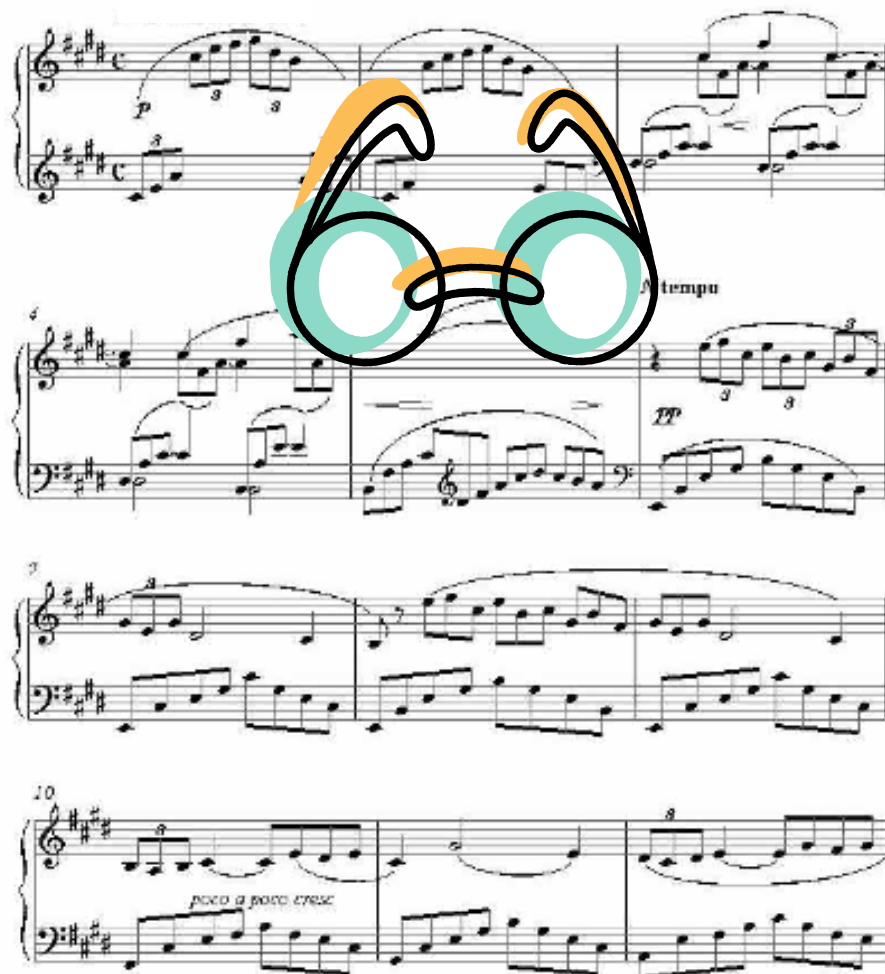


Reading Music

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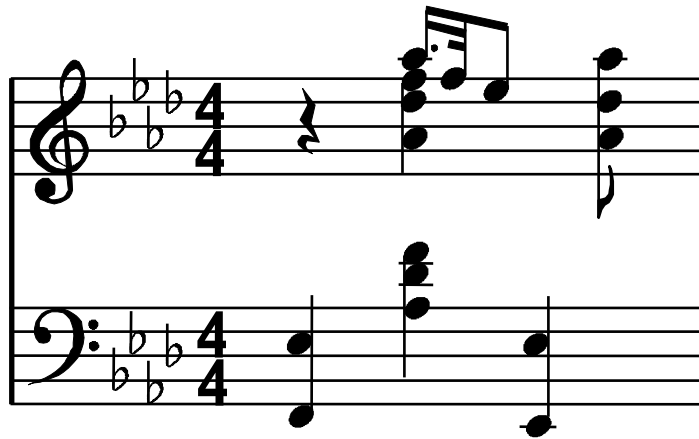


Why Read Music?

Learning to read music is *not* easy.

Standard Music Notation was invented around the year 1030 in Italy by a Benedictine monk named Guido D'Arezzo.

Like any foreign language, it takes years to master, and if you don't use it, you lose it.



Yet despite its complexity and design flaws, Standard Music Notation is a nearly universal language that links musicians of almost every nationality. Learning to read it will open the vast world of written music to your playing enjoyment.

Even if you're accomplished at playing by ear or with lead sheets and chords, some day you may want to play the exact musical arrangements created by renowned and popular composers.

