

SOLFA NOTATION - Grade 1

(Unisa learners only.)

Music written on a staff is called **staff notation**. There is another way of writing music. It is called **solfa notation**.

Solfa notation was developed by Curwen in England in 1841. The aim was to make sight reading easier for beginners. Prior to that, other similar systems were used.

1. PITCH.

Seven solfa syllables are used to indicate pitch:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
doh	ray	mi	fah	soh	lah	ti

In staff notation we name the tone degrees: tonic, supertonic, mediant, ens. In solfa notation we name them doh, ray, mi, etc.

These solfa syllables are **abbreviated**, and **small letters** are used to indicate them. The letters are written on one level:

Abbreviated: d r m f s l t


In solfa notation the key (key note / tonic) is indicated at the beginning of a piece:

EXAMPLE:	Doh is C	=	C major (tonic is C)
	Doh is G	=	G major (tonic is G)
	Doh is F	=	F major (tonic is F)

In grade 1 you are only going to work with these three keys.

In the following example you can see the scale of C major with the solfa notation at the bottom.

Doh is C

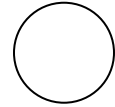
Staff notation 

Solfa notation
 d r m f s l t d¹

In grade 1 you are only working with the first 5 degrees from doh – soh.
 (The top C is indicated with a ¹ in superscript.)

Ex. 2/1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:



- 1 **How many** solfa syllables are used to indicate pitch? _ _ _
- 2 How would you indicate the **key** of a solfa notation in C major?
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 3 Complete the following solfa notation of the first 5 degrees in C major:

Doh is _ _ _ _
 d _ _ m _ _ s

2. TIME SIGNATURES AND NOTE VALUES.

- In solfa notation there are **bar lines**, but no staff:

Solfa notation:

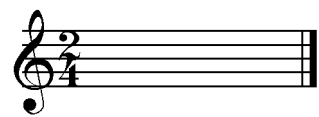
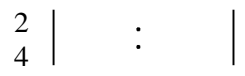
Staff notation:




- **Beats** are divided by colons (:).

Solfa notation:

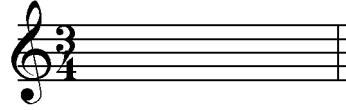
Staff notation:




 beat beat
 (Two crotchets in a bar)

3
4 | : : |

beat beat beat
(Three crotchets in a bar)



Note: We indicate beats with a bracket [] only to explain the work. It is not part of solfa notation.

Crotchets get **one beat** (one count). Crotchets on *doh* will be written as follows:

Solfa notation:

Doh is C

Staff notation:

2
4 | d : d |



3
4 | d : d : d |



- A **minim** is equal to two crotchets and gets **two beats** (two counts). Minims are indicated by a dash (-). Minims on *doh* will be written as follows:

Solfa notation:

Doh is C

Staff notation:

2
4 | d : — |



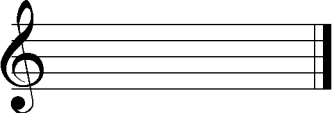
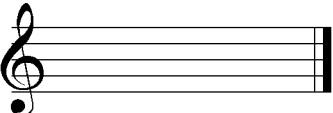


When we **rewrite** music from solfa notation to staff notation, it is called **transcription**. Transcription means to *rewrite*.

Ex. 4/1

TRANSCRIBE THE FOLLOWING PHRASES, WHICH ARE IN SOLFA NOTATION, TO STAFF NOTATION:

Hint: First write the time signature (and bar lines if necessary).

Doh is C	○
1	
$\frac{3}{4} \mid d : d : d \mid d : d : d \mid$	
2	
$\frac{2}{4} \mid d : d \mid d : d \mid$	
3	
$\frac{3}{4} \mid d : - : d \mid$	
4	
$\frac{3}{4} \mid d : d : - \mid$	

Ex. 4/2

WRITE THE FOLLOWING TWO-BAR PHRASES FROM SOLFA NOTATION TO STAFF NOTATION:

Doh is C	○
1	
$\frac{2}{4} \mid d : d \mid d : - \mid$	
2	
$\frac{3}{4} \mid d : - : d \mid d : - : d \mid$	
3	
$\frac{2}{4} \mid d : - \mid d : d \mid$	


4
 $\frac{3}{4} \mid d : - : d \mid d : d : - \mid$ 

5
 $\frac{3}{4} \mid d : d : - \mid d : d : d \mid$ 

Two tied crotchets across a bar line are also equal to a minim and indicated by a dash (-).

