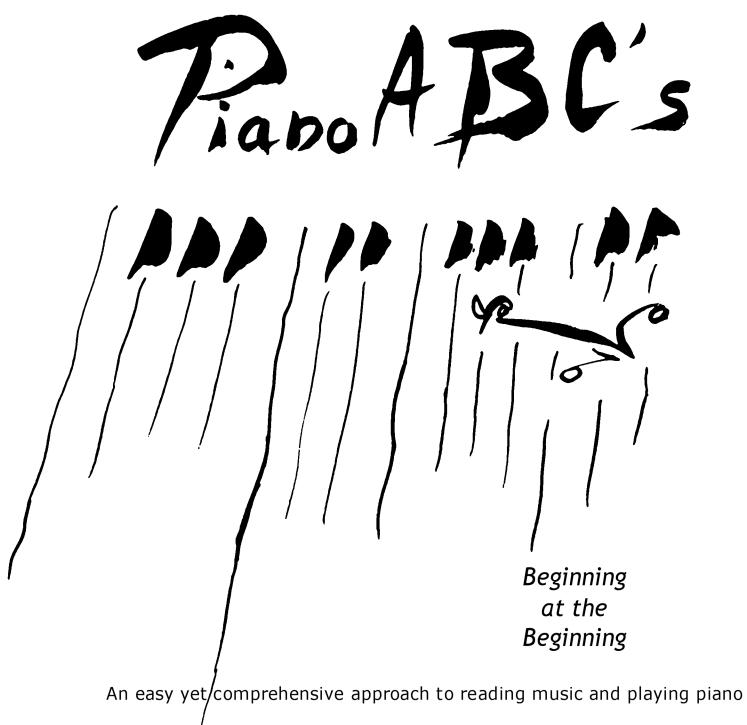
A Unique, Student-Friendly Piano Method for the 21st Century



Level One

Illustrator, François Arnaud

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Joy of Piano – PIANO ABC's

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A Note to Students

Welcome to the wonderful world of piano! Learning to make music by becoming a pianist is interesting and fun. Most people like music, many wish they could play an instrument, but you have taken a big step by signing up to actually take piano lessons which will bring enjoyment to you and to all those who listen to you play.

Now, your part is to <u>smile</u>, <u>practice diligently</u>, and <u>make piano time an important</u> <u>part of each day</u>.

Congratulations! You are now a member of a new generation of Piano ABC's students who are learning to read notes and understand rhythm with the most upto-date 21^{st} -century piano method.

Beverly Grace Joy

A Note to Parents

It has been a pleasure to develop the Piano ABC's method with the student's interests in mind.

During decades of teaching piano students from beginners to those playing concert-level pieces, I have observed many diverse learning styles. As I have watched students develop, it has occurred to me that a different approach at the beginning might be appropriate to help them progress more smoothly and establish a stronger connection with much that they already know and understand.

Piano ABC's taps into this reservoir of information--for instance, the alphabet--and presents the notes on the staff and keys on the keyboard alphabetically. This has proven to be very accessible to students who quickly perceive the relationship between the notes on the staff with each other, the relationship of the keys on the keyboard with each other, and then how these notes and keys relate to each other in this well-understood alphabetical arrangement. As you give positive support, encouragement, and commendation to your child, you may also want to learn to read along with him/her. If you already read music, it is important to spend music-study time together letting your young person read notes to you and engaging in other pianistic activities as often as you both have time.

There are many other new ideas in this method which I hope you will appreciate as your youngster enters into this new adventure in music.

I am so delighted that you, your child, and your child's teacher will be sharing music with the Piano ABC's method. Enjoy!!

Beverly Grace Joy

A Note to Teachers

What would we like for our students? Certainly, we want them to become enthusiastic, independent learners.

Piano ABC's is a unique, student- and teacher-friendly method.

The following innovations make this method unique:

- 1. The alphabetical approach that characterizes this method links well with concepts already known by the student. By learning alphabetically sets of seven notes/keys, students often anticipate how to read notes and find keys not included in their present level of playing. Because students write each note in various note values before actually playing it in a piece, reading is further strengthened. This approach is logical and seamless as students simply add (in Levels Two and Three) the adjacent sets of seven notes/keys to those already learned. Thus, there is never an "uprooting" whereby students "leave" a set of familiar notes/keys and are introduced to a new unfamiliar set of notes/keys. Students of the Piano ABC's method usually become confident, independent readers.
- 2. Reverse alphabetical thinking (as in descending scale patterns) is emphasized throughout.
- 3. Note reading/note value check-ups are frequent and follow the presentation of notes and rhythm.
- 4. Associations between fingers and notes/keys are never facilitated.
- 5. Whole keyboard awareness is taught alphabetically from the beginning.
- 6. A mix of Medieval modes, minor keys, and the very familiar major keys provide the melodic ingredients for these novel pieces.
- 7. Instructive rhythmic chants recited at an even pulse, such as "Quar-ter note, tap each note one count" and "Half-note, two-counts" provide a "memorized internal tape recording." If the question of a note value arises, students easily recall the correct answer as the teacher begins the chant and allows the student to complete it. Since students tap rhythmically while learning the chants, they will also understand the durations of notes both mathematically and physically which will provide a profound grasp of this vital part of music.
- 8. Conducting. By learning to conduct the student acquires an understanding of meter and pulse both intellectually and physically. Not only does this activity provide a correct foundational understanding of the steadiness of counting, but students respond to learning this skill with enthusiasm--it's just fun to do. Whether or not a student uses a metronome at some future point, he/she has already established a strong sense of the inevitability of the "controlling" pace. Learning to play while the teacher conducts gives the student/pianist an experience that has in the past been reserved for ensemble players; whereas, conducting while the teacher plays enhances the student's independence in apprehending steady pulse.
- 9. **Graphic proportional illustrations** are used to teach rhythmic proportions.

(Since there is much early-level music that is oriented in the middle C position, it is highly recommended that if you should choose to introduce any supplementary materials, these choices be made carefully. Because C-position music often leads to associations between notes and finger numbers, its use would compromise the benefits enjoyed from the strengths of this present approach. Most likely, it will be unnecessary to include supplementary music in the beginning months; but each teacher must be free to meet the needs of individual students. There are publications which include several pieces that use all or most of the seven middle alphabetical notes; one must just survey the literature and choose wisely. It is sometimes possible to simply write in different fingerings. I have requested parents and grandparents to put away old music books from the past. While some types of learners "wean" themselves from these early note/key-finger associations, for other types of learners these associations become permanent and actually inhibit reading at more advanced levels.)

