

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

1

ELEMENTARY VIOLIN

Building Music Readers
with Musicianship Skills

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OVERVIEW

Musical notation is simple and logical. Pitches are located step by step on a staff of lines and spaces, and note values are calculated mathematically as subdivisions or prolongations of a steady beat. How do we progress from decoding methodically and laboriously to reading confidently at sight? We isolate skills and practice them.

In the two volumes of **READING BETWEEN THE LINES**, scale routines provide the context for gaining expertise in combining pitch and rhythm. Repetition is essential in order for knowledge and understanding of note names and note values to develop into automatic response.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES - 1 begins with a section on pre-reading activities. Then, one octave scale routines in first position acquaint the student with the vocabulary and symbols of musical notation. The routines should be used first in a lesson with supervision, and then later at home for practice. This work helps to solidify the relationship between learning to play music by ear and learning to read music at sight. When brought into balance, well-trained ears and well-informed eyes work together to create musicians who play in tune, in time, and with rhythmic integrity.

In **READING BETWEEN THE LINES - 1**, each routine is an opportunity to recognize pitches, while maintaining a steady pulse. The student should become skilled at:

- naming notes and locating them on the fingerboard
- associating a note name with the sound of the note and the feel of it on the instrument

- moving among three different rhythm patterns in three different meters
- ensuring that within each meter, each measure lasts the same amount of time

The resulting connection is a triangle of senses: sight, sound, and touch.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES - 2 begins with a review of the proficiencies attained in **READING BETWEEN THE LINES - 1**. Then, the scale routines become more complicated, introducing extended major scales from first position through fourth position. Parallel minors and arpeggios are added, along with some shifting work into higher positions on the E string. While exploring the fingerboard in various positions as well as keys, the student should become skilled at:

- processing multiple instructions simultaneously (pitch + rhythm)
- executing one set of instructions while processing the next set of instructions

In the scale routines, the pitch component relies on the logic and familiarity of sequential fingering within scales, but at all times requires knowledge of note names. In addition, the student must be able to identify which notes are ringing tones (notes that have the same name as open strings), and which notes are sharps or flats (as indicated by the key signature).

The rhythm component stresses a consistent focus on an inner beat, while requiring the student to implement specified patterns (simple subdivisions and sustaining in 2/4 and 6/8, and simple 3/4 combinations).

The routines can be considered a series of challenging games or brain teasers. The correct implementation of the rhythm patterns confirms non-verbally that the student recognizes note names and observes the key signature. Further, a focus on ringing tones demonstrates for the student that playing in tune takes advantage of the instrument's resonance to produce a beautiful tone.

"Automatic pilot" is not possible during these routines! They challenge the student's ability to focus and to concentrate.

In addition to the scale routines in each volume, **READING BETWEEN THE LINES** provides sections of explanation for teachers or parents and suggested activities to reinforce concepts with the student.

Failure to observe the key signature is the downfall of many a music reader! We begin an examination of the Circle of Fifths in **READING BETWEEN THE LINES - 1**, looking at major key signatures through three sharps and three flats. By the end of **READING BETWEEN THE LINES - 2** we have assembled the full array of major and minor key signatures with seven sharps and seven flats.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES also features Fingerboard Charts (for first position only) that depict the locations of notes on the staff as they align with the fingerings used on each string of the violin. On the Fingerboard Charts, the student can distinguish between half steps and whole steps and detect the relationship of fifths across strings. Thus we secure an introduction to string theory, and reinforce the analytical information associated with reading.

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