GETTING READY TO PLAY THE PIANO

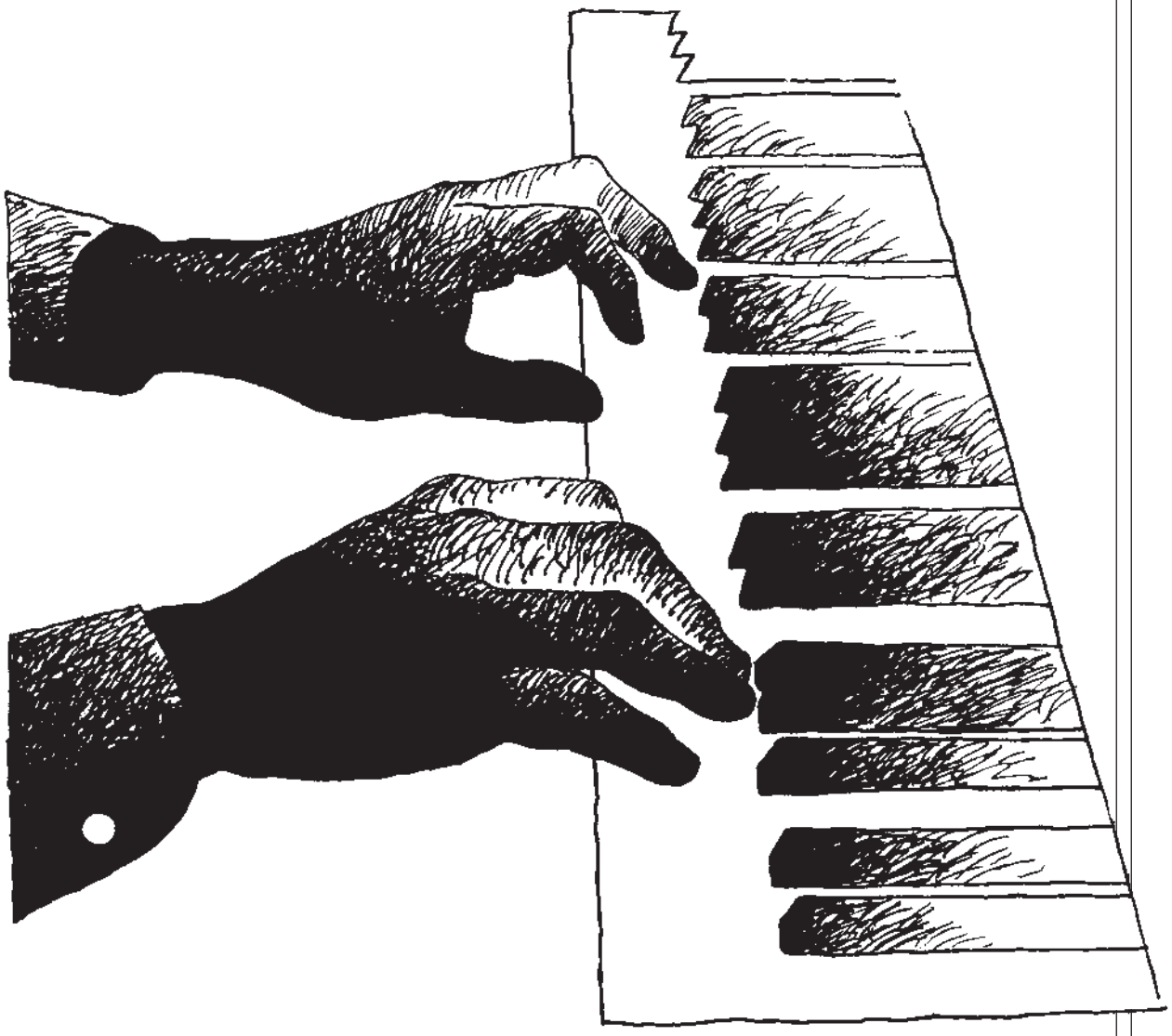
Nine-point Checklist

1. As you sit at the piano and rest your fingers on the keyboard, move the bench back far enough so your elbows are slightly bent.
2. Sit in the center of the bench, directly in front of the center of the keyboard.
3. Sit toward the front edge of the bench with your back straight and your weight forward.
4. Rest your feet on the floor.
5. Sit comfortably, maintaining good posture.
6. Make sure there is good light for you to see the music and the keyboard.

7. Stand. Drop your hands to your sides and relax them. Notice their natural curve, as if they were holding a ball. As you sit again, place your fingers on the keyboard, keeping the same natural curve.

8. Position your hands above the keyboard, letting your fingers touch near the center of the large area on the white keys. Hold your palms above the keyboard, but don't rest them on the keys or on the wood below the keys.

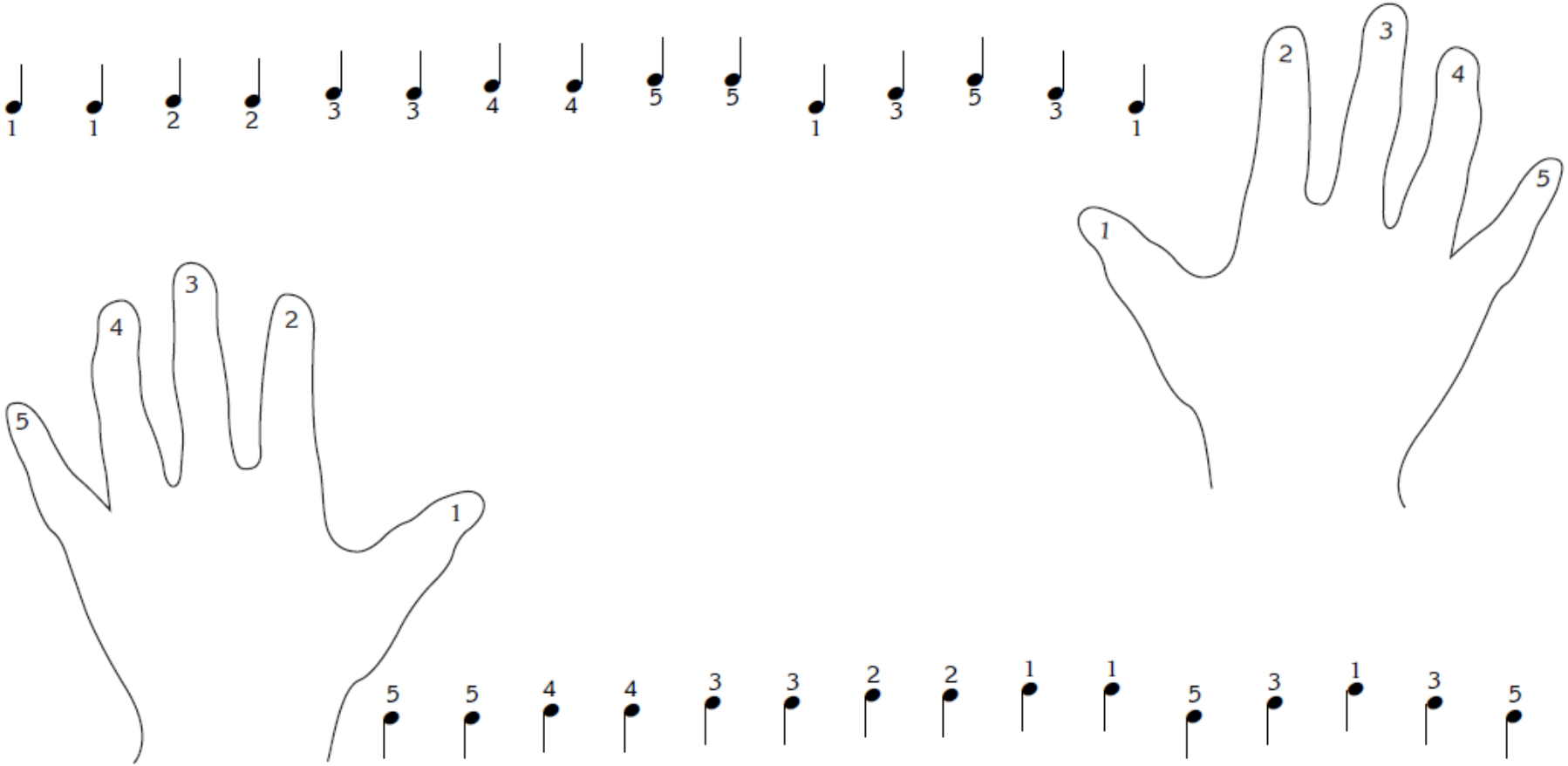
9. Strike the key with the pad of your finger just below the fingertip. Keep each finger curved, lifting it from the knuckle on the back of your hand. As you strike the key, keep your finger joints bent.



Playing by Finger Numbers

To help you place the correct finger on each key, the fingers are given numbers as shown below. Finger numbers are written above or below the notes on the page.

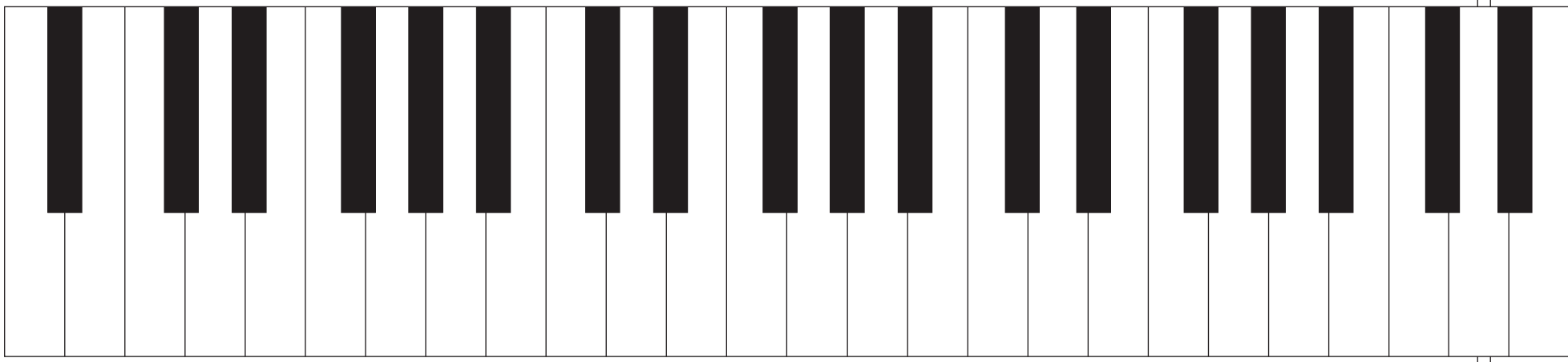
Place your hand above any group of five keys, holding each finger above one key. Practice the finger numbers by playing the keys with the correct finger as indicated. The notes with stems going up are for the right hand. Notes with stems going down are for the left hand.



THE KEYBOARD

The keyboard is made up of white keys and black keys. Black keys are in groups of two and three.

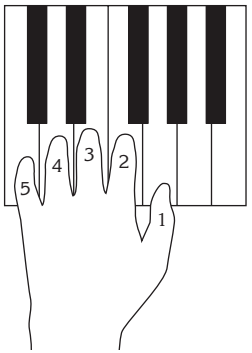
Find the group of three black keys at the left end of the keyboard. Beginning here and moving to the right, play all the groups of three black keys until you reach the middle of the keyboard. Play one key at a time, using fingers four, three, and two of your left hand. Do the same exercise with the right hand, beginning at the rightmost group of three and moving toward the middle.