I am so honored that you have chosen to venture into fresh pedagogical territory by using the **Piano ABC's** method. I hope you and your students enjoy every minute as you share music in these original 21st -century studies for piano.

Beverly Grace Joy

Sitting at the Piano



Preparing to Play

(adapted from the Lister-Sink Method ©2005, 2007 – used by permission)

Breathe – freely, naturally

Balance torso on sitting bones

Allow **spine** to lengthen in its four natural curves

Let shoulders remain free

Free neck of unnecessary tension

Balance head lightly on the spine

Sense **pendulous arms** supported by the torso

Let hands and arms remain supple

Allow **legs** to be comfortable and at ease

Be aware of restful feet supported by floor or stepstool

Stay in tune with the state of the muscles and well-coordinated movements while playing

"Technique is not what we play, but how we play. It is the best coordination of the whole body, directed by the brain, with the piano. Its hallmarks are optimal skeletal alignment, efficient muscle use and non-accumulation of tension. The sensations and coordinations of a free, injury-preventive technique cannot be adequately conveyed by words alone; they must be taught in a hands-on manner. Most importantly, the student should be encouraged continually to move with ease and without stiffness, to maintain his or her natural suppleness and to sit in a balanced, upright alignment. The pieces in **Piano ABC's** are designed and carefully sequenced to help the student develop good coordination at the piano and mastery on each level." Barbara Lister-Sink, producer of the DVD Freeing the Caged Bird

Preparatory Activities

- > Take a deep breath. Sit tall and yet feel as if you just arose after a very restful night's sleep energized for the day's activities.
- > Study the sitting illustration. Learn to make this well-aligned, balanced sitting a habit at the keyboard and during your other sitting activities. If your feet don't yet reach the floor, use a box or step-stool to support your legs and feet. You will need to adjust the height of this foot support as your legs grow.
- > Practice conducting. Trace the pattern on page 11 several times with a baton.
- > Trace your hands and fingers onto page 10 and number each finger.
- > Observe the pattern of alternating sets of two and three black keys.
- > Say the musical alphabet: **A B C D E F G**. Say it two times forward and five times backward.
- > The easiest key to find is \boldsymbol{D} because it is between the two black keys which are between the sets of three black keys. Find all the \boldsymbol{D} 's on the keyboard (in any order)
- > Starting with the lowest key A, name all the white keys from left to right. Use any finger. Stop on "check point" D each time. Pause again on G and continue until you reach the very top which ends on C.

Sticker square

For playing and saying all the white keys from left to right (second week)

Sticker square

For playing and saying all the white keys from right to left (to be done after several weeks of saying the alphabet backwards)

Playing *

Play the following pieces with the right pedal depressed (If you can't reach the pedal, teach another family member or friend how to press the right pedal down as you play. It can be fun to have help.)

Beginning with the left hand 4th finger (play 4, then 3, then 2) and alternating your left hand with your right hand (play 2, then 3), play one key after another as nicely as you can – left to right across the keyboard and then continuing back right to left. Play as evenly and smoothly as your can. You may play back and forth as many times as you like.

Imagine the sound of a quiet breeze as you play. Listen to the lovely sounds you make.

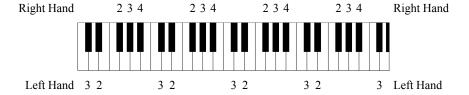
Gentle Breezes

Right Hand 2 3 2 3 2 3 Right Hand Second set of Second set of three black three black keys from left keys from right Left Hand 4 3 2 4 3 2 4 3 2 4 3 2 2 Left Hand

Think of gentle ocean waves as you try the next piece. Begin with your left hand 3rd finger and again alternate your left hand with your right hand, left to right and continuing back right to left:

Restful Waves

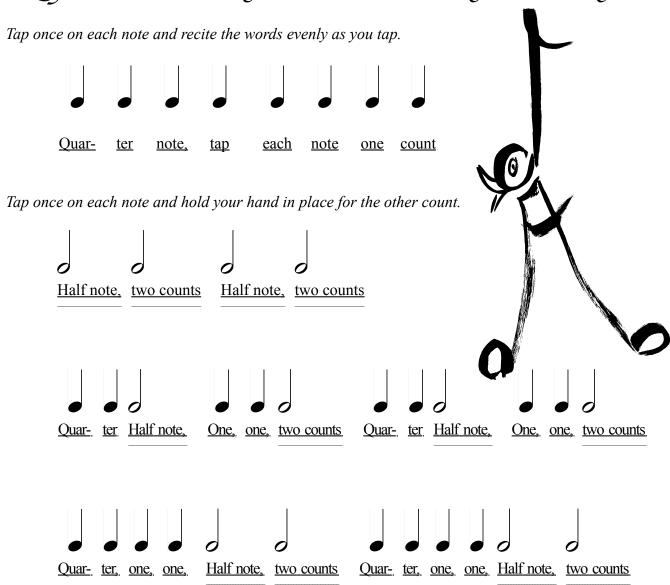
Second set of two black keys from left



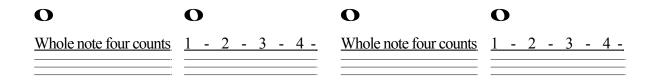
Second set of two black keys from right

^{*} To promote physical ease before playing Gentle Breezes and Restful Waves, have students leisurely "drag" their forearms, hands and fingers slowly back and forth across the keyboard. Have them feel the temperatures and textures of the black and white keys. Check for released shoulders, elbows and supple wrists. Encourage students to play with a free, warm, full tone, not forced nor harsh.

