

# Lesson 1: The layout of the keys

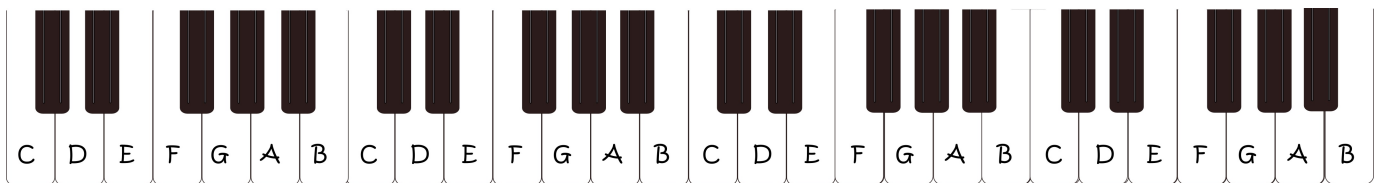
## The musical alphabet

Every musical note has a name, and that name is one of the first seven letters of the alphabet - A, B, C, D, E, F or G.

So how do you know which note is which? First you need to become familiar with the pattern of black and white keys. Have a look at the piano keys. You will notice that the black notes are in groups of 2 and groups of 3.

Now:

- \* With your right hand, play every group of 3 black keys.
- \* With your left hand, play every group of 2 black keys.
- \* The white notes that are just to the left of each group of two black keys are all called C.
- \* The rest of the notes are arranged in alphabetical order as shown below.



You will notice that many notes share the same name, for example, there are 8 different Bs on a full size piano. The most important note, for various reasons, is the note C. We will learn what the black keys are called later in this book.

### EXERCISE:

- \* Using one finger, and starting on the left of the keyboard, look for and play all of the Cs.
- \* Then see how quickly you can play each of these notes (play one of each):

G C B F A D E

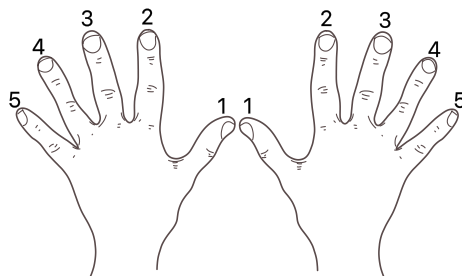
## How to place your hands on the keys



When you play you should hold your hands in a relaxed shape with fingers gently curved so that the tips touch the keys.

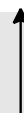
## Finger numbers

Your fingers are numbered 1 to 5 in each hand.



In order to play the piano well you will need to develop the ability to use each of your fingers independantly, and to be able to co-ordinate your hands to work together. The next exercise will help you with this.

**\* More about middle C later.**  
**For the moment, just look**  
**for a C that is near to the**  
**middle of the keyboard.**



### EXERCISE:

1. Place your right hand on the keys with your thumb on ***middle C***.  
 Then using fingers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, slowly play the notes C, D, E, F and G.  
 Try to play as smoothly and evenly as you can.
2. Then do a similar exercise with your left hand. Once again, you will start with your thumb on middle C, and will use fingers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. But this time you should move down through C, B, A, G and F.
3. Now, using your right hand again, play up through fingers 1 to 5, then back to C using fingers 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1.
4. Now, do the same using your left hand. ie. Put your thumb on C and play with fingers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 then 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.
5. If that was easy, try doing this with both hands at the same time. You will have to be careful to let both thumbs share middle C.

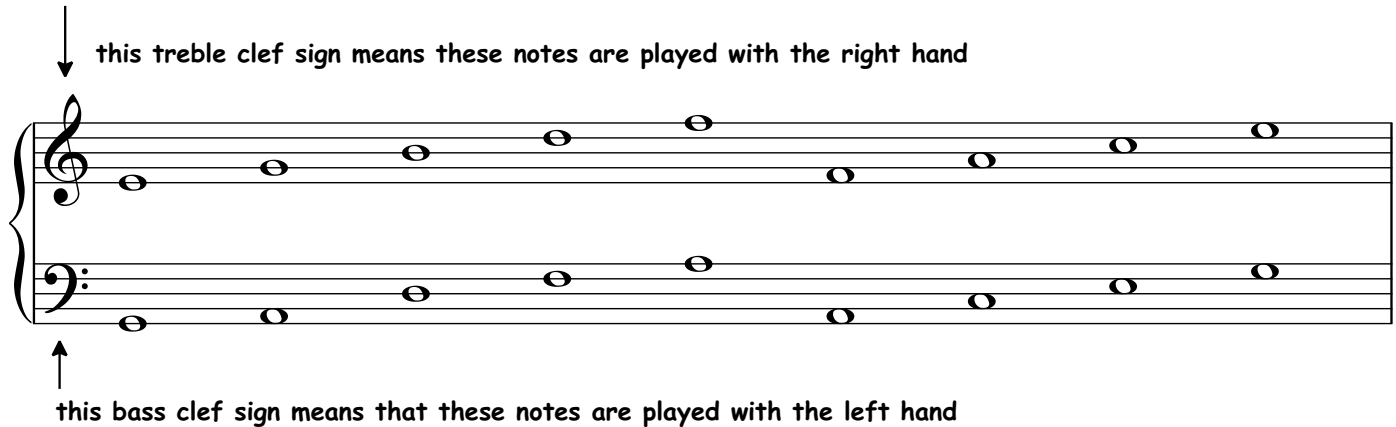
**Tip: remember to keep your fingers gently curved as you play. Your arms and hands should be as relaxed as you can manage.**

# MUSICAL NOTATION

Notes are written on a set of 5 lines called a **stave**.

Each stave has a symbol at the start, indicating which hand should play.

Notes are written on the lines or in the spaces on the staves:



Music is divided into bars (or measures) by bar lines with a line at the end of each bar.

The two numbers after the clef sign are called the **time signature**.

The top number tells us how many beats there are in each bar.

We will learn what the bottom number means later in the book.

This time signature tells us there are 4 beats in each bar.



## NOTE LENGTHS

Music has a beat and the way notes are written shows how many beats they should be held for:

○ = 4 beats - this is called a **semibreve** or a **whole note**

♪ = 2 beats - this is called a **minim** or a **half note**

♫ = 1 beat - this is called a **crotchet** or a **quarter note**

**Tip:** a beat usually lasts between about half and one second, although it can be much faster or much slower