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## BEGINNER'S GURU ELLEN ADVISES ON STRESS-FREE READING

Hello again bass friends! Last month we had a look at tempo and time signatures, and this time it's the entire staff. As regular readers will know, I'm slowly but surely exposing you to the world of written music. Reading music is often the Achilles' heel of a lot of musicians and is often perceived as scary and complicated, but it needn't be this way. Just take it one step at a time and it will soon make sense.

Bass Clef	Treble Clef
A	F
g	e
F	D
e	c
D	B
c	a
B	G
a	f
G	E

Why learn to sight-read, I hear you say? For starters, it will open up more avenues of work for you as a bassist. I'm sure you've seen jobs advertised for sight-reading bassists for cruise jobs and musical theatre work. Not only that, it will help you understand harmony and theory better, helping you express ideas in a more controlled manner. When we're learning a language, it's not enough just to speak it – we should be able to read and write it too.

Now, written music is placed on a framework known as a staff (or staff). This is not to be confused with TAB, as the lines in tablature represent bass strings. On a staff, the lines represent notes and pitches. The numbers on TAB tell you where to play the notes on the fretboard, while the staff gives you the freedom to choose where to play the notes.

There are five lines on a staff, each line and space indicating a different note. There are different kinds of staves from which musicians read, but the most commonly used are the Treble and Bass clef. Piano players tend to read from both staves at the same time, as shown in **Example 1**: the notes are spread out over both clefs to create a kind of master clef. Right in the middle you have the aptly-titled Middle C: this is the very centre of both clefs.

**Example 2** shows on both the treble and bass clef all the natural notes (in other words, excluding accidentals, also known as sharps and flats) that can be played on a five-string bass. The TAB is a

### EXAMPLE 1



### EXAMPLE 2

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

T  
A  
B

0 1 3 0 1 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 4 5 7 9 10 12 14 16 17 19 21

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guideline to show what each of these notes are on the fretboard. The notes, duplicated on the treble and bass clefs, are the same note, but in a different order depending what clef you're on.

On **Example 2**, I started the notes on the treble clef only from Middle C to illustrate where the notes on the bass clef continue. Notes that continue above or below a staff are placed on ledger lines. The notes above the bass clef that are on ledger lines are doubled up on the treble clef, and are the same notes. The bass clef becomes the treble clef as you go up in pitch. Next time you see some written music, see if you can identify the notes on both staves. Keep it low!

The lines and spaces are as follows. The capital letters are the lines from bottom of the staff to the top, the lower case letters are the spaces!

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