

SIGHT-READING

When you are sight-reading, it is very important to look through the music beforehand to make sure you are secure with all aspects of the piece to avoid being surprised.

The ability to read music for the first time with good musicianship is an important skill to develop. Before you begin, review each item silently.

SIGHT-READING CHECKLIST

1. Time Signature: Understand the top and bottom numbers. (Top number is beats per bar, bottom number shows what to count in, 2 means minims, 4 means crotchets and 8 means quavers)
2. Key Signature: What is the key of the piece of music, and what does this mean? (Remember what this means for your 2nd and 3rd fingers. Two sharps means all 3's, Two flats means all 2's etc)
3. Tempo: Look for the tempo marking at the beginning of the music. Know what it means.
4. Rhythm: Look for any unusual or difficult rhythms.
5. Patterns: Look for scale and arpeggio patterns which you should know.
6. Strings: Work out which strings you need to be playing on, and whether you are going back and forth, or just from one string to another.
7. Accidentals: Scan the music for flats, sharps and naturals that are not in the key signature.
8. Articulations and Bowings: Scan the music to identify accents, staccato and legato and slurred and separate bowing patterns.
9. Expression/Dynamics: Scan the music for dynamic markings and other directions.
10. Miscellaneous: Check for repeat signs, first and second endings, bar repeats, da capo/del segno markings, pauses, up-beat notes, etc.

After you have completed the sight-reading checklist, count one full bar of preparation in your head to establish the tempo and steady beat. Tap your foot if necessary. Don't stop playing until you reach the end. After you have finished sight-reading the music, analyze your mistakes to determine which category of the checklist you need to review. If you can, record your sight-reading and listen to it afterwards. It may help you hear your mistakes.

Sight-reading is a skill that develops through practice. Whenever possible, include sight-reading in your daily practice session. Simply play pieces and exercises out of the book that you don't know yet, or have forgotten. The more familiar you are with scales, the better you will be at sight-reading.