SOLFA NOTATION - Grade 1

(Unisa learners only.)

Music written on a staff is called **staff notation.** There is another way of writing music. It is called **solfa notation.**

Solfa notation was developed by Curwen in England in 1841. The aim was to make sight reading easier for beginners. Prior to that, other similar systems were used.

1. **PITCH.**

**Seven solfa** syllables are used to indicate pitch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>doh</td>
<td>ray</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>fah</td>
<td>soh</td>
<td>lah</td>
<td>ti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In staff notation we name the tone degrees: tonic, supertonic, mediant, ens. In solfa notation we name them doh, ray, mi, etc.

These solfa syllables are **abbreviated**, and **small letters** are used to indicate them. The letters are written on one level:

Abbreviated: d r m f s l t

In solfa notation the key (key note / tonic) is indicated at the beginning of a piece:

**EXAMPLE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doh is C</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>C major (tonic is C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doh is G</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>G major (tonic is G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doh is F</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>F major (tonic is F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In grade 1 you are only going to work with these three keys.

In the following example you can see the scale of C major with the solfa notation at the bottom.
Doh is C

In grade 1 you are only working with the first 5 degrees from doh – soh. (The top C is indicated with a \( \text{I} \) in superscript.)

**Ex. 2/1**

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

1. **How many** solfa syllables are used to indicate pitch?

2. How would you indicate the **key** of a solfa notation in C major?

3. Complete the following solfa notation of the first 5 degrees in C major:
   
   Doh is _ _ _
   
   d _ m _ s

**2. TIME SIGNATURES AND NOTE VALUES.**

- In solfa notation there are **bar lines**, but no staff:

  Solfa notation: 

  Staff notation:

  - Beats are divided by colons ( : ).

    Solfa notation: 

    Staff notation:

    \[ \frac{2}{4} : \]
3

\[ \frac{3}{4} \quad : \quad : \quad \]

(Three crotchets in a bar)

**Note:** We indicate beats with a bracket [ ] only to explain the work. It is not part of solfa notation.

**Crotchets** get **one beat** (one count). Crotchets on *doh* will be written as follows:

**Solfa notation:**

Doh is C

\[
\frac{2}{4} \quad d : \quad d
\]

**Staff notation:**

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{crotchet.png}}
\]

\[
\frac{3}{4} \quad d : \quad d : \quad d
\]

**Staff notation:**

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{crotchet.png}}
\]

- A **minim** is equal to two crotchets and gets two beats (two counts). Minims are indicated by a dash (-). Minims on *doh* will be written as follows:

**Solfa notation:**

Doh is C

\[
\frac{2}{4} \quad d : \quad -
\]

**Staff notation:**

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{minim.png}}
\]

When we **rewrite** music from solfa notation to staff notation, it is called **transcription**. Transcription means to **rewrite**.
Ex. 4/1
TRANSCRIBE THE FOLLOWING PHRASES, WHICH ARE IN SOLFA NOTATION, TO STAFF NOTATION:

Hint: First write the time signature (and bar lines if necessary).

Doh is C

1

\[ \begin{array}{|cccc|}
\hline
3 & 4 & d & d : d \\
\hline
2 & 4 & d & d : d \\
\hline
3 & 4 & d & : : d \\
\hline
4 & 4 & d & : : d \\
\hline
\end{array} \]

Ex. 4/2
WRITE THE FOLLOWING TWO-BAR PHRASES FROM SOLFA NOTATION TO STAFF NOTATION:

Doh is C

1

\[ \begin{array}{|cccc|}
\hline
2 & 4 & d & : d \\
\hline
3 & 4 & d & : : d \\
\hline
2 & 4 & d & : : d \\
\hline
\end{array} \]
Two tied crotchets across a bar line are also equal to a minim and indicated by a dash (-).

EXAMPLES:

Doh is C

Ex. 5/1
WRITE THE FOLLOWING TWO-BAR PHRASES FROM SOLFA NOTATION TO STAFF NOTATION:

Doh is C

1

2

3

4

3

4

3

4

3

4

3

4
You already know that you have to write the pitches doh to soh for grade 1. They are of course the first 5 degrees of the scale.

EXAMPLE:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/4 doh m f s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. 6/1

NOTATE THE FOLLOWING TWO-BAR PHRASES FROM SOLFA NOTATION TO STAFF NOTATION:

1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/4 doh s s m r doh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4 sol f m d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/4 sol s d r d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4 sol m d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/4 doh m f s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4 doh m s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfa notation:</th>
<th>Staff notation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4 doh d d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 **OTHER KEYS.**

**EXAMPLE:**

Doh is G

An example in G major:

```
3/4  | d : m : f | s : -- : d |
```

Repeat Ex. 6/1 with

Doh is G and Doh is F

Work on your own music paper.