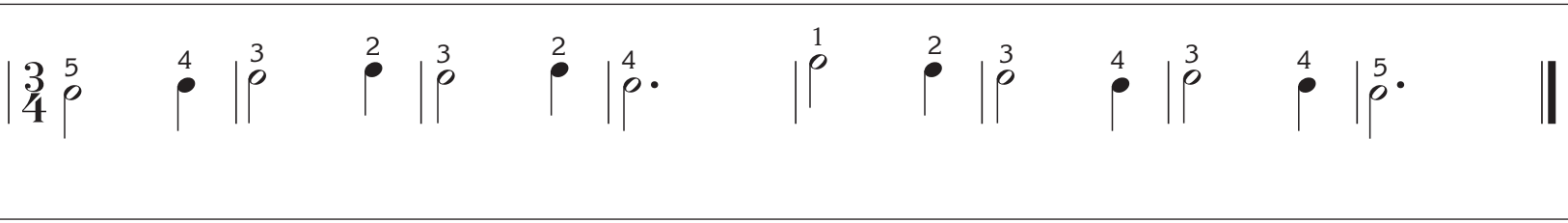


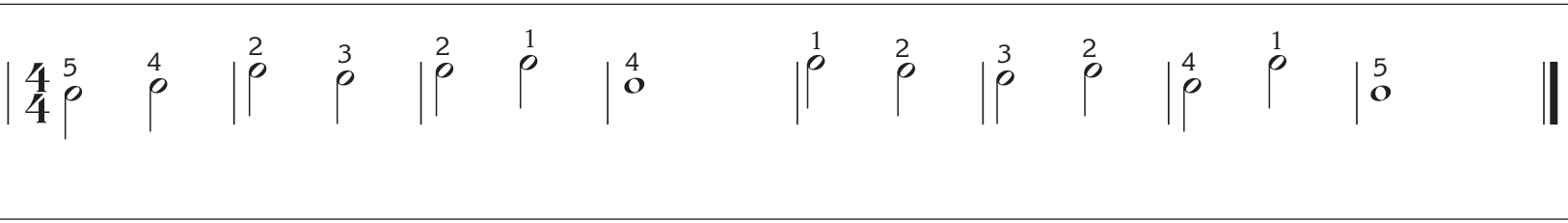
lower notes

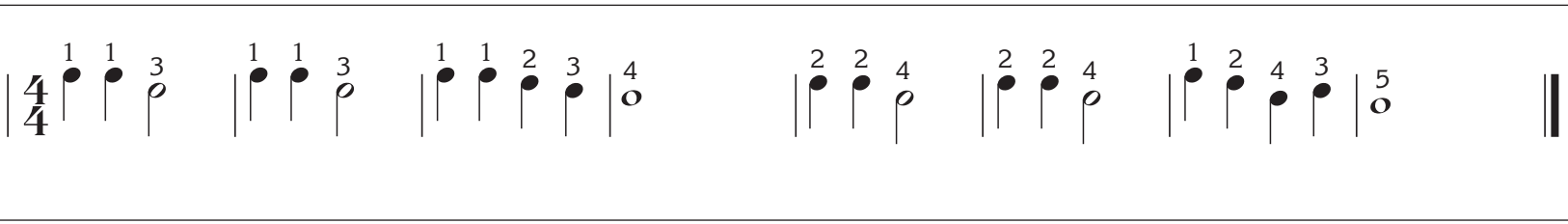
PRACTICING NOTES AND FINGER NUMBERS

1. Clap a steady beat and say the rhythmic names of the notes below.
2. **13** Place your left hand as shown in the illustration and play the notes below.

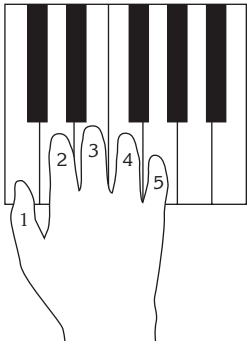


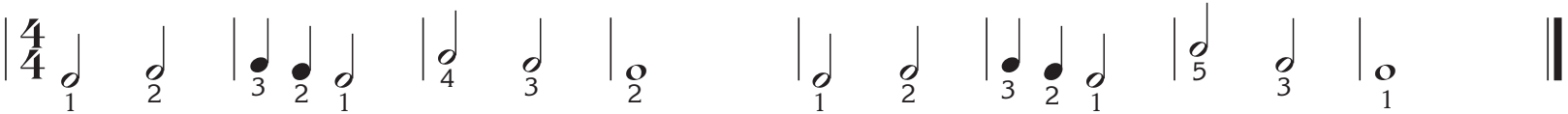


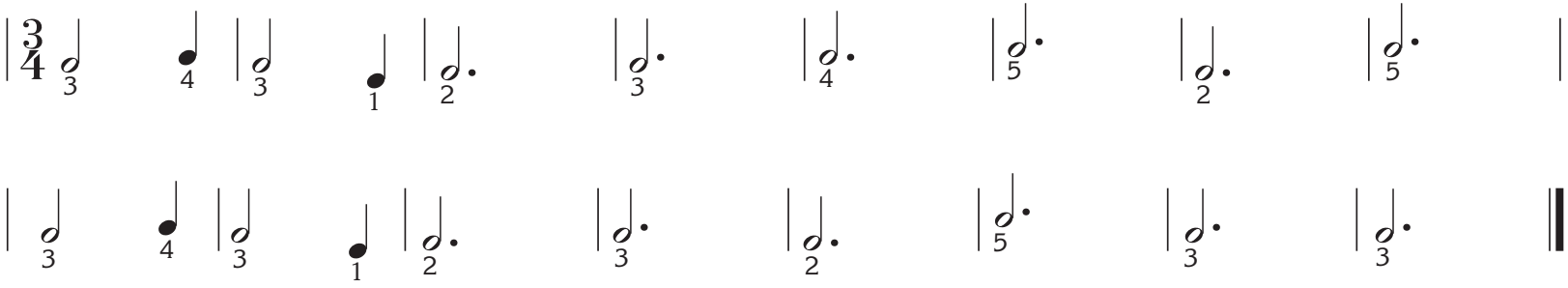


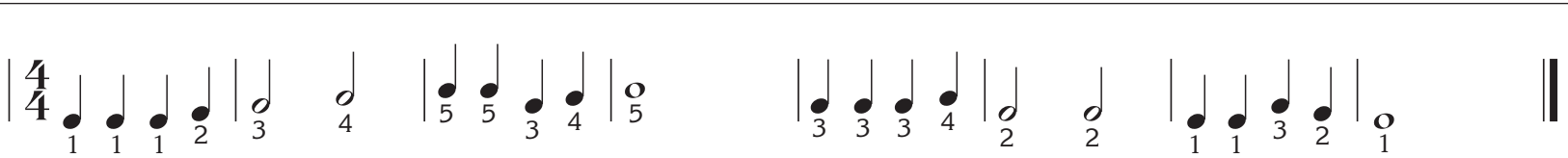


1. Clap a steady beat and say the rhythmic names of the notes below.
2. **14** Place your right hand as shown in the illustration and play the notes below.









Finding and Practicing the White Keys

The white keys are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet:

A B C D E F G

These seven letter names are repeated several times in succession, giving every white key a name.

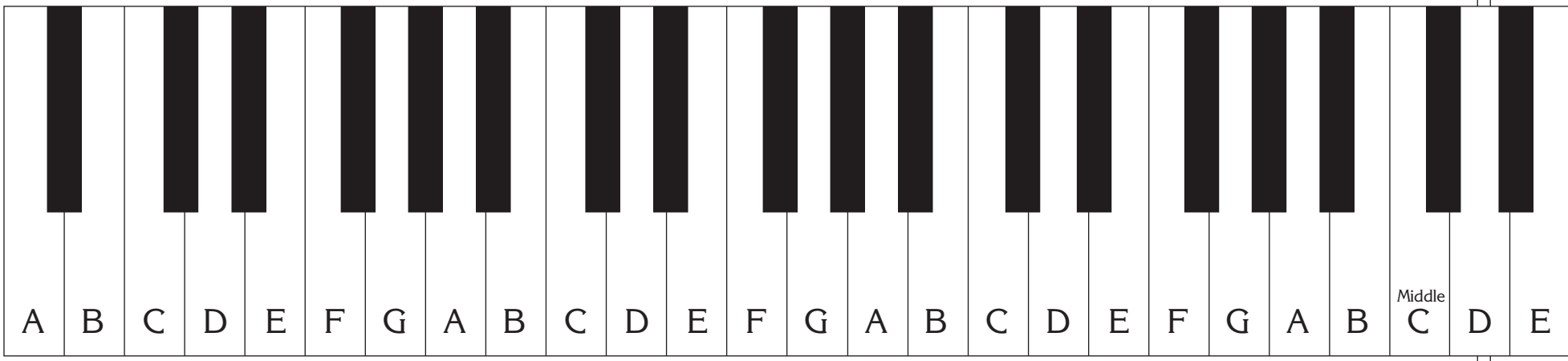
Below is an illustration of a full-length keyboard for a standard piano. How many times are the letter names repeated in order to give every white key on a standard keyboard a name? How many times are they repeated on your keyboard?

Play and name each white key on your piano. Begin with the lowest key (A on a standard keyboard) and move up to the highest (C). Then start at the highest key and move down the keyboard, playing and saying the letter names backwards.

FINDING MIDDLE C

Middle C is an important key. C is located to the left of any group of two black keys. Middle C is the C nearest the middle of the piano keyboard, as shown below. The brand name of the piano is usually printed on the wood above middle C. When you sit at the keyboard to play, middle C should point to the middle of your body.

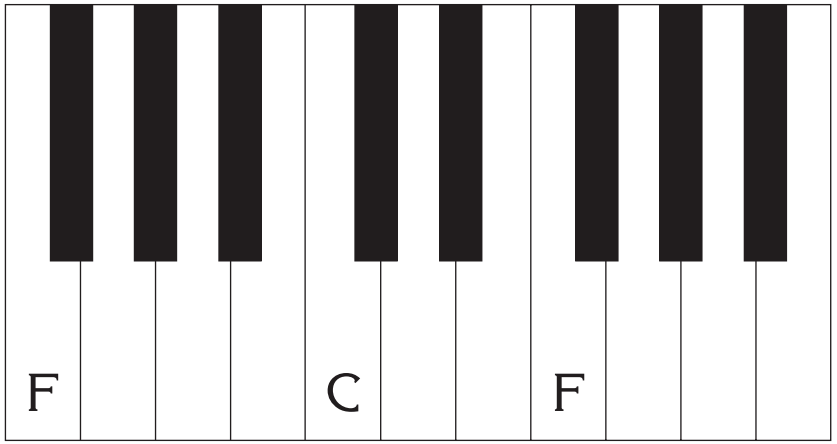
Find and play middle C on your keyboard.



F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

FINDING AND PRACTICING C AND F

C is located to the left of any group of two black keys; F is located to the left of any group of three black keys (see the illustration to the right). These are known as guidepost keys.

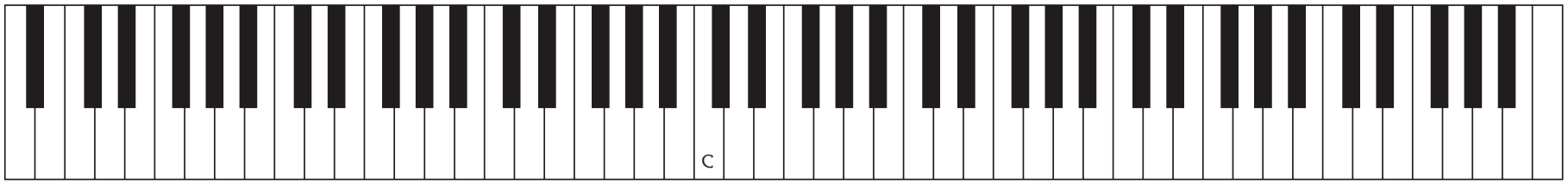


1. Play and name all of the C's and F's on your keyboard.
2. Clap a steady beat and say the rhythmic names of the notes in the exercises below.
3. Find middle C with your right thumb. Place your fourth finger on the F above middle C. **19** Play the first exercise below using middle C and F. Then play the second exercise with the thumb and fifth finger of your left hand. Use middle C and the F below it.
4. Sing the name of each key as you play it.

