

# Dictating Music

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Ready to get started? This book is designed to help you learn how to dictate music. It includes a list of words to use, a list of words to avoid, and a list of words to use with caution. It also includes a list of words to use with a specific meaning.

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# Dictating Music

Braille music has to follow rules, and signs need to be in a certain order to make sure the music is clear and unambiguous. Here are some of those rules and an indication of the order of signs and notes to help you dictate music to a blind friend.

With thanks to Dorothy Hamilton, John Shute and Ian Cooper

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# Dictating music to a blind friend

New signs and terms are written in bold and an explanation follows in the subsequent text.

Commence with the title, composer and any relevant material in the music to be dictated.

Then looking at the music read

- \* **The key signature:** Read this as 2 sharps or 3 flats etc.
- \* **Time signature:** three four or six eight or three two etc.
- \* **Clefs:** Ignore clefs unless asked for.
- \* **Octaves:** The piano is divided up into octaves. Each C up to B. The bottom octave is the first octave and then up until middle C which is 4th octave C. This is where we will begin. So middle C up D E F G etc to B on the middle line is called 4th octave.

Illustration 1 4th octave



Example 1



Unto us is born a son  
2 sharps, four four.

4th octave D crotchet, E crotchet F crotchet G crotchet **bar** F crotchet E crotchet D minim bar.

\***Bar lines.** simply say bar when a bar line is needed.

\***Octave signs.** Note that only the first note was called 4th octave.

## Rule 1.

The octave sign comes before the note, *immediately* before the note, always !

**Rule 2.**

While the music goes by step or seconds, octave signs are not needed after the first note.

Example 2 

Frere Jaques

One flat, common time

4th octave F crotch, G crotch, A crotch, F crotch bar **repeat** .

**Intervals:**

D to E is called a second. Think D one, E two, a second.

D to F is called a third . Think D one, E two, F three.

C to F a fourth. Think C one, D two, E three, F four.

Illustration 2



a second

a third

a fourth

In Frere Jacques A fell to F. No octave sign was required as that interval is a third.

**Octave signs:**

**Rule 3.** Thirds do not need an octave sign

\***Repeat bar.** Braille is bulky. The aim is to keep absolute clarity with the minimal amount of space. These two bars were the same so simply say bar repeat,

Example 3 

Continuing on -

A crotch, B crotch, C minim repeat bar C D, C B, A crotch, F crotch bar repeat.

F crotch C crotch F minim bar repeat **double bar.**

\* **Quavers:** Only give a letter name to a quaver. Saves lots of time.

These C D C quavers have moved up into the next octave but it went by step or a second, so no sign was needed.

F to C and C to F is a fourth. But they are both in the same octave, 4th octave, so no sign was needed.

### Octave signs

**Rule 4.** Fourths and Fifths dont need an octave sign when they are in the same octave.



4ths and fifths within the same octave.



Unto us

D up to A (bar 2 to bar 3 ) is a fifth in the same octave. No octave sign. Similarly E to C and D to B are thirds, then A to F is a third. So no octaves are needed through out this piece.

Example 5



Shepherds Awaken

One sharp, common time

4th G crotch, G F, G crotch D crotch bar 4th B crotch, B sharp A, B crotch, G crotch.

D up to B is a sixth.

### Octave signs

**Rule 5.** Intervals of sixths and sevenths always need an octave sign.

Now just when you think you can't bear this anymore let me make things easy.

## Octave signs made simple.

seconds and thirds **never** need an octave sign  
fourths and fifths **only when** moving to another octave  
sixths and sevenths **always** need an octave sign

Have you learnt these three simple octave signs rules? You really need them.

- \* **Accidentals.** See the sharp A quave? Accidentals come before the note, but take care!! had an octave been needed it would have been sharp 4th A quave. Don't let that octave sign be separated from the note.

Example 6 continued



B crotch, fifth E crotch, D min bar repeat.

Illustration 4 5th octave



The octave above 4 is of course 5. B up to E is a 4th moving to another octave so it needed an octave sign.

Remember? 4th and 5ths **only when**. . .

Example 7 continued



You read the rest and see how you go.

Did you give the D in bar 7 an octave sign? and I trust no others as there were only steps or seconds and thirds. Well done.

Example 8



The Holly and the Ivy

Read the music to yourself then check mine to see how you went and learn how slurs and phrases come in.

One sharp, three four

**Open phrase**, 4th octave G crotch bar G G, G crotch, fifth E crotch bar D crotch, B crotch **close phrase** and open phrase G crotch bar G G, G crotch fifth E crotch bar D min close and open phrase D **slur** C bar B A, G crotch B B, bar E E, D crotch close and open phrase G **slur** A bar B C, B crotch A crotch bar G min close phrase double bar.

