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Chapter 2: Basic Notation and Theory

Drumset Notational Key

The following notational key shows you how each drum or cymbal is notated on the musical staff. The staff consists of five lines, and each line or space corresponds to a specific

drum or cymbal. A *percussion clef* at the beginning of the staff indicates the music is written for drums, as opposed to some other instrument.

The diagram shows a grid of musical staves with percussion clefs. The notation is as follows:

- Small Tom:** Note on the first space (F).
- Mid Tom:** Note on the second space (G).
- Snare Drum:** Note on the third space (A).
- Floor Tom:** Note on the fourth space (B).
- Bass Drum:** Note on the fourth line (C).
- Cross Stick:** Note on the fourth line (C) with an 'x' symbol.
- Rim Shot:** Note on the first space (F) with 'R.S.' and an accent (>).
- Hi-Hat:** Note on the first space (F) with an 'x' symbol.
- Ride Cymbal:** Note on the first space (F) with an 'x' symbol.
- Crash Cymbal:** Note on the first space (F) with an 'x' symbol.
- Cowbell:** Note on the first space (F) with a triangle symbol.
- Hi-Hat w/ Foot:** Note on the first space (F) with an 'x' symbol.
- Hi-Hat Splash w/ Foot:** Note on the first space (F) with an 'x' symbol and a tilde (~).
- 2nd Bass Drum:** Note on the fourth line (C).
- Cowbell w/ Foot:** Note on the fourth line (C) with a triangle symbol.

Try to memorize this key. In the beginning, you may need to refer back to this page if you are uncertain of where a drum or cymbal is placed on the staff.

Notes and Rests

Notes and rests form the rhythmic “alphabet” of music. Notes indicate sound, and rests indicate silence. You need to memorize the shape and appearance of these notes and rests and be able to quickly identify them on the staff

before you can learn how to count them or begin using them in musical contexts. Below are the symbols that indicate the different types of notes and rests.

Notes—Duration of Sound

Whole Note 	Half Note 	Quarter Note
Eighth Note 	Sixteenth Note 	Thirty-Second Note

Rests—Duration of Silence

Whole Rest 	Half Rest 	Quarter Rest
Eighth Rest 	Sixteenth Rest 	Thirty-Second Rest