Right hand

Left hand

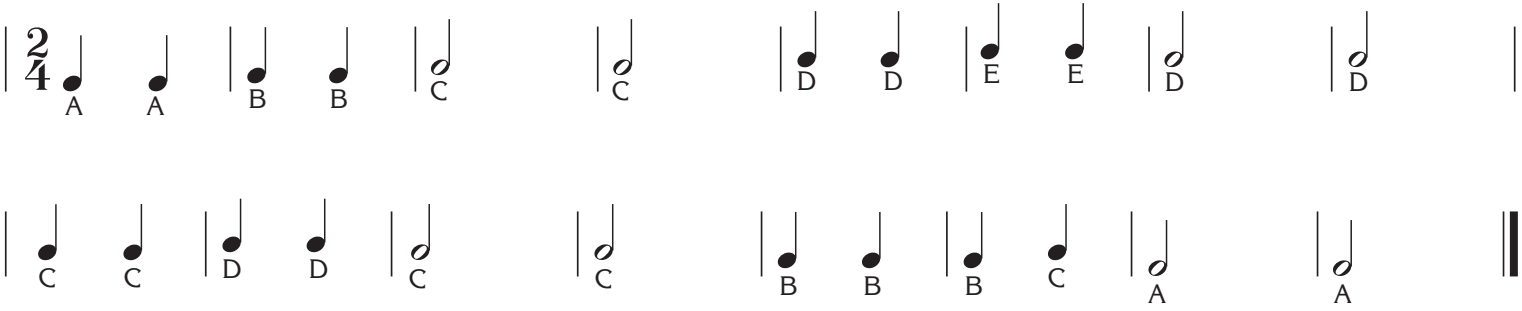
5. Label all the C's and F's on the keyboard below.

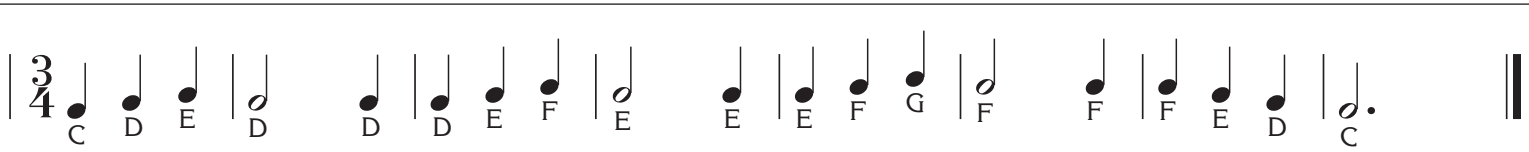


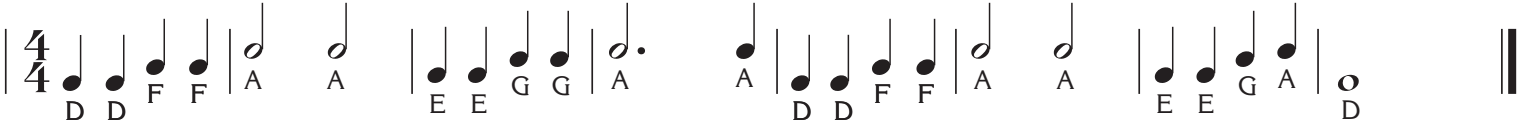
PRACTICING ALL THE WHITE KEYS

Now that you have learned the names of all the white keys, you are ready to play some melodies.

1. Clap a steady beat and say the rhythmic names of the notes in the exercises below.
2. **20** Play the following melodies near the middle of the keyboard with your right hand, then with your left hand. When playing with the right hand, put your thumb on the first key of each melody and put each finger on keys moving to the right. When playing with the left hand, put your fifth finger on the first key of each melody and put each finger on keys moving to the right.
3. Sing the name of each key as you play it.





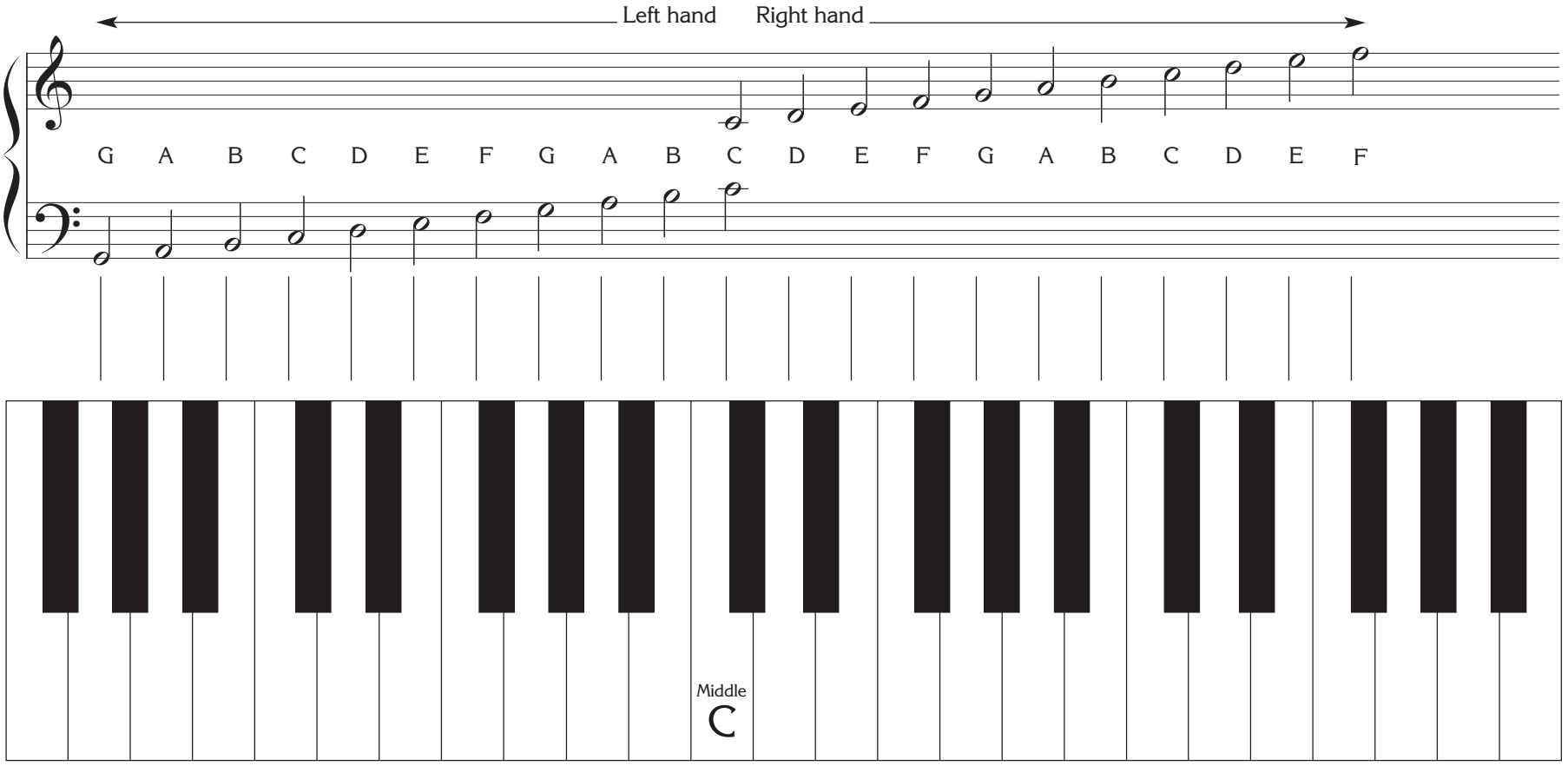


Matching Notes on the Staff with White Keys on the Keyboard

Each note on the staff represents a white key on the keyboard.

Since the middle part of the keyboard is used most often, the grand staff represents only the middle keys. On the diagram below, each note on the grand staff is connected to its corresponding key on the keyboard.

Now that you have learned about the treble and bass clefs, you should use them to determine which hand to use in playing a note (treble = right hand; bass = left hand). You should no longer use a note's stem direction to determine which hand to use.



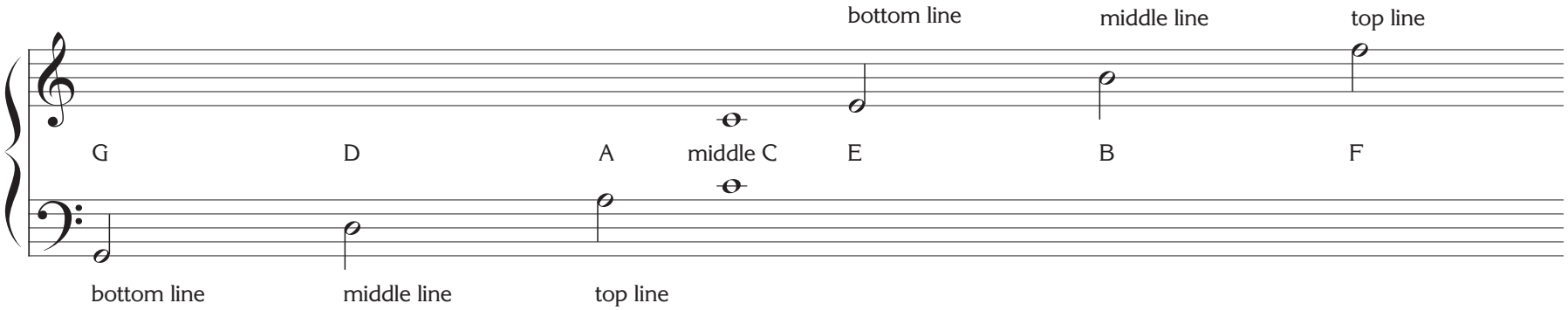
Seven Important Line Notes

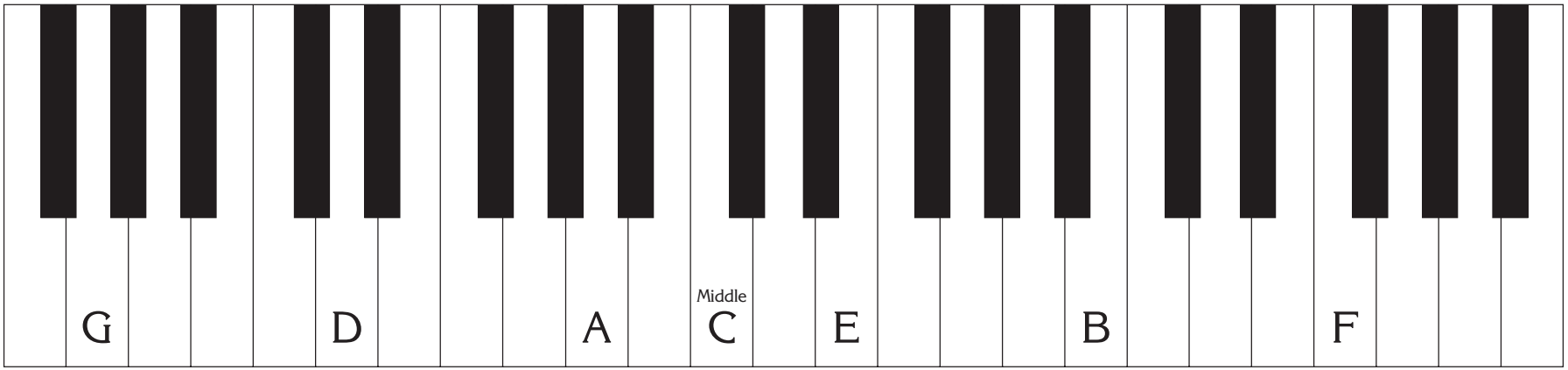
Memorize the seven line notes shown in the diagram below. G, D, and A are on the bottom, middle, and top lines of the bass clef. E, B, and F are on the bottom, middle, and top lines of the treble clef. Middle C is between the two clefs on a small line.

