,000 BCE). The lyre was a popular instrument in ancient Greece. **Indian** classical music dates from 500 BCE and is still played today; they have many different instruments. The oldest surviving sheet music is from 1400 BCE: the Hurrian Hymn No. 6. Flutes, lyres, and recorders are some of the oldest (Western) instruments.

In Western cultures, music is often seen to begin with the Gregorian chants in the **middle ages** (500-1400 CE). Gregorian chants use perfect fifths in unison. Listen to some here. These were used extensively in the Catholic church, usually in Latin.

1400-1600 With the **Renaissance**, music began to take off with composers like Josquin des Prez, Carlo Gesualdo, and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. Many musical instruments like the violin, brass, and woodwind instruments were invented or further developed. The harpsichord was most likely invented during the Middle Ages, but was not in widespread use until the Renaissance.

1600-1750 The **Baroque** period saw an explosion of music we still listen to, recognize, love, and play today. Bach, Corelli, Telemann, Handel, Pachelbel, Vivaldi, and Rameau are just some of the famous composers of the day. The piano was invented during this time, but most music was composed for the harpsichord instead of the piano-forte.

1750-1820 While any music composed during the Baroque or Romantic periods is often called "Classical," 1750-1820 is actually the **Classical** period. Mozart, Haydn, and early Beethoven are famous classical composers. The piano is popular now.

1820-1900 This is the **Romantic** period. Beethoven's later pieces are more romantic than classical, as are Chopin, Liszt, and Wagner. Many woodwinds and brass instruments are developed and refined during this time. This period is characterized by intense emotion, individualism, and the supernatural.

Modern Music History Overview

Jazz was first developed during the **late 19th and early 20th centuries** from African-American communities in and around New Orleans. Jazz remained popular throughout the 1920s.

Broadway originated in New York City and became popular in the **1920s**. This was before speaking movies, and some musicals were turned into the first musical films.

Folk songs have been around for a very long time, many brought to the US by immigrants, but they saw a surge in popularity in the **1930s** during the depression.

The **1930s** saw the rise in **Swing** and **Big Band**, but they saw a decline in WWII due to venue sizes.

Traditional Pop was the music between Big Band and Rock-N-Roll, and was popular during the **1940s**. While the vocalist was key, this music did not rely on vocal improvisation like Jazz did.

Rhythm & Blues (R&B) began in the 1940s and was popular in the **1950s**. Like Jazz, R&B originated in African American communities.

The **1960s** saw a rise in **British bands**. **Psychedelic Rock** was fueled by the counterculture movement. **Folk music**, **Motown**, and **soul music** intertwined with protest and Civil Rights movements.

Rock, **Disco**, and **Punk** gained popularity in the **1970s**. Rock music split into **progressive rock**, **hard rock**, and **glam rock**. **Funk** and soul also thrived.

The **1980s** saw MTV revolutionize music with iconic artists like **Michael Jackson**, **Madonna**, and **Prince**. Synth-driven **pop** and **new wave** flourished, while **heavy metal** and **hip-hop** gained mainstream traction. Electronic music also began shaping the future of dance music.

From the **1990s** onward, **grunge**, hip-hop, and pop dominated, with digital streaming transforming the industry. The **2000s** blended genres like **EDM** and **rap**, while the **2010s** saw global artists like **BTS** and **Bad Bunny** rise. Today, social media and streaming shape a diverse, interconnected music scene.

Exploring Musical Styles

It is difficult to say for certain what **ancient music** was like. We have some musical instruments that have been preserved from ancient times and less written music. Most likely, it was more variable than we are aware of now.

Gregorian chants were voice-only pieces composed for the Catholic church. These pieces use parallel fifths moving in unison, and were nearly always in Latin.

Renaissance music began using instruments again much more heavily. The harpsichord and hurdy-gurdy were popular during this time.

Baroque music is known for its ornateness. One of the reasons is that the harpsichord, a popular instrument of the time, could not sustain notes. Trills, grace notes, and turns were common. The violin of the time had a different bow that also did not sustain well. The style includes long sixteenth-notes and short eighth-notes. Opera was developed during this time.

When someone mentions “classical music,” they are usually referring to any music from the Baroque to the Neoclassical, but the actual **classical period** was from 1750-1820. This music featured elegant melodies, dynamic contrasts, and expanding instrumental music. Gluck, Schubert, and Rossini composed during the classical period.

Romantic music, characterized by intense emotion and individualism, is found in Tchaikovsky, Brahms, and Mahler’s compositions.

Impressionism is similar to Romantic music, was popular in the late-19th century, and focuses on moods and emotions. Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Erik Satie composed in the impressionist style.

Neoclassical music is composed in the 20th or 21st century but draws inspiration from Baroque and Classical music.

Modernism: During the 20th century, many composers felt that everything that could be done with music had already been done. Minimalism, Serialism, Atonality, and Aleatoric musics are all responses to this belief and an attempt to do something new.

Exploring Modern Musical Styles

Minimalism began in the 1960s with repetition, gradual change, and simple harmonic structures. Composers like Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and Terry Riley made hypnotic, meditative music with layered rhythms and steady pulse.

Developed by Arnold Schoenberg in the 1920s, **serialism** puts all 12 notes into structured tone rows and avoids traditional harmony. Later expanded by Anton Webern and Pierre Boulez, it became the dominant force in mid-20th-century avant-garde music.

Atonality, developed by Schoenberg in the early 20th century, rejects tonality and creates music with no central key. It was used in expressionist music and later evolved into serialism and other experimental music.

Aleatoric music, or “chance music,” allows elements of composition or performance to be determined randomly or left to the performer’s choice. John Cage popularized this in the 1950s with indeterminate notation and environmental sounds.

Jazz is an improvisation-driven genre characterized by swing rhythms, syncopation, and expressive melodies. It spans various styles, from the energetic brass of Dixieland to the complex harmonies of bebop and the smooth, atmospheric sounds of cool jazz.

Musicals blend spoken dialogue, song, and dance to tell dramatic or comedic stories, often featuring memorable melodies and grand orchestrations.

Broadway productions showcase diverse styles, from classical-influenced scores to rock and pop-inspired numbers.

Folk music is rooted in storytelling and simple, often acoustic instrumentation, reflecting cultural traditions and social themes. Its melodies are typically straightforward, passed down through generations, and adapted over time.

Swing and **big band music** emphasize rhythmic drive, brass-heavy arrangements, and lively, danceable beats. Led by bandleaders like Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, this style features bold instrumentation, call-and-response sections, and vibrant improvisation.

Exploring Modern Musical Styles, pg 2

Traditional pop is defined by lush orchestration, smooth vocals, and elegant melodies, often with romantic or sentimental themes. Popular in the mid-20th century, artists like Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole set the standard with polished, sophisticated performances.

Rhythm and Blues (R&B) combines blues-influenced melodies with strong rhythms, soulful vocals, and groove-heavy instrumentation. Originally rooted in African American music, it evolved into a dynamic genre incorporating funk, rock, and later hip-hop influences.

Rock & Roll is a high-energy genre driven by electric guitars, strong backbeats, and catchy melodies. Fusing blues, country, and R&B, it features rebellious themes and dynamic performances that emphasize rhythm and attitude.