Rhythm - Learning about Short, Long, and Longer



Tap once on each note and hold your hand in place for the remaining counts

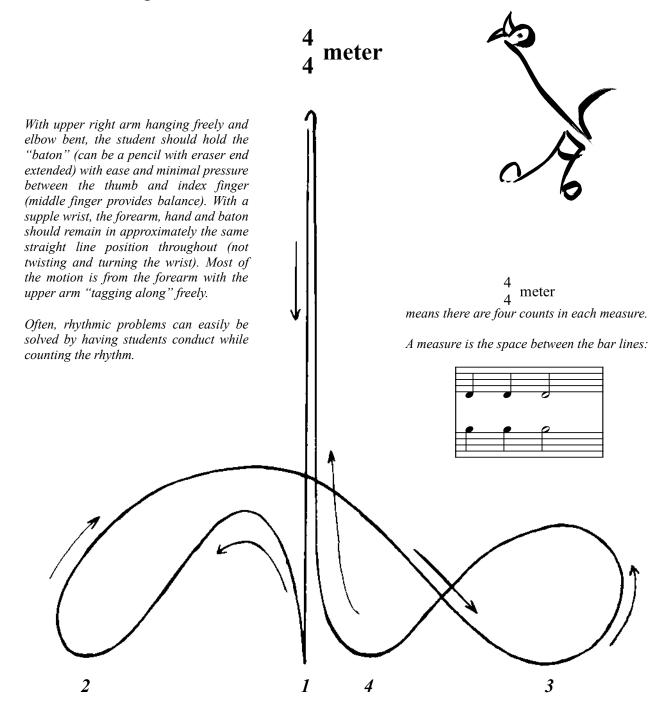


Tracing Hands

Trace your left hand and your right hand.

Then, number your fingers from 1 to 5 starting with your thumb (1) and ending with your "pinkie" (5).

Conducting in 4

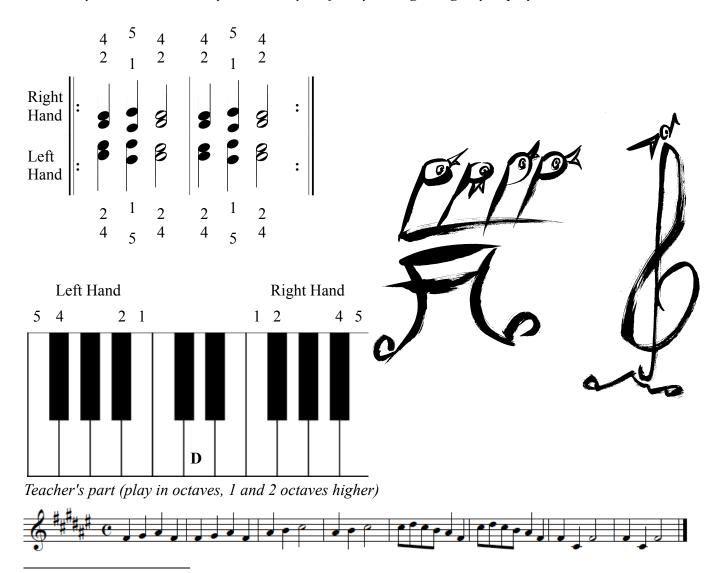


Practicing for a "sing-along" *

Here is a pattern that is fun to play. You will learn to play this pattern in two places on the keyboard.

Find the shape of your hands by shaping your hands over your knees. Bring this shape to the place your teacher shows you. Each set of keys should be played with a new lift of the forearms--keeping the wrists and the muscles of the forearms released as you lift and lower for each set, align straight wrists and "knee-shape" hands on each set of keys as you play.

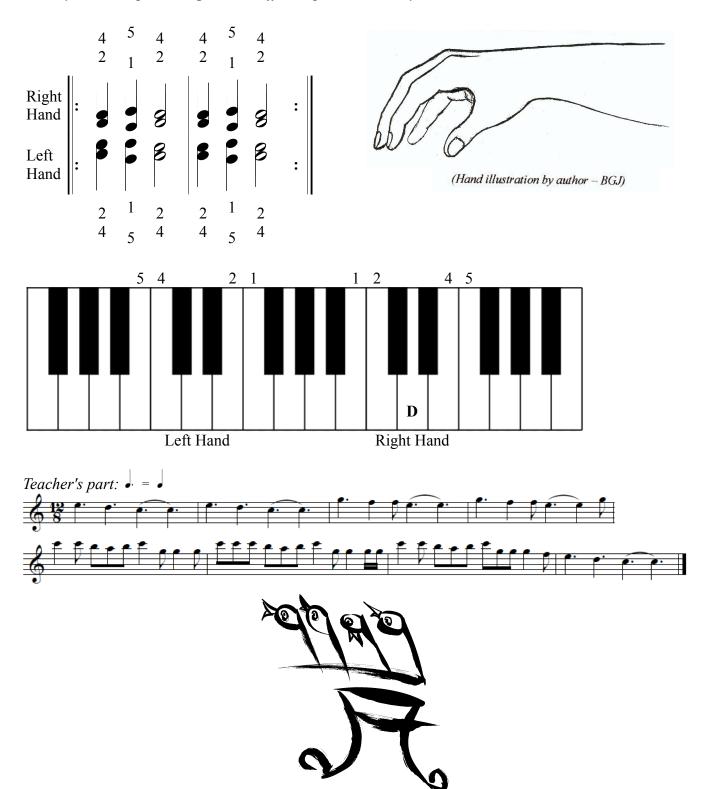
Do you see the repeat sign? A repeat sign is the two little dots and double bar lines at the beginning and end of the pattern. Once you can play this pattern smoothly with repeats, you are ready to play a duet with your teacher. Then, you can ask your family to sing along as you play.



^{*} Students with smaller hands may play on only one set of keys in one place on the keyboard using 4 (E#) and 3 (F#) on the left hand, and 3 (A#) and 4 (B) on the right hand. With suppleness, lift and lower the forearms for each set of notes played.

Practicing for a "sing-along" (continued)

Now try the same pattern again in a different place on the keyboard:



Let's see What We know

Write in each type of note

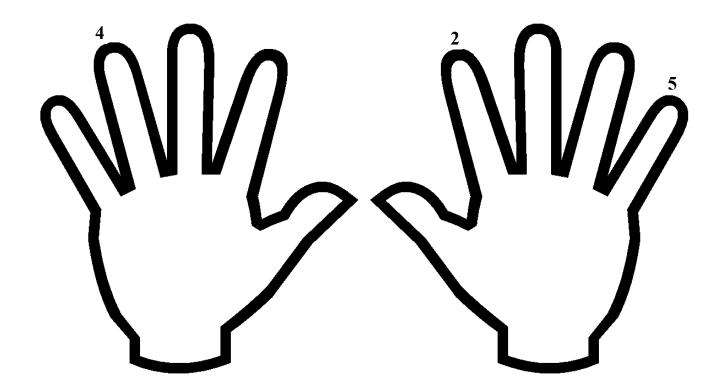
This note receives 1, 2, or 4 counts?