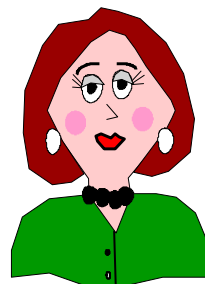
And if you enjoy playing by picture, a basic ability to read music will allow you to convert your favorite sheet music songs into Allcanplay notation. (See the *Converting Songs to Allcanplay* section.)

Standard Notation Issues

If you've tried to read music, you may identify with some of the following concerns.



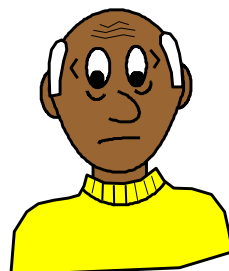
Music notation for the right hand is easy..."Every Good Boy Does Fine" and "F-A-C-E" help me remember the names of each line and space. But for the life of me, I have trouble remembering the left hand. Why couldn't they have given the left hand lines and spaces the same names as the right?



I find it very hard to read notes on ledger lines above the Treble or below the Bass Staff. I have to start up from the top Treble line or down from the bottom Bass line to find out the names of these "far out" notes.



"Every Good Boy Does Fine" was great at first. But now it slows me down. Sometimes I catch myself reciting the whole phrase just to figure out that the top line is F!

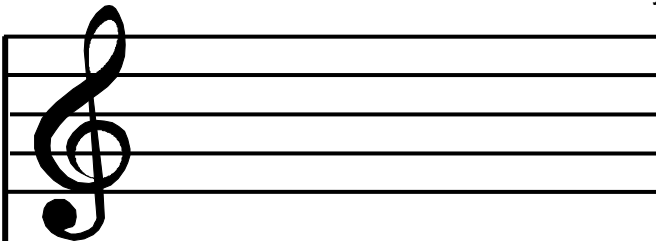


I'm okay until they throw in a lot of Sharps and Flats. White keys become black keys, black keys become white keys. It's very confusing! Why do we have to have Sharps and Flats anyway?

The Grand Staff

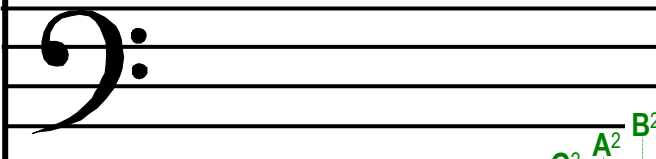
The primary structure of Standard Music Notation is the Grand Staff, which consists of Treble (right-hand) and Bass (left-hand) staves. Each line and space represents a key on your keyboard. Unfortunately, there are only enough lines and spaces to represent the white keys. Perhaps early keyboard instruments did not have black keys. Or maybe the staff evolved from choir notation that didn't include black-note tones.