Electronic music relies on synthesizers, drum machines, and digital production to create atmospheric, rhythmic, or experimental sounds. It spans various styles, from ambient and techno to house and EDM, often emphasizing repetitive beats and evolving textures.

Listening Recommendations

<u>Ancient Music</u>	<u>Romantic</u>	<u>Atonality</u>	<u>Traditional Pop</u>
<u>Gregorian Chants</u>	<u>Impressionism</u>	<u>Aleatoric</u>	<u>Rhythm & Blues</u>
<u>Renaissance</u>	<u>Neoclassical</u>	<u>Jazz</u>	<u>Rock-N-Roll</u>
<u>Baroque</u>	<u>Modernism</u>	<u>Musicals</u>	<u>Electronic</u>
<u>Opera</u>	<u>Minimalism</u>	<u>Folk Songs</u>	<u>Movie Music</u>
<u>Classical</u>	<u>Serialism</u>	<u>Swing and Big Band</u>	<u>World Music</u>

Deep Diving into History and Geography

If there are any styles of music that your student shows interest in, they can use them as an avenue to further explore the history and geography that led to them. What else was going on in the world and local area at the time? Alternatively, music can be integrated into traditional history and geography.

Combining Music and Art

Bring out art supplies and have your child(ren) explore and create as they see fit while listening to music. Any art medium may be used; drawing, painting, coloring, clay, fiber arts, dancing; even writing can be done while listening to music (especially instrumental music that does not include words).

What does the music make them feel? How are they expressing this feeling in their art? What colors does the music remind them of? What ideas? Does the music tell a story? Does it make them think of characters?

Some examples of combining music and art:

Fantasia (paid link at no cost to you; clips are available on YouTube)

Lieutenant Kije (Prokofiev; Neoclassical, 1891-1953, composed 1934)

Peter and the Wolf (Prokofiev, composed 1936) (Narrated and illustrated version)

Carnival of the Animals (Saint-Saens; Romantic, 1835-1921, composed in 1886) (Carnival of the Animals was composed as a ballet; this is an excellent example of combining music and dance.)

Fantasia is an excellent example of how we can use music to inspire other art forms. The other three pieces were written with specific stories or characters in mind. Have your student first create their interpretation, then share the story with them.

Finally, you can introduce your child to art produced during each period while listening to the music.

Lieutenant Kije, Prokofiev

The story told is that in St. Petersburg in 1800 during the reign of Emperor Paul I of Russia, a clerical error was made. In order to cover up this error, the fictional Lt. Kije was created. This piece tells the story of this soldier's birth, romance, wedding, Troika (sleigh ride), and burial.

Prokofiev's suite was adapted from music he wrote for a film of the same name which was itself based on a novella by Yury Tynyanov. The original version appeared in Vladimir Dahl's *Stories of the Time of Paul I*, apparently reported as told by his father Jochan Christian von Dahl. While it may not have actually happened, it's an amusing story and wonderful music.

Science of Music

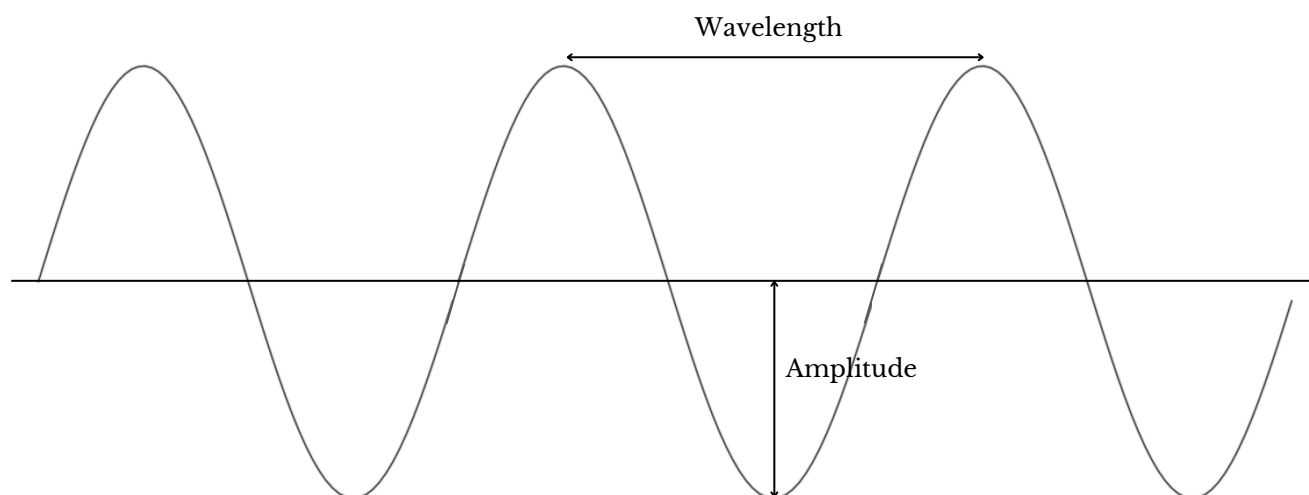
There are four main elements of music. Pitch, rhythm, tone, and dynamics. We will cover rhythm later, when we cover the math in music.

Pitch refers to how high or low the note is. This is determined by the frequency of vibrations. Slower vibrations produce lower notes, and faster vibrations produce higher notes. On stringed instruments, strings with longer lengths and larger diameters produce lower notes. You can raise the pitch by shortening the string. In woodwinds, a longer tube produces slower vibrations and lower notes.

Tone refers to the quality of the sound. This is impacted by the materials used and the size and shape of resonating chambers.

Dynamics refer to the loudness of the music. The larger the waves (amplitude), the louder the sound.

Sound is a type of wave. Not quite the same as an ocean wave, but close. This unit on [Khan Academy](#) has good explanations, as does [this website](#). Crash Course has a fantastic video on [waves](#), one on [sound](#), and one specifically on [music](#).



[This sine graph](#) was used to create this image. This image, and only this image, may be shared freely.

Amplitude is the distance from the top (peak) of the wave or the bottom (trough) to the middle. The wavelength is from peak to peak or trough to trough.

If you halve the length of a string, the wavelength will halve as well (doubling the frequency). This is what happens with harmonics on a string instrument. A harmonic is an octave higher than the unaltered string, and is made by placing your finger halfway along the string (effectively halving the length).

Science of Music, pg 2

The tone of an instrument (or voice) is heavily influenced by the material that is vibrating. Many cheaper woodwinds are made of plastic for their durability, but many claim that wood instruments have a better quality sound.

Woodwinds may be made of grenadilla, rosewood, or boxwood (among others). The strings family are often made of maple and spruce with ebony fittings and inlay. Violin bows are traditionally made of pernambuco (*Paubrasilia echinata*), which is endangered. The species is native to the rainforests of Brazil. However, modern bows are often made of brazilwood or carbon fiber. Cheap bows can be made from cherry wood or fiberglass.

Other instruments can be made from various kinds of metals. Often, the mouthpiece is made from a higher-quality metal than the body.

With all these different materials available and used, there are many factors to take into consideration. Dense woods like grenadilla, ebony, and pernambuco are prized for the improved results. However, using these woods for musical instruments can put their continued existence at risk.

