

## Lesson 2

# Printed Music for Piano, Left Hand

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David Dempster

Course	Read & Play Music
Book 2	Read and Play Simple Tunes with Two Hands
Lesson 2	Printed Music for Piano, Left Hand

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## LESSON 2:

# PRINTED MUSIC FOR PIANO, LEFT HAND

**Reminder:** In *Book 1* of this course, you learned about the staff with its 5 lines and 4 spaces. You also learned about the treble clef, which is used for music played on the piano with the right hand. You got very familiar with which note is designated by each line and space when we have a treble clef.

In *Lesson 1* of *Book 2*, which you just completed, you had a quick introduction to the bass clef. This is the clef used for music to be played on the piano with the left hand.

Let's take a closer look at the bass clef now.

# MUSIC THEORY

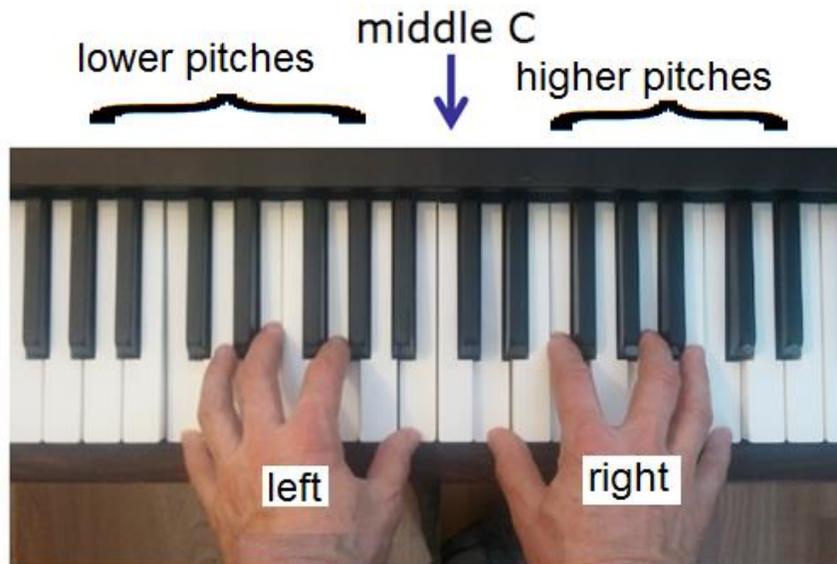
## BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

### Why do we need a new clef?

You may ask, ‘Why we need a new clef? Why don’t we just keep using the treble clef?’

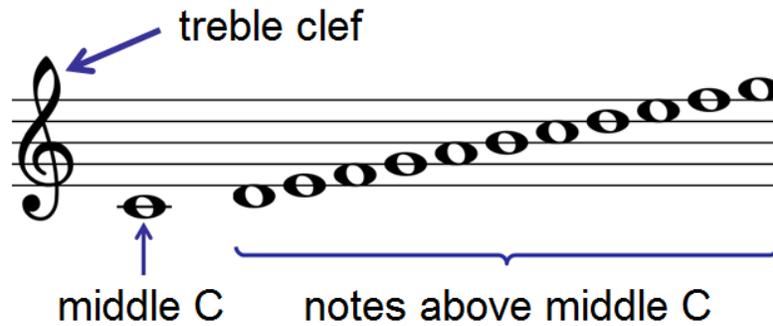
Good question. And here is the answer.

When you play the piano with both hands, your right hand is usually playing a tune made up of high pitches, while your left hand plays lower pitches to support the tune.



Your right hand usually plays higher pitches (notes), while your left hand plays lower pitches.

As we saw in *Book 1*, the treble clef works well for showing high pitches, such as notes from middle C on up:



The treble clef works well for high notes.

So the treble clef works for music played by your right hand.

But it doesn't work for the lower pitches played by your left hand. We need a different clef to show lower pitches. And that's what the bass clef is designed to do.

