

TRANSCRIPT:

Ledger Lines, Movable Clefs, and the Grand Staff

Notes ascend the treble staff. When you get to the top, you can keep going by adding lines. These lines are called ledger lines. You can add ledger lines both above and below the staff. Previous to a hundred years ago, musicians avoided using ledger lines. If using notes below the staff, they might place the clef higher and move up all the notes up accordingly—or they might use a different clef.

In this case, a C clef shows where C is between the two bumps. In modern usage, the C clef can be placed in different places on the staff. When it's on the third line, the middle line, it's called an alto clef. This is played by the viola. When it's on the fourth line, it's called a tenor clef—sometimes played on the cello or the bassoon.

In fact, these clefs are octave specific. The C clef identifies middle C. Middle C is a note (sound here) that's comfortable to sing. It's high in the guys range, and low in the ladies range. The treble clef, the G clef, is higher than that. It refers to this G, which is 5 notes higher than C. It's mostly for the ladies and higher notes. The bass clef, the F clef, (sound here) refers to that F below C.

If you notice, we can cover a lot of notes if we have the treble clef on top of the bass clef. This is called the grand staff. It contains a treble clef for the higher notes and a bass clef for the lower notes. Between the treble and the bass is middle C. It can be thought of as 1 ledger line below the treble clef, as well as 1 ledger line above the bass clef. Ascending up the bass clef, notes may go higher than C by passing into the treble clef—which is the same as if you use ledger lines above the bass clef.

This diagram shows the 4 notes on the left are the same 4 notes as the ones on the right. Similarly, ledger lines below the treble clef are the same notes as those on top of the bass staff. We often want to use ledger lines, rather than crossing staves. So, there's extra room placed between the staves. This note is middle C whether it's shown in the bass clef or in the treble clef. It's the same note.

The last item to cover in this lesson is transposed clefs. Some clefs have a little aid at the bottom, and that indicates that the notes are 1 octave lower. Tenors often sing using this clef: the treble clef 1 octave lower. They read it just like sopranos or altos, their notes are just an octave lower.

For the video on the exercise, we will wait and I'll post that separately.