What are the environmental implications of using different materials? We all know how terrible plastics are for the environment, but is that worse than using wood from an endangered species? Mining metal ore and smelting have environmental impacts, too. These are tough questions with no certain answers, but they deserve exploration.

Dynamics and tone are also impacted by the size and shape of the resonating chamber. In order for sound to reach our ears, we need to make the air vibrate. These vibrations are amplified with a resonating chamber. Vocalists are taught to form different shapes while keeping their tongue and jaw relaxed for the best sound. Woodwinds and brass instruments have some sort of a tube that the air can vibrate in. Stringed instruments have a hollow body.

A larger resonating cavity will allow a louder sound to be produced. Remember, larger waves (amplitude) mean bigger sounds.

We will dive into these principles more when we make our own musical instruments.

Languages Within Music

The study of Western music encompasses several different languages. Historically (Middle Ages into the Renaissance), Latin was the primary language used. However, as time progressed, other languages found their way into Western music, especially Italian.

Before we can get into what different words mean, we need to cover Italian pronunciation. Italian is much easier to pronounce words because the rules are consistent and you are already familiar with many Italian words (pizza or lasagna, anyone?).

Vowels: **a** says *ah*, **e** says *a* (like in *made*), **i** says *e* (like in *pizza*), **o** says its name, and **u** says *ooh*.

Soft consonants: If an **e** or **i** follow, **c** says *ch*, **g** says *j*. If an **h** comes after, then they say *k* and *g* (if something else or nothing comes after, they get the hard sound).

Dynamics: In Western music, dynamics range from pianissimo (*pp*), or very soft, to fortissimo (*ff*), or very loud. Piano (*p*) means soft, mezzo piano (*mp*) means medium soft, mezzo forte (*mf*) means medium loud, and forte (*f*) means loud. Composers will sometimes add extra *ps* or *fs* to indicate even softer or louder sounds. *Crescendo* means to get louder while *decrescendo* or *diminuendo* mean to get softer. All of these words are Italian.

Tempos: Tempo refers to the speed of music, designated by beats per minute.

Grave, serious, up to 39 BPM

Largo, wide, 40-59 BPM

Larghetto, a little wide, 60-65 BPM

Adagio, slowly, 66-75 BPM

Andante, walking, 76-89 BPM

Moderato, moderate, 90-104 BPM

Allegretto, 105-114 BPM

Allegro, cheerful, 115-129 BPM

Vivace, lively, 130-167 BPM

Presto, fast, 168-199 BPM

Prestissimo, very fast, 200+ BPM

Languages Within Music, pg 2

Musicians use a wide variety of other words to indicate how something should be played. Here are some of the words commonly used (all Italian!):

accelerando, speed up

accent, emphasis

arco, bowed

arpeggio, played like a harp

cantabile, singing

coda, a tail

con, with

dal segno al fine (*D.S. al fine*), from the sign to the end

divisi, divided

dolce, sweet

espressivo, expressive

fine, end

glissando, slide

grandioso, grand, solemn

marcato, marked

martellato, hammered

meno, less

molto, very

pastorale, peaceful

pizzicato, plucked

poco, little

portamento, carrying (sliding between notes with pauses)

prima, first

ritardando, slow down

rubato, robbed (flexible in tempo)

scherzando, playfully

scherzo, fast triple meter

sempre, always

senza, without

simile, same

solo, only (1 musician)

staccato, short

tenuto, held

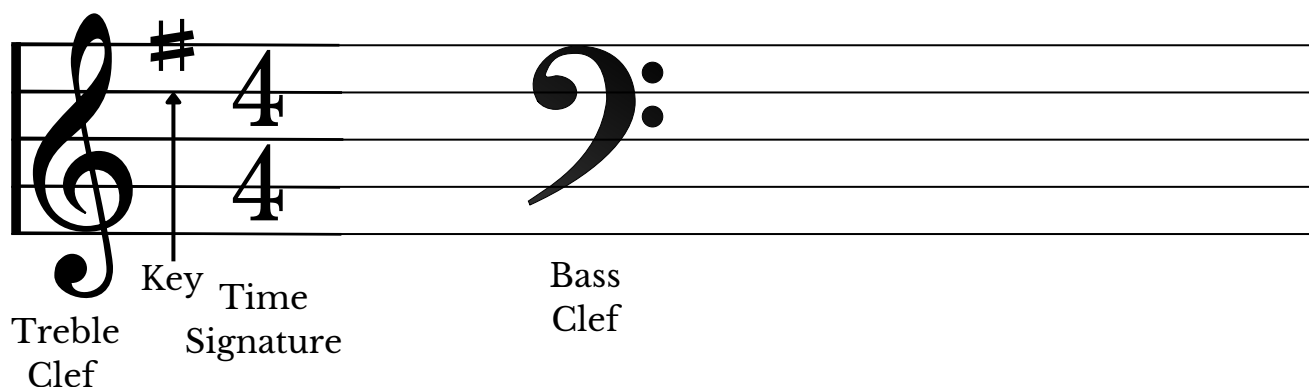
Other languages that are common in Western music include German and French. Some composers (like Mahler) are known for mostly including words from their own language (in Mahler's case, German).

Music Theory

Music has two main components: pitch and rhythm.

The Staff

Before we can discuss pitch, we must first discuss the musical staff. Most western music is written on the staff and has a clef, key signature, and time signature. The five horizontal lines are the staff.



The Clef

The treble clef is also called the G clef because it circles around the G (the line that is second from the bottom). The bass (pronounced "base") clef is also called the F clef because the two dots are on either side of the line for F. There are other clefs, but these are the most common.

The clef determines what notes are present. Without a clef, you can't actually know what notes to play.

The Key Signature

The key signature is located at the beginning of every line of the music. It can be comprised of nothing (key of C Major or a minor; all white keys on the piano), up to 7 sharps (#), or up to 7 flats (b). Key signatures can not contain both sharps and flats. They also always occur in the same order.

Sharps raise a note by a 1/2-step, while flats lower a note by a 1/2-step. You can also have extra sharps, flats, or naturals (♮) within the music, called *accidentals*.

We will cover the time signature later, when we cover rhythms.

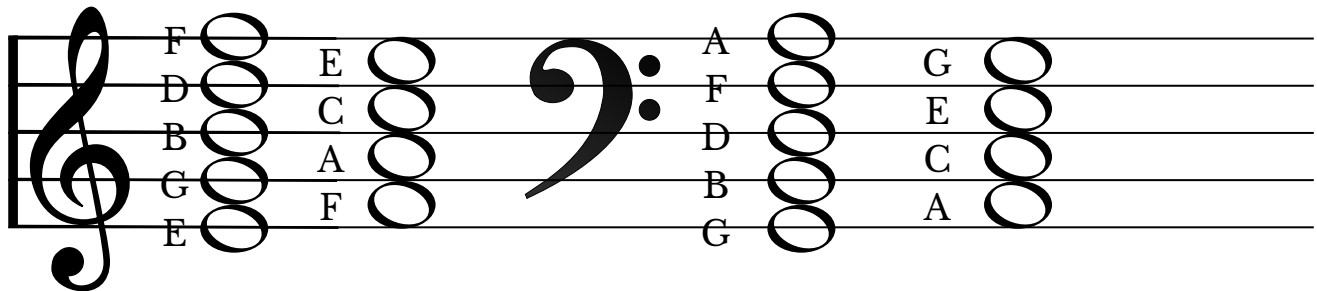
Music Theory, pg 2

Notes

We use the first 7 letters of the alphabet to create the musical alphabet: **A B C D E F G**. When we get to G, we just start over again with A. Notes farther down the staff have a lower pitch than notes higher up the staff. Notes are described as *lines* or *spaces*.

