

“The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.”

Sacrosanctum Concilium , paragraph 34

Solfege is the essential starting point to reading music. Solfege was invented to chant the liturgy of the Church. Through solfege, the singer learns the names and *relationship of the notes* that form a melody.

Just as a child learns the letters of the alphabet in order to identify vocabulary, a singer can use solfege to properly and consciously sing, starting with the simplest melodies (which could be learned by rote).

What do we mean by *relationship of the notes*? Our human brains recognize easily melodies, and often we can memorize them and sing them. We can recognize them and sing them at different pitches (highness or lowness of the tone). We recognize the *form* made by notes in a certain sequence (ex: the 1-2-3-4-5 used in our initial test), even without knowing the *matter* of these notes. We have no need to know that a note is A4 and vibrates at 440 Hz.

This introduces the distinction between a *relative* pitch (form) and the *absolute* pitch (matter). Musical instruments are made of matter.

We have a gift! Solfege builds on that gift to allow us to read music.

PLAN and time commitment

1. Learn basic music theory to start exercises: lines, punctum, sol-fa, DO Clef, FA Clef, and preview more theory this will allow (circle of 5th) .
20 minutes
2. Practice first round of 18 exercises to build an organized solfege library and practice *audiation*
5 minutes per day - 3 weeks
3. Start reading music, while continuing to build our library with harder exercises, and learning more theory
5 to 15 minutes per day - 5 to 9 more weeks

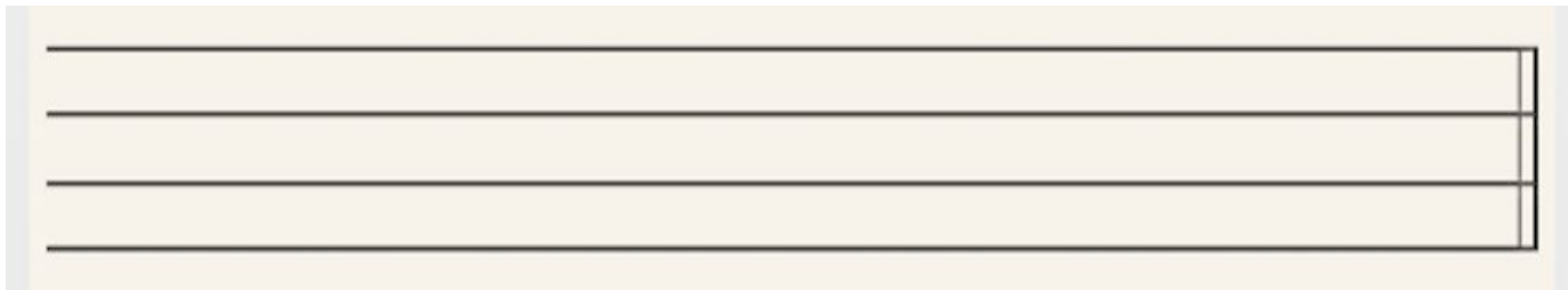
Music notation had no lines in the IXth century, then 1, then 2...

Solfege developed when music notation had 4 lines (XIth cent.-present)

Notation continued to evolve, adding a double 5-line staff, to then emphasizes the *absolute* frequency of notes, not just their relationships.

The *Movable Do* method consists in moving our solfege reading on these 4 lines. We will show later how to move the Do, and solfege reading, also on the “modern” 5-line staff.

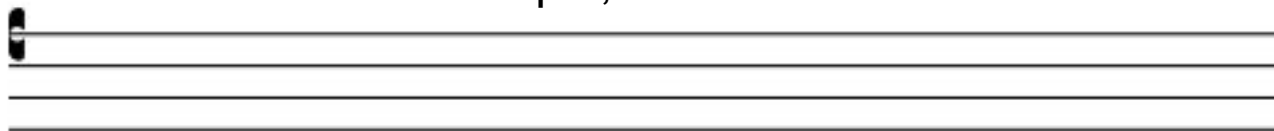
The lines are numbered from the bottom up: the bottom line is line 1, the top one is line 4.