_____note _____count(s)

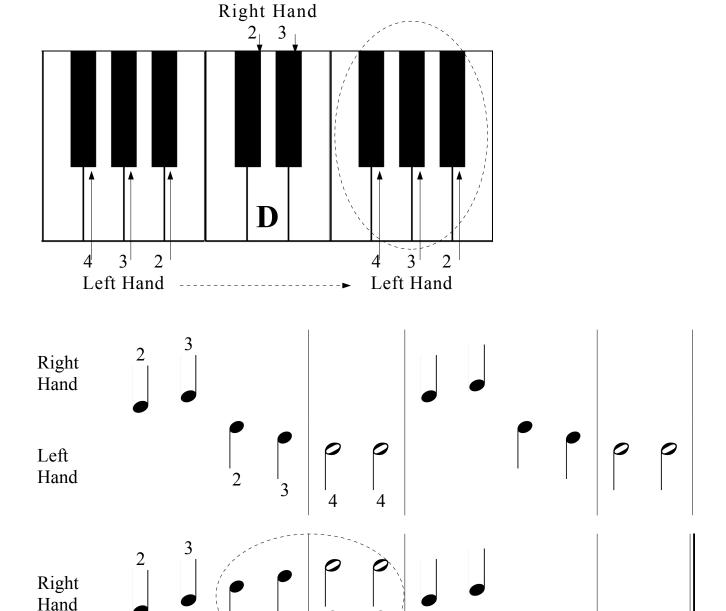
_____note _____count(s)

O ______ note _____ count(s)

Fill in the missing finger numbers:



A Happy Day **



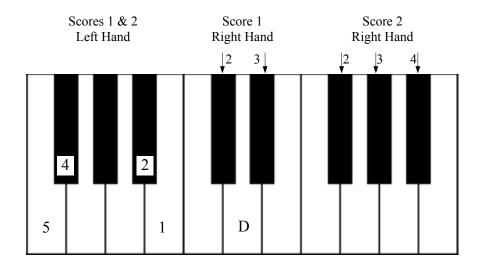
Left Hand

^{*} Note to teachers: With color markers, mark the right hand sections with orange. Mark the lower left hand part green and the crossover left hand part purple (or use any three distinct colors).

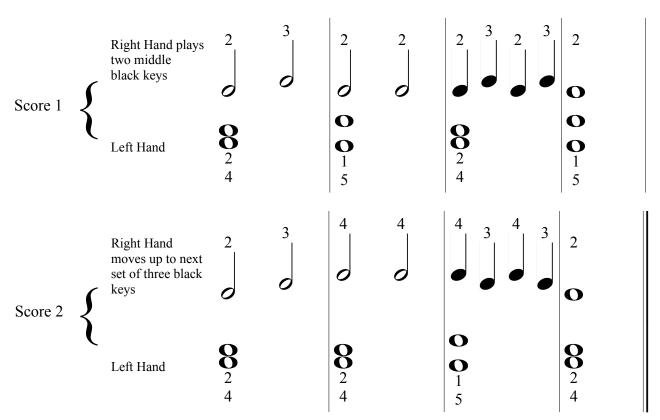
^{**} Note to teachers: Have students play the "Follow the Pencil Game" on the "Grand Staff" page, and have students study and do "My A Page" this week.



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A Sunday Afternoon Stroll* **



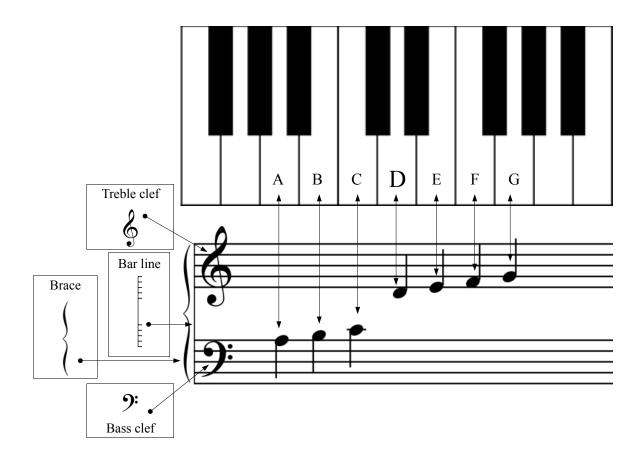
^{*} Note to teachers: For "A Sunday Afternoon Stroll" mark the first right hand section orange, mark the second right hand section blue. Mark the left hand black key notes brown, and the white key notes yellow (again, feel free to use your own appropriate color choices).

^{**} Note to teachers: Have students study and do "My B Page" and "My C Page" this week.

The Grand Staff*

FOLLOW-THE-PENCIL-GAME

Students: Look at the note "D" on the Grand Staff. Play the "D" key right in front of you. Then play the notes your teacher points to with any finger on either hand. If you start the game first with the left hand, be sure to play the game with the right hand also.

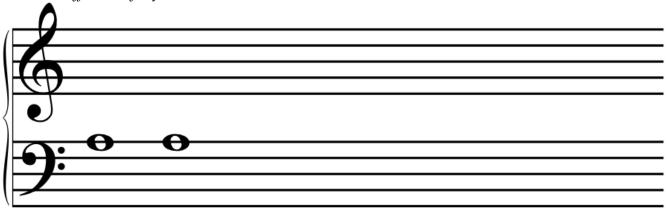


^{*} Note to teachers: It helps to move alphabetically to the left or to the right at first. Once the student "catches on" small jumps are fun. Younger students may need to see the pencil point from key to note and back to key on the illustration.