Treble Staff and G Clef
For the Right Hand

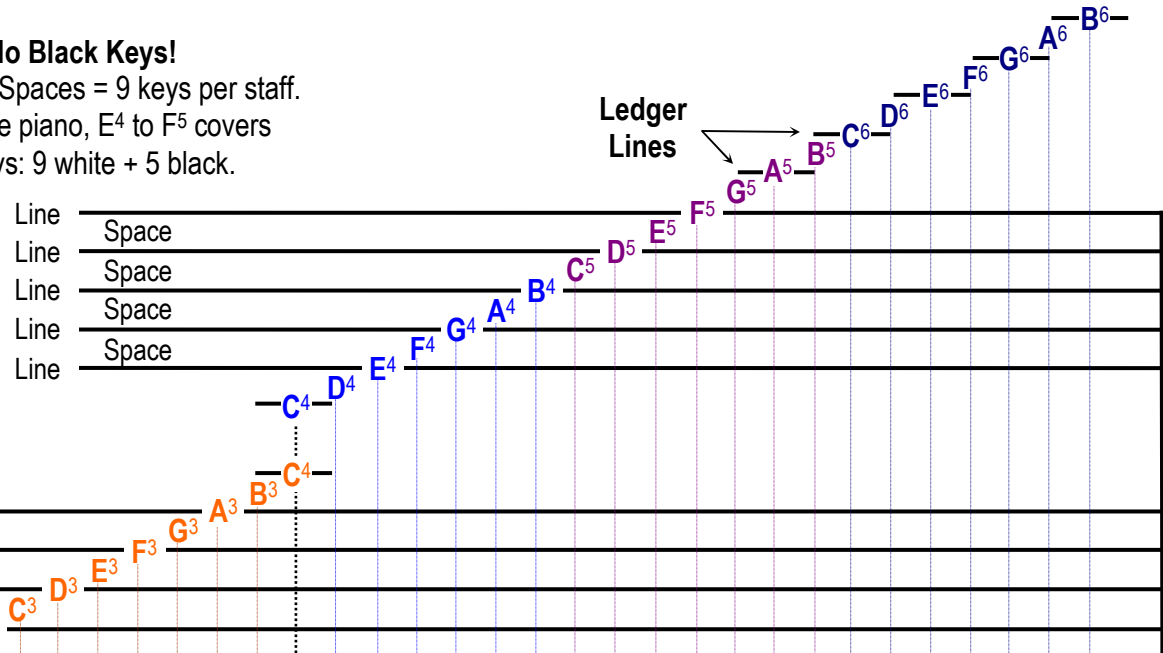


No Black Keys!
5 Lines + 4 Spaces = 9 keys per staff.
But on the piano, E⁴ to F⁵ covers
14 keys: 9 white + 5 black.

Bass Staff and F Clef
For the Left Hand

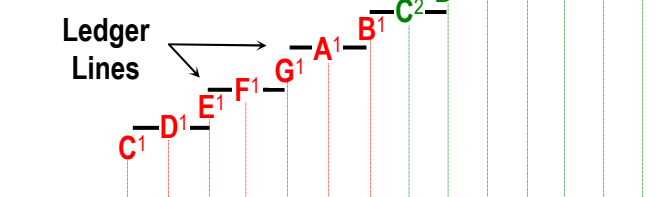


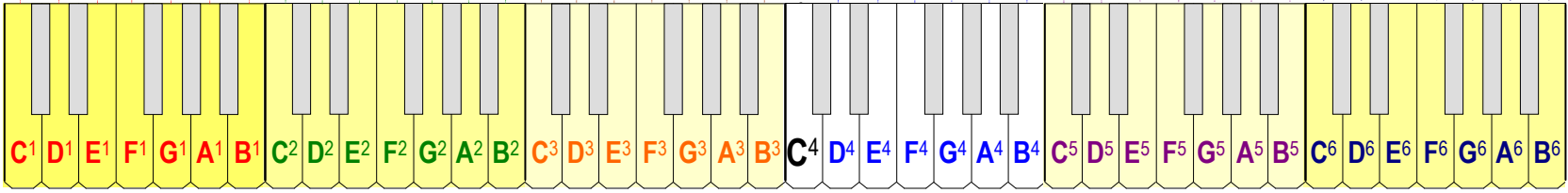
Ledger Lines



Bass is pronounced *Base*

Ledger Lines





Middle

Line & Space Memory Hints

Most students learn the names of the lines and spaces through sequential sayings or letters. These help at first but hinder in the long run. The biggest problem is the need or tendency to recite the entire saying each time, similar to having to sing the “a, b, c” alphabet song to know which letter comes next.

Traditional Sayings

Treble Clef:

- Line 5: Fine
- Space 4: Does
- Line 4: Boy
- Space 3: Good
- Line 3: Every
- Space 2: A
- Line 2: F
- Space 1: E
- Line 1: C

Bass Clef:

- Line 4: Always
- Space 3: Fine
- Line 3: Do
- Space 2: Boys
- Line 2: Good
- Space 1: Grass
- Line 1: Eat
- Space 0: Cows
- Line 0: All

Pros

- Sayings, which can vary (All Cars Eat Gas), are catchy and easy to remember.

Cons

- Four sayings; different for each hand.
- Sayings skip either lines or spaces.
- Sayings do not include non-staff notes.
- Tendency/need to recite entire saying.

Octave Sayings

Start at any C and recite up or down to the desired line or space.

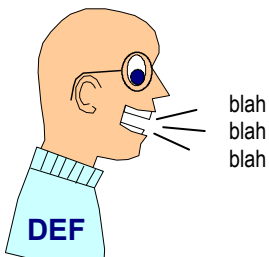
Octave 5 (Purple): C-B-A-G-F-E-D-C

Octave 4 (Blue): C-B-A-G-F-E-D-C

Octave 3 (Orange): C-B-A-G-F-E-D-C

Octave 2 (Green): C-B-A-G-F-E-D-C

Going Up
C(see) DEF GAB!



