

Lesson 0

Have You Ever Wondered . . . What is Music?

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Dear Reader

In today's world, where so much is changing and information is so freely available, I just want to outline your rights and mine with regard to this booklet, which is part of my home study course 'Read & Play Music'.

This is a legally binding agreement between you and myself (David Dempster). Please read it carefully.

This is a multimedia home study course which contains lessons, audios, videos, and documents – all in digital format. Unlike printed books and music where you own the physical book, the standard for digital works is to purchase a licence to use the media.

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David Dempster

What students are saying about this course

‘This course is done in such a step-by-step way that it was extremely easy. This is great! I love it! I am looking forward to the next lessons!’ — Gigi

‘I kept telling myself ‘I am doing it! I am actually reading and playing music!’ I had no idea I could achieve this ability in such a short time. David makes it seem so simple.’ — Andrew

‘I played violin from age 5 through high school but was never taught to read music. I’m thrilled to finally learn in such an easy step-by-step way. Thanks, David.’ — Ben

‘All my life I’ve wanted to have music be part of who I am. With my earlier failures to learn music, I resolved to be just a listener. Now with David’s method of learning, I can CREATE music myself.’ — Kathy

‘I am a singer. Now I can play a song on the piano and learn it all by myself. I never could do that before!’ — Helen

‘I already played the piano but it was so difficult to learn new songs. After learning how to read music in David’s course, I was able to easily read and play a song that I really wanted to learn. Awesome!’ — Ellen

‘I am so happy with this! I have a pile of books on music and couldn’t understand them. This is much better than anything else I’ve seen. What a wonderful course!’ — Debbie

‘I finished the first lesson. It was fantastic. Thank you for letting me learn this way. I look forward to being able to play.’ — Jim

‘I played the song with great ease! This is great for a beginner, so easy to follow. The diagrams are great.’ — Amber

For Mum, Dad and my brother Raymond

Acknowledgements

This course was the result of some remarkable teamwork.

My buddy **Kathy Jackson** has been my 'first reader', devouring the course as I wrote it and giving me her special insights. She also took on the role of lead pilot student, becoming the first to do all four books of the course. With Kathy there studying the pages as I wrote them, I was able to see which parts were sticky and work out how to get them flowing more smoothly. Kathy stood by me in difficult times in the middle of the project. She filmed the videos and got them to turn out well (including combing my hair). She applauded when I wrote something bright, and gently helped me realise when a piece of the course needed to be reworked or even scrapped. (For some reason, she did not think my brilliant essay on the history of traffic speed limits belonged in a music course.) Anyone who knows Kathy will understand what I mean when I say she brought her special Kathy-ness to the project. Thank you Kathy.

One of my students, **Gayla Gum-Aguirre**, piloted the first part of the course. Then instead of just drifting off, Gayla did something brilliant that added tremendous energy to the project and helped me get the course into its final form. She offered to deliver my course to teenagers at the school where she works. She started with four students, they told their friends about it, and soon there were 25. They gave a performance in the school Christmas show. The feedback from Gayla and her students was invaluable in fine-tuning the course materials to get them into their final form, and confirming that the course was working well and was in high demand. Thank you Gayla and all your students who piloted the course under your watchful eye.

This project found a champion in my friend **Grace Hunter**. Grace constantly encouraged me by telling me how valuable the course was. She piloted the early rough versions of the course. (I still remember her shriek of dismay when she turned a page and found a great mountain of indigestible exercises!) As a result, I rewrote the course twice until it started to flow better. Grace had a vision of my course creating great effects in the world, and she has never stopped believing in it. Thank you Grace.

Thank you to all my other pilot students who did the course and shared with me the exhilaration of learning a new musical skill. It has been such a delight to see you beginning your adventure in music-making.

Do you know the Beatles song that goes ‘I get by with a little help from my friends’? I want to thank all my wonderful friends who gave me a little help when I needed it. **Claire, Bitten, Terry, Cecily, all the Nelsons, Diane, Linda, Barbara, Sam, Dan, Bob, Steven & Monica, Dale, Laurel, Teresa, Jerry, Ed, Norrie, Riko, Gayle, Norman & Moya, Dick & Gay, Ariel, Rebecca, Brandon, Martin,** and many more who have been there for me. Thank you.