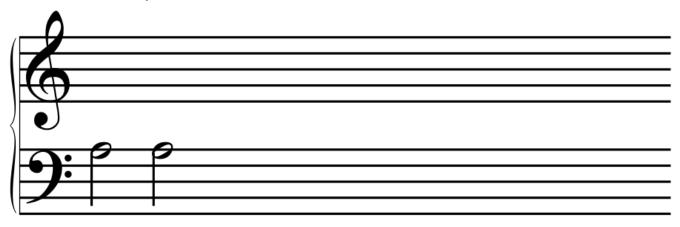
My A Page

A is the note on the top (fifth) line of the Bass Clef.

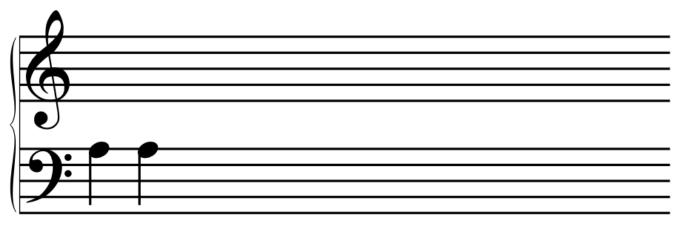
Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes:



Now draw several half notes:



And now draw several quarter notes:



My B Page

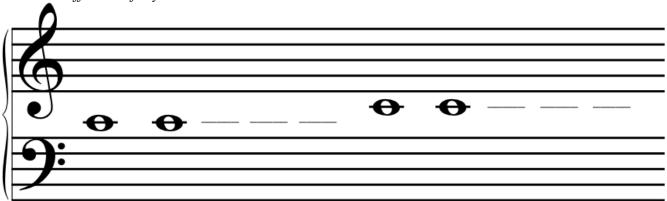
B is the note just above the Bass Clef. Its space touches the top line of the Bass Clef.

Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes: Now draw several half notes: And now draw several quarter notes:

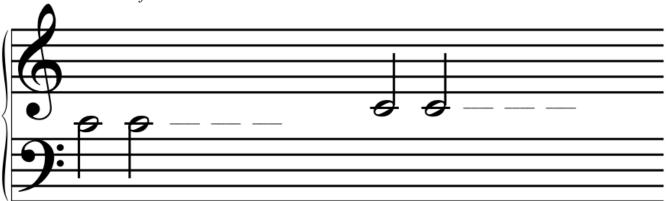
My C Page *

C is the note on its own ledger line between the Bass Clef and the Treble Clef. This C ledger line is, in fact, always the "same" line, but it is "pulled" down or up to be closer to the Bass Clef or the Treble Clef."

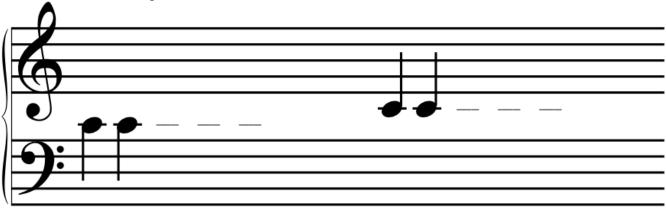
Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes:



Now draw several half notes:



And now draw several quarter notes:



Students: Continue to practice conducting in 4.

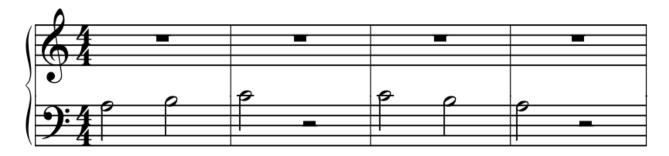


You may notice these signs: ______. These are rests which are signs of silence.

Warm-up 1 *

- Play Warm-up 1 with the left hand fingers 4, 3, and 2 on A, B, and C
- Play Warm-up 1 with the left hand fingers 3, 2, and 1 on A, B, and C
- Play Warm-up 1 with the right hand fingers 2, 3, and 4 on A, B, and C
- Play Warm-up 1 with the right hand fingers 1, 2, and 3 on A, B, and C

A special reminder for students: Always, on every piece, remember to say the letter names of the notes before you play, and say them rhythmically. Then, also say the notes as you play.





There is a rest for each type of note we have learned so far:

This is a half rest: It means to be silent for two counts.

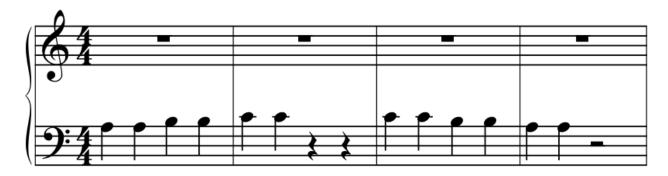
This is a whole rest:

Note to teachers: If you write in any fingering, please use a different color marker for each fingering set (perhaps yellow for 4, 3 and 2, or blue for 3, 2 and 1)

Warm-up 2

- Play Warm-up 2 with your left hand fingers 4, 3, and 2 on A, B, and C.
- Play Warm-up 2 with your left hand fingers 5, 4, and 3 on A, B, and C.
- Play Warm-up 2 with your left hand fingers 3, 2, and 1 on A, B, and C.
- Play Warm-up 2 with your right hand fingers 2, 3, and 4 on A, B, and C.
- Play Warm-up 2 with your right hand fingers 3, 4, and 5 on A, B, and C.
- Play Warm-up 2 with your right hand fingers 1, 2, and 3 on A, B, and C.

Students: Don't forget to say the letter names of the notes before you play and as you play.

