

Lesson 13

# Leger Lines

Copyright © 2018 David Dempster. All rights reserved.

Version 1.0, 1 Mar 2018

# 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.

Your group has purchased a Group User Licence. This means the course materials will be used only by members of your group, such as a choir, a school music class or a community study group. This licence is intended for a group of up to 20 members. If you have a larger group, your group should purchase multiple licences.

Reminder of terms of Group User Licence	
	
Your group members <u>may</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>STUDY</b> the course materials online.</li><li>• <b>DOWNLOAD</b> the course materials and read them on their personal computers or other devices.</li><li>• <b>PRINT</b> the course materials from downloaded files, up to one copy per group member, for their personal use.</li></ul>	Your group members <u>may not</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Resell, lend or give away your course login, any downloaded course files, or any printed course materials.</b></li><li>• <b>Print additional copies of the course materials.</b></li></ul>

Thank you for respecting my intellectual property rights.

  
David Dempster

<b>Course</b>	<b>Read &amp; Play Music</b>
<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Read and Play Simple Tunes with Two Hands</b>
<b>Lesson 13</b>	<b>Leger Lines</b>

# CONTENTS

*LESSON 13: Leger Lines* ..... 1

**Music Theory** ..... 2

Example of leger lines in real music ..... 5

**Practical**..... 9

Exercise 1: Low notes in the bass clef ..... 9

Tune 1: Low notes in the bass clef ..... 10

Exercise 2: High notes in the bass clef ..... 11

Tune 2: High notes in the bass clef ..... 12

Exercise 3: Low notes in the treble clef ..... 13

Tune 3: Low notes in the treble clef ..... 14

Exercise 4: High notes in the treble clef ..... 15

Tune 4: High notes in the treble clef ..... 16



## LESSON 13:

# LEGER LINES

I introduced you to 12 treble clef pitches in *Book 1*, and now you've learned 12 bass clef pitches.

If you have a full-sized keyboard, you'll notice that it has a lot more pitches it can play. It can go up to very high pitches and down to very low pitches.

Rather than teach you every pitch (boring for both of us!) I'm now going to show you how you can work out all the higher and lower pitches for yourself.

# MUSIC THEORY

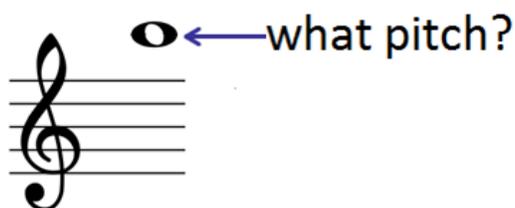
## BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The highest treble clef pitch you've learned so far is upper G:



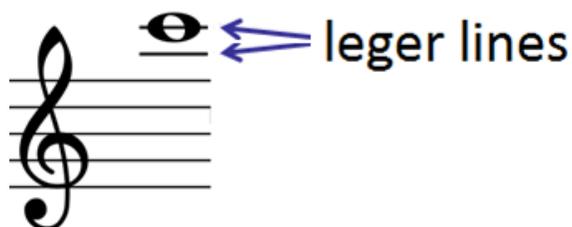
Upper G.

Here's a pitch that is higher. The trouble is, it's hard to see how much higher it is.

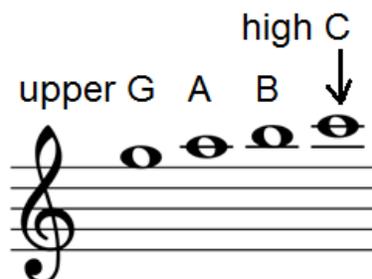


To make it clearer, we use short lines to extend the staff upward or downward to accommodate a very high or very low pitch. The short lines are called 'leger lines'. (They are also referred to as 'ledger lines', particularly in America.)

**Definition:** a **leger line** or **ledger line** is a short line used to extend the staff upward or downward, to indicate the pitch of a note that is above or below the staff.