In the treble clef, the lines are **E G B D F** and spaces are **F A C E**. There are many mnemonics to help you remember; my usual is “**Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge**” and “space rhymes with **FACE**.”

In bass clef, the lines are **G B D F A** and spaces are **A C E G**. The mnemonics I use are **Good Boys Deserve Fudge Always** and **ACE-G**. However, the notes on bass clef are lower than treble clef, by about 2 octaves (we’ll cover those in a bit).

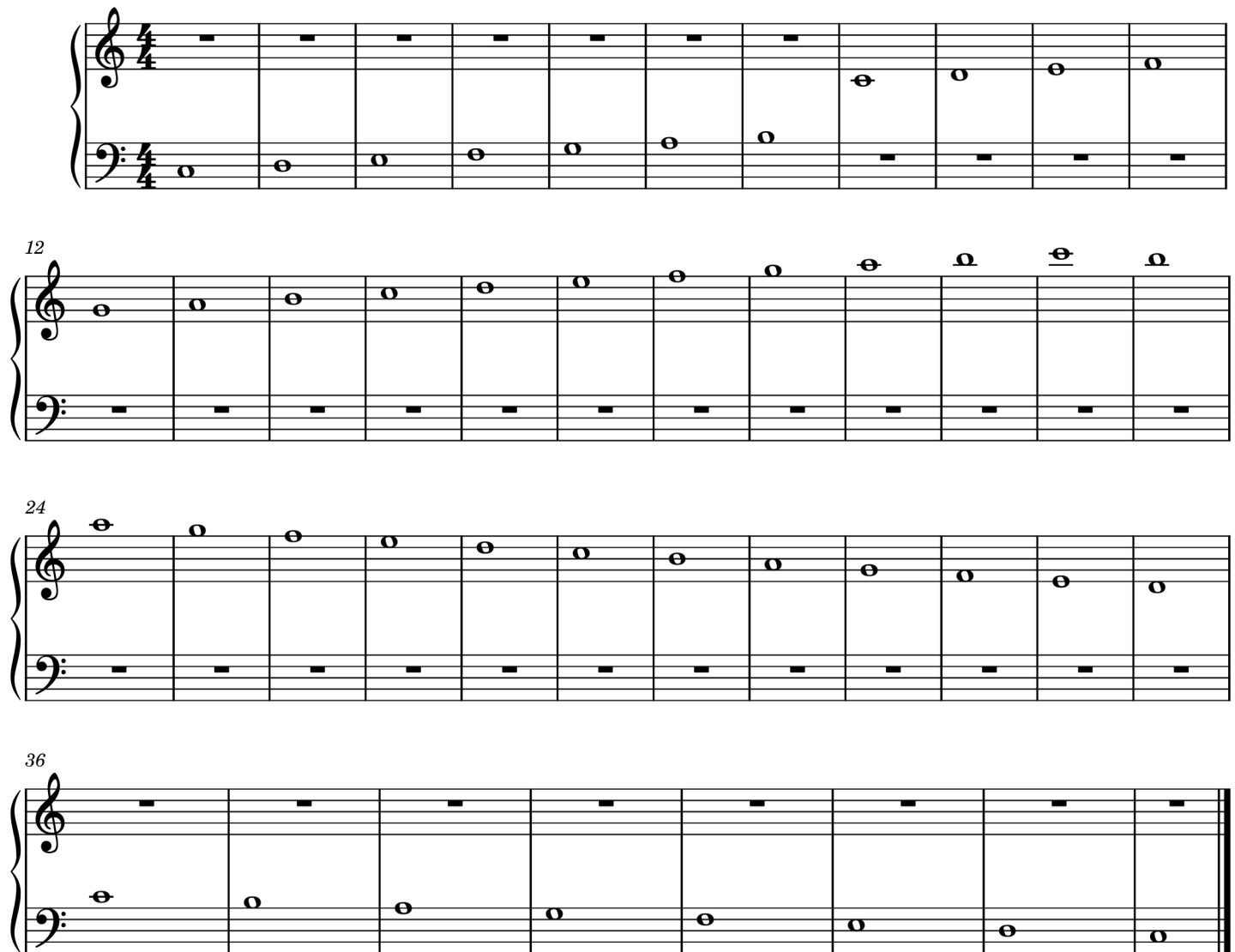


Did you notice where the G is in treble clef, and the F in bass clef? These notes are how these clefs get their names of G-clef and F-clef, respectively.

Notes can also be written on a double, or grand staff. This is very common in piano music. A 3-octave C Major scale (remember, this is the one on all white keys) is on the next page. Watch this video to hear the C Major scale while watching it on the sheet music and the piano keys. Did you notice how the notes further down the staff are lower than those higher up on the staff? Or how much lower the bass clef notes were than the treble clef notes?

What about middle C? Middle C is the 8th and the 36th note in the following scale. Do you see how it’s written on the treble clef staff on the way up the scale but on the bass clef staff on the way down? Both notes are the same.

C Major Scale



I promised we'd go over octaves. Remember how I said that after you get to G in the musical alphabet, you just start over again? Well, an octave is the distance between two notes with the same name. So in our three-octave scale above, we have four Cs: the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd notes (on the way up; there are another three Cs on the way down: the 29th, 36th, and last notes).

There are three different octaves of every other note above. Can you find some?

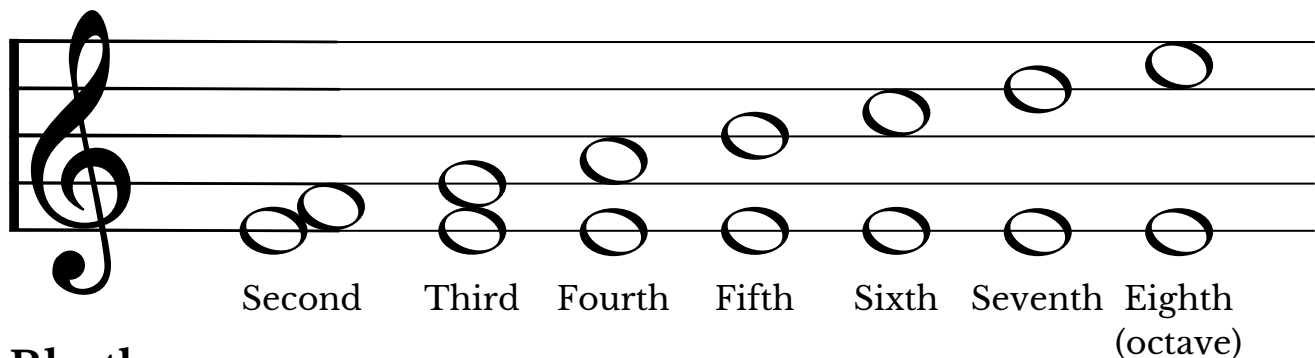
Remember when we discussed the physics of sound, and how when you make a note that is an octave higher than the one below, you are just cutting the string length in half and doubling the frequency?

