Introduction

Being a good sight-reader is so important and it needn't be difficult! If you work through this book carefully – always making sure that you really understand each exercise before you play it you'll never have problems learning new pieces or doing well at sight-reading in exams!

Using the workbook

1 Rhythmic exercises

Make sure you have grasped these fully before you go on to the melodic exercises: it is vital that you really know how the rhythms work. There are a number of ways to do the exercises, several of which are outlined in Stage 1. Try them all out. Can you think of more ways to do them?

2 Melodic exercises

These exercises use just the notes and rhythms for the Stage, and also give some help with fingering. If you want to sight-read fluently and accurately, get into the simple habit of working through each exercise in the following ways before you begin to play it:

- Make sure you understand the rhythm and counting. Clap the exercise through.
- Look at the shape of the tune, particularly the highest and lowest notes. Which finger do you need to start on to be able to play it? The exercises have this fingering added to get you started.
- Try to hear the piece through in your head. Always play the first note to help.

3 Prepared pieces

Work your way through the questions first, as these will help you to think about or 'prepare' the piece. Don't begin playing until you are pretty sure you know exactly how the piece goes.

4 Going solo!

It is now up to you to discover the clues in this series of practice pieces. Give yourself about a minute and do your best to understand the piece before you play. Check the rhythms and hand position, and try to hear the piece in your head.

Always remember to feel the pulse and to keep going steadily once you've begun. Good luck and happy sight-reading!

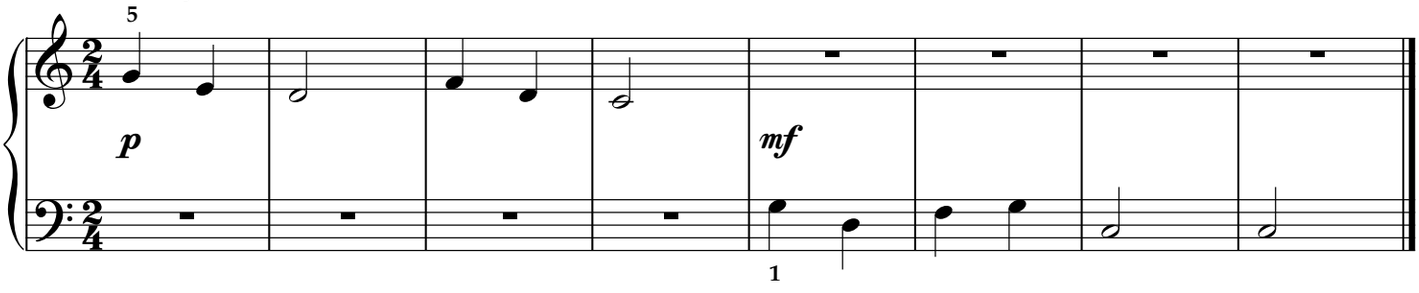
Terminology:
Bar = measure

Going solo!

Remember to prepare each piece carefully before you play it.

