

## Music notation

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### 1. Common music notation

Have you ever wondered what the highest, lowest, shortest, or longest note ever written is? Or what the densest chord, or the shortest or longest piece is? I've been working off and on for years on a document entitled [Extremes of Conventional Music Notation](#) Comments, criticisms, and contributions are very welcome. -- Don Byrd

[dolmetsch online](#) : [music theory & history online](#) by Dr. Brian Blood.

Test your music notation knowledge with [Music Flashcards](#) .

The Major Orchestra Librarians' Association [Guidelines for Music Preparation](#)

Haddonfield Symphony and Theodore Presser Company: [SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING ORCHESTRAL SCORES AND PARTS](#)

[Express Music Publishing](#) has a website with many usefull information. Especially take the time to read their [Staff Notes Articles](#) . (Thanks to Harald Schollmeyer for this link)

The complete article [The Notation of Time](#) by James Ingram.

[Peer Smola](#) s [Infothek](#) about music notation and physics of music.

Treblis Software's [Music Notation Reference Guide](#)

Gary Ewer's [Easy Music Theory](#) .

[Notationstation](#) is intended to teach/learch music notation. The sheet music can be written interactively.

Music Notation - [www.music-notation.info](http://www.music-notation.info) - Copyright 1997-2008, Gerd Castan

The used technology seems to be a web interface to Encore (see [GVOX](#)) that runs on the server.

[The Big Site of Music Notation and Engraving](#) contains a comprehensive and well structured overview of design elements of musical notation and a good bibliography.

Online lessons in [Music Theory](#) by Elizabeth Hinde.

moods provides a [brief overview of music notation](#).

[Jazclass](#) with Michael Furstner offers Music Education, including some free online lessons. This includes [lessons on Music Notation](#).

[Wilbur's Music Tutorial](#)

[Kitchieboy's Music Tutor](#)

Music notation: [interactive tutorial](#) (needs [Java](#) and JavaScript)

[Songwriting and the Creative Process - An Internet Tutorial](#) by Steve Gillette.

For me, the most valuable part of [Computing in Musicology](#) are the music notation examples sent out to the notation software developers. You can find some of the older examples (vol 1-9 or so) on [CCARH ieee](#).

[The seven parameters of musical notation](#) by Gary Daum

[MS Encarta](#) tries to explain [Musical Notation](#) and [Scores](#) without using a single example.

## 2. Shape notes

A special form of noteheads are [shape notes](#). Find their users are at [fasola.org](#).

Several [examples](#) of Sacred Harp music notation.

## 3. Sagittal notation

The word "sagittal" (pronounced "SAJ-i-tl") means "arrow-like". Think of Sagittarius the archer; the centaur with bow and arrow that the ancients saw in the night sky.

The [Sagittal notation system](#) is a comprehensive system for notating musical pitch in all possible scales

and tunings - a universal set of microtonal accidentals, equally suited to extended just intonation, equal divisions of the octave (or of any other interval), or any of the non-just non-equal "middle path" tunings or temperaments. It is called Sagittal because, you guessed it, it uses various arrow-like symbols, pointing up or down to indicate raising or lowering of pitch.

*Sagittal* was developed by George Secor and Dave Keenan, with a major early contribution from Gene Ward Smith.

## 4. About limitations and extensions of common music notation

*The Music Notation Project* . Formerly known as the Music Notation Modernization Association (MNMA).

"The Music Notation Project seeks to raise awareness of the disadvantages of traditional music notation, to explore alternative music notation systems, and to provide resources for the wider consideration and use of these alternatives. We hope our efforts will help make reading, writing, and playing music more enjoyable and easier to learn."

*Symbolic Extensions and its corruption of Music* by Barton McLean (1981).

Dan Lindgren developed a new musical notation system called *Nydana Notation* . It simplifies reading of musical notation for keyboard instruments.

## 5. Accordions

Accordion music is notated as common music notation. Note that there are big differences in the notation of the left hand between american and european sheets.