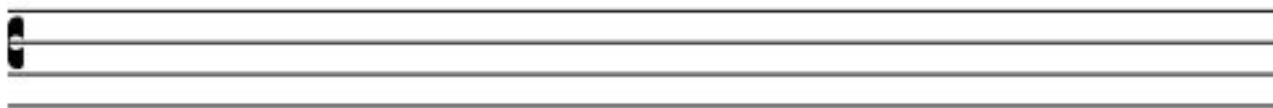
Now we add the “Do Clef” (Clef = key). It tells us where the note called Do is. The music publisher will pick a Do so most of the notes of a melody can fit on the 4 lines. A important factor in that decision is called the *mode* of the melody. The reference note “Do” can move up or down the four lines.

On the other hand, singers when a-cappella, can pick any note to be their “Do” point of reference. They pick a Do to fit the melody to their vocal range.

In this example, Do is on line 4:



In this example, Do is on line 3:



We call this method of reading music the **Movable Do**.

The Movable Do is the meeting point for the singer and the publisher. It accurately reflects that reading (all reading!) consists in two separate skills:
a decoding skill, and a sound-producing skill.

Our brains reconcile these two skills through a process called ***audiation***.

Solfege: only seven notes are used in liturgical chant and in many church hymns. On a piano, you can hear the relationship between these seven notes by playing C as Do, D as Re and continue like this.



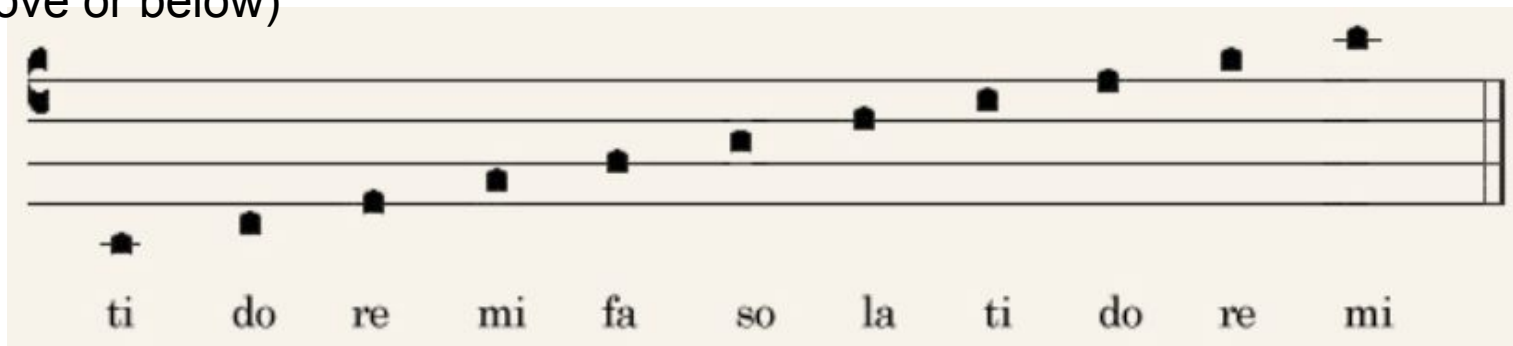
We will use one variation to the 7th note to introduce the concept of *accidental*: Ti becomes Te, when preceded by the sign ♭

As the music goes up higher or lower, the same patterns repeat: ti-do-re-mi (going up), and do-ti-la-so (going down). We notice how the 1-2-3-4-5 pattern overlaps within the seven basic notes. We will start by learning these five.

In chant, the square note is called a “punctum” and is the basic unit for rhythm.

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| DO | RE | MI | FA | SO | LA | TI | DO | RE |
| - | - | - | - | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | 1 | 2 |

Ledger lines go through notes that are two or four grades outside the staff (above or below)



