

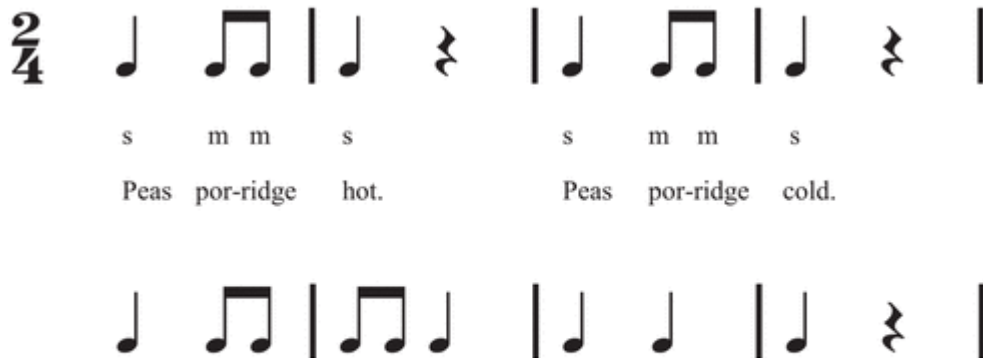
How to read like a Musician

Disciplinary Literacy in Music comprises learning in 6 separate areas:

- Reading and Writing Music notation,
- Reading and Writing Musical signs,
- Reading and Writing Musical symbols,
- Reading Lyrics in song and orchestral scores,
- Interpreting conducting gestures and cues,
- Dictation of both pitch and rhythm

Considerations towards cognitive overload and pre-empting any potential misconceptions in reading and understanding will be crucial for pupils here, in order for them to gain the most.

For example, initially, a musical symbol such as a rest could be learnt aurally and kinesthetically – via chanting then some form of gesture at the point of the rest.



s m m s s m m s s m s m d

Peas por-ridge hot. Peas por-ridge cold. Peas por-ridge in the pot, Nine days old.

After practice without seeing the rest symbol, pupils are then ready for a guided discovery to recognise both the name of the rest symbol and what the rest symbol looks like. Crucially, it must be pointed out here that the beat continues even when a pitch is not aurally present.

This process confirms for the teacher that the students can take known sounds to symbols; students are cognitively ready to successfully add another notation symbol to their repertoire. Acquired knowledge is the most useful to a learner when it is discovered through a learner’s own cognitive efforts, for it is then related to and used in reference to what one has known before. Effectively, the pupil does the “cognitive heavy lifting” as opposed to the teacher restating what has been covered in previous lessons.



When a pupil encounters a full musical score, the above 6 aspects of disciplinary literacy considered in detail are...

1. **Reading and writing of music notation** - the spatial arrangement of music notation where the higher the notehead the higher the pitch helps pupils follow the sound they hear then there are further details about rhythm to process. Here also, pitches can be stacked, indicating simultaneous performance in chords in addition to single line melodies.
2. **Reading and writing musical signs and symbols (1)** - composer's intentions related to tempo, timbre, dynamics and articulation. Here these will be in Italian so there is much scope for etymology, morphology, inference etc. This then leads in performance to interpretation and 'how much?' and 'relative to what?'
3. **Reading and writing musical signs and symbols (2)** – some symbols which do not involve words also provide performance directions and cues and are both frequently occurring and often look quite unrelated to their intended outcome.
4. **Song Lyrics** - are spaced out with hyphens to match the rhythm of the song and layered according to verses and choruses.
5. **Interpreting conducting gestures and cues** – reading and reacting to the gestures and body language of the conductor or group leader.
6. **Dictation of both pitch and rhythm** – one of the most important exercises for ear training. It helps pupils to develop the ability to identify sounds and the sense of rhythm. What is more, it enhances concentration, memory, and attentive listening, which are fundamental skills for the children's overall learning.

As reading music involves motor, visual, auditory, audio-visual, somatosensory, parietal and frontal areas in both hemispheres and the cerebellum, this makes music reading truly a whole brain activity.

In Music lessons, score reading is often a whole class activity at the start of a learning a piece and can involve some aural perception tests such as eg. teacher plays and stops somewhere – pupils name the note or eg. teacher plays and deliberately plays one note wrong – pupils name the note or eg. teacher deliberately ignores some composer performance directions leading to pupil discussion of what/where/what was the impact? These skills are akin to those developed when doing dictation as in point. no. 6 above.