And that brings me to **Debra Lynn Dadd**. I hardly know where to begin in acknowledging her myriad contributions to this project. She has such a wide variety of talents, and she applied them to this task with great energy, persistence and dedication. She contributed her insights as a professional piano teacher, she applied her artistic eye in designing graphical elements, she advised on publishing procedures based on her 30 years as a published author, and she designed and created the website. Debra applied her executive abilities to organise this complex project in a way that drove it forward to completion. She helped me sort through the hundreds of decisions, big and small, that had to be made. I’ve rarely met anyone with such a strong work ethic. Thank you Debra.

When you fly in an aeroplane, or talk on your cellphone, or ride to the top of a 30-story building, you don’t normally think about all the work that went into inventing and creating these amazing things. We just take them for granted as part of daily life. The same is true of music. I want to acknowledge all the pioneering musicians who evolved over thousands of years the amazing system of music we take for granted every day of our lives.

And in particular, thank you to **Guido d’Arezzo** for inventing printed music 1,000 years ago. (You’ll read about him in Lesson 3.) What an avalanche of creativity you unleashed.

Course	Read & Play Music
Book 1	Read and Play Simple Tunes
Lesson 0	Have You Ever Wondered . . . What is Music?

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What you need in order to do this course

You need either a piano or an electronic keyboard:



Examples of instruments that can be used for this course.

Definition: A **piano** is a traditional instrument that generates sound by hammers striking tight wires. The wires are called ‘strings’, but they are really wires because they are made of metal. The hammers and strings are inside the piano. Pianos have been around for 300 years.

Definition: An **electronic keyboard** is an instrument developed 60 years ago as an alternative to the piano. It uses electricity instead of strings to generate sounds.

A piano and an electronic keyboard are similar in that both have the same arrangement of black and white moving parts. When you learn to play one of these instruments, you will also be able to play the other.

The collection of black and white moving parts is called a **keyboard**, and each moving part is called a **key**.

Definition: a **key** is one of the black or white moving parts on a piano or electronic keyboard that you push down to make a musical sound. (A key is sometimes called a 'note'. In this course, I'm going to stick to calling it a 'key'. I think you'll find that clearer.)

The word 'key' has other meanings in music, but the above is the only meaning we're concerned with at present.

Definition: a **keyboard** is the collection of keys on a piano or electronic keyboard.

If you don't have a piano or electronic keyboard, perhaps you know a friend who has one you can use.

Another option would be to rent one from your local music shop.

Or maybe you could practise on a piano at your local church or community centre.

Got your instrument ready? Good. Carry on.



LESSON 0:

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ... WHAT IS MUSIC?

We hear music every day of our lives. But what exactly is music? Read on ...

What is music?

Throughout the ages, the world over, there has been music.

But what exactly is music?

Music is sound.

But it's not just any sound. What is it that makes one sound (such as a song) seem like music, while another sound (such as traffic in the street) sounds like noise?

If you ask musicians, ‘What is music?’, you may get many different answers. I’d like to give you mine.

Music is made up of three main elements. Let’s take a look at them now.

The first element of music: pitch

Noise and musical sounds

I’m going to have you make two sounds.

First, make a sound by tapping once on your chair. Do that now.

Now make a sound by pushing down one of the white keys on your keyboard.

How would you describe the difference between the two sounds?

Make the sounds again, first tapping your chair and then pushing down a key, and listen to the difference in quality.

Most people hear the tapping sound as a *noise*, and the sound from your keyboard as a *musical sound*.

But what is it that makes a sound seem musical?

To explore that, I’m going to have you make two different musical sounds.

Two different musical sounds

Push down any white key on your keyboard.

Now push down a white key to the right of the first one. You'll hear a different sound.

How would you describe the difference between them?

Most people hear the second sound as 'higher' than the first sound.

Push down the first key again, and now push down a key to the left of it. Does the second sound seem 'lower' than the first?

This concept of 'higher' and 'lower' is the first essential element of music.

Since it is such an important thing, it has a name: **pitch**.

Definition: **pitch** means how high or low a musical sound is.

The sounds you just made by pushing down keys are examples of musical sounds, each with its own special pitch.

By contrast, tap once again on your chair. Do that now. That sound has no particular pitch, and we do not hear it as a musical sound. It sounds like a noise.

The second element of music: time

Make that sound again by tapping your finger once on your chair. As I mentioned above, we do not hear that single tap as music.

Now make a series of taps, doing them regularly like the ticking of a clock. Does it sound a bit like a drum in a rock band?

By tapping regularly, you are marking out (establishing) regular periods of time.

And you have discovered the second essential element of music: **time**. More specifically, regularity of time.

A single tap does not sound like music. A series of taps, occurring with regularity of time, begins to sound like music.

