

Sight-Read It for Strings

Improving Reading and Sight-Reading Skills in the String Classroom or Studio

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String Bass

Welcome to *Sight-Read It for Strings: Improving Reading and Sight-Reading Skills in the String Classroom or Studio*. This book will help you become better at reading—and specifically, sight reading—music. Here's how:

First, work with your teacher to learn at least one of the systems used to count beats in music (listed on page 3). Then, look at the "Sight Reading Checklist" on page 2, and identify clues that can help you understand how to play unfamiliar music with ease. Next, turn to any unit in the book. Each unit addresses a separate set of sight reading

challenges that you will discover as you play the "Pretest." Following the Pretest is a series of exercises that will help you to practice and focus on each of these issues. Once you can easily play these exercises, sight read the "Post Test." After the Post Test is a "Special" page that explores other music reading concepts. Finally, each unit closes with an ensemble piece that you can play with your friends that revisits all of that unit's sight reading challenges. As you practice through this book, your ability to read music will get stronger and stronger! Good luck, and get ready to get reading!

table of contents

Introduction

Sight Reading Checklist	2
Counting Systems	3

Unit 1

Dotted Quarter and Eighth Notes	4
Special: "Road Maps"	6
Ensemble: <i>Men of Harlech March</i>	7

Unit 2

Long Notes	8
Special: Subdividing	10
Ensemble: <i>Theme from Symphony No. 1</i>	11

Unit 3

Rests	12
Special: Dynamics	14
Ensemble: <i>Theme and Variation on "Spring"</i>	15

Unit 4

Ties	16
Special: Meter Changes and Conducting	18
Ensemble: <i>Mixed-Up Bach</i>	19

Unit 5

Note Values: Long to Short and Short to Long	20
Special: Bowings and Articulations	22
Ensemble: <i>Noel's Galliard</i>	23

Unit 6

Conjunct (Stepwise) Interval Patterns	24
Special: Accompaniment Patterns	26
Ensemble: <i>Old Joe Clark</i>	27

Unit 7

Disjunct (Skipping) Interval Patterns	28
Special: Accidentals and Key Changes	30
Ensemble: <i>Bugle-Call Blues</i>	31
Special Page: E and C Strings	32



sight reading checklist

Before playing a piece of music for the first time, look it over carefully for these important clues which will make sight-reading the piece easier and more successful. Make sure you take time to think about the following:

1. Title

The title may indicate something about the style or mood of the piece.

2. Composer

The composer's name may be a clue to the style of music.

3. Tempo and Tempo Changes

These markings indicate the speed and any speed changes.

4. Key Signature and Key Changes

These indicate which scale notes to play and when they change.

5. Time Signatures and Time Changes

These indicate the meter and when it will change.

6. "Road Map"

These markings indicate where to go in the music and other important visual cues.

If you have time you should also check the following items:

7. Beginning and Ending Dynamics

The dynamics tell you how loud or soft to play at the beginning and end of the piece.

8. Accidentals

These indicate when pitches are altered in some way.

9. Articulations

Articulation markings indicate the length of the notes and special ways to use the bow.

Now use this checklist to guide you as you look over the piece below.
Discuss the process with your teacher and classmates, then play the piece.

1 Surprise Symphony

2

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

3 Andante

4

5 *p* 7 9

8

6

10 *pp*

6

6 *Fine*

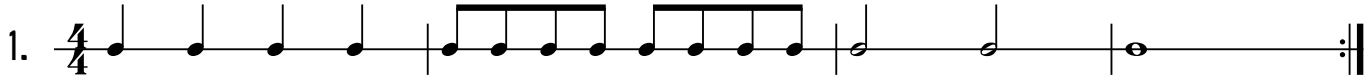
6 *D.S. al Fine*

counting systems

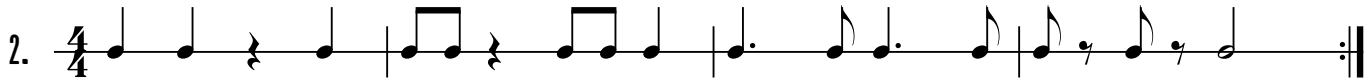
When sight-reading music, it is important to be able to count the rhythms in the music out loud, then silently "in your head." Musicians use a variety of different systems to count rhythms. In three common systems, students speak

(1) beat numbers, (2) syllables (such as the Gordon System) or (3) beat numbers and syllables (as in the McHose System).