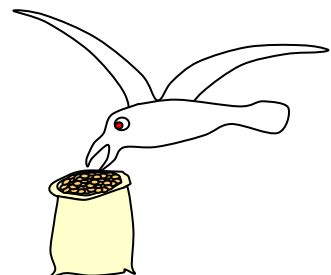
Pros

- Two sayings; same for each hand.
- Sayings include lines & spaces.
- Sayings include non-staff notes.
- Octave numbers aid keyboard location.

Cons

- Tendency/need to recite entire saying.

Going Down
BAG FED C(gull)!



Octave Visualizations

The ideal is to be able to look at a line or space and *instantly* know which key on the keyboard it represents. It can help to visualize corresponding objects on lines, spaces, and keys.

Cat Dog Elk Fox Goat Ape Bear
Copper Diamond Emerald Feldspar Gold Amber Bronze

Carrot Dandelion Eggplant Flax Garlic Asparagus Broccoli
Cantaloupe Date Elderberry Fig Grape Apple Banana

Base Staff Treble Staff

C² D² E² F² G² A² B² C³ D³ E³ F³ G³ A³ B³ C⁴ D⁴ E⁴ F⁴ G⁴ A⁴ B⁴ C⁵ D⁵ E⁵ F⁵ G⁵ A⁵ B⁵

2: Veggie Octave 3: Fruit Octave 4: Animal Octave 5: Mineral Octave

2 lines above
3 spaces up
3 spaces down
2 lines below

C⁶
G clef
F clef
C's

Flees staff
Bisects staff
Enters staff
Air level
Divides staff
Ground level

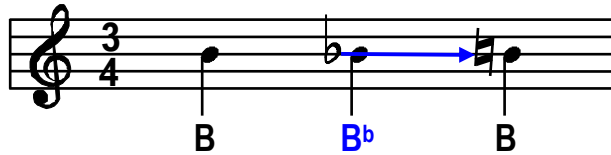
C D E F G A B

Applying Sharps & Flats

Below are three ways to apply accidentals to notes in a song, using flats to illustrate. Notice that the flat symbols are placed *before* the notes on the staff but *after* the letter names of the line or space.

To A Single Note

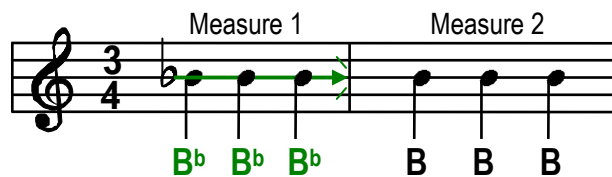
Flat flows along staff until canceled by a natural.



A flat placed in front of the **B** note changes it to **B^b**.
The natural sign returns the following note to **B**.

To All Notes in a Measure

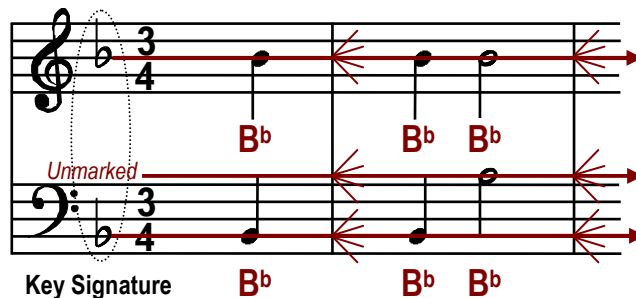
Flat flows along staff until blocked by a bar line.



A flat in front of the first **B** note changes it and the following **B**s on that line to **B^b**. The flat is stopped at the bar line and does not continue to the next measure.

To All Notes in a Song

Key Signature flats blast through bar lines.



Accidentals inserted between the Clefs and the Time Signature (3/4) make up the **Key Signature** which indicates the "key" a song is written in. Key Signature accidentals apply to *every* note in *every* measure, including notes on *unmarked* lines or spaces.

This is a great time saver for composers, since they don't have to mark accidentals on each affected note. But it makes it difficult for piano players who haven't memorized the 30 musical keys, so they often end up marking each note themselves to avoid missing a sharp or flat.

Timing

Timing refers to the length of time or number of beats each note in a song is held. Each year tens of thousands of new songs are written and added to the millions of songs that already exist. With only 88 keys on a piano, how is it possible to have so many unique songs?

The answer is TIMING.

Play each of the following identical note sequences on your piano. If you don't know the melodies, count the timing. [1+] = 1 and.