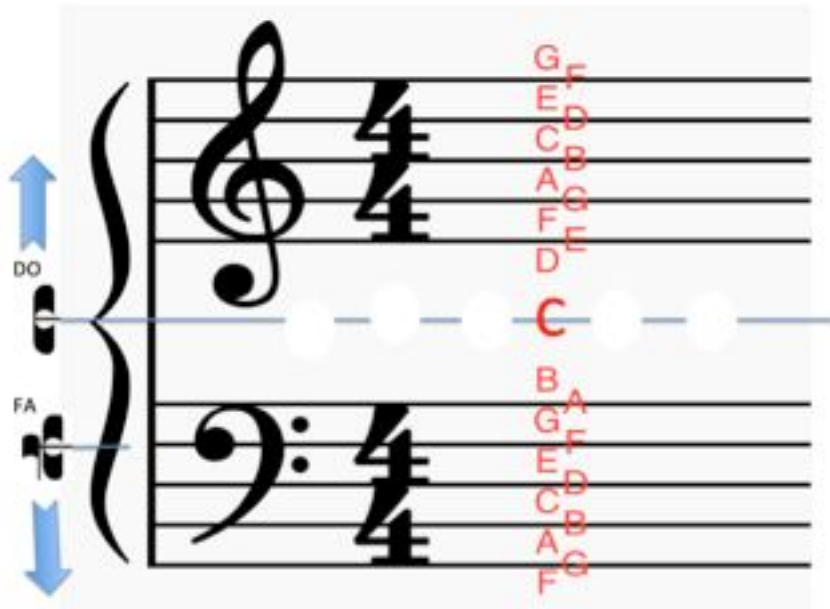
When the melody requires for the “Movable Do” to be on the ledger line above the staff, then the note Fa, on the third line of the staff, is used as the visible reference. To distinguish them, the *Fa Clef*, looks different from the *Do Clef*.



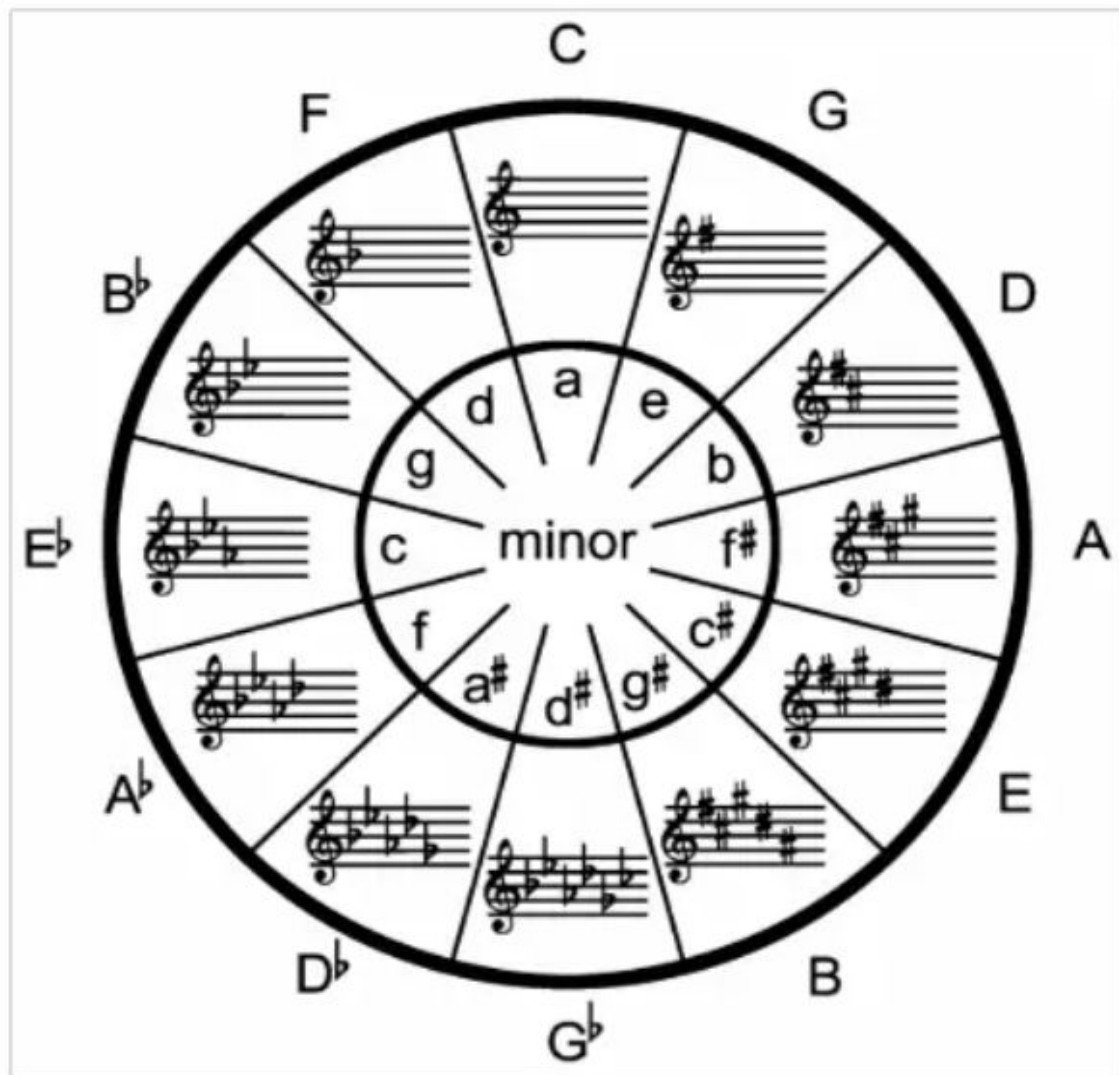
Learning to keep this *Movable Do* as reference with a *clef* that is not Do will help us later to read many other *Key Signatures* in the 5-line system of notation. In the Fa Clef, the Do in the staff is now in the space between lines 1 and 2, not on a line.