\* **Phrases:** Note how the first open phrase comes before the octave sign ?

\* **Slurs:** As you would expect the slur comes between the two notes.

Example 9



Sur Le Pont

One sharp, two four

Open phrase 4th G G, G crotch, close phrase bar open phrase A A, A crotch, close phrase bar open phrase B C, D 4th G, (a fifth into another octave ) bar F G, A D ,close phrase bar (why no octave sign ? ) **bars 1 to 3**( go back to those bars and repeat them ) 4th A F, G crotch close phrase double bar.

\* **Repeats 2:** In the above example the brailist when reading or learning the music would go to the bars numbered 1, 2 and 3, remind herself of them then move back to the original place and continue. Always keep this in mind. Brailleing 3 bars, the time and space needed, against the break in the flow of reading the braille. Every reader is different, so ask, but also always read ahead and look for repeats and offer them.

Example 10



Hot Cross Buns

Please dictate this to yourself. First read through and look for repeats, then converse yourself with any leaps requiring octave signs. Here is my reading to check against.



## Hot Cross Buns

One sharp, common time

Open phrase, 5th octave D crotch, 4th octave D crotch, G min close phrase bar repeat. Open phrase 5th D C, B A, G A, B C bar. Repeat bar 1, close phrase. Open phrase 4th octave B B repeat beat, A crotch, A crotch bar G A, B C, A min, close phrase bar. Repeat 3 and 4 double bar.

\* **Octaves:** An octave, an eighth, is obviously bigger than a 7th so it must have an octave sign.

\* **Repeats 3:** This time a beat was repeated. Now the repeat sign took 1 cell, 2 quavers took 2 cells. Did the repeat help musically? Was it easier to read quave, quave repeat than 4 quavers? Possibly yes and a repeat was probably expected. Some beats are longer and a repeat beat helps.

## Words and music.

The words to a song are written first. They are brailled above the music. Look at the phrases, the length of both the words and the music and try to judge places to start lines that are musical and that are going to be easiest to read, as the brailist can only read one line at a time and when singing will probably read the opening of one line to be reminded of what's coming and read the other.

Also the length of the lines. If both music and words can fit on one line of braille it is better.

Example 11

Three gip - sies stood at the cas - tle gate, They  
sang so high and they sang so low, The la - dy sate in her  
cham - ber late, Her heart it melt - ted a way like snow.

## The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies O

One flat, four four

What are they all?

Three gypsies stood at the castle gate **comma**

**4th** A slur G bar F crotch, D crotch, D crotch, A G bar F crotch, E crotch, D crotch **music hyphen**.

They sang so high and they sang so low **comma**

**4th** A crotch bar 5th D crotch, D crotch, D crotch, E D bar C crotch, A crotch, A crotch **dotted**, hyphen

- \* **Punctuation** needs to be dictated so the braille copy is the same as the print.
- \* **Music Hyphen:** this line of music finished in the middle of the bar. This needs to be indicated.
- \* **New Lines.** Each new line must have an octave sign though it may not be needed.
- \* **Dotted notes.** Dots, as in print are written after the note so they can be called after the note. A crotch dot; C min dot etc.
- \* **Uses of braille.** Some braille music is used to memorise, for example a piano piece. Sometimes braille is needed to sing from in a choir. Here the less dots under the fingers the better as the singer is having to read fast. In the Wraggle Taggle Gypsies I omitted the phrases as they coincided with the lines and I felt were obvious.

Illustration 5 3rd octave



Example 12

This example is in bass clef hoping you are familiar with the 4th and 5th octaves by now.



I saw three ships come sail - ing in, On  
Christ - mas Day, Christ - mas Day, I saw three ships come  
sail - ing in - on - Christ - mas - day in - the morn - ing.

I Saw Three Ships  
One flat, **six eight**

I saw three ships come sailing in comma  
3rd F bar F crotch, F , F crotch, 4th D bar C crotch, B , A crotch hyphen

On **one repeat of** Christmas Day **end repeat** comma  
3rd A bar G slur A, B , A crotch dot bar G slur A, B , A crotch hyphen.

I saw three ships come sailing in  
3rd F bar F crotch, F , F crotch, 4th D bar C crotch, B, A slur B hyphen

On Christmas Day in the morning **stop**  
4th C bar D slur C, B, A, G , F bar G crotch dot, F crotch double bar.

- \* **Six eight.** 2 dotted crotchets or 6 quavers in the bar. Easy.
- \* **Repeating words.** This again saves space and time reading. "One repeat" or "two repeats" at the beginning and then an "end repeat" at the end of the word or words to be repeated
- \* **Full stop.** Abbreviated to stop. Nothing to do with braille, just easier.