Cover the picture of the keyboard below and point at random to notes on the staff. As you point to a note, play it on the piano.

Use music note cards 3, 7, 11, 13, 18, 20, 24, and 28 to help you learn these notes. Look at the side of each card that has the note on it. Say the name of the note and play it on the keyboard. Then turn the card over to check yourself.

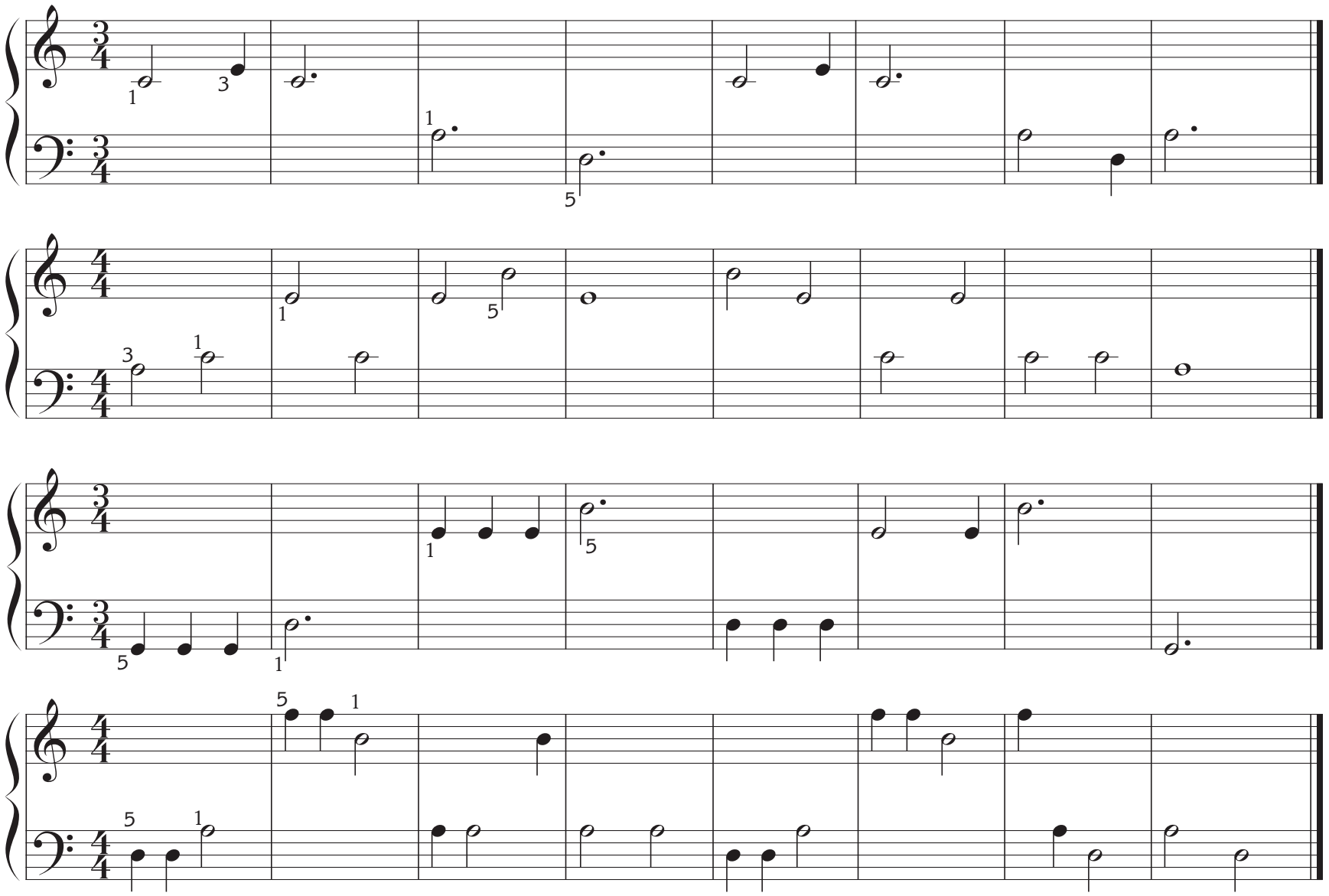
Have someone show you the cards one at a time to help you learn to recognize the notes quickly.





PRACTICING SEVEN IMPORTANT LINE NOTES

1. **23** Practice the exercises below until you can play them smoothly.
2. Sing the name of each key as you play it.
3. When you've learned these exercises, try to play them without looking at your hands.

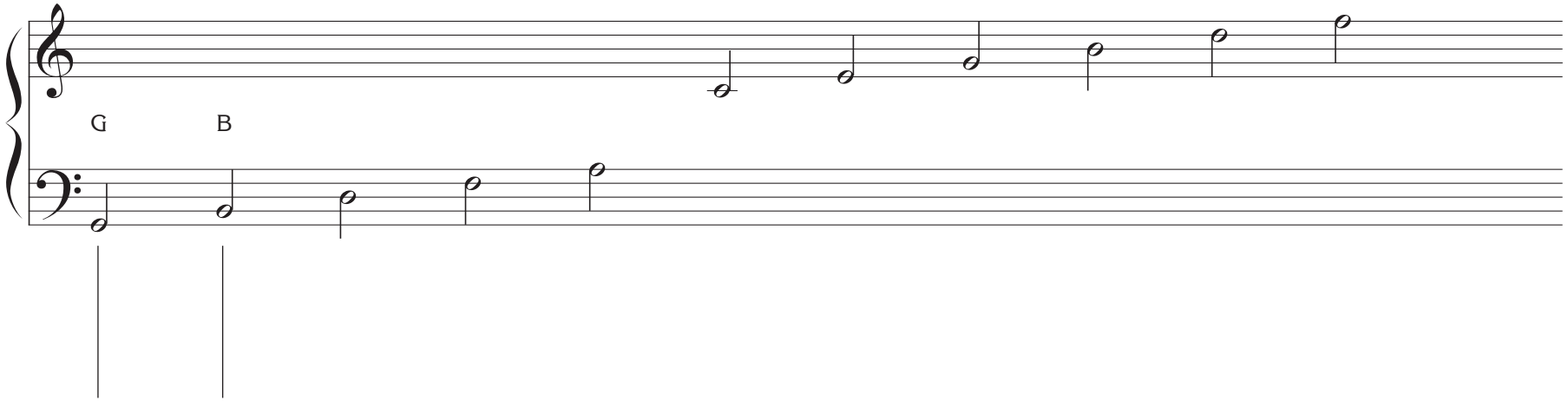


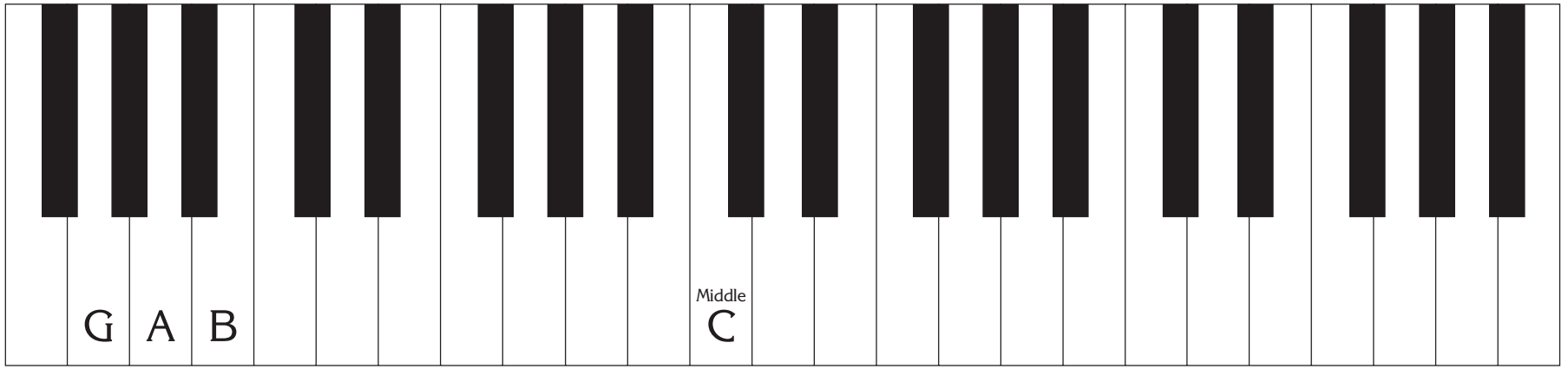
Other Line Notes

On the staff below, label each line note with its alphabet name. Then draw a line to its corresponding key and label each key with its name. (See page 43 if you need help.)

When you complete this exercise, memorize the new notes. Use music note cards 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 20, 22, 24, 26, and 28 to help you. Look at the side of each card that has the note on it. Say the name of the note and play it on the keyboard. Then turn the card over to check yourself.

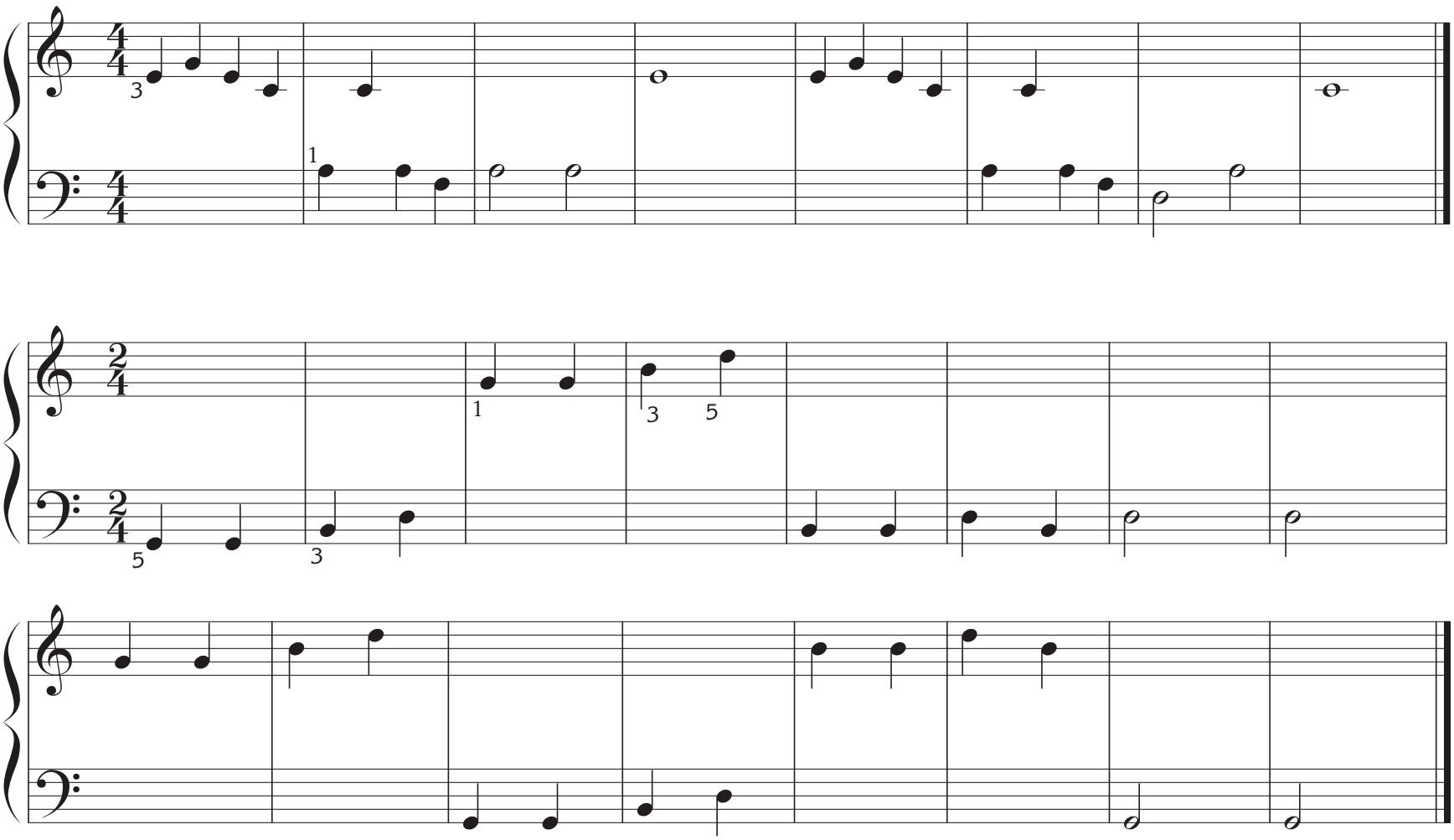
Have someone show you the cards one at a time to help you learn to recognize them quickly.





