INTERMEDIATE · READING BEYOND THE GRAND STAFF

Reading alto & tenor clefs

One familiar pitch can guide you through two new clefs. Start at middle C and read outward.

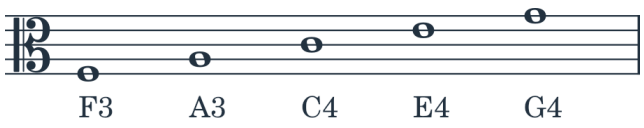
Learning goal: locate C4 and name nearby notes in alto and tenor clefs.

Name _____ Date _____

1 · LOCATE MIDDLE C

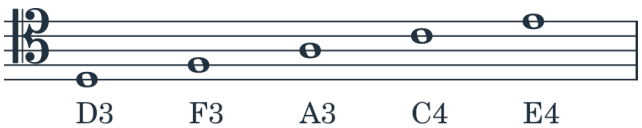
The center of a C clef points to **middle C (C4)**. Count staff lines from the bottom. These are the five **line notes**, bottom to top.

Alto clef · line 3 = C4



The viola usually reads this clef.

Tenor clef · line 4 = C4



Used for higher passages on cello, bassoon, and trombone.

2 · READ FROM THE ANCHOR

Write each note's **letter and octave number** on its engraved blank. Move through the alphabet one line or space at a time. C4 is middle C; the next C above it is C5.

A · Alto clef **8 notes**



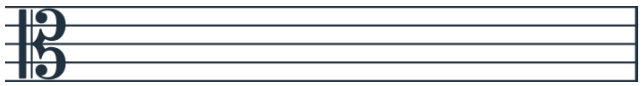
B · Tenor clef **8 notes**



3 · WRITE THE SAME PITCH IN TWO CLEFS

Draw **one whole note for C4** on each blank staff. The clef changes its location on the page; the sounding pitch stays the same.

C · Alto



D · Tenor



TRY IT Play middle C on the piano. Point to its place in both clefs and say which staff line it uses.

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INTERMEDIATE · TEACHER / SELF-CHECK

Alto & tenor clefs · Answer key

The note names below include octave numbers so the exact sounding pitch is clear.

Check for: correct letters, octave numbers, and the two different staff locations of C4.

2 · NOTE NAMES, LEFT TO RIGHT

A · Alto clef



C4 · D4 · A3 · E4 · F3 · G4 · B3 · F4

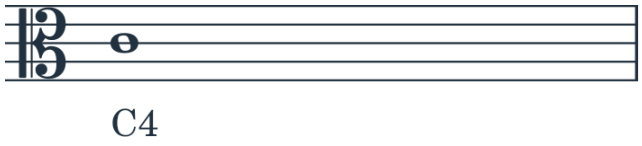
B · Tenor clef



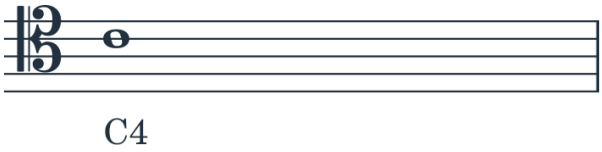
C4 · B3 · D4 · G3 · E4 · A3 · D3 · F3

3 · MIDDLE C, TWO LOCATIONS

C · Alto: third line



D · Tenor: fourth line



Both notes are **the same piano key**. A C clef identifies a pitch; it does not make the instrument transpose.

HELP A READER WHO GETS STUCK

1. **Find C4 first.** Alto puts it on line 3; tenor puts it on line 4.
2. **Walk one step at a time.** In alto, the space below C4 is B3 and the next line down is A3. In tenor, the space below C4 is also B3, but it sits higher on the staff.
3. **Keep octave numbers consistent.** B3 is the B just below C4. The octave number changes when B moves up to C.

TEACHER NOTE This tenor **C clef** is different from the treble clef with a small 8 below it used by tenor singers. Follow the clef actually printed.

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