MuseScore
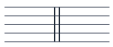
Music symbols cheat sheet

Staff, bar lines and clefs


Staff
Five lines and four spaces


Ledger line
Short extra line above or below


Bar line
Divides the music into bars


Double bar line
Marks the end of a section


Final bar line
Marks the end of the piece


Treble clef (G clef)
Names the second line G


Bass clef (F clef)
Names the fourth line F
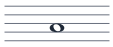

Alto clef (C clef)
The middle line is middle C
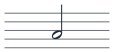

Tenor clef (C clef)
The fourth line is middle C
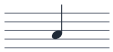

Percussion clef
Lines stand for drums, not pitches


Brace
Joins two staves for one player

Notes and rests


Whole note
Lasts four beats


Half note
Lasts two beats


Quarter note
Lasts one beat


Eighth note
Lasts half a beat

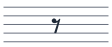

Sixteenth note
Lasts a quarter of a beat
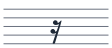

Thirty-second note
Lasts an eighth of a beat


Whole rest
Four beats of silence


Half rest
Two beats of silence
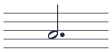

Quarter rest
One beat of silence


Eighth rest
Half a beat of silence


Sixteenth rest
Quarter of a beat of silence


Thirty-second rest
Eighth of a beat of silence

Dots, ties, slurs and beams


Dot
Adds half of the note's length


Tie
Joins notes of the same pitch


Slur
A smooth, connected line


Beam
Joins stems; groups notes into beats


Triplet
Fit three notes into two

Time signatures


Time signature
Beats per bar over beat note


4/4
Four quarter-note beats per bar


3/4
Three quarter-note beats, a waltz
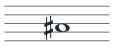

2/4
Two quarter-note beats per bar


6/8
Six eighths, two groups of three
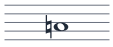

Common time
Means 4/4


Cut time
Means 2/2: two half-note beats

Sharps, flats and naturals


Sharp
Raises the note a half step


Flat
Lowers the note a half step


Natural
Cancels a sharp or a flat


Double sharp
Raises by two half steps


Double flat
Lowers by two half steps

Key signature
Sharps or flats for whole piece

Dynamics

ppp
As soft as possible

pp
Very soft

p
Soft

mp
Medium soft

mf
Medium loud

f
Loud

ff
Very loud

fff
As loud as possible

Crescendo (cresc.)
Gradually louder

Decrescendo or diminuendo (decresc., dim.)
Gradually softer
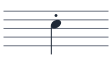
sfz
Sudden, strong accent
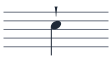
fp
Loud, then immediately soft
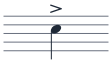
MuseScore
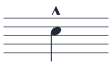
Music symbols cheat sheet

Articulations


Staccato
Short and detached
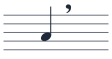

Staccatissimo
Very short


Accent
The note is stressed


Marcato
A stronger accent


Tenuto
Held for its full length


Fermata
Held longer than written


Breath mark
Short break at the phrase end


Caesura
The sound stops completely

Ornaments


Trill
Alternate quickly with the note above
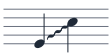

Mordent (lower mordent)
Note, note below, note


Inverted mordent (upper mordent)
Note, note above, note
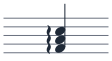

Turn
Above, written, below, written


Acciaccatura
Crushed in right before the note
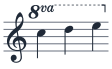

Appoggiatura
On the beat; lean on it


Glissando
Slide from first note to second


Tremolo
Repeat or alternate very fast


Arpeggio sign
Roll the chord from the bottom

Octave signs


8va
One octave higher than written


8vb
One octave lower than written
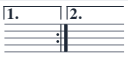

15ma
Two octaves higher than written


15mb
Two octaves lower than written

loco
Loco
Back to playing where written

Repeats and road-map signs


Repeat signs
Play the passage once more


First and second endings
Bracket 1 first, then bracket 2


Segno
Where D.S. sends you back


Coda sign
Marks the closing section

To Coda
To Coda
Jump from here to the coda

Fine
Fine
Italian for “end”

D.C.
D.C. (da capo)
Go back to the beginning
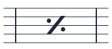
D.S.
D.S. (dal segno)
Go back to the segno

D.C. al Fine
D.C. al Fine
Beginning, then play to Fine

D.S. al Fine
D.S. al Fine
Segno, then play to Fine

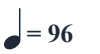
D.C. al Coda
D.C. al Coda
Beginning, To Coda, then coda

D.S. al Coda
D.S. al Coda
Segno, To Coda, then coda


Measure repeat sign
Play the previous bar again

sim.
Simile (sim.)
Keep playing in the same way

Tempo marks and words


Metronome mark
Count of those notes per minute

Largo
Largo
Very slow and broad

Adagio
Adagio
Slow and at ease

Andante
Andante
At a walking pace

Moderato
Moderato
At a moderate speed

Allegro
Allegro
Fast and lively

Presto
Presto
Very fast

rit.
Ritardando (rit.)
Gradually slower

accel.
Accelerando (accel.)
Gradually faster

a tempo
A tempo
Back to the earlier tempo

Piano and string marks


Ped. and release sign
Sustain pedal down, then up


Pedal line
Hold the right pedal

una corda
Una corda
Asks for the soft pedal

1 2 3 4 5
Finger numbers
Play with the finger shown


Down-bow
Pull the bow from the frog


Up-bow
Push the bow from the tip

Chord symbols

C
C
C major: C, E and G

Cm
Cm
C minor: C, E flat, G

C7
C7
C, E, G and B flat

Cmaj7
Cmaj7
C, E, G and B

C/E
C/E
C major with E lowest