PRACTICING ALL THE LINE NOTES

1. Practice the exercises below until you can play them smoothly.
2. Sing the name of each key as you play it.
3. When you've learned these exercises, try to play them without looking at your hands.

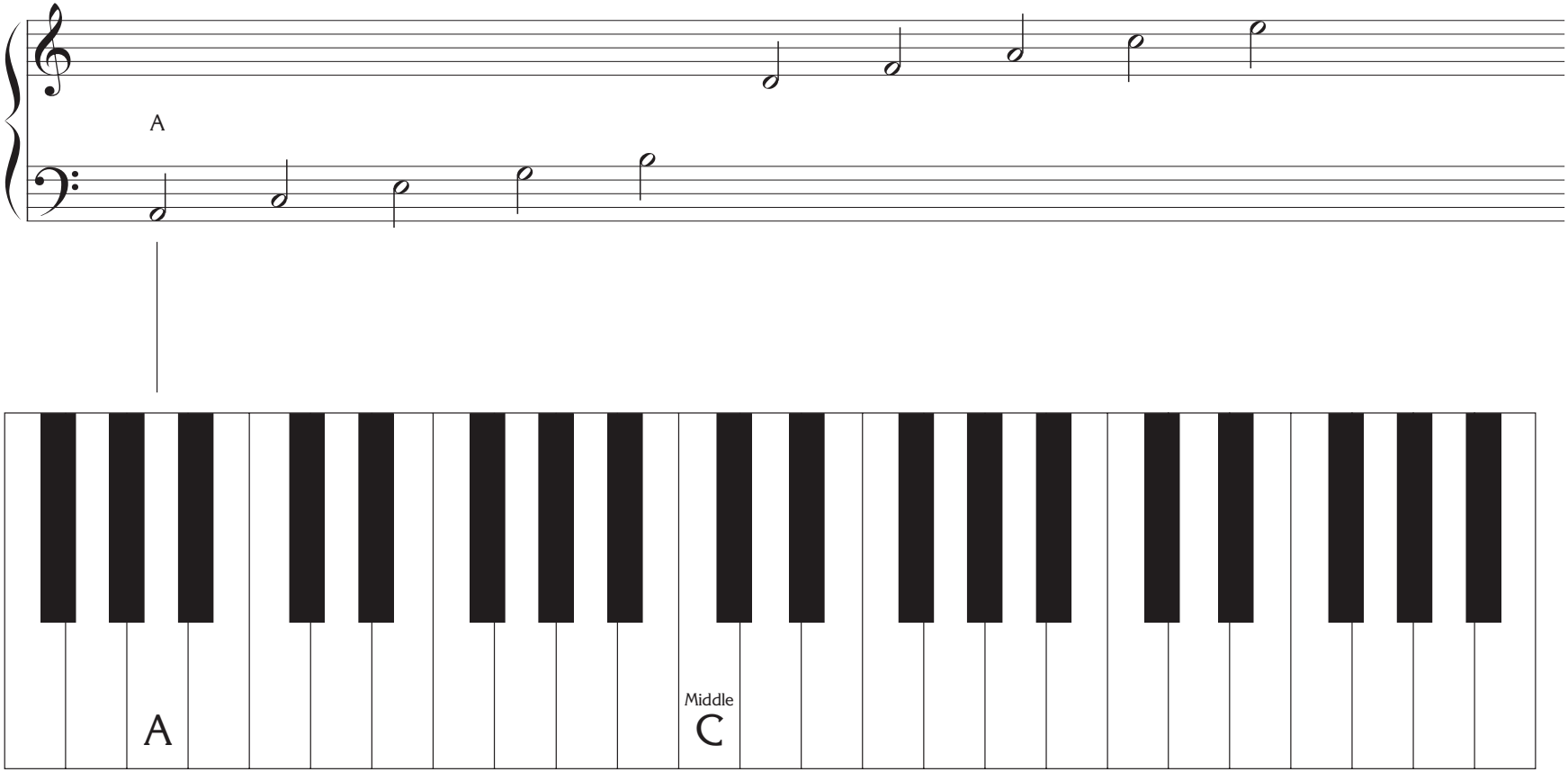


The Space Notes

On the staff below, label each space note with its alphabet name. Then draw a line to its corresponding key and label each key with its name.

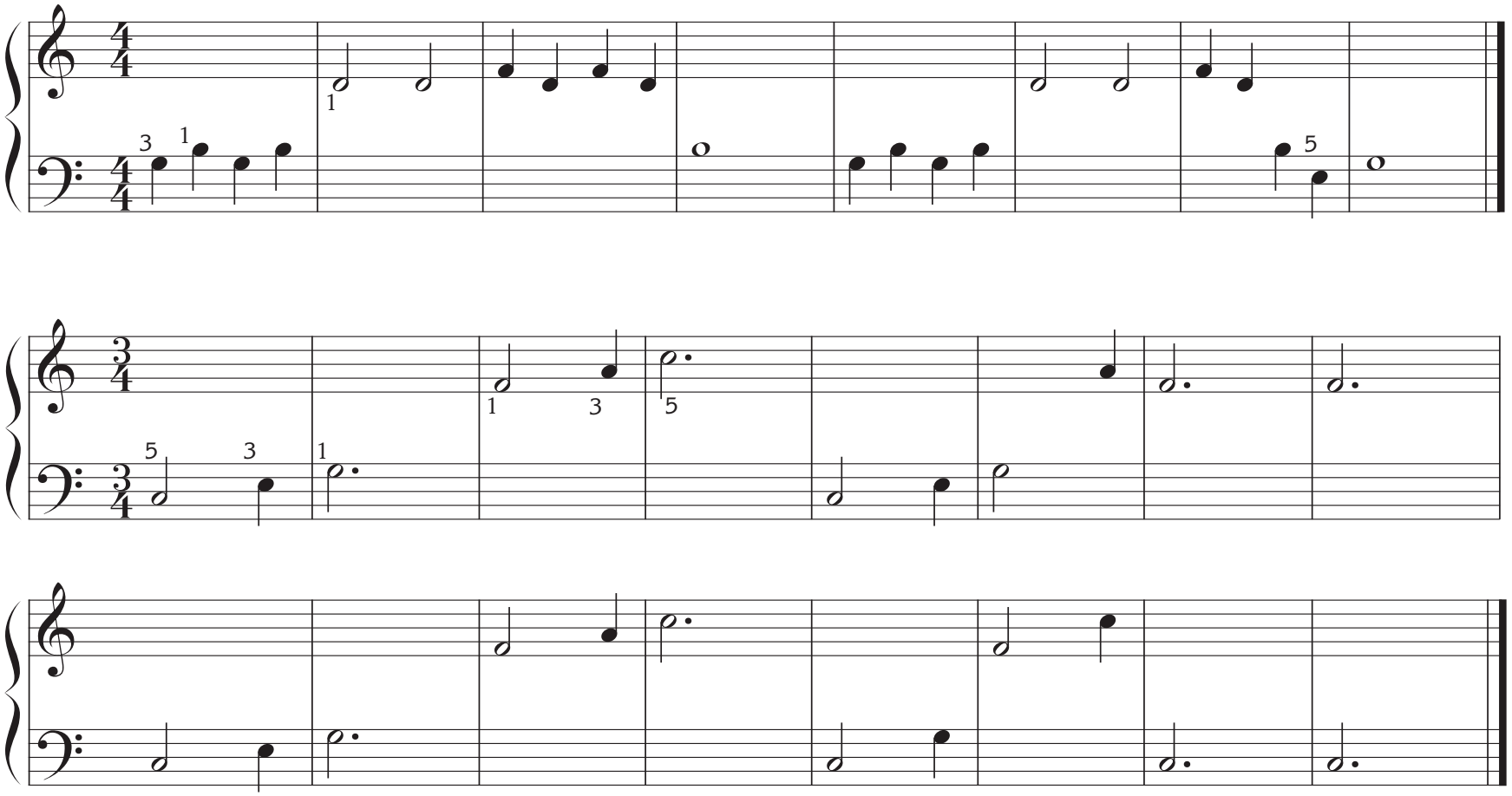
When you complete this exercise, memorize the new notes. Use music note cards 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 19, 21, 23, 25, and 27 to help you. Look at the side of each card that has the note on it. Say the name of the note and play it on the keyboard. Then turn the card over to check yourself.

Have someone show you the cards one at a time to help you learn to recognize them quickly.



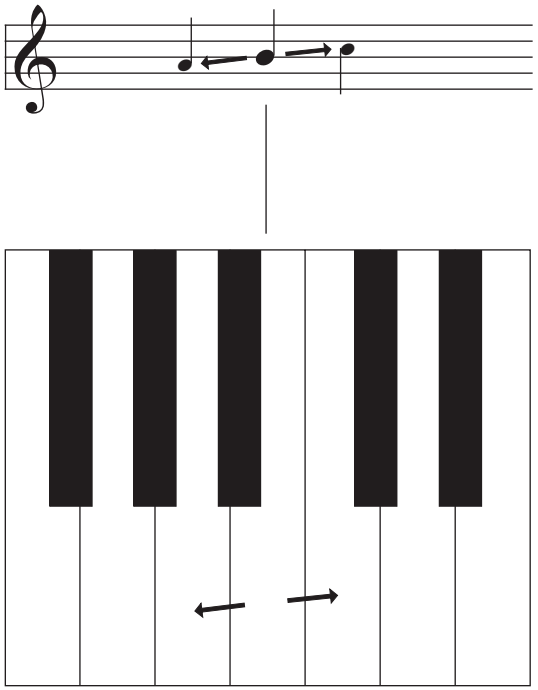
PRACTICING THE SPACE NOTES

1. Practice the exercises below until you can play them smoothly.
2. Sing the name of each key as you play it.
3. When you've learned these exercises, try to play them without looking at your hands.



