

Notation Guidelines - Examples

1 3 4 5 6 7 8

Yes NO! NO! Yes NO! NO! Yes Yes NO! NO! Yes Yes

9 10 11

Yes NO! NO! Yes NO! NO! Yes Yes Yes

13 14 15 16 17

Yes Yes Yes Yes NO! NO! Yes NO! Yes NO! Yes Yes NO! NO! Yes Yes Yes

18 19

Yes Yes NO! Yes - Beams follow beats NO-Beats unclear; hard to read

Yes - Beams follow beats NO-Beats unclear; hard to read

20 21 22

Yes NO! NO! Yes Yes NO! NO! Whole rest="hole" in the ground Take note of vertical positioning

23

Yes Yes NO! Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes

24

Yes - Beats are clear NO-Beats unclear; hard to read Yes - Beats are clear NO-Beats unclear; hard to read

Notation Guidelines

By Mark Feezell, Ph.D.

Your literacy as a musician will be evaluated in part based on your ability to notate music clearly and correctly. You will be expected to follow these guidelines when notating your homework assignments and tests. Study them carefully, and keep this sheet handy while doing your homework. I reserve the right to subtract points for incorrect notation, even if your answer is otherwise correct. The second sheet of this document contains illustrations of these principles.

Clefs and Staves

1. Lines and spaces are numbered from bottom to top. Lines: 1 to 5; Spaces: 1 to 4.
2. The plural of staff is *staves*. One line of music in a score is a *system*, which may have many *staves*.
3. The treble clef *always* circles around the "G" line.
4. The two dots in the bass clef *always* surround the "F" line.
5. The center of any "C" clef *always* indicates middle C (C4). However, the clef may be centered on any line.

Noteheads

6. Noteheads should be as tall as 1 space.
7. Noteheads should be oval and slightly slanted (see figure).
8. Whole notes are oval but *do not* slant.

Accidentals

9. Normally, added accidentals *immediately precede* the notehead to which they apply.
10. If a chord requires 2 accidentals on notes closer than a sixth, write the upper accidental directly to the left of its notehead, and the lower accidental by its notehead but staggered to the left.
11. For > 2 accidentals, stagger them as shown.
12. Key signatures must be written correctly for the given staff. See your text for examples.

Stems

13. 3rd line and above - stems down; below 3rd line - stems up (except if two parts are in one staff).
14. Stems *always* go on the left if down, on the right if up.
15. Stem length is normally one octave.
16. Stems for notes using ledger lines extend to the 3rd line, regardless of how high or low they are.
17. When notating seconds, the higher pitch goes on the right. If the stem goes up, it connects to the lower pitch. If the stem goes down, it connects to the higher pitch. HOWEVER, if there are two voices on one staff stating a 2nd, the higher pitch's notehead goes on the left (see example).

Beams

18. For beamed notes, stems should go up or down based on the note farthest from the middle line.
19. Beam notes in the same beat together.
20. Beams should be about twice the thickness of stems and may slant *slightly* if the notes ascend or descend.
21. Flags should be notated correctly.

Rhythm

22. Note the usual position of rests within the staff (except when there are two parts in one staff).
23. Dots for dotted rhythmic values are *never* placed on a staff line. If the notehead itself is on a staff line, the dot is put to the right of the note but in the space above it.
24. Always attempt to use rhythmic notation to clarify the placement of *beats* in the meter. Use ties if needed.