Read the rhythm examples below, using each system (or one suggested by your teacher) to count the beats. Be sure to whisper the beats in parentheses.



Beat Numbers: 1	2	3	4	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	1	(2)	3	(4)	1	(2	3	4)
Gordon System: Du	Du	Du	Du	Du	de	Du	de	Du	de	Du	de	Du		Du		Du			
McHose System: 1	2	3	4	1	te	2	te	3	te	4	te	1		3		1			



Beat Numbers: 1	2	(3)	4	1	+	(2)	3	+	4	1	(2)	+	3	(4)	+	1	(+)	2	(+)	3	(4)
Gordon System: Du	Du	(Du)	Du	Du	de	(Du)	Du	De	Du	Du	de	Du	de	Du	de	Du	(de)	Du	(de)	Du	
McHose System: 1	2	(3)	4	1	te	(2)	3	te	4	1	te	3	te	4	te	1	(te)	2	(te)	3	

Students use other counting systems, too. Whatever system you use, it is important to use a counting system consistently.

Using the system your teacher suggests:

- Count the following rhythm exercises out loud. Clap or tap a steady beat as you count.
- Write what you spoke under the beats as you repeat the exercises silently, (syllables or numbers).
- Play the rhythms using a note of your choice, or notes suggested by your teacher.



Hot Shot Challenge: Can you play the rhythms on one note and count out loud at the same time?

Pre-Test

Dotted Quarter/Eighth and Half Notes

Dotted Quarter/Eighth and Eighth Notes

Dotted Quarter Notes on Beat One

[illegible]

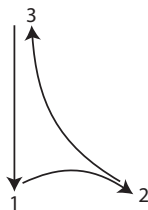
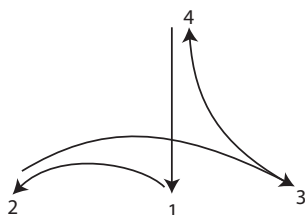
unit 4 special meter changes and conducting

Your teacher will show you how to conduct each beat pattern. Try conducting each line below.

$\frac{4}{4}$ (conductor's view)

$\frac{3}{4}$ (conductor's view)

$\frac{2}{4}$ (conductor's view)



Conducting Patterns

Play the famous melodies below. Try to identify the title and composer of each. Then practice following the conductor by:

1. Playing only the down beat notes while watching the conductor.
2. Playing all the notes, making sure to look up at the conductor at each change of tempo.

Allegro

Title: _____

Composer: _____



Moderato

Title: _____

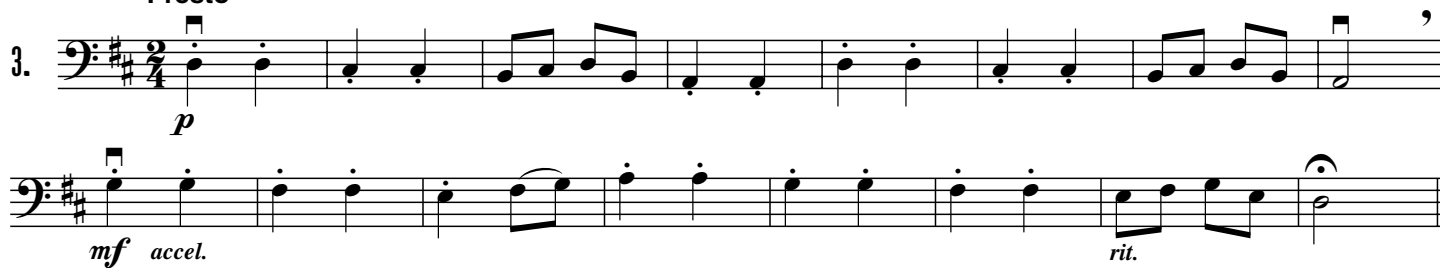
Composer: _____



Presto

Title: _____

Composer: _____



Meter Changes—On the pieces below:

1. Circle the downbeats
2. Play the downbeat notes only.
3. Play the entire exercise.
4. Play the piece and look up at the conductor for a moment every time you play a downbeat.
5. Take turns with your friends conducting each exercise.

Allegro



Mixed-up Melodies

Moderato