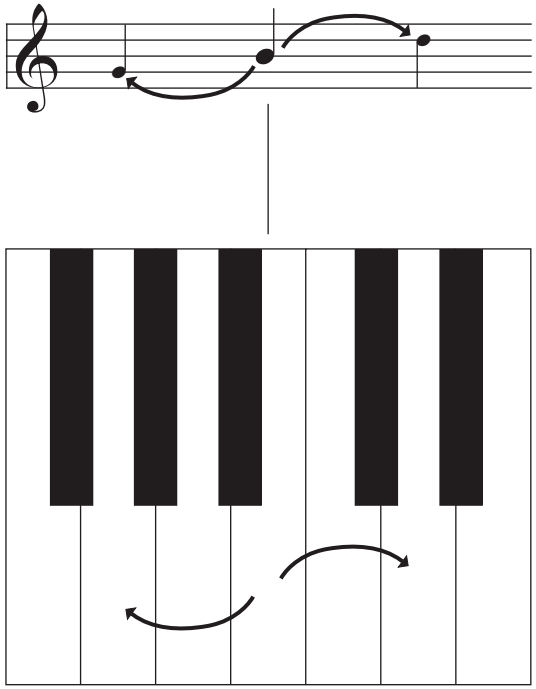
Steps and Skips

On the staff, a step usually moves from a line note to the space note above or below it, or from a space note to the line note above or below.



In this section of the course, a “step” moves from one white key to the nearest white key to the right or left. (Ignore the black keys when finding steps and skips.)

On the staff, a skip moves from a line to the nearest line above or below, or from a space to the nearest space above or below.

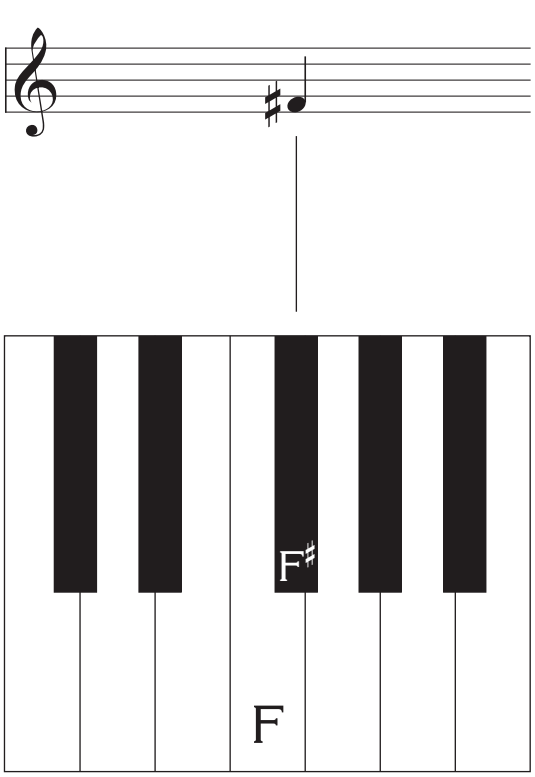


In this section of the course, a “skip” jumps over the nearest key to the next nearest key to the right or left.

SHARPS

A sharp sign (♯) means to raise the note by playing the next key to the right, usually a black key.

As shown in the diagram below, when a sharp sign is placed in front of an F on the staff, you should play the black key to the right of the F. Its name then becomes F-sharp.

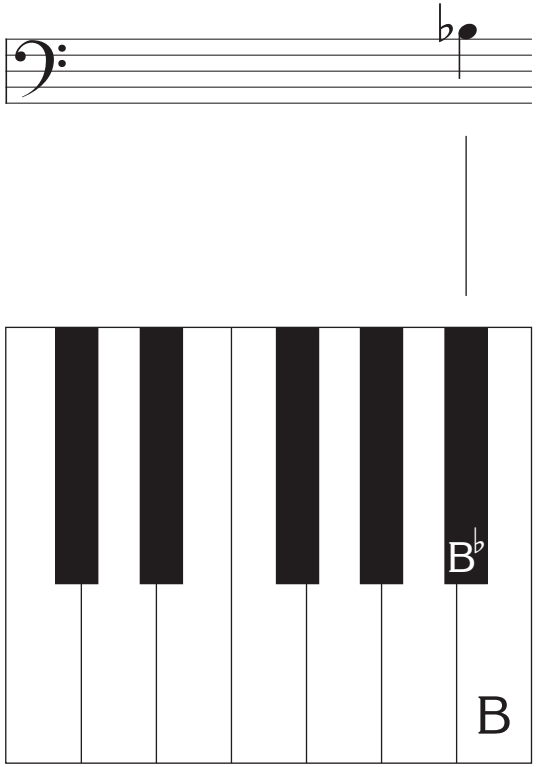


FLATS

A flat sign (♭) means to lower the note by playing the next key to the left, usually a black key.

As shown in the diagram below, when a flat sign is placed in front of a B on the staff, you should play the black key to the left of the B.

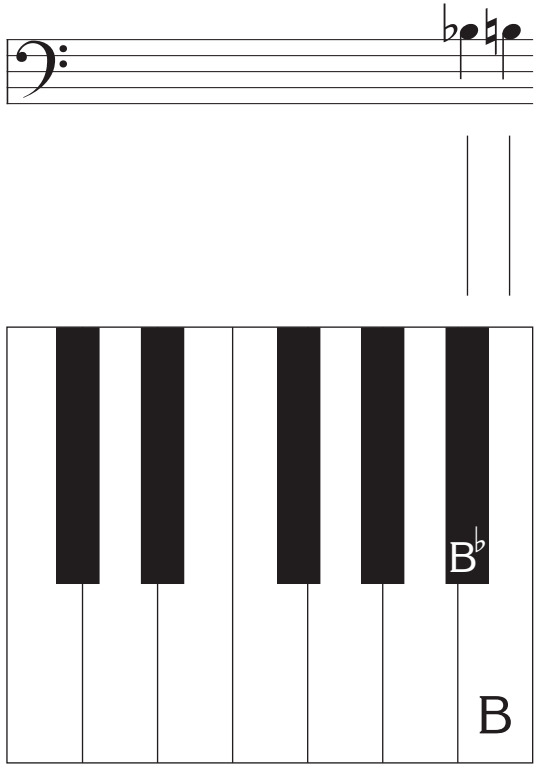
Can the same black key be both a sharp and a flat? Play A-sharp and B-flat to find out.



NATURALS

A natural sign (♮) means to play the note as written. Do not raise or lower it.

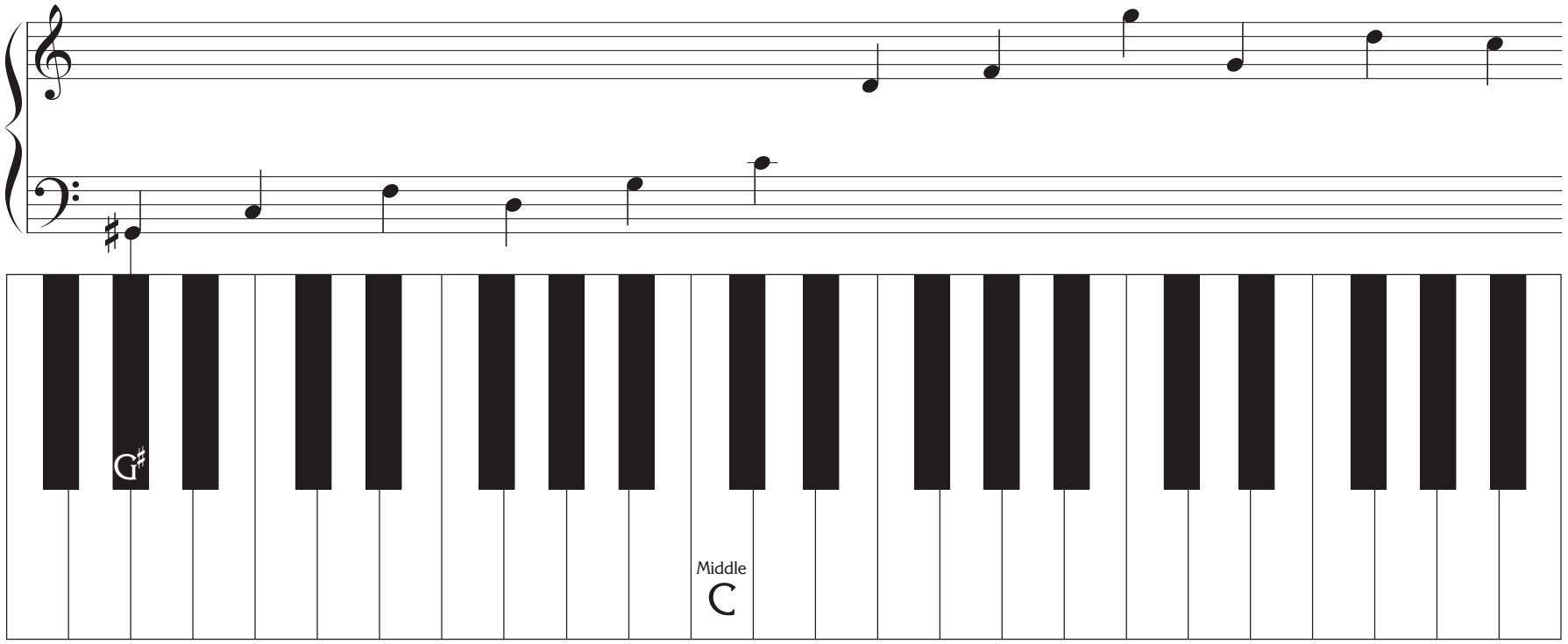
When an accidental makes a note sharp, flat, or natural, play the note that way throughout the measure. A barline cancels any accidentals.



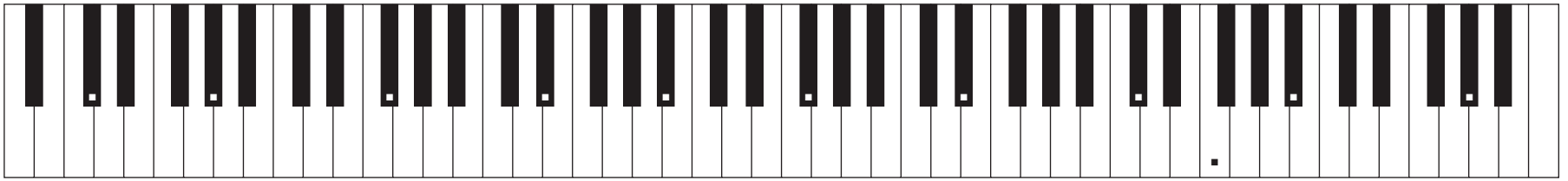
Learning about Sharps

Draw a sharp sign (♯) in front of each of the following notes. Then draw a line from each note to its corresponding key.

After drawing lines to the keys, find each of the notes on your keyboard instrument. Say the name of each key as you play it.

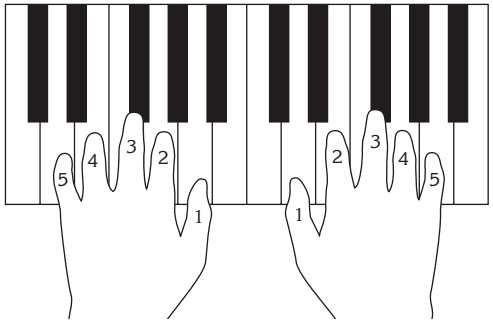


On the lines below, write the names of the sharps marked with □.