Instruments cannot transpose like the human brain. Transposing a melody on an instrument requires a long training that a singer does not need. This training requires a new vocabulary for many more than 7 notes. This gave us the 5-line staff, and the “Fixed Do” system. In the US, the “Fixed Do” is what we would call the “middle C”.

Notice how that system was an evolution from the *Movable Do*: as the Fa Clef is when the Do is on the ledger line above the staff, the Treble clef (a.k.a. G clef, or Sol clef) is to read notes when the Do is on the ledger line under the staff.



This “circle of Fifths” is all we need to identify our “Movable Do” on the 5-line “modern” notation. The note on the outside of the circle is the “Movable Do” the singer needs as a reference for the relationship between notes.



Rhythm is a very important component of music. There is a fundamental difference between the rhythm of liturgical chant, and the rhythm of most “other” music.

The basic rhythmic unit for chant is the *punctum*. We chant words, and a punctum’s value is the syllable of a word. The rhythmic signs in chant only *increase* the duration of a syllable and of the punctum. There is no sign in chant that decreases or subdivides a *punctum*.

The basic rhythmic unit in modern notation is the *measure*, representing an arbitrary duration linked to a mechanical movement. The measure is then subdivided in *beats*. An instrument called the metronome, and mathematical formulas (fractions,..) indicate the duration of beats and the corresponding signs. Learning how to count these beats is outside our scope here.

For the purpose of this *Movable Do* curriculum, we will limit ourselves to learning chant rhythmic signs. Hymns are about words too, so many hymns can be read and learned with chant rhythmic signs.

We recommend however that you continue studying the rhythmic language of the 5-line staff. Many resources are available. Ask the music director at your parish.

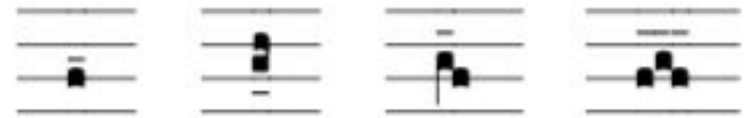
The only rhythmic signs we need to start reading music:

In liturgical chant, individual notes receive the same rhythmic value, irrespective of their shape (square, diamond, round). However, notes can be expressed in several different ways, which may affect their relative length:

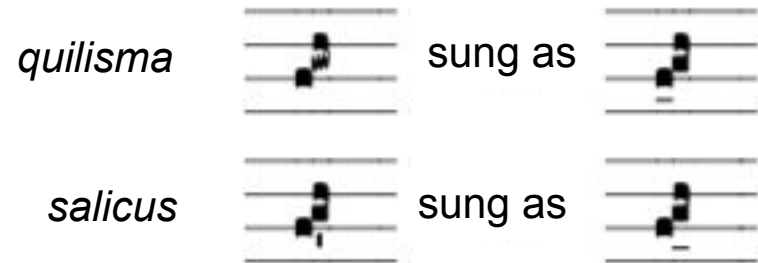
1. By the addition of a **dot**:



2. By the addition of a **horizontal episema**:



3. In the context of a **special neum** :
(a neum is a group of notes, see chant slides)



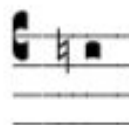
Three other signs you'll encounter:

flat sign

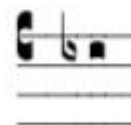


creates *te* (*ti*-flat)
lasts for word or incise,
whichever is smaller

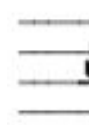
natural sign



cancels



custos



cue to the first pitch of the
next line

We will begin our MOVABLE DO exercises by getting familiar with the most common intervals used in music with DO in three different positions :

The image displays three musical staves illustrating intervals between notes. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: DO, TI, LA, SOL, FA, MI, RE, DO. Half-step markers are placed between DO and TI, TI and LA, and LA and SOL. The second staff shows a sequence of notes: DO, TI, LA, SOL, FA, MI. Half-step markers are placed between DO and TI, and TI and LA. The third staff shows a sequence of notes: DO, TI, LA, SOL, FA, MI, RE, DO.