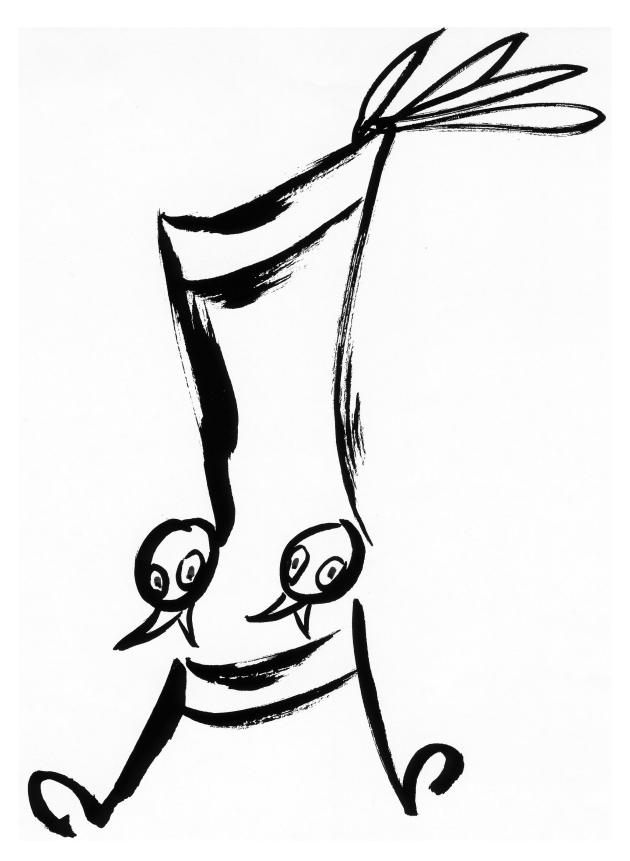




This is a quarter rest: ₹

It means to be silent for one count.

Each quarter rest receives one count, so two quarter rests equal two counts of silence, just as one half rest also equals two counts of silence: $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{2}$



Students – Can you still say the musical alphabet backwards? Be sure to continue practicing this.

A's On a March

Beverly Grace Joy

Play "A's On a March" with your left hand fingers 4, 3, and 2 on A, B, and C; then play with your left hand fingers 3, 2, and 1 on A, B, and C. Teachers: Please mark each number set with a different color.

Next, play with your right hand fingers 2, 3, and 4 on A, B, and C; then, play with your right hand fingers 1, 2, and 3 on A, B, and C. Teachers: Again, please mark each number set with a different color.



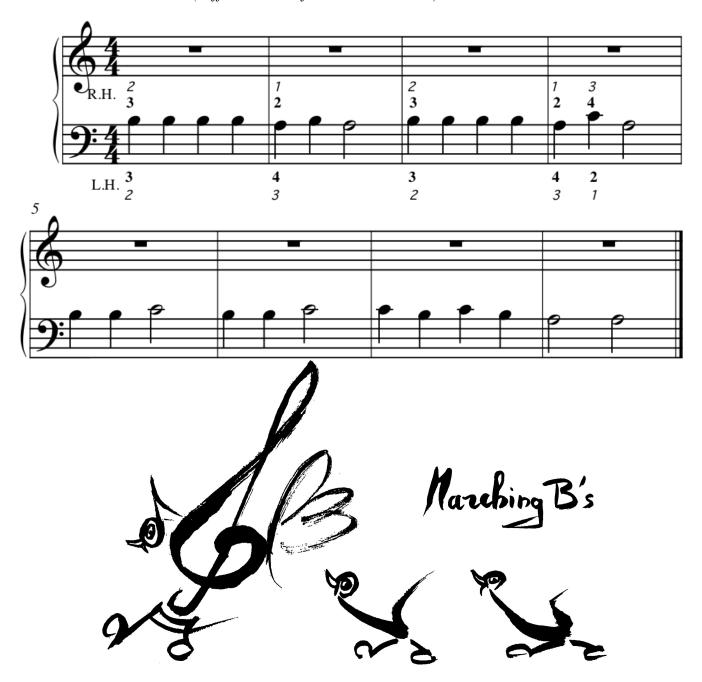
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Marching B's

Beverly Grace Joy

Play "Marching B's" with the left hand fingers 4, 3, and 2 on A, B, and C; then play with the left hand fingers 3, 2, and 1 on A, B, and C. (Different colors for each number set.)

Next, play with the right hand fingers 2, 3, and 4 on A, B, and C; then play with the right hand fingers 1, 2, and 3 on A, B, and C. (Different colors for each number set.)

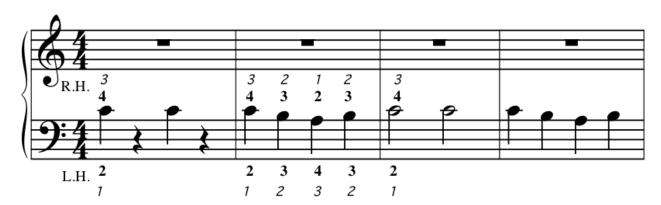


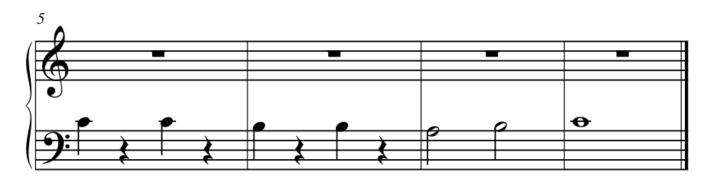
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Playful C's

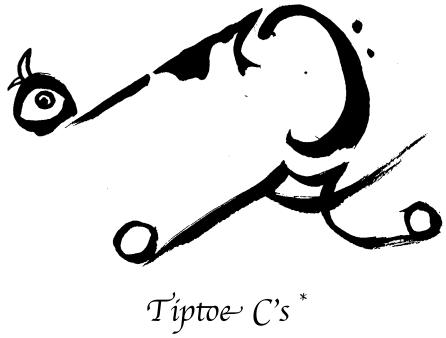
Beverly Grace Joy

Practice "Playful C's" with the same finger sets as you did in "A's On a March" and "Marching B's."



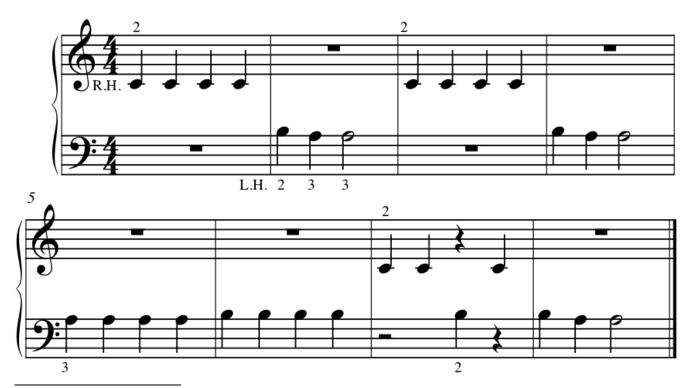






Beverly Grace Joy

A special reminder to students: Are you remembering to say the letter names of the notes before playing. Are you saying them rhythmically? Can you also say the letter names as you play?