Declining C Scale	
	DO 1+
	TI 2+
	LA 3+
	SO 4+
	FA 5+
	MI 6+
	RE 7+
	DO 8+

Joy To The World	
	JOY 1+2+
	TO 3+4
	THE +
	WORLD 1+2+3+
	THE 4+
	LORD 1+2+
	IS 3+4+
	COME 1+2+3+

Although the two note sequences are identical, the timing makes each melody unique.

Pivot on *t* and crossover with *m*.

Pivot on *t* and crossover with *m*.

Counting Time

Traditional Counting
Whole Number = Whole Beat

For Half Beats, you must insert "+" and speed up your counting pace, which can throw off your rhythm.

	1 2 3 4
	1 2 3 + 4
	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

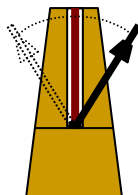
Say/play [1], [2], [3], [4] for the Whole Beats.

Speed up to say [3 and] in the same amount of time as you said [3].

Allcanplay Counting
Includes "+" after every number so there is no need to speed up counting.

Instead, you can count steadily (like a ticking metronome), which makes it easier to keep time and to play and hold notes for their designated time value.

Say a number or "and" with each tick.



Keep a constant counting pace.

Say/play [1 and], [2 and] for the Whole Beats then [3], [and] for the Half Beats, then [4 and] for the Whole Beat.

The count for a note can start on any number or "+" based on its order in the song. For example, a Whole Beat's timing may be [+3].

Beats, Measures, & Time Signatures

Beat: the basic unit of timing.



Imagine drum beats.

Measure (or Bar): a group of beats.



Bar Lines: used to separate measures.



Time Signature: a fraction placed after the Key Signature. The top number tells how many beats are in each measure. The bottom number tells which type of note gets *one* beat.

- 2 2 beats per measure (foxtrot, 2-step...)
- 4 Quarter note gets one beat
- 3 3 beats per measure (waltz/minuet...)
- 4 Quarter note gets one beat
- 4 4 beats per measure (march, rock...)
- 4 Quarter note gets one beat
- 6 6 beats per measure (fast waltz/minuet...)
- 8 Eighth note gets one beat

Many Time Signatures are possible: 2/2, 5/4, 9/8...
The symbol **C** denotes 4/4 or Common time.

A **downbeat** is strong and applies only to the 1 count, which is given more emphasis than the other beats so it drives the rhythm.

An **upbeat** is less strong and applies to all other beats *but* the 1 count.

Equal Beats per Measure

Each measure in a song will have the same number of beats, with this exception: If the first measure begins on an *upbeat*, the missing beats will be in the *last* measure.

Time Values

The shape and shading of note symbols tells you how long to hold keys down.
Notes can be solid or hollow and have stems, flags, dots, bars, etc.

Counting in x/4 Time

This table displays the most common time with a quarter note getting one beat. Although the counts shown here all begin with the number 1, a count can start with any number or + depending on a note's place in a measure.

Quarter Note = 1 beat [1+]

Traditionally, one beat would be counted with a single word [1]. But to avoid having to speed up for half beats, we count one beat as two words [1 and].

Note times are relative. In x/8 time, an eighth note gets one beat [1+]; a quarter note gets two [1+2+], etc.

Eighth Note = ½ beat [1]

Count as a single word, either with a number or "and."

Sixteenth Note = ¼ beat [1/]

Count as a half word by splitting: 1[wu/ /un], 2[too/ /oo], 3[thr/ /ee], 4[fo/ /ur], +[an/ /da]

Dotted Note = 1½ time

















A dot after a note adds half again as much time as the note itself. (Imagine getting paid time-and-a-half for overtime work.)

Joined Notes

When a bar or bars join notes, they are counted the same as if they had flags.

Triplets

A small "3" with three notes means to split the count of *two* of those notes over all three notes. An eighth-note triplet splits the count of two eighth notes [1+] to [1 an da].

