

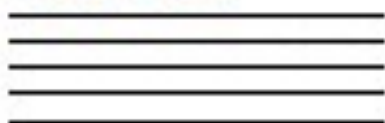
## Introduction to Reading Music for the Bass Guitar

### Pt.1 PITCH

Reading music is actually pretty easy when you know how, and by learning a few basic rules and mnemonics (noun - a device such as a pattern of letters, ideas, or associations that assists in remembering something) you will be well on your way to mastering those mysterious little black dots. I've split this lesson into 2 halves, PITCH and RHYTHM, as it is easier to look at these musical principles separately then combine our new knowledge into one music notation reading super skill.

Music notes are written on 5 lines and 4 spaces called the STAFF:

#### The Staff



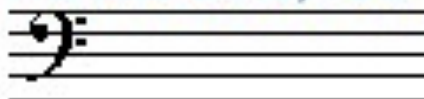
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The pitch of the note (how high or low it sounds) is relative to it's vertical position on the STAFF. So, notes placed on the lower lines and spaces sound lower than those placed on the upper lines and spaces.

An important point to be aware of is that these lines do not represent the strings of your bass, like they do in the TAB system.

Music for the bass guitar is written in the BASS CLEF which has this symbol:

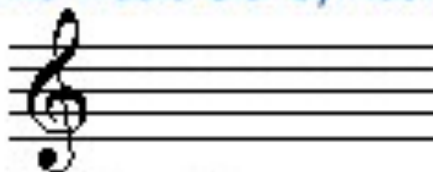
#### The Bass Clef Symbol



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and is placed at the start of each line of music. There are different kinds of clefs in music, each designed for different sets of instruments, for example you will have probably heard of the treble clef which looks like this:

#### The Treble Clef Symbol



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And is used for instruments with a much higher register than the bass guitar like alto saxophone and trumpet.

## Notes in the Bass Clef

The name of each note is derived from its position on the STAFF.

A note will either be placed ON a LINE or IN a SPACE.

Each LINE and SPACE has a letter attached to it and therefore determines the name of the note situated on it.

The names of the lines are:

<b>A</b>	-	_____	<b>ALWAYS</b>
<b>F</b>	-	_____	<b>FUNK</b>
<b>D</b>	-	_____	<b>DESERVE</b>
<b>B</b>	-	_____	<b>BASSISTS</b>
<b>G</b>	-	_____	<b>GOOD</b>

The rhyme should be learnt from bottom to top.....

The names of the spaces are:

<b>G</b>	-	_____	<b>GRASS</b>
<b>E</b>	-	_____	<b>EAT</b>
<b>C</b>	-	_____	<b>COWS</b>
<b>A</b>	-	_____	<b>ALL</b>

Again this mnemonic should be memorised from bottom to top....

So the names of the lines are (from bottom line to top):

**Good**      **Bassists**      **Deserve**      **Funk**      **Always**

And the names of the spaces are (from bottom space to top):

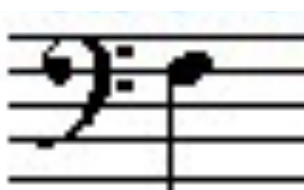
**All Cows Eat Grass**

Now that you are armed with these catchy memory joggers you will be able to name any note you see written bass clef.

For example the following note is written in the lowest possible space, so we can rule out the 5 note names that are connected with the lines. That leaves us with the 4 letters connected to the spaces and we know the first word of the mnemonic is ALL, therefore this note must be an **A**



Similarly if we look at this note which has been placed on the 2nd to top line, we run through the phrase 'Good Bassists Deserve **FUN** Always' and we see that the second last word is FUN, so this is the F line and this note must be an **F**. Easy!!



In summary, by memorising these two simple mnemonics, we can quickly and accurately name 9 musical notes of the bass clef. There are of course much more than just these 9 notes but for now this is all we need to focus on.

If we look at all the notes we've just learned on the bass clef staff we can see that they ascend in alphabetical order from bottom to top,



Which gives us another tool for quickly determining the name of a note. For example a note 2 spaces above A is an E, which we can derive by going through the alphabet and counting each line and space as we go.