The third element of music: artistic creation

The first two elements – pitch and time – are the ingredients of music.

This is like flour and eggs being the ingredients of a cake. They are not in themselves a cake. They are the ingredients from which a cake can be made.

Or, to take a more artistic example, a canvas and tubes of paint are the ingredients of a painting. They are not in themselves a painting. They are the ingredients from which a painting can be made.

An artist takes the ingredients (canvas and tubes of paint) and uses them to create a painting. We can look at his painting, and if it is good it will create an effect on us.

So it is with music. A composer takes the ingredients (pitch and time) and uses them to create music. We can listen to his music, and if it is good it will create an effect on us.

My definition of music

So let's put all this together.

Definition: **music** is an *artistic creation* made up of a series of *itches* occurring with *regularity of time*.

(You can find all these definitions in the Glossary on your Book 1 Course Materials page at www.dempstermusic.com.)

This very basic, simplified definition of music will do for now. Your understanding of pitch, time and music will become deeper as you work your way through this course.

Next time you listen to some music, hear how it rises to high pitches and then falls to low pitches, back and forth. See if you can also hear the sounds occurring with regularity of time.

Music takes many varied forms, but they all have this in common:

All music is made up of pitch and time.

A word that means 'musical sound'

It's clumsy to say 'musical sound', so we have a short name for it: '**note**'.

Definition: A **note** is a single musical sound, such as you hear when you push down one of the keys on your keyboard.

When you push down one of the keys to create a sound, you are 'playing a note on the keyboard'.

By the way . . .

(When you see ‘By the way . . .’, I’m giving you some information that you might find interesting but that is not essential to the course.)

Interestingly, the word ‘music’ comes from a Greek word, ‘mousai’ (muses). The muses were the nine goddesses considered to be the source of knowledge. They were concerned not just with music, but more broadly with literature, science and the arts.

One of the nine muses is our very own goddess of music. She was called Euterpe (pronounced ‘You-**ter**-pay’), which means ‘rejoicing well’. She is often depicted carrying a flute. Being the goddess of music, of course you’d expect her to be very beautiful. And here she is.

The word ‘muse’ in turn came from an ancient language where it meant ‘pay attention to, be lively’. It looks like they played pretty lively music in those days.

**Euterpe, goddess of music, by Swiss painter
Jakob Emanuel Handmann**



Where we're heading

Have you ever made a journey that you remember years later? Perhaps a road trip, or a visit to foreign lands, or a walking holiday.

We are setting off now on a very special journey.

Where are we heading? By the end of this course, **you will be able to read and play the music you want to play, with two hands.**

And how will we get there?

Here's your roadmap:



Roadmap for the Read & Play Music Course.

This course is made up of 4 books. You are now starting **Book 1**.

The purpose of the whole course is to give you a thorough grounding in the basics of reading music, while playing the keyboard to bring the music to life.

Book 1 will get you off to a great start.

You need no prior experience of reading music or playing an instrument. You can do this course if you're a complete beginner, or if you tried to learn music and gave up.

Watch this short video now. It will show you the skills you will acquire as you progress through the 4 books that make up this course:



Click the blue box above,
or find the video on your **Book 1 Course Materials** page at
www.dempstermusic.com

To play the video in a new browser tab, right-click the blue box then select 'Open link in new tab' (in Windows), or do the equivalent in Mac.

This course, **Read & Play Music**, is something new in the world of music learning, with its unique clarity and workability.

