Flaky Mnemonics!

These are mnemonics that may - repeat, *may* - help you with the more difficult elements of recognising and reading note pitches - especially on ledger lines. These mnemonics are quirky, silly, largely unconnected and basically have no real system to them at all! However, if they help you to read music and recognise notes, then they are well worth learning. (By the way, there is in fact *one* element that connects all these mnemonics, including the more regular ones such as "Every Good Boy Deserves Football"... and that is that they *all* go from bottom to top. There are no mnemonics here that go top to bottom.)

Firstly... have you noticed how the three ledger lines **above** the treble staff and **below** the bass staff both spell out the word "ace"?



Secondly... have you noticed how the three ledger lines **above** the bass staff spell out the word "keg"? A keg... like a barrel of beer? OK, they don't quite spell out the word "keg"; they actually spell out the word "ceg", but that's almost "keg", and anyway, it may be a useful way for you to remember the notes (please don't forget... these are "flaky" mnemonics)!



Thirdly... the three ledger lines **below** the treble staff plus the 'E' on the lowest line of the treble staff spell out the word "face" (as do the notes in the spaces in the treble staff). So again, to help you remember, here is a picture of a happy face beside the notes. Why is he happy? We don't know... perhaps he's been drinking beer from a "CEG"!



Another one... do you remember the song "Goodbye Dolly Gray"? The words to the opening lines are, "Good Bye Dolly! I must leave you, though it breaks my heart to go". Well, the three notes in the spaces **above** the treble staff are G, B and D, and if you stack them up like a chord (and draw silly faces and hands on them) they look a bit like a dolly saying goodbye! GBD = Good Bye Dolly!



Here's a ridiculous graphic to help you remember!



And a couple of fun facts...

These aren't mnemonics; they are just a few intriguing facts about written music which you may find interesting.

First up... these two notes are at exactly the same pitch:



And these two are an octave apart:



And second... fancy trying to play this?



Although it may not look like it, in the above bar, the treble clef line is *lower* than the bass clef line. This makes it almost impossible to play with the right hand playing the upper line (the treble clef) and the left hand playing the lower line (the bass clef). It's a quirk of written music. If you really want to turn your brain inside out, try playing the treble clef line with your left hand and the bass clef line with your right! OUCH!

And here's a thing... did you know that if you were to write - in the treble clef - the highest note on the piano, it would require *nine* ledger lines? Like this:



However, if you were to write - in the bass clef - the *lowest* note on the piano, it would require a "mere" six ledger lines. Like this:



Why is this?

Why is the lowest note on *six* ledger lines *beneath* the bass staff (in fact, just below the sixth ledger line), but the highest note is on *nine* ledger lines *above* the treble staff? Is there a reason why are they not equally separated?

Well, the answer is... "Yes!" There is indeed a reason why the highest note is on nine ledger lines up but the lowest note is just below six ledger lines down. And the reason is... the note we call "Middle C" is *not* actually in the middle of the piano.

In fact, a full-size piano has 88 notes, so there can't actually be a note which is literally "in the middle". 88 is an even number, so the central point of the piano is actually *between* two notes - or as musicians would call it, "in the crack". But even allowing for that, Middle C is still not in the

middle of the piano; it is slightly to the left (ie skewed slightly towards the bass notes). Middle C *is*, however, written in the middle of the Grand Staff - it is on the first ledger line between the two staves (either above the bass staff or below the treble staff).

If we were to change how music is written (which is probably ill-advised!), and put one of the two notes nearest to the middle of the piano (either the 'E' or 'F' immediately above Middle C) onto the Middle C ledger line (and shift the written position of all the other notes in proportion) then the ledger lines needed for the lowest and highest notes on the piano would even out a little, but still not be equal. You would have either seven ledger lines above and eight below, or eight ledger lines above and seven below, depending on which of the two notes you chose to put on the Middle C ledger line.

The only way to make the ledger line requirements for the low and high notes exactly symmetrical is to add an extra note to the piano*, either at the very top or the very bottom. But since this would have to be a black note (either a C-sharp at the top or an A-flat at the bottom), this would make the construction of the piano keyboard extremely difficult. Plus it would require a note other than 'C' to be placed in the middle of the Grand Staff, and therefore require an entire re-writing of music theory!

So we'll stick with what we've got, yes?

*An Austrian piano manufacturer, called Bösendorfer, do in fact make a piano (called the Bösendorfer Imperial 290) which has 97 keys. This gives a range of eight full octaves on this particular model and does indeed place Middle C right in the centre of the keyboard (and would therefore place the lowest note on nine ledger lines below the bass staff). The nine extra notes are all at the low end of the piano, and are all coloured black in order to show the pianist clearly where they are. The reason for the all-black colouring of these notes is to help the pianist avoid accidentally "overshooting" when aiming for low notes, and playing the extra notes by mistake.

These extra low notes are not used very often, and are so low that most people are unable to tell which pitches they actually are.



The extra low notes at the bottom of a Bösendorfer Imperial 290