Music Theory, pg 4

Intervals

Just one more concept with notes and pitch before we move on to rhythms. The interval is the distance between 2 pitches. These can be measured in half or whole steps. A half step is when two keys touch on the piano, without any keys in between. A whole step is when there is one key in between.

Additionally, intervals can be given numbers. These work sort of like subtraction, except you count both the top and bottom note (and you're using letter names, not numbers).



Rhythm

Rhythm refers to how long a note is held for. Let's go over some common rhythms in 4/4 time:

○ whole note = 4 beats	■ whole rest = 4 beats
♩ half note = 2 beats	▬ half rest = 2 beats
♪ quarter note = 1 beat	♪ quarter rest = 1 beat
♫ eighth note = 1/2 beat	♫ eighth rest = 1/2 beat
♬ sixteenth note = 1/4 beat	♬ sixteenth rest = 1/4 beat

Flagged notes (eighth notes, sixteenth notes, etc.) can also be barred together. So you might see 2 eighth notes like this: ♫

Whole notes and whole rests are kind of tricky, because they always just take up the full measure. (A measure is the space between two vertical lines on the staff; we'll get into this more in a bit.) So, above it says they each get 4 beats, because they do in 4/4 time. But if you're in a different time signature, their beats will change.

Notes and rests can also be dotted. A dot gets half the value of whatever it follows. So a dotted half note will get 3 beats in 4/4 time: 2 beats for the half note, plus 1 beat for the dot.

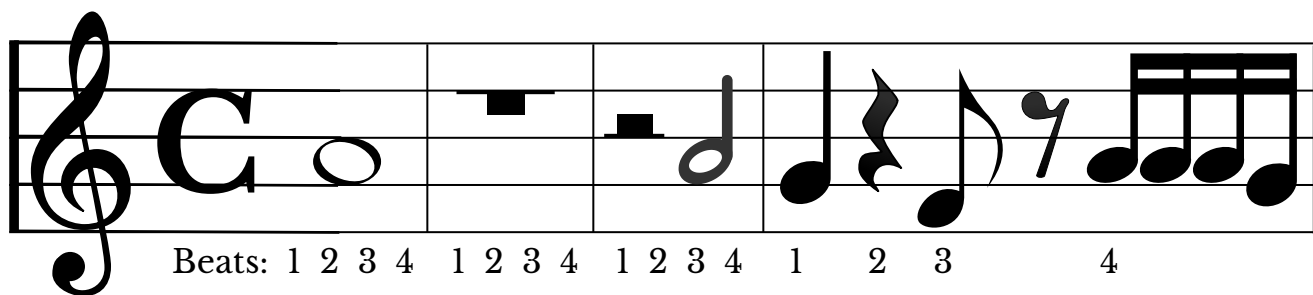
Music Theory, pg 5

Time Signatures and Measures

Remember the time signature, those two numbers at the beginning of a piece?

The top number indicates how many beats are in a measure, while the bottom number indicates what kind of note (what rhythm) gets one beat. It may be tempting to think of the time signature like a fraction, but don't; they're not the same.

The most common time signature is 4/4 time, so it is also known as common time. You might see it represented with a big C at the beginning of the music where the time signature is.



There are several other key signatures:

$\frac{2}{4}$ = 2 beats per measure
quarter note gets the beat

$\frac{6}{8}$ = 6 beats per measure
eighth note gets the beat

$\frac{3}{4}$ = 3 beats per measure
quarter note gets the beat

$\frac{2}{2}$ = 2 beats per measure
half note gets the beat

There are even more, but this gives you a good overview. Oftentimes, time signatures like 3/8, 6/8, and 9/8 time might actually be faster and felt in 1, 2, or 3, respectively. This would mean that the dotted quarter note feels like it gets 1 beat.

One last concept: measures. In our example above, we have 4 measures. In our C Major scale, we have 43 measures. Measures are just a way of dividing the music to make it easier to read and find your place.

But wait! That can't be everything to music theory, can it?!? Of course not! Music theory is a vast field and this is just to get you a taste. For a more comprehensive music theory education, I recommend the Master Theory series (paid link).

Fractions

Fractions are super cool and fun, and what is even cooler is that we can think of fractions in terms of rhythms!

Let's set 1 measure in common (4/4) time to be equal to 1. This means that our whole, half, quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes are all named appropriately.

However, how much of a measure is a dotted half note, a dotted quarter note, or a dotted eighth note? Cut out the strips on the next page to help you fill out this page. If it helps you, you can color each rhythm a different color. After cutting them out, play around with them a little to see how different rhythms fit together. (Tip: If you laminate them, they will last a long time and you can use them with other worksheets and fractions practice, too!)

How many of each note fits inside 1 whole note?



How many of each note fits inside 1 dotted half note?



How many of each note fits inside 1 dotted quarter note?



What fraction is each note worth if a whole note is 1?



Provide 3 alternate rhythms that add up to each shown rhythm with their corresponding fractions:



 Whole Note = 1

Dotted Half Note 

Quarter Note 

Half Note 

Half Note 

Dotted Quarter Note 

Eighth 

Dotted Quarter Note 

Eighth 

Quarter Note 

Quarter Note 

Quarter Note 

Quarter Note 

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Eighth 

Eighth 

Eighth 

Eighth 

Eighth 

Eighth 

Eighth 

Eighth 

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
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1/16
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1/16
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1/16
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1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

1/16
Note

 Whole Note = 1

Dotted Half Note 

Quarter Note 

Half Note 

Half Note 

Dotted Quarter Note 

Eighth 

Dotted Quarter Note 

Eighth 

Dotted Quarter Note 

Eighth 

Dotted Quarter Note 

Eighth 

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Eighth
Note

1/16
Note

Dotted Half Note 

Quarter Note 

Fractions pg 3

After each rhythm combination, write the fraction addition problem and answer:



Rewrite the following subtraction problems (using rhythms) in fractions and include their answers, in fraction and rhythm form:



Multiplying fractions by fractions can be represented by folding the rhythms strips. For example: $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{4} = \frac{3}{8}$ =  $\times$  =  can be shown by folding a half note in quarters and seeing how much 3 of those quarters equals. Use the fraction strips to solve the following equations:

$$\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{2} =$$

$$\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{3}{4} =$$

$$\frac{3}{8} \times \frac{1}{2} =$$

There is another type of rhythm, called a triplet, that looks like 3 eighth notes barred together (with a small 3 over their top). Altogether, they get one beat. What fraction of a 4/4 measure do they each get?

For even more fractions practice, [download a copy of Pizza Parlor](#).

Instrument Families

Instruments can be broken up into several different families.

Begin this lesson by listening to Britten's Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra. I have a copy on CD that I love, narrated by Sean Connery, but this is a fantastic YouTube video that labels each section. Since it's a video, you are able to see many orchestral instruments.

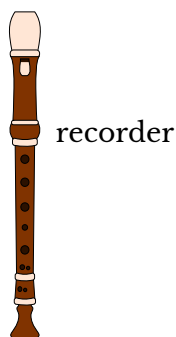
Britten begins with the winds. This section is often called the woodwinds, but flutes, a prominent member, are almost always made of metal. Most people are familiar with the standard C flute, but did you know there are flutes that go higher and lower? Piccolos are also well-known (they're the small, very high ones), but there are also alto, bass, and contra-bass flutes!