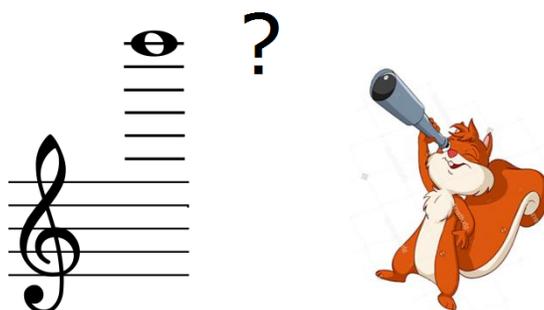


Now we can work out what pitch that note is. We know that the space above the staff is G. Counting up the lines and spaces from G, we get line=A, space=B, line=C, so that note is a C. This one is often called ‘high C’.



Play the above notes now with your right hand.

High C has 2 leger lines. You can have more than 2 leger lines to show even higher pitches, but if you have too many it can become rather hard to read!

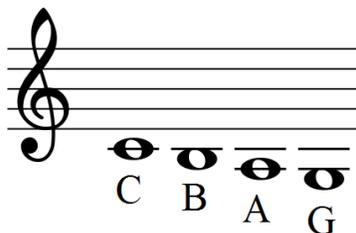


Just for fun, how about figuring out what the above note is and playing it on your keyboard (if your keyboard goes that high).

**Hint:** Count up the lines and spaces to find out.

**Answer:** That very high note is a D.

Sometimes you'll find notes in the treble clef that go down below middle C. Play this now with your right hand:



Leger lines also apply to the bass clef. Here are some notes above the staff. Play this now with your left hand:



And here are some leger lines below the bass clef staff. Play them now with your left hand:



Now that you know about leger lines, you can work out for yourself any note on, above or below the staff, for both treble clef and bass clef. Pretty neat!

Let's do a little practice at reading high and low pitches.

## Example of leger lines in real music

Just in case you're wondering whether leger lines are really used, here are a few examples.

If you like a challenge, you can try playing these. They are pretty tricky. No need to play them over and over. Just once through each piece to find the notes will do fine.

### Low notes in the bass clef

Scott Joplin was an African-American composer of 100 years ago who wrote a style of music called 'ragtime'. In fact, he was known as the 'King of Ragtime'. He is best known today for his composition 'The Entertainer', featured in the film 'The Sting'.

His music is rather tricky to play because he makes your left hand leap around a lot. Here's a measure from the left hand part of The Entertainer:



Can you work out what that last note is? (Answers below.)

## High notes in the bass clef

The cello (full name ‘violoncello’) is a string instrument with a low-pitched sound, so most cello music is written in the bass clef.

Experienced cello players can play very high notes, so they have to read leger lines above the staff.

Johann Sebastian Bach (leading composer of 300 years ago) wrote 6 pieces of music for unaccompanied cello. ‘Unaccompanied’ means the cello plays the music all on its own without any other instruments. These 6 pieces by Bach are much loved by cellists, and Yo Yo Ma played one of them at a 9/11 memorial service in New York.

Here’s a snippet:



Count up the lines and spaces, and work out what that first note is.

### Low notes in the treble clef

Clarinet music is written in the treble clef. The clarinet is a wind instrument that can make wonderful rich sounds when it plays low notes. Actually, 200 years ago the clarinet went even lower than the clarinets of today. Here's a snippet from the clarinet concerto by Mozart:



Clarinet players get used to reading all those leger lines below the staff. Can you tell what the first note is?

### High notes in the treble clef

The flute is a wind instrument that can play very high notes. Flute music is written with the treble clef. Here's a snippet from the flute and harp concerto by Mozart:



What do you reckon that second note to be? The flute can play a lot higher than that, so flute players learn to read lots of leger lines above the staff.

## Answers to the 4 questions

Here are the answers to the questions in the 4 sections above:

- Low note in the bass clef: F
- High note in the bass clef: G
- Low note in the treble clef: C
- High note in the treble clef: F

# PRACTICAL

## BUILD YOUR SKILL

### Exercise 1: Low notes in the bass clef

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting up or down the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names. (Answers are below.)