EXAMPLES:

Doh is C

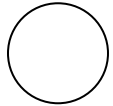
$\frac{2}{4} \mid d : d \mid - : d \mid$ 

$\frac{3}{4} \mid d : - : d \mid - : d : d \mid$ 

Ex. 5/1

WRITE THE FOLLOWING TWO-BAR PHRASES FROM SOLFA NOTATION TO STAFF NOTATION:

Doh is C



1
 $\frac{2}{4} \mid d : d \mid - : d \mid$ 

2
 $\frac{3}{4} \mid d : - : d \mid - : d : - \mid$ 

3
 $\frac{3}{4} \mid d : - : d \mid - : d : d \mid$ 

You already know that you have to write the pitches doh to soh for grade 1. They are of course the first 5 degrees of the scale.

EXAMPLE:

Doh is C

Solfa notation:

Staff notation:

$\frac{3}{4}$ | d : r : m | f : s : — |

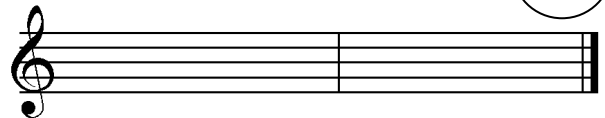


Ex. 6/1

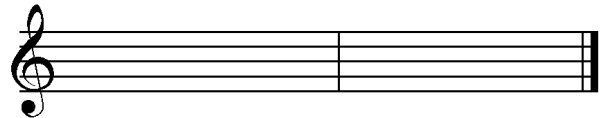
NOTATE THE FOLLOWING TWO-BAR PHRASES FROM SOLFA NOTATION TO STAFF NOTATION:

Doh is C

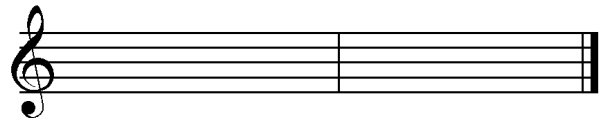
1
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | s : s : s | m : r : d |



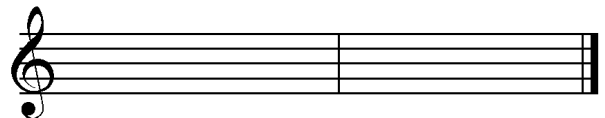
2
 $\frac{2}{4}$ | s : f | m : d |



3
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | s : f : s | d : r : d |



4
 $\frac{2}{4}$ | s : — | m : d |



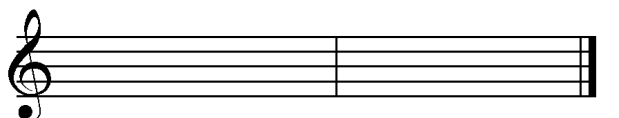
5
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | d : r : m | f : — : s |



6
 $\frac{2}{4}$ | d : m | s : — |



7
 $\frac{2}{4}$ | d : r | d : — |



8
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | d : m : f | s : — : d | 

9
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | d : m : s | — : f : m | 

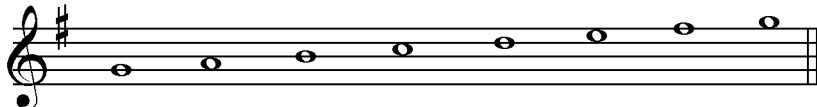
10
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | d : — : m | — : r : d | 

11
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | s : — : f | — : m : — | 


12
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | d : m : s | — : d : — | 

3 OTHER KEYS.

EXAMPLE:

Doh is G 
 d r m f s l t d¹

An example in G major:

Doh is G
 $\frac{3}{4}$ | d : m : f | s : — : d | 

Repeat Ex. 6/1 with

Doh is G and Doh is F

Work on your own music paper.

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