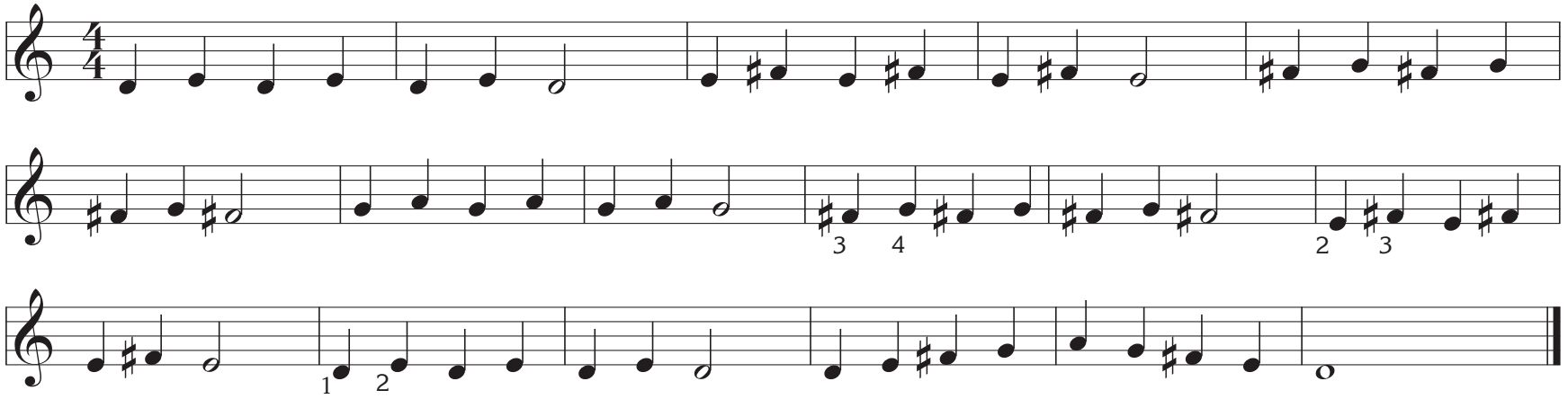


DAILY EXERCISES WITH A SHARP

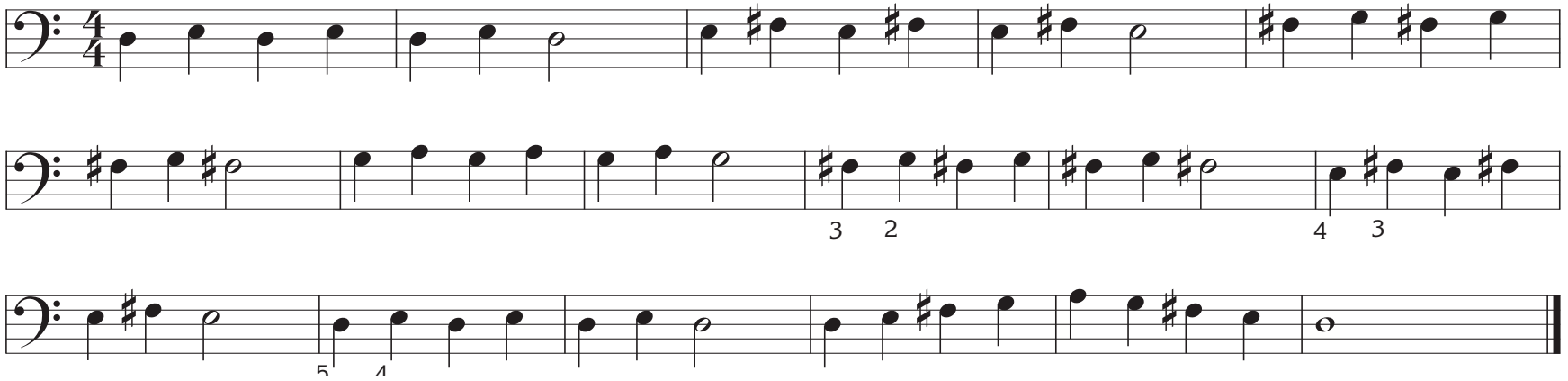
Play the following exercises evenly, smoothly, and firmly. Remember to raise each finger high to strike the key. You should hold your wrists high, away from the keys but level with your forearm. Increase the tempo a little each day.



Right hand



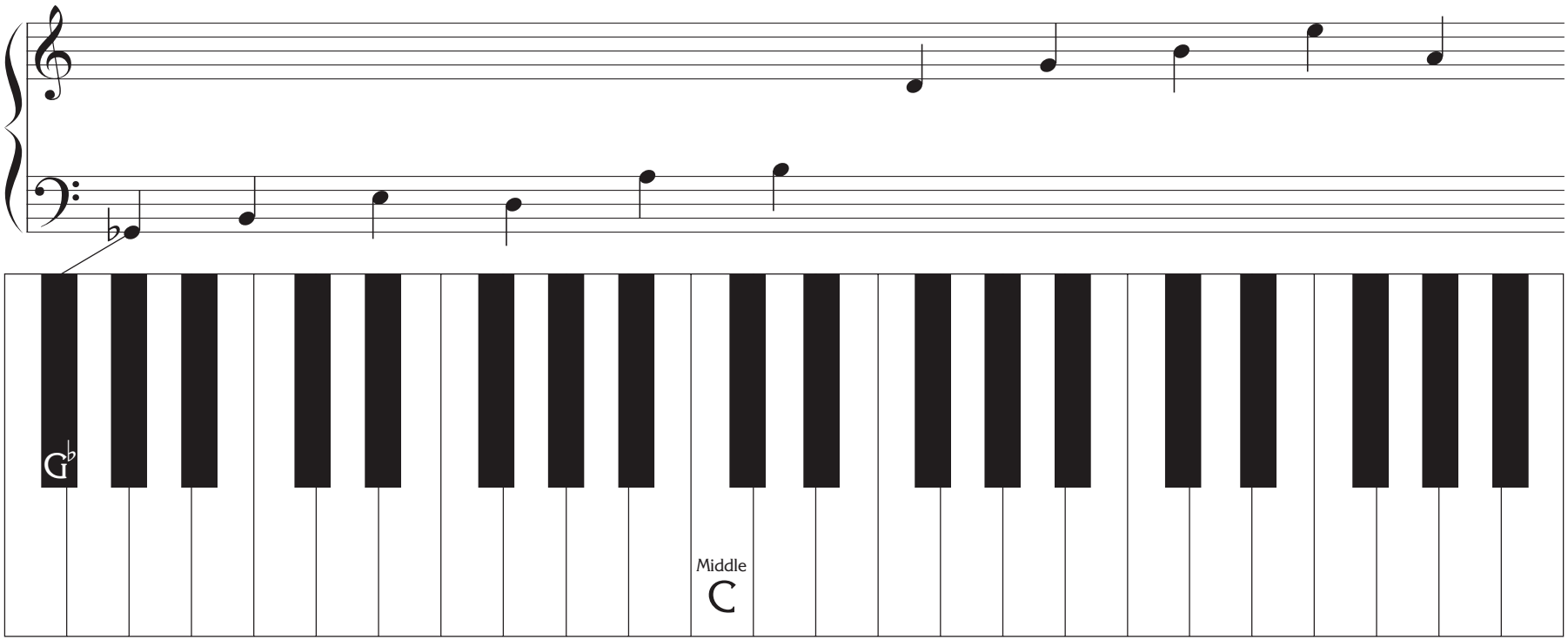
Left hand



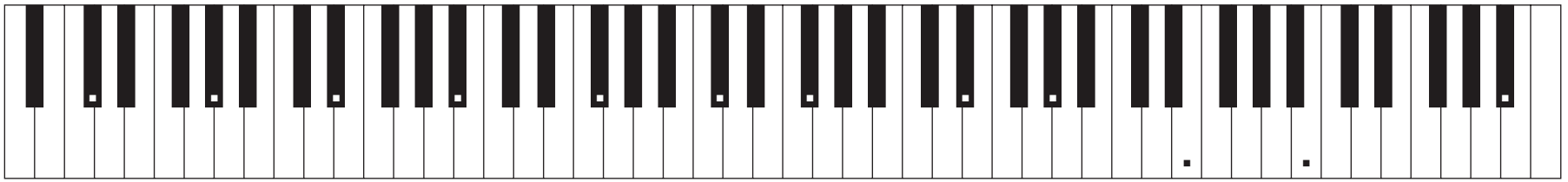
Learning about Flats

Draw a flat sign (♭) in front of each of the following notes. Then draw a line from each note to its corresponding key.

After drawing lines to the keys, find each of the notes on your keyboard instrument. Say the name of each key as you play it.

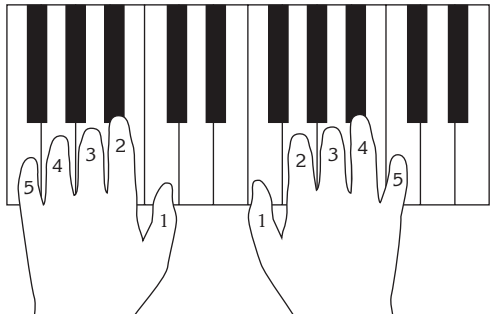


On the lines below, write the names of the flats marked with □.

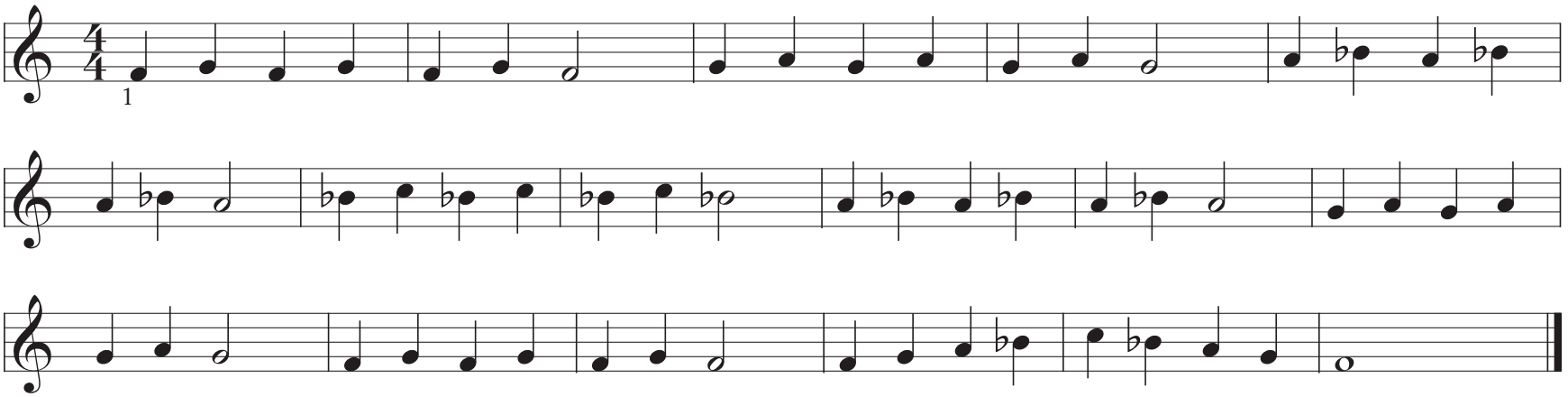


DAILY EXERCISES WITH A FLAT

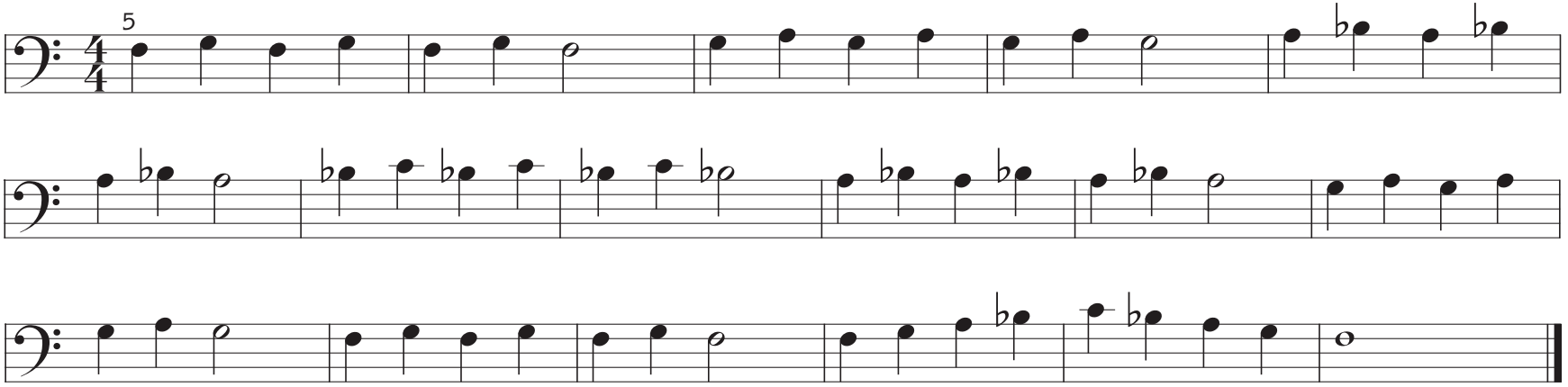
Play the following exercises until you have mastered them. Play evenly, smoothly, and firmly. Remember to raise each finger high to strike the key. Hold your wrists high, away from the keys but level with your forearm. Increase the tempo a little each day.



