

Alto Clef

A New Perspective



Frank Lestina

**The Alto Clef sits in the middle of the grand staff.
The middle line is middle C**

**Violin and viola have identical technique.
Therefore, if a violinist learns to read Alto Clef,
they can play viola and violin with the same proficiency.**

**The same is true in reverse.
Violists can play violin by learning treble clef.**

It is possible to learn Alto Clef in a few hours!

**If you do not have a viola,
you can get started using your violin.
You already have the A, D & G strings.
You can use your G string to practice the C string notes.**

**If you have a viola, play a few scales.
Your fingers will quickly adjust to the slightly larger spacing.**

**Study the first three pages that follow.
Start with the open strings.
Then memorize the notes on each string.**

**It is very important to learn note names!
Say or think the note names as you play or
alternate playing, then saying the note names.
This will help you with accidentals!**

Alto Clef

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Viola **A** String

The musical notation for the Viola A string consists of two staves. The left staff is in treble clef and contains a whole rest on the first line, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4 with a sharp sign, and a quarter note C5. The right staff is in bass clef and contains a whole rest on the first line, followed by a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note B3 with a sharp sign, and a quarter note C4.

Viola **D** String

The musical notation for the Viola D string consists of two staves. The left staff is in treble clef and contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4 with a sharp sign, and a quarter note C5. The right staff is in bass clef and contains a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note B3 with a sharp sign, and a quarter note C4.

Viola **G** String

The musical notation for the Viola G string consists of two staves. The left staff is in treble clef and contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The right staff is in bass clef and contains a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note B3, and a quarter note C4.

Viola **C** String

The musical notation for the Viola C string consists of two staves. The left staff is in treble clef and contains a whole rest on the first line, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The right staff is in bass clef and contains a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note B3, and a quarter note C4.

Learning the Alto Clef - Part 1

The range of the Viola is in between the Violin and the Cello. The treble clef is a little too high and the bass clef is a little too low. The Alto Clef uses the bottom two lines of the treble clef and the top two lines of bass clef. Later we will add the "Middle C" line.

The OPEN STRINGS on the viola are C, G, D, and A. You can see that D & A are in the treble clef and C & G are on the bass clef. First learn the open strings, then learn the other notes on each of the four strings.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff has a treble clef and contains the notes D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains the notes G, A, B, C, C, D, E, F. The notes A and C are underlined in both staves. The notes D, E, F, G, B, C, and D on the top staff, and G, A, B, C, D, E, and F on the bottom staff, are marked with small arrows indicating fingerings.

It is very important to learn the note names, not just the fingerings, on each string. There are really only 8 notes in each staff so it will not take long to memorize them.

Once you are comfortable with the two strings in treble clef and the two strings in bass clef, we will combine the two and try the same thing in ALTO CLEF. See the next page (other side)

Learning the Alto Clef - Part 2

Notice that the Alto Clef is just the middle of the Grand Staff. The middle line of the Alto Clef is actually Middle C. I have simply moved the treble and bass clef of the Grand Staff a little closer together and added a dashed line where the Middle C would be. Now, think of the **Open Strings** of the Viola and where they will be in the **Alto Clef**.

Memorize the 16 notes (4 on each string). Note names are very important once we start adding sharps and flats!

The image shows a handwritten musical staff for the Alto Clef, which is the middle of a grand staff. The staff consists of five lines and a dashed middle line. A treble clef is on the top line and a bass clef is on the bottom line. A double bar line is drawn between the two staves. The notes are as follows:

- Top line: D E F G A B C D
- Fourth line: (empty)
- Third line: (empty)
- Second line: (empty)
- First line: (empty)
- Dashed middle line: (empty)
- Fourth line: (empty)
- Third line: (empty)
- Second line: (empty)
- First line: (empty)
- Bottom line: C D E F G A B C

The notes are represented by solid black dots for the first seven notes of each string and open circles for the eighth notes. The eighth notes are placed on the dashed middle line.

Viola D & A String

Etude 1

Lestina

Viola

1 2 3 4 5

D E A B

Vla.

6 7 8 9 10

D E F# A B C# E B#

Vla.

11 12 13 14 15 16

F# G C# D

Vla.

17 18 19 20 21 22

Vla.

23 24 25 26 27

D E F# G A B C# D

Vla.

28 29 30 31 32 33

Vla.

34 35 36 37 38 39

D E ED B B^b F# C# DE ED A

4 -4 4 -4

Vla.

40 41 42 43 44

C# F# ED B^b

3 -1 1

Viola C & G String

Etude 2

Lestina

Viola

Handwritten notes: C G, C D, G A

Vla.

Handwritten notes: C D E, G A B, 1 2 D E, A B

Vla.

Handwritten notes: C E F, B C, C E F D

Vla.

Handwritten notes: C E D, F, C B, F

Vla.

Vla.

Handwritten notes: A C, D E, C

Vla.

Handwritten notes: D D^b, A A^b, E E^b, B B^b, C D, D^b, 3 4 -4, 3 4 3 -4

Vla.

Handwritten notes: D, E^b, B^b, E^b

Viola - All Strings

Etude 3

Lestina

Viola

Vla.

Vla.

Vla.

Vla.

Vla.

Vla.

Vla.

Viola - Songs

Etude 4

Lestina

French DM

3

DEF#

11

E G

DC#

French CM

21

3

B F E D C D E

31

DEF

C

Allegro DM

41

49

Allegro GM

57

65

Perpetual Motion DM

73



77



81



85



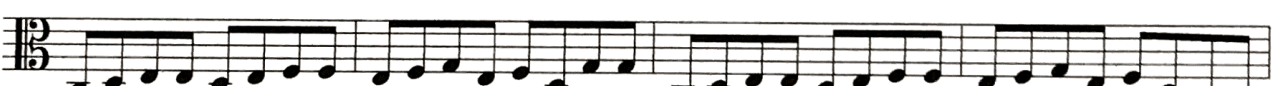
Bowing Options

89



Perpetual Motion CM

94



98



102



106



Viola - Accidentals

Etude 5

Lestina

Viola 

Vla. ⁵ 

Vla. ⁹ 

Vla. ¹³ 

Vla. ¹⁷ 

Vla. ²¹ 

Vla. ²⁵ 

Vla. ³⁰ 

Etude 7

Bourree

Viola

Handel

