

Clefs in Music



Read the symbol. Locate its reference pitch. Follow the notes.

A clef assigns pitches to the five lines and four spaces of a staff. Count lines and spaces **from the bottom upward**. C4 means middle C; the number identifies the octave.

Treble clef

The treble clef is the G clef. Its curl surrounds the second line from the bottom, making that line G4. It is commonly used for higher-pitched music.

Common instruments: Flute, violin, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, and piano right hand.



Reference pitch: G4

Line 2 from the bottom.

The whole note marks the clef's anchor.

Lines: E4 G4 B4 D5 F5 | Spaces: F4 A4 C5 E5

Two-bar motif - Flute | 4/4 | Suggested tempo: 80 BPM

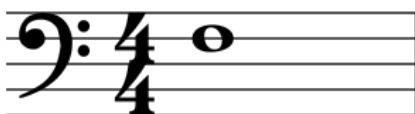


Pitches: G4 A4 B4 C5 | B4 A4 G4 G4

Bass clef

The bass clef is the F clef. Its two dots sit above and below the fourth line from the bottom, making that line F3. It is commonly used for lower-pitched music.

Common instruments: Cello, double bass, bass guitar, bassoon, trombone, tuba, and piano left hand.



Reference pitch: F3

Line 4 from the bottom.

The whole note marks the clef's anchor.

Lines: G2 B2 D3 F3 A3 | Spaces: A2 C3 E3 G3

Two-bar motif - Cello | 4/4 | Suggested tempo: 80 BPM



Pitches: C3 D3 E3 F3 | E3 D3 C3 C3

Rhythm in every motif: bar 1 = four quarter notes; bar 2 = two beamed eighth notes, one half note, and one quarter note. Each bar contains four quarter-note beats.

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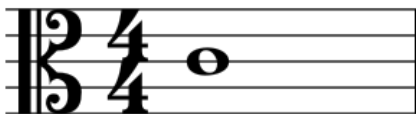
Read the symbol. Locate its reference pitch. Follow the notes.

Alto and tenor use the same **C-clef symbol**, but its centre sits on a different line. Moving the clef changes the pitch names of every staff position.

Alto clef

The alto clef is a C clef centred on the third (middle) line. The centre of its symbol identifies this line as middle C (C4). It helps middle-register music fit on the staff.

Common instruments: Viola is its principal modern user; viola da gamba also uses alto clef.



Reference pitch: C4

Line 3 from the bottom.

The whole note marks the clef's anchor.

Lines: F3 A3 C4 E4 G4 | Spaces: G3 B3 D4 F4

Two-bar motif - Viola | 4/4 | Suggested tempo: 80 BPM



Pitches: C4 D4 E4 F4 | E4 D4 C4 C4

Tenor clef

The tenor clef is the same C-clef symbol moved to the fourth line from the bottom. Its centre makes that line middle C (C4). It reduces ledger lines in higher passages for low instruments.

Common instruments: Cello, bassoon, and trombone, especially in their higher registers.



Reference pitch: C4

Line 4 from the bottom.

The whole note marks the clef's anchor.

Lines: D3 F3 A3 C4 E4 | Spaces: E3 G3 B3 D4

Two-bar motif - Bassoon | 4/4 | Suggested tempo: 80 BPM



Pitches: G3 A3 B3 C4 | B3 A3 G3 G3

Rhythm in every motif: bar 1 = four quarter notes; bar 2 = two beamed eighth notes, one half note, and one quarter note. Each bar contains four quarter-note beats.