## Bass clef

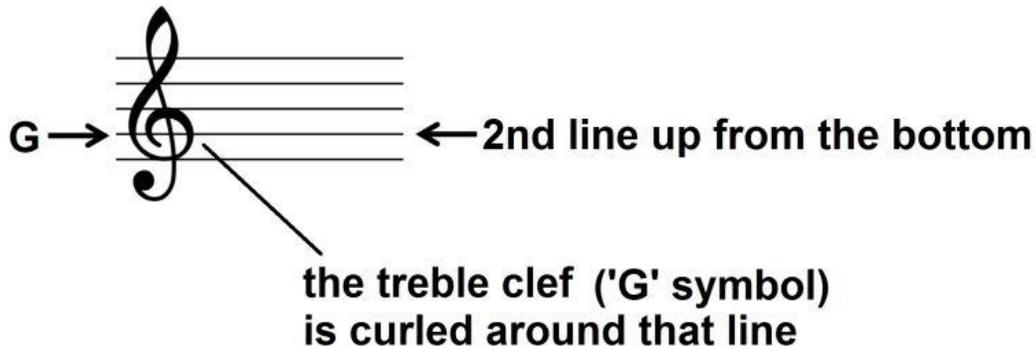
Here is the bass clef, which we encountered in *Lesson 1*:



The bass clef on a staff.

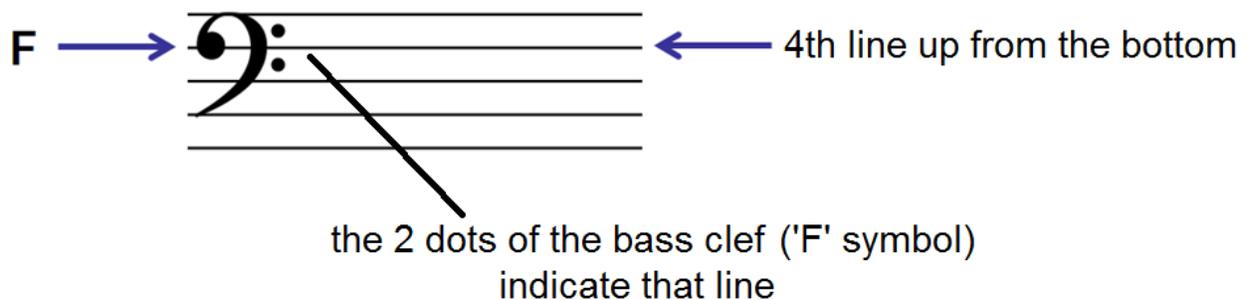
**Definition:** **bass** (pronounced the same as 'base') means low-pitched.

**Reminder:** In *Book 1* of this course, we learned that the treble clef evolved from the letter G, and it indicates that the 2nd line up from the bottom is the pitch G:



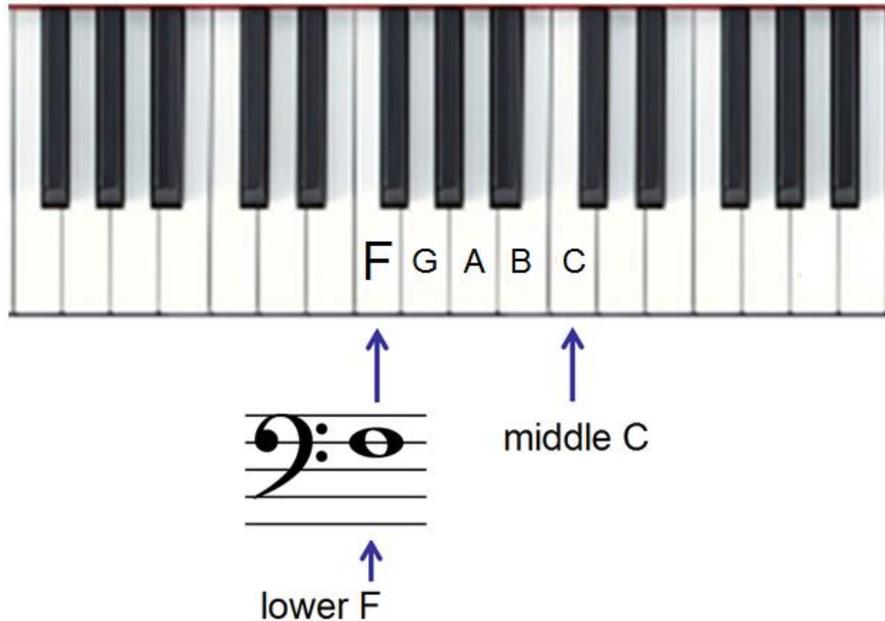
The treble clef indicates that the 2nd line up from the bottom is the note G.