Time Value	Rest	Note	Count x/4 time
Sixteenth			1/ [wu]
Eighth			1
Dotted Eighth			1 an/
Quarter			1+
Dotted Quarter			1+2
Half			1+2+
Dotted Half			1+2+3+
Whole			1+2+3+4+
2 Sixteenths			1/ /1 [wu/ /un]
2 Eighths			1 +
Eighth Note Triplet			1 an da

Rests

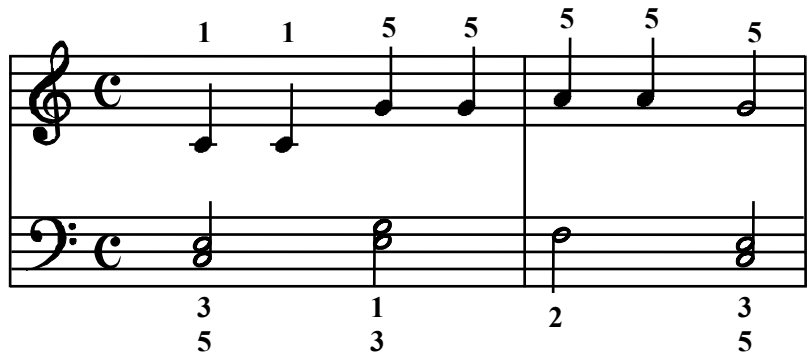
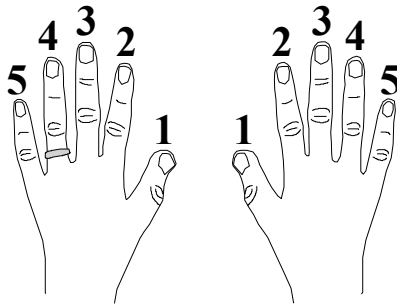
Rest symbols indicate a period of silence when *no* notes are played. (Imagine that the Whole rest is heavier than the Half rest, so its box "sank" below the line.)

Stems can also be drawn pointing down, on the *left* of the note body. However, **flags** are always drawn on the *right* side of their stems.



More Music Terms & Symbols

Finger Numbers



This example shows every key with a finger number. Typically only certain keys are numbered, or numbering is omitted completely.

More Note, Accidental, & Timing Symbols



Tie

Joins same notes. Play once but hold for the time of both notes.



Slur

Joins different notes. Play notes smoothly as a group.



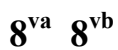
Staccato

Play quickly with short, separated notes. Imagine popcorn popping.



Duplet

Split the count of 3 notes between 2 notes. Eighth Note Duplet count: [1an da2]



Octave

Play notes an octave higher (above) or lower (below) than written.



Fermata

Hold the note beneath this symbol for longer than its normal time count.



Double Sharp

Play the note following this symbol two keys higher.



Double Flat

Play the note following this symbol two keys lower.



Common Time

Alternate Time Signature symbol for 4/4 Time.



Cut Time

Alternate Time Signature symbol for 2/2 Time.

See the
Pedaling
section of
these lessons
for pedal
symbols.

Ornament Symbols



Arpeggio

Play a group of notes one at a time quickly and smoothly in order.



Glissando

Slide thumb or finger quickly up or down over one or more octaves.





Grace Note

Play and blend the small grace note quickly into the adjacent note.



Mordent

Rapidly alternate a note once or twice with the note below  or above  it.



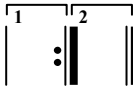
Trill

Rapidly alternate adjacent notes several times.

Repeat Symbols




Repeat Signs: Play notes between signs again.





Double Ending: Play song through the 1st ending. Play again from the beginning of the song (or from the first Repeat Sign). Skip over the 1st ending and play the 2nd ending.



Da Capo al Coda: Play song to “D.C. al Coda.” Play again from the beginning of the song until “To Coda .



Da Segno al Coda: Play song to “D.S. al Coda.” Play again from the  (Segno) symbol until “To Coda .

Tempo Terms & Dynamic Symbols

Tempo = Pace of play

Grave	Very Slow
Largo, Lento	Slow
Adagio	Moderately Slow
Andante	Walking Tempo
Allegro	Fast
Vivace	Lively
Presto	Very Fast
Prestissimo	Very Very Fast
Moderato	Moderately
Accel[erando]	Gradually Faster
Rit[ardando]	Gradually Slower

Dynamics = Loudness of play

<i>ppp</i>	Pianississimo	Very Very Soft
<i>pp</i>	Pianissimo	Very Soft
<i>p</i>	Piano	Soft
<i>mp</i>	Mezzo Piano	Medium Soft
<i>mf</i>	Mezzo Forte	Medium Loud
<i>f</i>	Forte	Loud
<i>ff</i>	Fortissimo	Very Loud
<i>fff</i>	Fortississimo	Very Very Loud
	Crescendo	Gradually Louder
	Decrescendo	Gradually Softer
<i>dim.</i>	Diminuendo	Gradually Softer

Consult a Music Dictionary or search online for additional music terms and symbols.