^{*} When not in use, the thumbs should just freely hang below the hand in a natural position (think of the thumbs on the hands of a one-year-old). Thus, hands of beginners will not feel crowded by fingerings which differ from what previously might have been common, since the thumbs will not be unnaturally and uncomfortably extended forward.

Check-up 1

- 1. Name the notes with letter names.
- 2. Tell how many counts each notes receives



Conducting in 3

 $\frac{3}{4}$ meter

Introducing the Dotted Half Note: o.

A Dotted Half Note receives 3 counts. The Half Note receives 2 counts and the dot adds one more count:

$$2 + 1 = 3$$

Say,

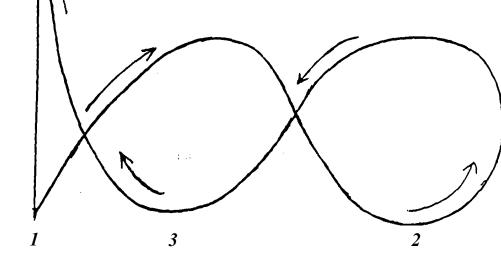
J. J. Dot-ted Half

Tap each dotted half note once and hold for the remaining counts. (Speak-ver-y-even-ly-like-a-ro-bot).

 $\frac{3}{4}$ meter

means there are 3 counts in each measure.

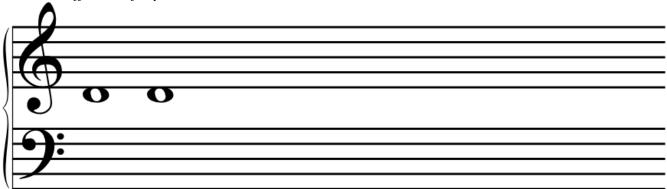




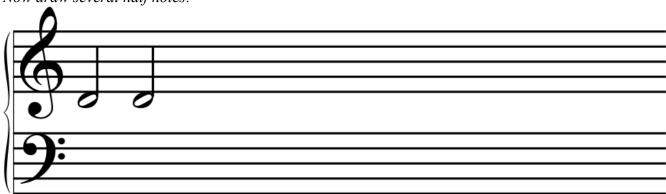
My D Page

D is the note at the bottom of the Treble Clef. Its space touches the bottom line of the Treble Clef.

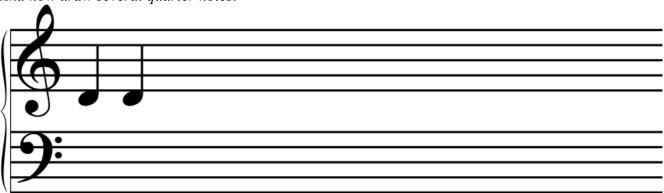
Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes:



Now draw several half notes:



And now draw several quarter notes:

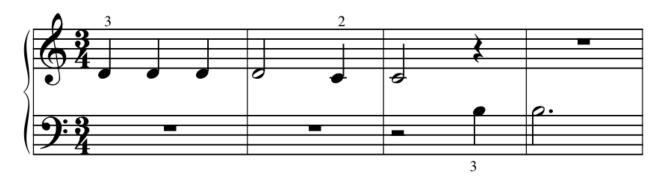


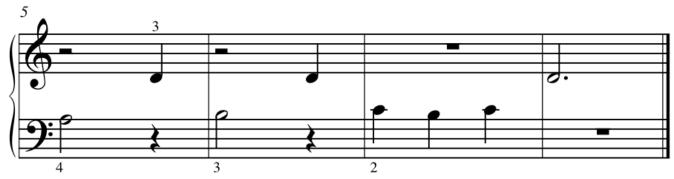
Students: Some people confuse this "D" with "B." But these notes are really rather different. "B" sits on the TOP of the Bass Clef and its stem goes DOWN. "D" is at the BOTTOM of the Treble Clef and its stem goes UP. And the half note "D" ($_{\circ}$) looks somewhat like the lower case "d." What other ways can you think of to tell them apart?

Dancing D's

Beverly Grace Joy

Count 1 - 2 - 3 - 1 - 2 - 3 and play.



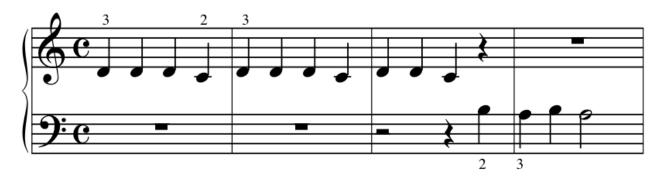




D's Hopping and Sliding

Beverly Grace Joy

Do you see the new meter sign ($\bf C$)? It means Common Time which is the same as 4 meter.







For teachers and students – Take turns conducting and playing this piece. Student plays, teacher conducts and vice-versa.

Intervals - 2nds

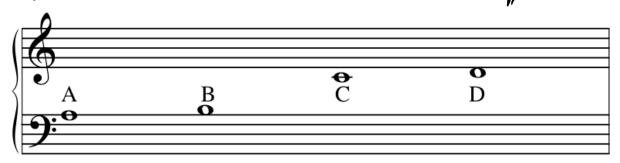
In music an INTERVAL tells us how close two notes are, or how far apart two notes are from each other.

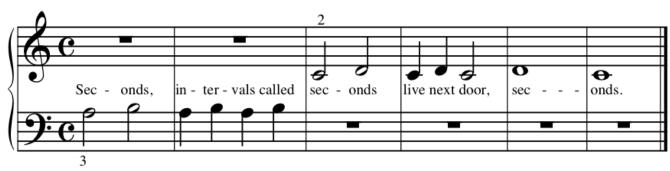
When the NOTES are side by side, and

when the KEYS are side by side,... and

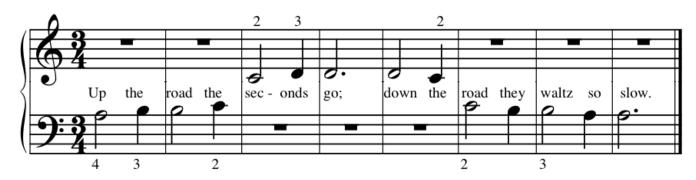
when the LETTER NAMES are side by side,

we say the INTERVAL is a second.