The bass clef is an old form of the letter F. The two dots after it are on either side of the 4th line up from the bottom. So the bass clef tells us that the 4th line up is the pitch F.



The bass clef indicates that the 4th line up from the bottom is the note F.

In fact, it's more specific than that. We've seen that there are many 'F' notes on the keyboard, all with different pitches. The F indicated by the bass clef is not just any F. It is the F just below middle C (to the left of middle C on your keyboard).



Specifically, the bass clef shows that the 4th line up is the F below middle C. I'm calling that note 'lower F'.

**Reminder:** Make sure you're saying the word 'bass' so it sounds like 'base'. That's how the word 'bass' is spoken when used in a musical sense like this.

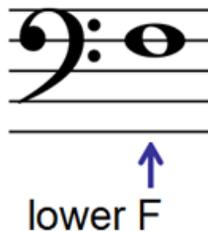
In *Lesson 1*, we defined the bass clef as the clef usually used for the left hand of piano music and for low-pitched instruments. Now we can have a more precise definition:

**Definition:** the **bass clef** is a clef that shows that the 4th line up from the bottom of the staff represents the F below middle C. The bass clef is usually used for the left hand of piano music and for low-pitched instruments and voices.

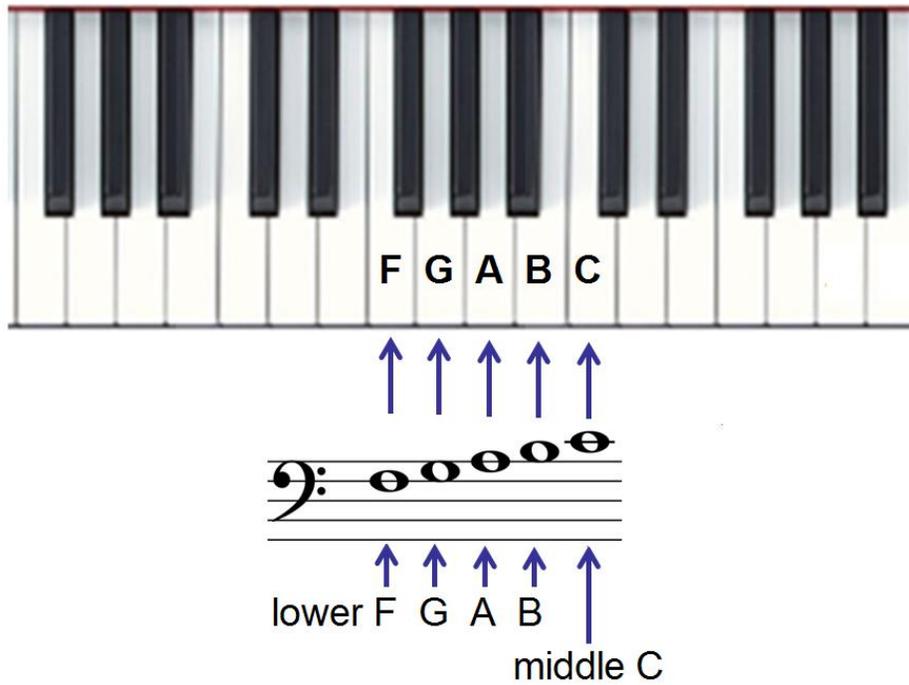
Find lower F on your keyboard now, and play it. (Find middle C and then count 4 notes to the left.)

### **So where is middle C printed on the bass clef?**

Let's start with the note we know, the F below middle C, which I'm calling 'lower F':

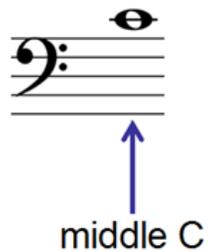


Now let's count up the lines and spaces until we reach middle C:

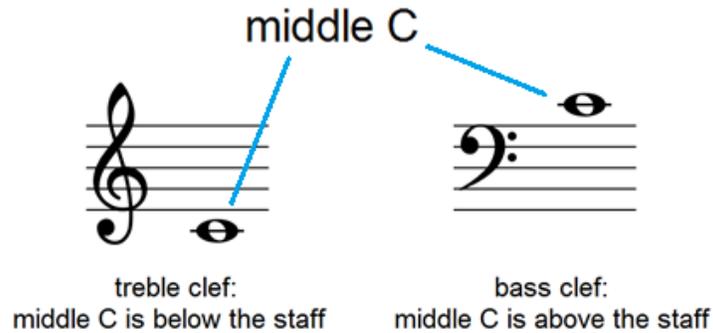


Counting up from lower F to middle C.