Right hand



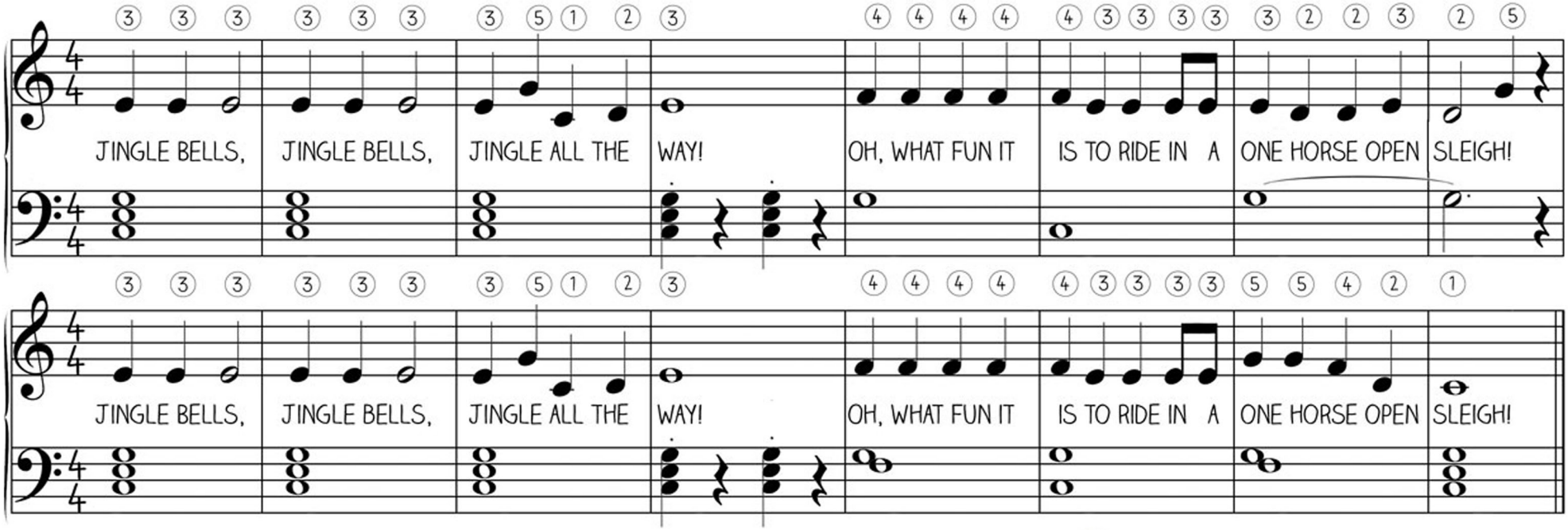
Left hand



LET'S PLAY MUSIC

Jingle Bells

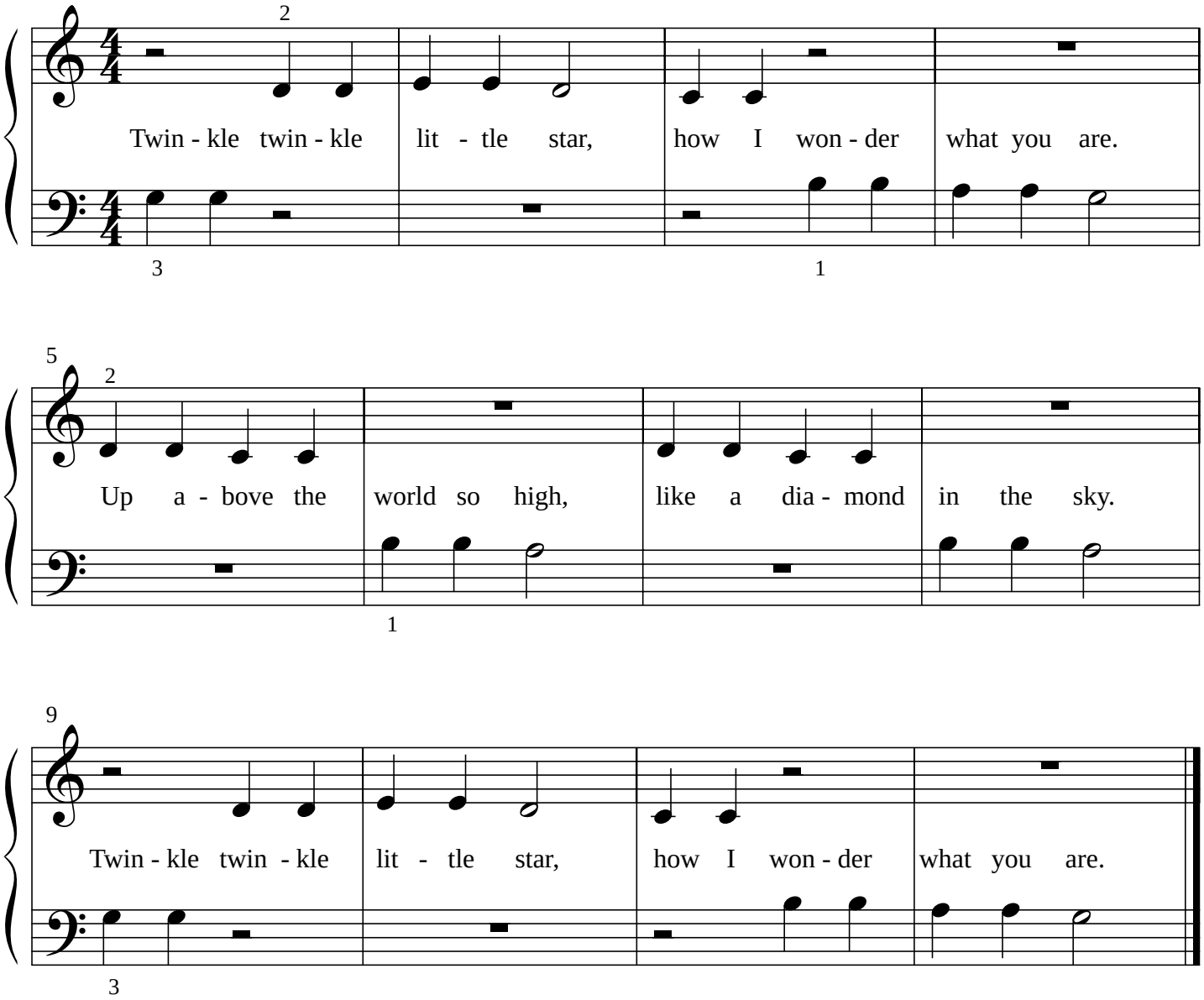
TRAD.



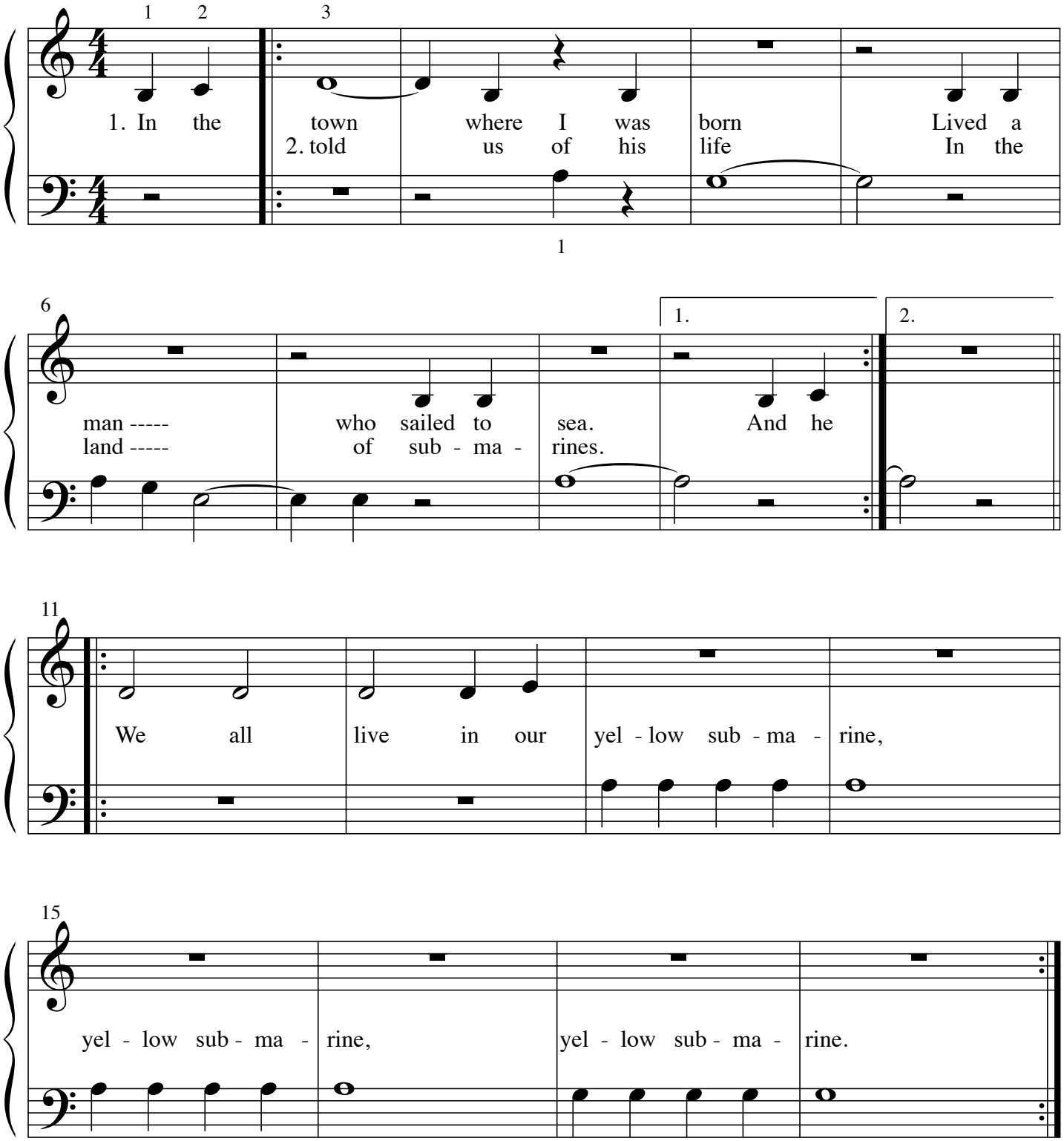
Twinkle Twinkle

by Wolfgang A. Mozart

Arranged by Dave Ratcliffe
DavesPianoLessons.com



Yellow Submarine

by John Lennon & Paul McCartney

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