Notation: Pitch

**Music Notation** is the art of recording music in written form.

Modern music notation is a product of centuries of transformation... and it is neither efficient nor intuitive!

**Pitch** is the highness or lowness of a sound.

For example, a flute has a high pitch, while a tuba has a low pitch.

**A note is a written representation of a particular pitch.**

Notation is based on the piano keyboard: lines and spaces on the staff represent the white notes on the keyboard.

To display notes outside the staff, we use shortened staff lines called ledger lines.

The *clef* determines what notes each staff line corresponds to. The four modern clefs are shown here; the note displayed on each staff corresponds to middle C.

The white notes on the keyboard are labeled with letters from A to G.

**Middle C** is the C that is closest to the middle of the piano keyboard.

The system of musical notation we use is essentially a stylized graph of pitch versus time.

The five lines on which notes appear is called a staff.

To notate the black notes on the piano keyboard, we use **accidentals**, which alter the note by one or two half steps.

A half step is the distance between two adjacent keys on the piano keyboard, regardless of what color the keys are.

**The double sharp** raises the note by two half steps.

**The sharp** raises the note by one half step.

**The natural** cancels out any previous accidental.

**The flat** lowers the note by one half step.

**The double flat** lowers the note by two half steps.

**Two notes** which have the same pitch (for example, F sharp and G flat) are called enharmonics.

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The treble clef and alto clef are used for the treble and bass parts of music. The tenor clef and bass clef are used for the tenor and bass parts.

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