So we've discovered that with the bass clef, middle C is centred on a short line above the staff:



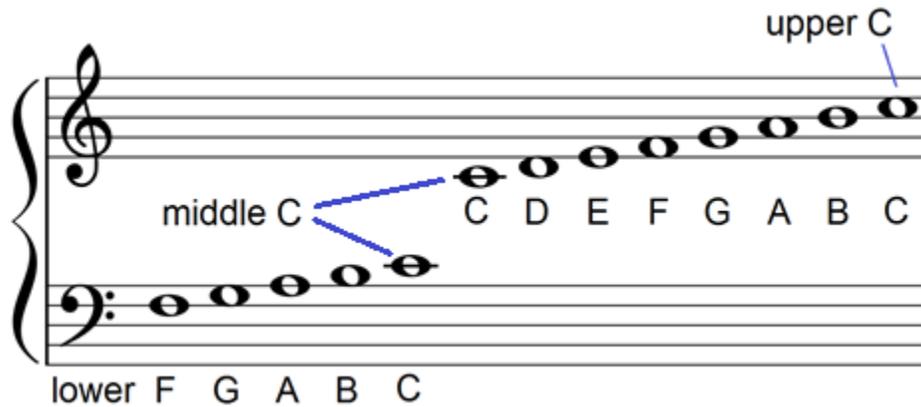
We know from **Book 1** that with the treble clef, middle C is on a short line below the staff. So here are two different ways of representing the same note, middle C:



How middle C is shown with the treble clef and with the bass clef.

You will get used to this new look at middle C as you work through the lessons and exercises in this book.

Now let's see how middle C looks on the grand staff. Here's a series of notes starting with lower F and going all the way to upper C:



Notes printed on the grand staff, from lower F to upper C.

I've shown middle C twice in the music above, so you can see how it looks in both the bass clef and the treble clef.

As you can see, middle C is in the middle between the bass clef staff and the treble clef staff. How appropriate.

**Read middle C and lower F from printed music in the bass clef, and play them**

Find middle C on your keyboard and play it with your left thumb.

Now find the F below middle C and play it with your left little finger.

Play them again, while looking at the printed music below:



You just read and played the notes middle C and lower F in the bass clef.

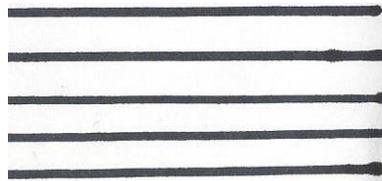
## How to draw a bass clef nicely

You already drew a bass clef in *Lesson 1*.

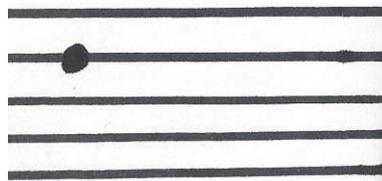
It's a bit simpler to draw than the treble clef, isn't it?

In case you'd like a way of drawing your bass clefs a bit more accurately, here's an easy way you can try:

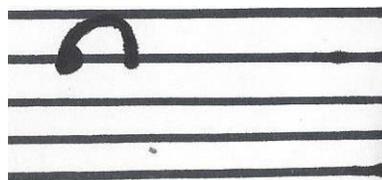
1. **Grab** a piece of blank paper and draw a staff on it (5 lines).



2. **Draw** a dot on the 4th line up from the bottom.



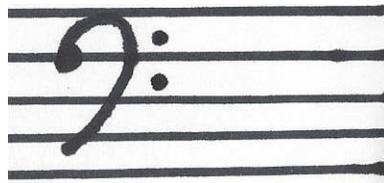
3. Starting on the dot, **draw** a half circle touching the top line and coming back down to the 4th line.