Most of the rest of the woodwind section is composed of reed instruments. Clarinets, bass clarinets, and saxophones have a single reed, while oboes, bassoons, and English horns have a double reed. These reeds provide the vibration so the instrument makes sound.



Saxophones are usually not present in the symphony orchestra but are common members of bands. Recorders are not often included in the symphony orchestra, but there are concertos written for them. They were popular during the Baroque period and are underappreciated today.



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flute



piccolo

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clarinet



bass
clarinet



oboe

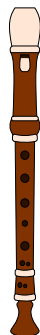
bassoon



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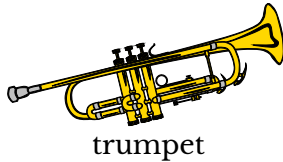
saxophone



recorder

Instrument Families, pg 2

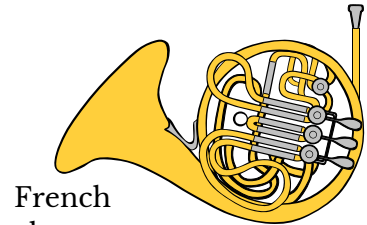
Next up in Britten's exploration of the symphony orchestra is the **brass**. These instruments are all made from metal (though not necessarily brass) and have a mouthpiece that vibrates to provide the sound. Trumpets are higher and have three valves. Trombones are lower and have a slide to change the tube length. French horns are wrapped around in a circle. Again, there are higher and lower versions of most of these instruments.



trumpet



trombone



French
horn

Tubas are not typically in a symphony orchestra but are popular in marching bands. Euphoniums are the concert band equivalent and sit in the player's lap.



tuba



euphonium

Britten covers **strings** next. The stringed instruments of the symphony orchestra all follow the same plan. Violins are the highest, and there are usually two different violin parts. Violas look very similar to violins but are lower by a fifth. Cellos sit on the ground, in between the player's legs. Lowest of all strings are the basses, which a player must stand or sit on a tall stool to play. Harps are sometimes included in the symphony orchestra.



violin



cello

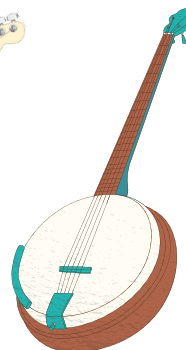


string
bass



harp

Not included in the symphony orchestra are guitars, banjos, and ukeleles.

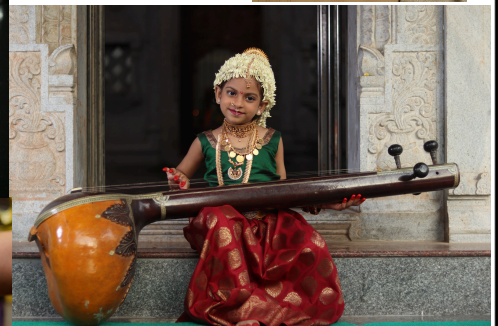
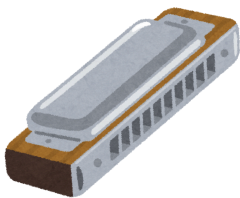
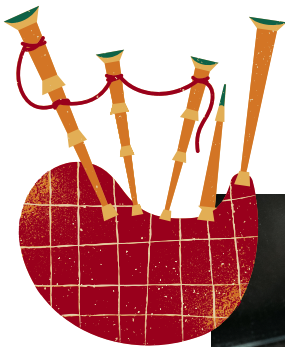


Instrument Families, pg 3

Finally, Britten covers **percussion**. This section varies wildly. Timpani are common, as are gongs, bass drums, and snares. Mallet instruments like vibraphones and marimba as well as triangles and chimes are also included. A percussionist must be competent on dozens of instruments, be able to learn new ones quickly, and have impeccable rhythm. Each score (sheet music) will require different instruments, so percussionists must also have access to many instruments (sometimes they are owned by the orchestra, though).



There are many other instruments used in different musical genres and from around the world.

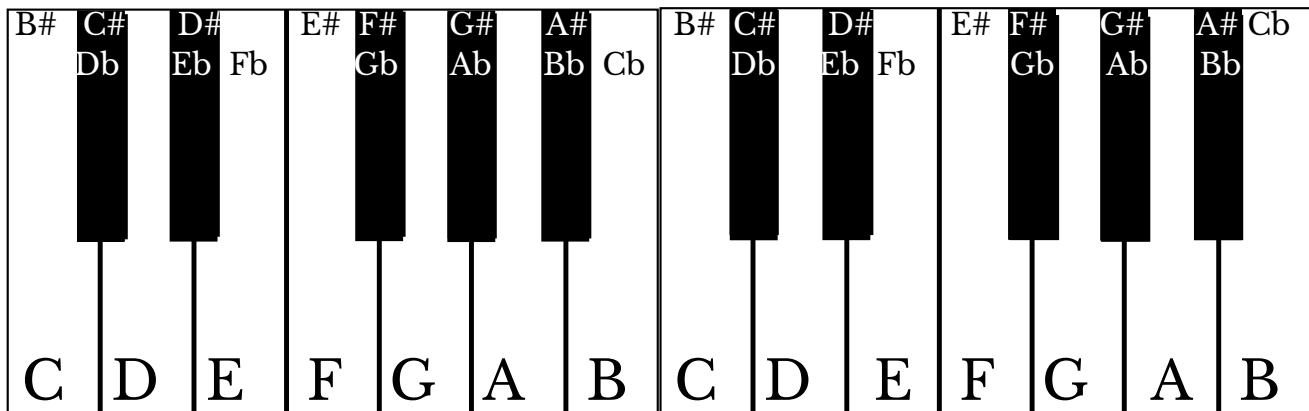


The Piano



The piano is both a percussion and a string instrument. When you press a key on a non-digital piano, it causes a hammer to hit the corresponding string, making the sound. However, they are one of the most common instruments and probably the easiest to discuss notes, intervals, sharps, and flats with.

Even musicians who don't play piano can generally find a few notes or even scales on the piano. An electric piano always stays in tune so is useful to check your intonation with.



Our piano here has 2 octaves. As we discussed before, if you are in the key of C Major (no sharps or flats), you will only use the white keys. Notes on the left side of the keyboard are lower, and notes on the right side are higher.

Sharps raise a note by a 1/2-step, while flats lower them by 1/2-step. As you can see, every note can be called different things, which is important in more advanced theory.

On the piano, a 1/2-step is when 2 keys touch without any other keys between them. So even though C and D touch, there is a black key between them, so they're a whole step apart.

Play around on this [virtual piano](#). Can you play a C Major scale? How about a song?

Suggested Activities

Create a large world history timeline and include musical eras and major events. How do they influence each other?

Try your hand at composing a piece using serialism. There are 12 tones within an octave (A, A#, B, C, C#, D, D#, E, F, F#, G, G#). Arrange them randomly (I like using [this randomizer](#)), then use a notation editing software ([MuseScore](#) is free, but there are many others) to enter them in. You can use a variety of octaves and rhythms. Many will allow you to play it back so you can hear what your creation sounds like.

Try listening to a new kind of music every day or week.

Pick a new location each day or week, listen to their music on [Radio Garden](#), and learn about that place.