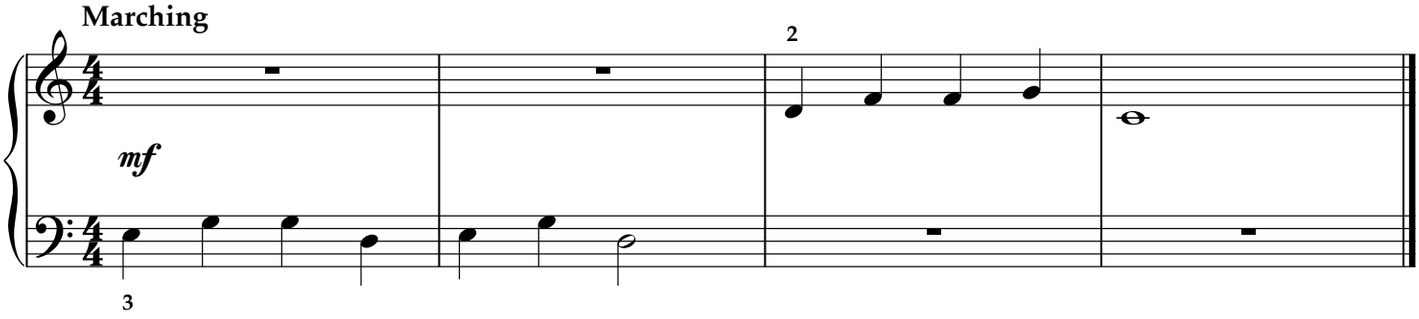
1 ☐

Cheekily



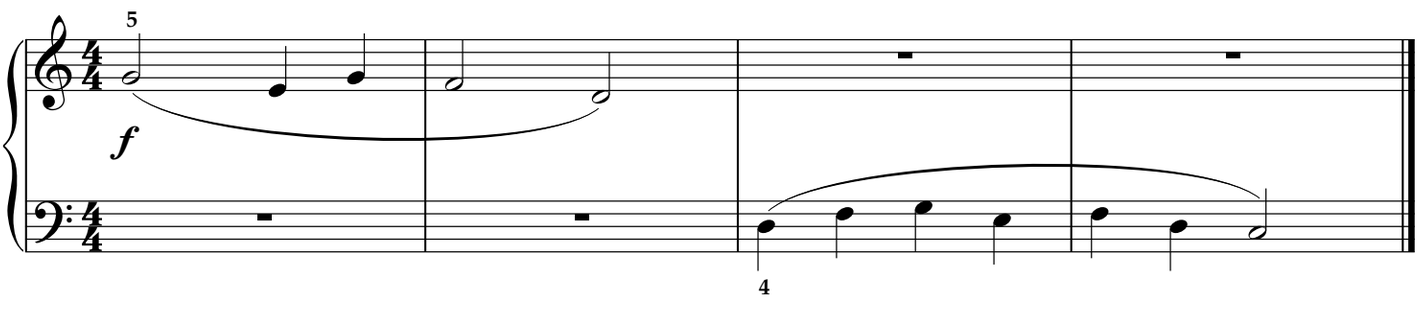
2 ☐

Marching



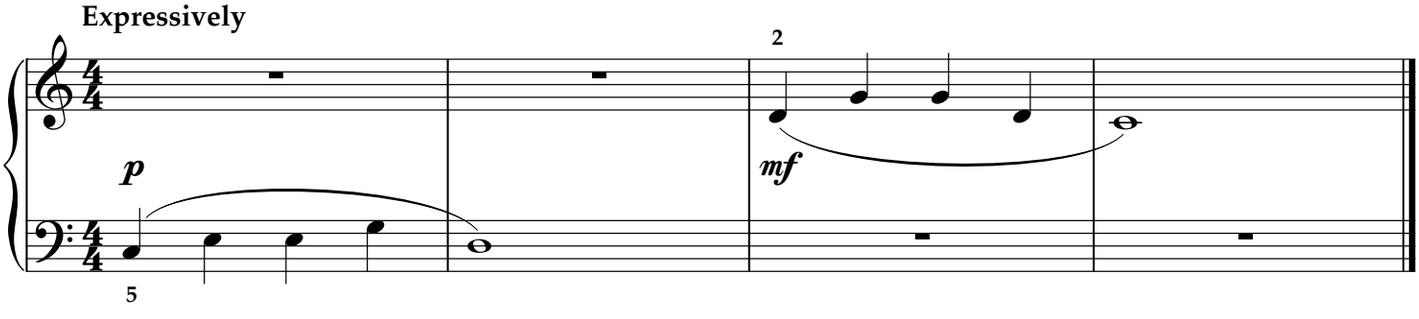
3 ☐

Majestically



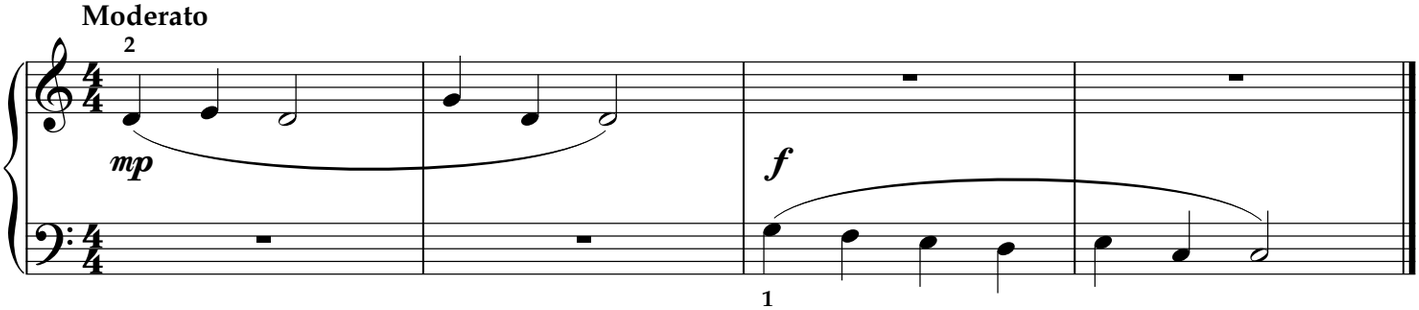
4 ☐

Expressively



5 ☐

Moderato



The golden rules

A sight-reading checklist

Before you begin to play a piece at sight, always consider the following:

1 Look at the time signature and decide how you will count the piece.

2 Look at the key signature and find the notes which need raising or lowering.

3 Notice patterns – especially those based on scales and arpeggios.

4 Check the fingering and position for each hand.

5 Notice any markings that will help you convey the character.

6 Count at least two bars in.

When performing a sight-reading piece

1 Keep feeling the pulse.

2 Keep going at a steady tempo.

3 Ignore mistakes.

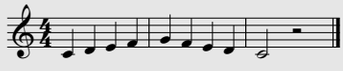
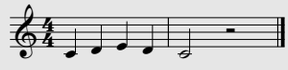
4 Look ahead – at least to the next note.

5 Keep your hands in position on the keyboard.

6 Play musically, always trying to convey the character of the music.

Look at each piece for about half a minute and try to feel that you are understanding what you see (just like reading these words).

Don't begin until you think you are going to play the piece accurately.

Microscales

If you don't know the whole scale, just the first five notes or even just the first three notes will do! Both patterns will give a good feel of the key.