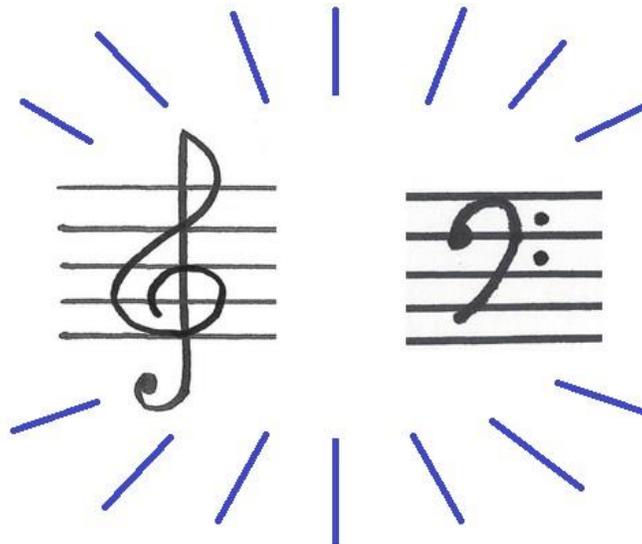
4. **Continue curving down**, ending on the 2nd line up (or a little under it), directly under the dot you drew at the start.



5. **Draw 2 dots to the right**, on either side of the 4th line up.

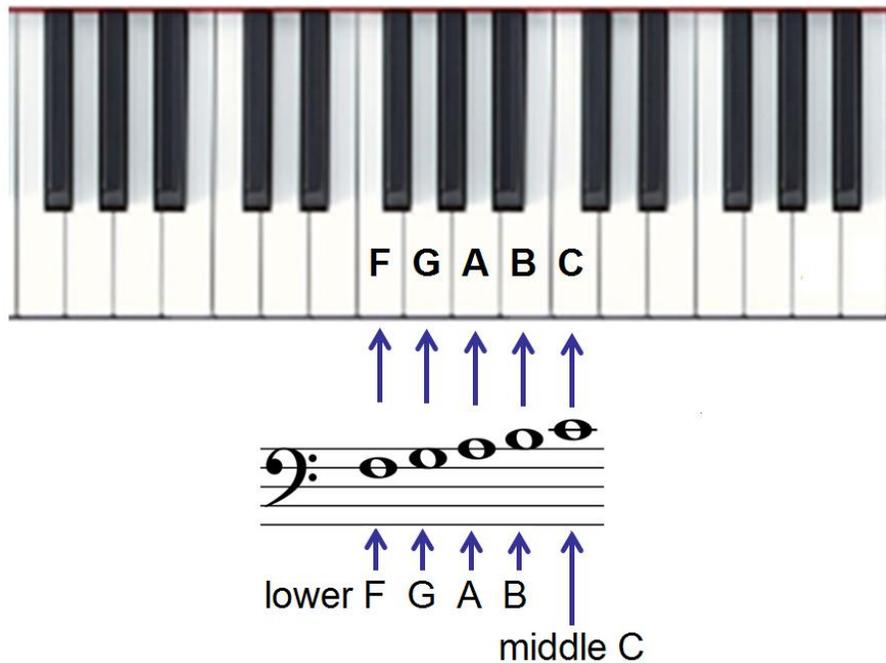


And here he is, along with his partner the treble clef. Don't they make a handsome couple?



### Note-matching diagram for the 5 notes leading up to middle C

Here again is the note-matching diagram for lower F up to middle C in the bass clef:

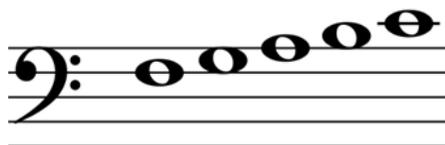


Note-matching diagram for the 5 notes leading up to middle C.

Play those 5 notes now, starting from the F below middle C and working up to middle C.

There is no terminology in general use for ‘the F below middle C’, so I’m going to refer to it as ‘lower F’, and similarly for ‘lower G’ and so on.

Here are those 5 printed notes again, without any labels. Look at each printed note, and as you look at it call out its name and play it on your keyboard with your left hand. Refer back to the note-matching diagram above if you're not certain.



Now read and play those 5 notes again, and this time play the first note (lower F) with the little finger of your left hand. Play each note with the next finger, ending by playing middle C with your left thumb. Make sure you look at the printed notes one at a time as you play each one, so you are practising reading and playing.

Well done! You are reading the bass clef and playing it with your left hand.

## What's next?

You've learned all about the bass clef.

In the next lesson, we'll take a few notes in the bass clef and get you very familiar and fluent at reading and playing them.

To find Lesson 3, click the green box:

**Go on to your next lesson**



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