Pick a style, era, composer, or piece of music and [write about it](#). It could be persuasive, informative, or creative writing. [Grading rubrics](#) are included at the end of the unit study.

Games

The following games will help cement your music knowledge:

[Go Composer](#) is similar to Go Fish, but you're creating storylines for each of 13 famous composers.

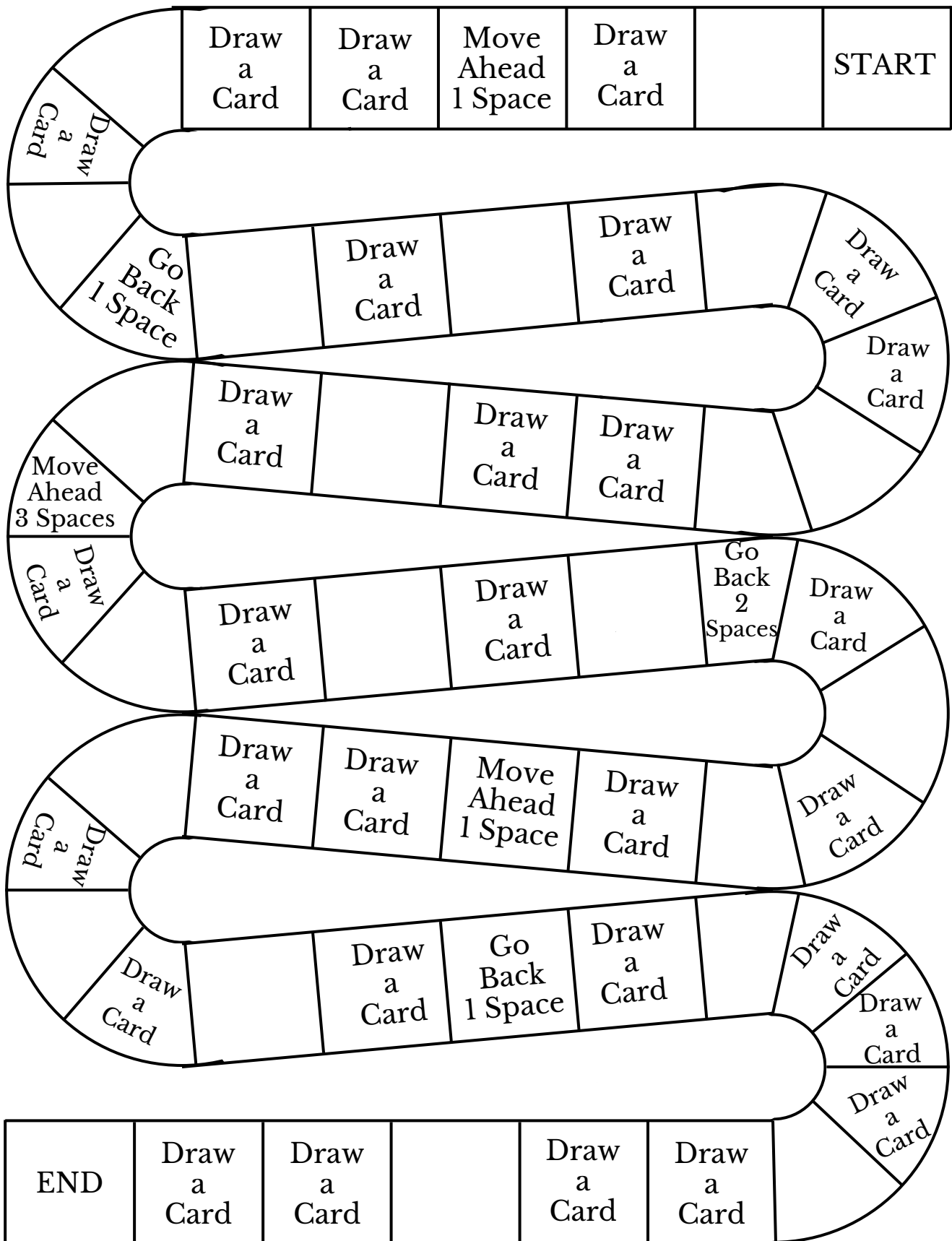
[Measure Up](#) and [Dominotes](#) provide great rhythm (and therefore fractions!) practice.

[Compose Yourself](#) allows anyone to compose their own music!

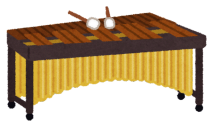
Check out [The Music Game](#) on the next page! I first created this game for my private violin students many years ago.

Don't forget your copies of the [music history scavenger hunt](#), [composers scavenger hunt](#), [musical forms scavenger hunt](#), and [music theory escape room](#)!

The Music Game



Name the instrument family!



Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.
500-1400

Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.
1400-1600

Compose a Ditty!

Play or sing a short song you made up

Name the musical symbol!



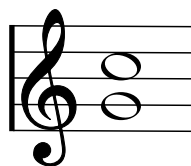
Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.
1600-1750

Performance!

Play or sing a short song

Name the interval!



Name the interval!



Name the instrument!



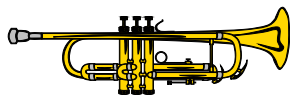
Name the interval!



Name the interval!



Name the instrument!



Name the note!



Name the note!



Scale Time!

Play or sing a 1-octave scale

Name the note!



Name the note!



Name the musical symbol!



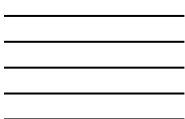
Clap the rhythm!



Clap the rhythm!



Name the musical symbol!



Clap the rhythm!



Clap the rhythm!



Name the instrument family!



Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.

1750-1820

Name the musical era!

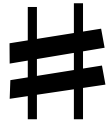
Name one thing going on during this time period.

1820-1900

Compose a Ditty!

Play or sing a short song you made up

Name the musical symbol!



Name the musical era!

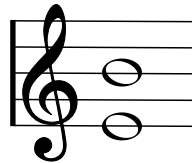
Name one thing going on during this time period.

1920s

Performance!

Play or sing a short song

Name the interval!



Name the interval!



Name the instrument!



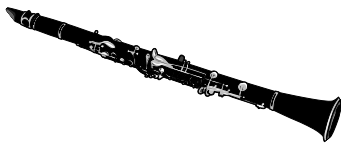
Name the interval!



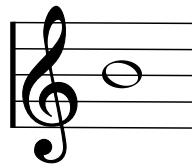
Name the interval!



Name the instrument!



Name the note!



Name the note!



Scale Time!

Play or sing a 1-octave scale

Name the note!



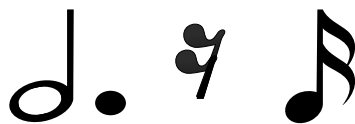
Name the note!



Name the musical symbol!



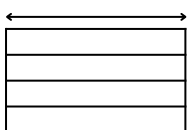
Clap the rhythm!



Clap the rhythm!



Name the musical symbol!



Clap the rhythm!



Clap the rhythm!



Name the instrument family!



Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.
1980s

Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.
1940s

Compose a Ditty!

Play or sing a short song you made up

Name the musical symbol!



Name the musical era!

Name one thing going on during this time period.
1960s

Performance!

Play or sing a short song

Name the interval!



Name the interval!



Name the instrument!