The intervals are the distance between two notes. For two notes next to each other (ex: DO-RE), the interval is called a *second*. If one note is in between (ex: DO-MI), the interval is a *third*. If two notes (ex: DO-FA), a *fourth*. And three notes (ex: DO-SOL), a *fifth*.

If a *second* or *third* interval includes a *half-step*, as indicated above, it is then called a *minor second*, or *minor third*. If it does not include a half step, it is a *major second*, or *major third*.

It takes many notes to sing the Mass, but only a few intervals (relationships): m2, M2, m3, M3, P4, P5 & P8

m2 m2- M2 M2 M2 M2 M2 M2 m3 m3 m3 m3 M3 M3 M3 M3

P4 P4 P4 P4 P4 P4 P4 Tritones 4&5 P5 P5 P5 P5 P5 P5- P8 P8

when we sing “Happy Birthday”, we already use ALL of these seven intervals :

HappyBirth dayto you, HappyBirth dayto you, HappyBirth daydear John Doe, Happy Birthdayto you,

M2 M2 P4 m2 M3 M2 M2 P5 M2 P4 P8 m3 M3 m2 M2 m6 m2 M3 M2 M2

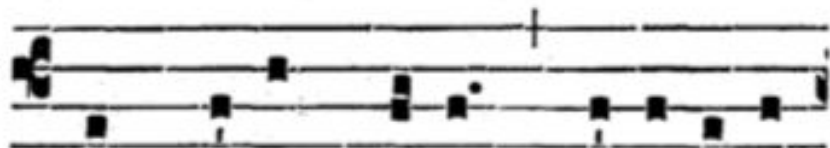
Now let us go and 1, listen to the exercises, 2. audiate them, and 3. read music !

Ut queant laxis resonare fibris miragestorum famuli tuorum solue polluti labii
reatu sce iohannes. Nuncius celso ueniens olimpo tepatri magnum fore nasciturum
nom & uita seriem gerendo ordine pmit. Ille pmissi dubi us supni pdidit pmpre m
si reformasti genitus pempte organa uocis. Ventris obstruso posit cubila senseras.

Ut queant laxis resonare fibris

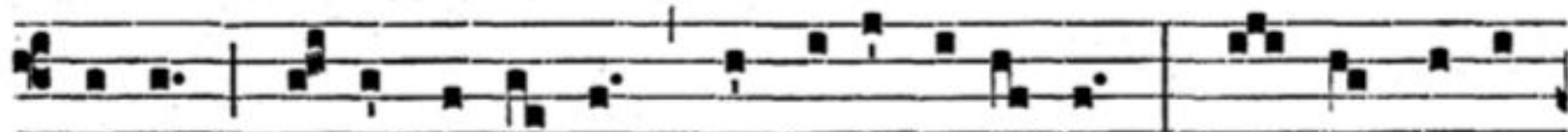
Hymn. II

U



T qué-ant láxis **re**sonáre

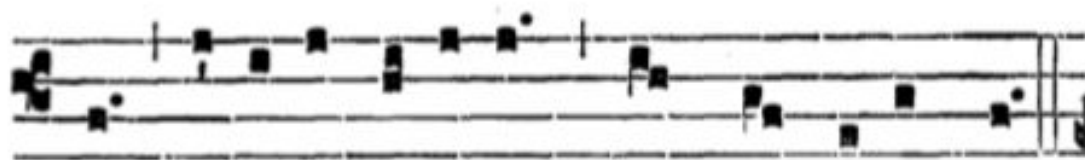
I. O for thy spirit,
holy John, to chasten
lips sin-polluted, fetter-



fíbris **Mí**-ra gestó-rum **fá**mu-li tu-ó-rum, **Sól**-ve pollú-

1230

Proper of the Saints.



ti **lá**bi-i re-átum, **Sán**cte **Jo**-ánnes.

ed tongues to loosen;
so by thy children
might thy deeds of
wonder meetly be
chanted.