## 6. Tablatures

### 6.1. Diatonic accordions

There are many different regional tablatures for diatonic accordions. I've never seen the next three in printed form:

Proposition d'une *notation standard pour l'accordéon diatonique* .

Bernard Loffet provides an [explanation](#) of the CADB system that is used in Britany (Bretagne). CADB is the [Collectif Accordéon Diatonique de Bretagne](#) which has some example sheets in this system.

Examples for the most common way of tablatures for diatonic accordion can be found on [www.stammtischmusik.at/noten/griffschrift.shtml](http://www.stammtischmusik.at/noten/griffschrift.shtml) and [www.harmonika-noten.de/](http://www.harmonika-noten.de/) . Both examples have been set with Capella 2000, that is not designed to do it: The clef for diatonic accordions is missing and the 'sharp' has a wrong shape. Unlike common music notation, the direction of the noteheads is a hint how to play the notes. Capella (like almost all music notation programs) sets many noteheads in the wrong (common music notation) direction. Musicians have severe problems playing from such sheet music.

A comprehensive site about the [Irish button accordion](#)

On [Trekharmonica muziek](#) there are examples of one more type of diatonic tablatures.

You won't believe me, but automatic music notation has much to do with pattern matching (although nobody has implemented it). We also need [exact string matching algorithms](#) .

## 6.2. Konzertina notation

Examples of [Konzertina notation](#) .

Ken (The Polish Fireball) Yagelskis [Chemnitzer Concertina Music Site](#) contains many music sheets for the Chemnitzer Concertina. There is also an extensive [link list](#) .

## 6.3. Guitar Tablatures

[Guitar music theory including music notation](#)

[Guitar tablature proposal](#)

## 7. Early western music notation

[NEumed Unicode Manuscript Encoding Standard](#)

[The Neume Notation Project](#) by Louis W. G. Barton

An [Early Music Glossary](#) .

[Die Intervall-Chiffren-Schrift des Hermann von Altshausen](#) by Wolfram Benz.

## 8. small letteral notation

Sister Betsy recorded [Music of Angels](#) in a Shaker system of notation known as "small letteral notation." Developed by Shaker leaders in the first half of the nineteenth century, this system replaced traditional note values with letters.

## 9. Non-western music notation

[Music in our world](#) describes music in different cultures of our world.

[Asian Music](#) is a Journal that appears twice a year. Their [table of contents](#) is available on the internet.

[Ethnomusicology Research Digest](#)

### 9.1. Indian music notation

[Books on Indian Classical Music & Dance](#)

[Musical notation in north india](#)

M. Subramanian describes [Carnatic music notation](#) , the South Indian classical music notation.

[Swar Systems](#) sell indian instrument samples for music programs along with a beautiful multimedia tutorial on Carnatic music.

August Schmidhofer about [Indian music](#) (in German).

### 9.2. African music

African music bases on equidistant scales with 5 or 7 steps for example. The rhythm can be described with polymeric and heterometric that bases on elementary pulsation. More is described by August Schmidhofer in his script [African Music](#) . There is no description of a native african music notation. But the description shows what music can't be developed, if one sticks to common music notation.

### 9.3. Arabian music notation

Arabian music bases on scales beyond the western halftones. Therefore it isn't possible to notate it in common music notation. Even the representation in quarter tones is a bad approximation. August Schmidhofer presents the scales and the quarter tone approximation in his script *Arabische Musik (maqam, wazn, taqsim, ud, tar, nuba, dhikr)* . Does anybody know if there is a notation for arabian scales?

[Maqam books](#)

### 9.4. Turkish music notation

In Traditional Art Music, every note is called a "koma", means "minik". These "komas" were used alone, or in combination that is two, four, five, eight or nine together. However, there may be some differences during the performance. With this rich sound, hundreds of makams have been created (see examples 1, 2, 3,4) Every "makam" has its own characteristics and every "koma" its own sign. Another characteristic of Traditional Art Music is the use of the "usul" or rhythmic pattern which regulates the structure of a composition. Each "usul" has a different name.

