

Sight-Read It for Strings

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

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Conductor's Score

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!

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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

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

3 Andante

4 C

5 *p*

7

9

8

6

ff

ff

ff

10 G^7 C G G^7

pp

6 C G^7 6 *Fine*

G^7 C G^7 6 *D.S. al Fine*

counting systems

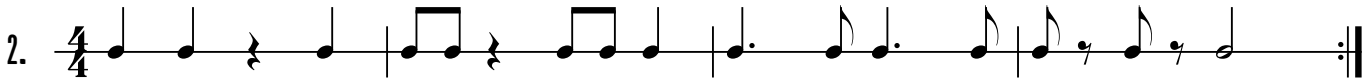
When sight-reading music, it is important to be able to count the rhythms in the music out loud, then silently "in your head." Musicians use a variety of different systems to count rhythms. In three common systems, students speak

(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	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
McHose System: 1	2	(3)	4	1 te (2)	3 te 4	1	te 3	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?

unit 1 dotted quarters and eighth notes

Play each exercise using a dynamic suggested by your teacher.

Pre-Test

1.

D G D A D G A⁷ D

Violin

Viola

Cello Bass

1.

G D G Bm D A⁷

2.

Em D G D Em D A⁷ D