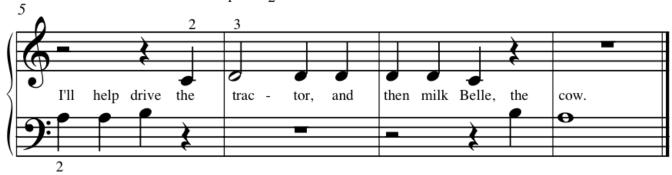
Before playing, practice moving from the second finger of the left hand on C to the second finger of the right hand on C. Then, practice moving from the second finger of the right hand on C to the second finger of the left hand on C.





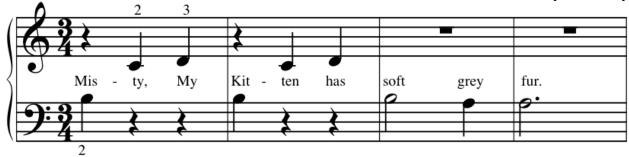
Beverly Grace Joy

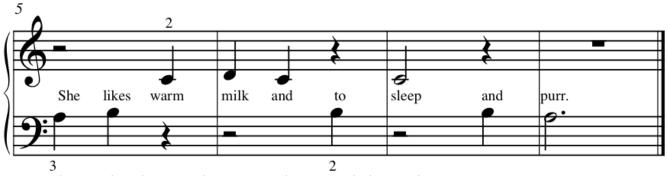




Misty, My Kitten

Beverly Grace Joy





For teachers and students – Take turns conducting and playing this piece.

Building Blocks

Beverly Grace Joy

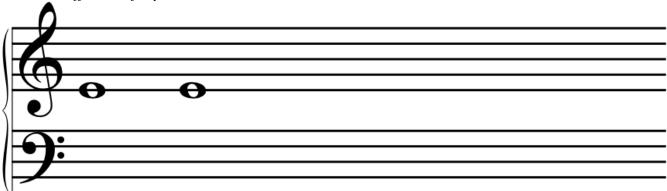


Students - Can you still say the musical alphabet backwards? Keep practicing this.

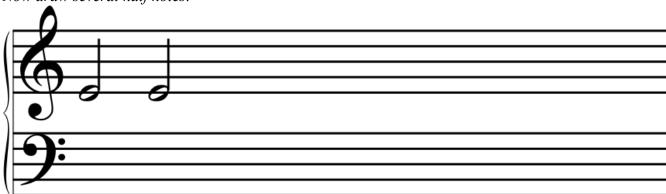
My E Page

E is the note on the lowest line (first line) of the Treble Clef.

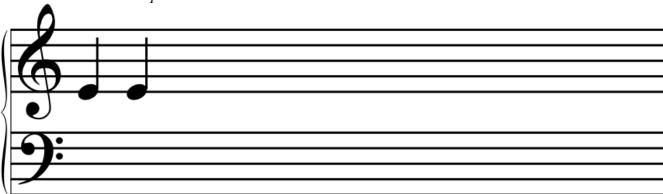
Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes:



Now draw several half notes:



And now draw several quarter notes:



Students: Sometimes people confuse "E" with "A." We needn't let this happen. "A" is now an old friend. Remember, "A" is on the TOP line (5th line) of the <u>bAss clef</u>; whereas "E," our new friend today, is on the BOTTOM line (1st line) of the <u>trEble clef</u>. Think of your own ways also to remember how these notes are different so that you will not be one of those who is confused, but will be "in the know."

Warm-up 3

Play Warm-up 3 with the right hand fingers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on A, B, C, D, and E.

Play Warm-up 3 with the left hand fingers 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 on A, B, C, D, and E.







Walking My Dog

Beverly Grace Joy

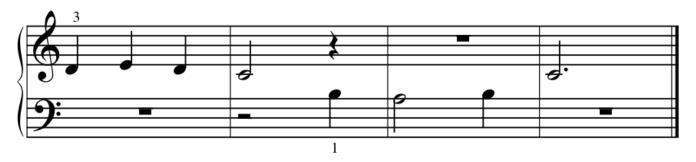




On the Merry-Go-Round

Beverly Grace Joy





Choo-Choo Train

Beverly Grace Joy





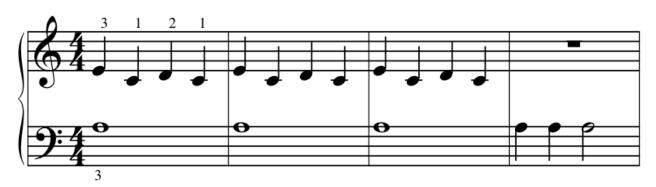
Roses Are Red

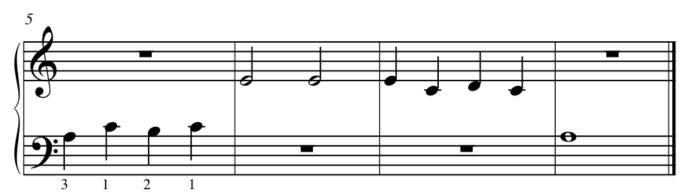




Zig-Zag_

Beverly Grace Joy







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Check-up 2

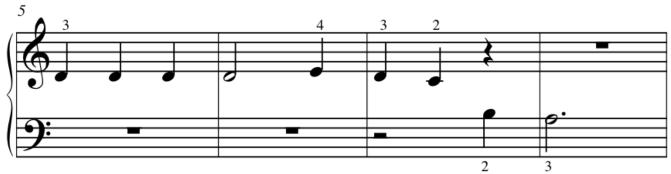
- 1. Name the notes with letter names
- 2. Tell how many counts each note receives.



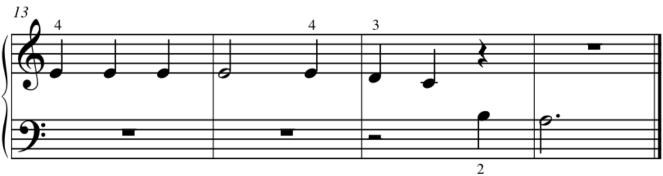
E-Z Waltz

Beverly Grace Joy









How many E's can you find in "E-Z Waltz"?_____ How many D's?____



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