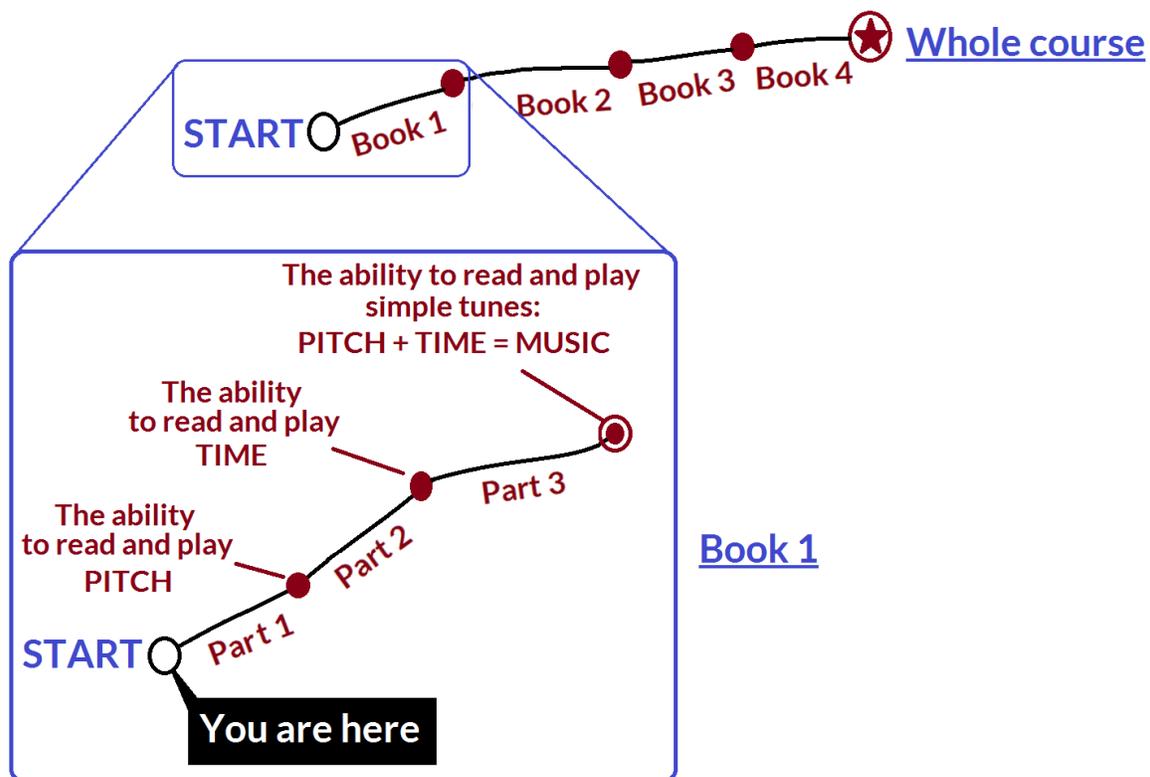
You won't be learning gimmicks or memorisation tricks. You will learn the real basics of music as known and applied every day by professional musicians. It's the real thing.

Orientation:

The 3 parts of Book 1

Since music is made of pitch and time, I've divided this first book of the course into 3 parts:

- In **Part 1**, you will learn to read **PITCHES** from printed music and play the pitches on your keyboard. (That means playing the right notes.)
- In **Part 2**, we'll take up **TIME**. (Playing the notes with accurate timing.)
- Then in **Part 3**, we'll bring it all together to create the **MUSIC**.



Roadmap for the 3 parts of Book 1.

The lessons that make up Book 1

Lesson 0: Have You Ever Wondered . . . What is Music? [this lesson]

PART 1: PITCH

Lesson 1: Read and Play Your First Tune in 15 Minutes!

Lesson 2: Read and Play Your First 3 Notes - Advanced

Lesson 3: Read and Play 5 Notes

Lesson 4: What is Sound?

Lesson 5: Read and Play 7 Notes

Lesson 6: What is a Musical Sound?

Lesson 7: Play Using All Your Fingers

Lesson 8: Play Without Looking at Your Hand

Lesson 9: The Know-Before-You-Go Practice Method

Lesson 10: Read and Play 10 Notes

Lesson 11: Two Important Symbols in Printed Music

Lesson 12: Read and Play 12 Notes

PART 2: TIME

Lesson 13: The Heartbeat of Music

Lesson 14: The Repeating Pattern

Lesson 15: Duration of Sounds

Lesson 16: Duration of Silences

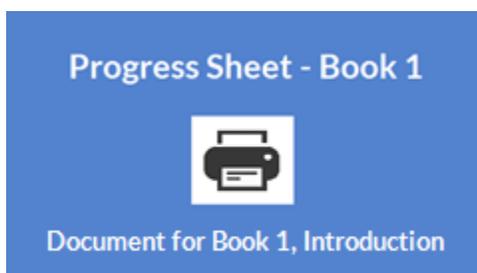
Lesson 17: Showing the Pattern

PART 3: PITCH + TIME = MUSIC**Lesson 18:** Read and Play Pitch and Time**Lesson 19:** Sounding Your Best**Lesson 20:** The Pitch-Time-Music Practice Method**Lesson 21:** Read and Play Parts of Tunes**Lesson 22:** Grand Finale**Book 1 Tunes****Glossary**

Progress Sheet

You might like to print out a Progress Sheet, and sign off each step as you do it. This helps you see how you're progressing through the course.