"Usuls" are divided into two types: "kucuk" (small) and "buyuk" (large). Today "kucuk usul" (small) is widely used:

- \* 2 time "usul": "Nim Sofyan"
- \* 3 time "usul": "Semai"
- \* 4 time "usul": "Sofyan"
- \* 5 time "usul": "Turk Aksagi"
- \* 6 time "usul": "Yoruk Semai"
- \* 7 time "usul": "Devr-i Turan" and "Devr-i Hindi"
- \* 8 time "usul": "Duyek" and "Museummen"
- \* 9 time "usul": "Aksak", "Evfer" and "Raks Aksagi"
- \* 10 time "usul": "Aksak Semai" and "Oynak"

The [Oud Home Page](#) has a [definition of makam and turkish koma accidentals](#) .

### 9.5. Chinese music notation

According to [www.cultureofchina.com](http://www.cultureofchina.com) , there is no standard notation for Chinese music. The various methods may be grouped under: pitch system, descriptive system, hand-and-finger system, Kung Ch'e system, rhythmic recitation and numerical system.

August Schmidhofer: [Chinese music \(music theory, erhu, pipa, yangqin, guzheng, dizi, sheng, Peking-Opera\)](#) : about chinese scales and instruments but without notation.

## 9.6. Byzantine Music Notation

St. Gregory Palamas Monastery eMatins has an extensive [collection of chants](#) , each in byzantine and western notation for download in psf format.

[BYZWRITER](#) is a system for writing Byzantine Music Notation.

[Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae](#)

## 9.7. Ancient Egyptian music notation

Coptic Music

## 9.8. Indonesian Music Notation

A Gamelan orchestra can be tuned in two scales: pelog: 5 pitches with a halftone step slendro: 5 about equal intervals

August Schmidhofer: [Indonesian Music \(Gamelan, pelog and slendro, angklung, krontjong\)](#) is about indonesian scales, instruments but without notation.

## 9.9. Kinko Ryu shakuhachi notation

For examples as images click on the sample notation symbols of [this page](#) .

[Music notation symbols](#) for Macintosh and Windows from the comprehensive [www.shakuhachi.com](http://www.shakuhachi.com) site.

John Singer also provides a [comprehensive shakuhachi site](#) .

## 9.10. Doumbek Notation

Learn doumbek notation and rhythm at [Kamuran's Doumbek Rhythm Guide](#) . The notation is for doumbek (dumbec, dumbek, dumbeq...) and related instruments such as tabla, djembe and ashiko.

## 9.11. Okinawan Notation

Nutation is a music notation system for the NeXT machine that can handle Okinawan Notation. Download from <ftp://ccrma-ftp.stanford.edu/pub/NeXT/Nu/Nu.pkg.tar>

## 9.12. shamisen notation

When the shamisen is played as an accompaniment to a singer, which is often the case, the fundamental pitch is set by the singer. Consequently, shamisen notation indicates interval, or ma, rather than pitch.

## 10. Extra-terrestrial music notation

The article "Music Notation and the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence" by [David Rosenboom](#) isn't available online at the moment. The article is printed in (1992) [Scholz, C. \(ed.\)](#) . Frog Peak Anthology. (Hanover, NH: Frog Peak Music). Also in (1993) [Leonardo](#) , 6(4), 273-274.

## 11. More resources

[Shamanism](#) by August Schmidhofer.

[The Odradek Institute](#) by Musical Culture-Area:

[African \(sub-Saharan\)](#) [Amerindian](#) [Australasian](#) [Central Asian/Siberian](#) [East Asian](#) [China](#) [Japan](#) [Korea](#)  
[The Persian/Arabic/Turkish World](#) [Prehistoric](#) [Oceanic](#) [South Asian/Indian](#) [Southeast Asian](#) [Western](#)