#### 2 Play

1. **Play** them with your left hand.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

**Answers:** FEC ACE BCD

## Tune 1:

### Low notes in the bass clef

A rousing patriotic song, which bolstered the spirits of soldiers and the British public during the First World War.

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting down the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names.

### *Pack up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag*



#### 2 Play

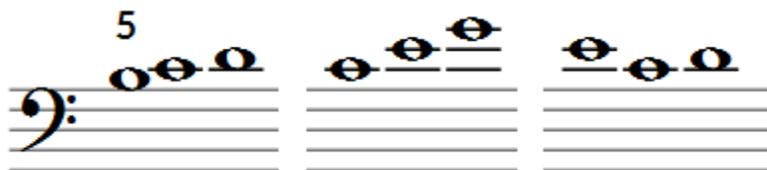
1. **Play** them with your left hand.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

## Exercise 2:

### High notes in the bass clef

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting up or down the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names. (Answers are below.)



#### 2 Play

1. **Play** them with your left hand. (Even though these are pretty high notes, you play them with your *left hand* because of the bass clef.)
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

**Answers:** BCD CEG ECD

## Tune 2:

### High notes in the bass clef

This traditional song is well travelled. At various times and places it has been a railroad workers' song, a Christian spiritual, and a children's song.

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting up the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names.

*She'll be Coming Round the Mountain*

The musical notation is written on a single bass clef staff in 4/4 time. It features 11 notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, and C6. The first three notes (G, A, B) are grouped with a '3' above them. The next four notes (C, D, E, F) are grouped with a '2' above them. The final note (C) is on a ledger line above the staff.

#### 2 Play

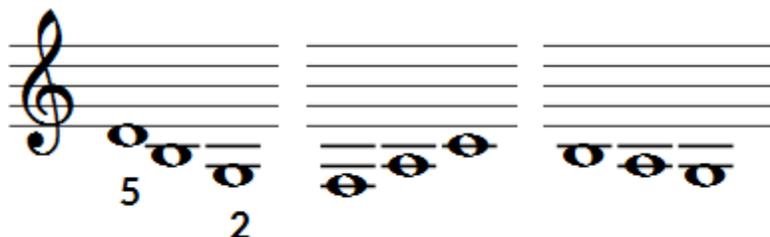
1. **Play** them with your left hand. (**Reminder:** Even though these are pretty high notes, you play them with your *left hand* because of the bass clef.)
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

## Exercise 3:

### Low notes in the treble clef

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting up or down the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names. (Answers are below.)



#### 2 Play

1. **Play** them with your right hand. (Even though these are pretty high notes, you play them with your *right hand* because of the treble clef.)
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

**Answers:** DBG FAC BAG

## Tune 3:

### Low notes in the treble clef

An old Scottish folk song.

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting down the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names.

### *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean*



#### 2 Play

1. **Play** them with your right hand. (**Reminder:** Even though these are pretty low notes, you play them with your *right hand* because of the treble clef.)
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

## Exercise 4:

### High notes in the treble clef

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting up or down the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names. (Answers are below.)



#### 2 Play

1. **Play** them with your right hand.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

*Answers:* GAC ECD ECA

## Tune 4:

### High notes in the treble clef

You've played this tune snippet before. Now you're going to play it much higher on your keyboard.

#### 1 Call out note names

1. **Work out** the notes by counting up the lines and spaces. **Call out** their names.

*Are You Going to Scarborough Fair?*



#### 2 Play

1. **Play** them with your right hand.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can play them accurately and easily.

## What's next?

It's time to read and play more sophisticated chords, such as you'll find when you purchase published music when you complete **Book 4**.

To find Lesson 14, click the green box:

**Go on to your next lesson**



or go to your Book 2 Course Materials page at  
[www.dempstermusic.com](http://www.dempstermusic.com)