You can download and print the Progress Sheet here:



Click the blue box above,
or find the document on your Book 1 Course Materials page at
www.dempstermusic.com

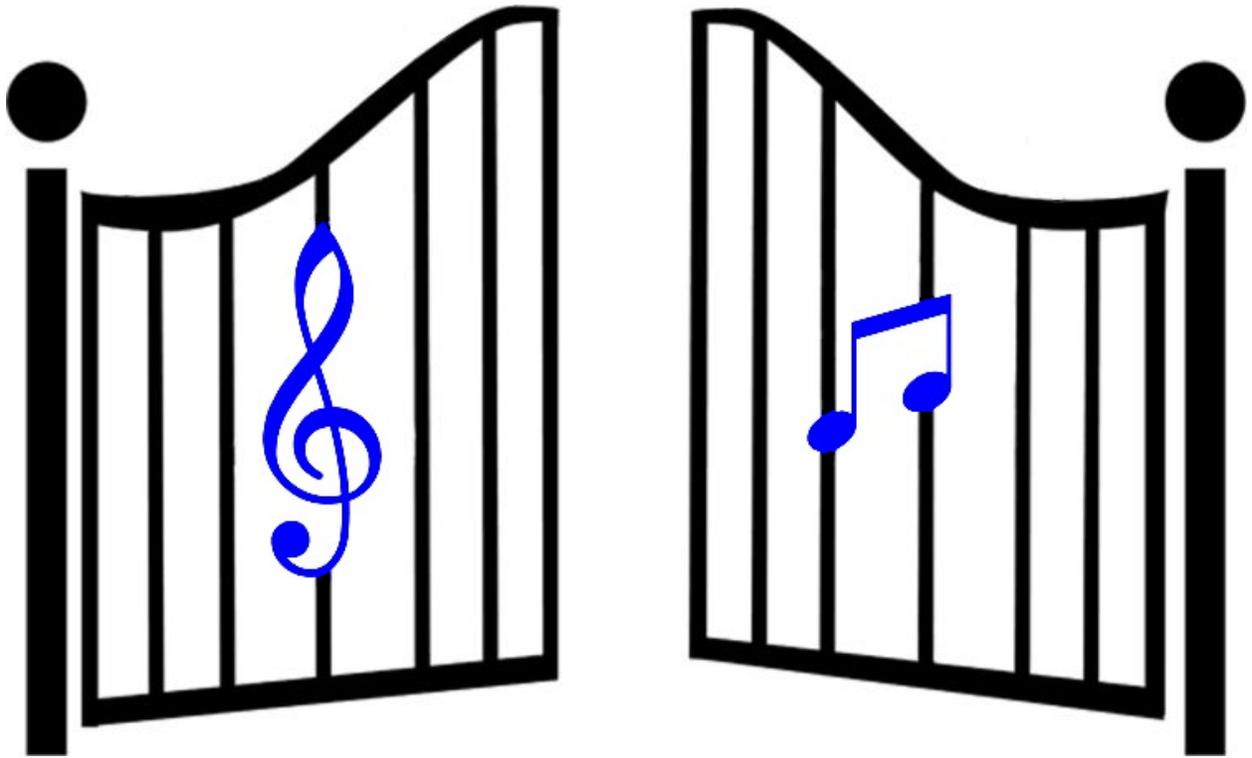
What's next?

Let's get started learning to read and play pitches.

Go on to your next lesson



Click the green box above,
or find Lesson 1 on your Book 1 Course Materials page at
www.dempstermusic.com



*Enter
the world
of music*

About the Author



“There has been a decline in music-making. The days of singing around the piano are virtually gone, replaced by television, video games and the internet. This has been made worse by huge cuts in the funding of music education. A whole generation is being denied the rich experience of making music.

I want to open up the world of music-making to anyone who wants it.”

- David Dempster

Dempster Music™ was created by David Dempster. This unique method of learning embodies David’s strengths in music, teaching and storytelling. The result is a method that teaches the real fundamentals of music while taking the student on a lively and entertaining journey of discovery.

David lives and breathes music. Spend some time with David and you will likely hear him humming a tune or burst out singing a bit of a symphony.

When he was four years old, David learned to read music while taking piano lessons from Mr Ingram in Perth, Scotland. Because he learned to read music fluently, it was easy for David to go on to play other instruments, and conduct choirs, orchestras and opera. He has experienced a lifetime of music-making.

David gets a thrill when he hears from his students who are now playing and singing music instead of just listening to it.

David leads a colourful life as musician, choir director, writer, storyteller, mathematician, mountaineer and world traveller.