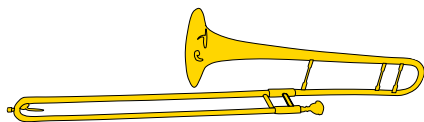
Name the interval!



Name the interval!



Name the instrument!



Name the note!



Name the note!



Scale Time!

Play or sing a 1-octave scale

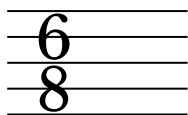
Name the note!



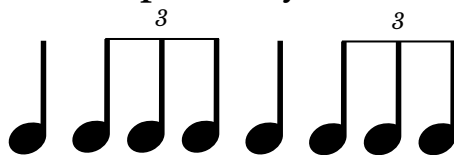
Name the note!



Name the musical symbol!



Clap the rhythm!



Clap the rhythm!



Name the musical symbol!



Clap the rhythm!



Clap the rhythm!



Make Your Own Instruments

You can make your own instruments, too!

As we have learned, humans have been making music for a very long time! All you need is something you can use to vibrate the air. Here are some ideas. Remember to take notes and only adjust one variable at a time.

Drums: buckets and coffee cans make great drums, especially if you can remove both ends so you are only left with a cylinder. Then you can stretch a piece of fabric tightly over one end. Traditionally, drums have used leather secured over a wood frame, but experiment with different materials and methods of securing the material. Try using your hand and then use a stick. How does the sound change?

Stringed Instruments: As a child, I spent many an afternoon with a shoebox and a handful of rubber bands, carefully creating my own “violin.” Experiment with different sizes of rubber bands, thick and thin. How do the different rubber bands make different sounds? Experiment with modifying your cardboard box to see if you can change the sound. Do you have a wooden box you can use (ask your parents before you modify it)?

Wind Instruments: All you need is a tube that can vibrate the air. Blowing over the top of a soda bottle, gently clamping down a straw and blowing through, even clamping a couple pieces of grass between your hands and blowing through them - these can all work! Some people are even able to use their hands as an instrument. Pan pipes are just a row of pipes of different lengths that you blow over the top of. How can you get different pitches from these instruments?

Your Voice: Our voices are likely our oldest instruments. Some people even excel at mimicking percussion or other instruments. Can you beatbox? Or maybe you’ve heard of acapella music? Acapella groups are voice-only groups, even though they often sound like they have instruments.

Experiment with different ways to get different sounds. How can you make higher or lower pitches? How can you make a louder instrument? Can you play a simple song? Try getting your friends or family together with your homemade instruments and put on a concert for your neighborhood!

Writing Assignments

Pick any musical era, genre, composer, musician, instrument, piece of music, related historical event, or anything else related and write about it. You can write an informative paper about your chosen topic, a short story, or maybe a persuasive paper expressing an opinion.

Creative Writing Brainstorming

The next page is for brainstorming and developing elements of a story. Use it to help get your ideas organized and fleshed out before writing your storyy.

Writing an Outline

1. Pick a topic
2. Choose your three main points.
3. These three main points go under the Introduction a., b., and c. and under the Conclusion a., b., and c.
4. Also write these three main points at 2., 3., and 4.
5. Find three supporting points for each of your main points, and place them at a., b., and c. under 2., 3., and 4.

Using Your Outline

Each of your main number points (1., 2., 3., 4., and 5.) is a separate paragraph. Each of your subpoints (a., b., and c.) should be one sentence. When you are finished fleshing out your outline into your full essay, each paragraph will be 3-5 sentences long.

Creative Writing Brainstorming

Character Descriptions: _____

Setting Description: _____

Challenge or Problem: _____

Resolution: _____

Essay Topic: _____

1. Introduction

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

5. Conclusion

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Subjects Covered

Throughout this unit study, your student has covered:

Math: Fractions, music theory

Science: Physics, ecology, making their own instruments

Reading: Music history, styles of music, music theory

Writing: Suggested activities, Writing Assignments

History: Music history, styles of music

Languages: Italian

Geography: Suggested activities, Deep dive into geography

Art: Combining music and art, making their own instruments

P.E.: Combining music and art

Grading Rubrics

What your child produces will depend on their capabilities. Use this as a rough guide, but don't be afraid to modify it to meet your child's needs.

Early Elementary

- Very basic; write 1-2 sentences OR
- Dictate a more complicated story/essay to parents that you, the parent, writes down
- Correct mechanics with your child.

Mechanics: spelling, punctuation, and grammar

Late Elementary				
	Length	Organization	Mechanics	Content
4 points	3+ paragraphs; 4-5 sentences/ paragraph	There is an introduction, body, and conclusion	Up to 2 mechanical errors	The topic is clearly defined and there are 3 or more supporting points
3 points	3 paragraphs, 3 sentences/ paragraph	There is a clear beginning, middle, and end	3-5 mechanical errors	The topic is defined and there are 2-3 supporting points
2 points	2 paragraphs, 2-3 sentences/ paragraph	There is some organization of supporting points	6-10 mechanical errors	The topic is loosely defined and there are 1-2 supporting points
1 point	1 paragraph, 3 sentences/ paragraph	There is little organization	More than 10 mechanical errors	The topic is barely defined with little or no supporting points

Grading Rubric

What your child produces will depend on their capabilities. Use this as a rough guide, but don't be afraid to modify it to meet your child's needs.

Mechanics: spelling, punctuation, and grammar

Middle School					
	Length	Organization	Mechanics	Content	Style
4	5 paragraphs; 5 sentences/ paragraph	There is an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion	Up to 2 mechanical errors	The topic is clearly defined and there are 3 or more supporting points	Clear voice and style, consistent throughout
3	4 paragraphs, 4 sentences/ paragraph	There is a clear beginning, middle, and end	3-5 mechanical errors	The topic is defined and there are 2-3 supporting points	Voice and style is mostly consistent
2	3 paragraphs, 3 sentences/ paragraph	There is some organization of supporting points	6-10 mechanical errors	The topic is loosely defined and there are 1-2 supporting points	Voice or style is somewhat present
1	2 paragraphs, 3 sentences/ paragraph	There is little organization	More than 10 mechanical errors	The topic is barely defined with little or no supporting points	Voice and style are not developed

Grading Rubric

What your child produces will depend on their capabilities. Use this as a rough guide, but don't be afraid to modify it to meet your child's needs.

Mechanics: spelling, punctuation, and grammar

High School					
	Length	Organization	Mechanics	Content	Style
4	1-3 pages, 7+ paragraphs	There is an introduction, 5+ body paragraphs, and conclusion	Up to 2 mechanical errors	The topic is clearly defined and there are 5 or more main supporting points	Clear voice and style, consistent throughout
3	5 paragraphs, 5 sentences/ paragraph	There is a clear beginning, middle, and end	3-5 mechanical errors	The topic is defined and there are 4 supporting points	Voice and style is mostly consistent
2	4 paragraphs, 4 sentences/ paragraph	Supporting points are mostly organized into paragraphs	6-10 mechanical errors	The topic is loosely defined and there are 3 supporting points	Voice or style is somewhat consistent
1	3 paragraphs, 3 sentences/ paragraph	There is some organization of supporting points	More than 10 mechanical errors	The topic is loosely defined and there are 1-2 supporting points	Voice or style is somewhat present