**Steps to Successful Sight Reading**

Sight reading is often considered intimidating. The following steps will help make it easier to become more successful. “The key to successful sight reading is to know what to look for”.

What key are you playing in? An easy way to figure out major key signatures is as follows:

**Soflege Scale** – do, ra, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do

**Major Key Signatures**:

**Sharps** – the last sharp in the key signature is “ti”. To find the major key, go one step up to “do”. Therefore, the C# in the key signature below is “ti”, making the song in D major.



**Flats** – “FLATS LOOK BACK”. The second to last flat in the key signature will tell you the key the song is in. If there is only one flat, the song is in F Major.



\*If there are no sharps or flats, the key is either C major or A minor.

**FYI Minor keys**: Don’t always assume the key you are playing in is major. To find the minor key signature, find the major key signature and go down three half steps (semi tones). For example, using the Eb major key signature above, go from Eb, then D(step 1), then C#(step 2) and finally C (steps 3). The relative minor key signature above is C minor.

**Note:** if you are just using the staff, go down two steps. For example Eb becomes E, D(step 1) and C (step 2), therefore your song is in C minor. F# becomes F, then E (step 1) and D (step 2), therefore, your song is in D minor.

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| **Sight Reading in Five Easy Steps:** |
| **S** | **S**harps or flat**S** in the key **S**ignature - Identify the key the song is written in. Silently practice the fingers / notes from that key signature (i.e. Bb, Eb, Ab or F#, C#, G#). Look for any key signature changes in the piece. |
| **T** | **T**ime signature and **T**empo markings – Identify and look for changes in the piece. |
| **A** | **A**ccidentals – Check for any accidentals not found in the key signature and note the fingering on your instrument. |
| **R** | **R**hythm – slowly count and clap through the song. Review any difficult rhythms |
| **S** | **S**igns – Look for all signs that indicate dynamics, articulations, tempo changes, repeats, 1st and 2nd endings, and any other instructions printed on your music. |

**Tempo Markings:**

From slowest to fastest:

* *Grave* – very slow (25–45 BPM)
* *Largo* – broadly (40–60 BPM)
* *Adagio* – slow and stately (literally, "at ease") (66–76 BPM)
* *Andante* – at a walking pace (76–108 BPM)
* *Moderato* – moderately (108–120 BPM)
* *Allegro* – fast, quickly, and bright (120–168 BPM) (molto allegro is slightly faster than allegro, but always in its range)
* *Vivace* – lively and fast (168–176 BPM)
* *Presto* – extremely fast (168–200 BPM)
* *Prestissimo* – even faster than Presto (200 BPM and over)

**Terms for tempo change:**

* *Ritardando* or *rallentando* – gradually slowing down (abbreviation: *rit., ritard.,* *rall.*)
* *Accelerando* or *stringendo* – gradually accelerating (abbreviation: *accel.*)

**Common Qualifiers**

* *poco a poco* – little by little
* *più* – more, as in *più allegro* (more quickly); used as a relative indication when the tempo changes
* *Più mosso* – more movement or faster. Note, however, that when *Più Mosso* or *Meno Mosso* appears in large type above the staff, it functions as a new tempo, and thus implies an immediate change.)
* *a tempo* – returns to the base tempo after an adjustment (e.g. "ritardando ... a tempo" undoes the effect of the ritardando).
* *Divisi* – tells players when to divide and play the two or more notes on the staff.
* *Marcato accent (^)* – a loud accented note of short duration
* *Tenuto accent (*-) – *hold the note a little longer than its full length. T*he note should receive emphasis.
* *Fermata* – the note should be prolonged beyond its normal duration or note value would indicate
* *Trill (tr.*) - the rapid alternation between two adjacent notes. If you find an A with a “tr” symbol above it, and you have no sharps and no flats in the key signature, the upper note is B. If you find an A with a “tr” symbol above it, and B is flat in the key signature, the upper note is B-flat (Bb).