## Semiquavers, doublings, orders and more

Example 13



A Nonsense  
two flats, four four

*mf*, 3rd E **semiquaver** sharp F, natural B, D, E semiquaver, D, B, F  
**repeat half bar.**

- \* **Repeats 4.** This time the second half of the bar is repeated.
- \* **Dynamics and expression marks.** Read these in the appropriate places.
- \* **Semiquavers.** Semiquavers don't take up more cells but they do use lots of

dots and look crowded. So they are written with the first of 4 as a semiquaver and the remaining 3 as quavers. Therefore this cannot be used where the 4 are followed by a quaver. After discussion these are called as above, first a semi, the rest nameless.

Illustration 6.



Here the 4 semis followed by a quaver must be called G, Fsemi, G semi, A semi G semi, F semi, E semi, 5th C D, E crotch.

Example 14



Another Nonsense  
Crotchet equals 132  
one flat, two four



Three bars rest, crotchet rest, *forte*, 3rd B, rest, bar, rest, A, repeat half bar, repeat bar, rest, A, rest, sharp F, bar, rest, G, F crotch, dots to the left, double bar.

\* **Metronome markings**

\* **Bars rest**

\* **Single note rests.** These take their name from the note eg crotchet rest, min rest or rest (no name) for a quaver rest.

**Repeats 5.** For section repeats call the dots to the left or to the right of the double bar as printed. eg double bar dots to the right and dots to the left double bar.

\* **Articulation signs** come before the note of course. eg accented A min, staccato D crotch,

\* **Doublings**

To save space and for clarity, some signs can be "doubled". For

example with a row of staccato notes saying stacc G, stacc A, stacc B etc would be unendurable, so with **double stacc** before the first note and **stacc** before the last note it is quite clear that every note between will be staccato and much space saved and clarity gained. eg double stacc C crotch, A crotch, B crotch, stacc C crotch for four staccato notes.

**Doubles 1:** 4 or more consecutive staccato notes needed.

**Doubles 2:** accents, 4 or more are needed.

**Doubles 3:** slurs, 4 or more slurs needed.

**\* Order of Signs.**

expression, articulation, accidental, octave, **note**, finger, slur/tie.

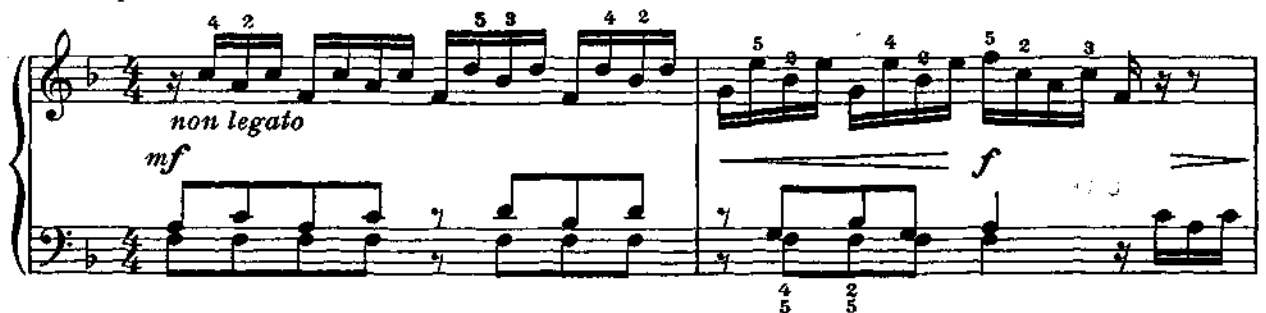
eg. *mf*, staccato, sharp, 4th octave, **F** crotchet, 3rd finger, slur

The order that the braille signs must be placed in !!!

**Piano Music**

As always no clefs. Dictate the Right hand first and then the Left hand which will be written on the line below.

Example 15



Thank you Johann Sebastian

one flat, four four

1 Right hand. **semi rest** *mf non legato* 5th C 4, A 2, C, 4th F semi, 5th C, A, C, 4th F semi, 5th D 5, B 3, D, 4th F semi, 5th D 4, B 2, D bar

\* **Bar numbers** are written at the beginning of the Right Hand line ie the first bar in that line has the bar number.

\* **Semi rests and notes** - semibreves and semiquavers are written the same, the context differentiates them.

\* **Fingering.** the finger number follows the note.

1 Left Hand. 3rd F **with its 3rd**, F with its 5th, repeat beat, rest F with its 6th, F with its 4th, F with its 6th bar.

\* **Lines.** The left hand starts with the number of the line of music on the printed page.

\* **Chords.** With chords, counting the bottom note as 1 again, count up the interval and give it after the note. eg A is a third above F, so F with its 3rd.

continuing the R.H.

cresc. 4th G semi, 5th E 5, 4th B 2, 5th E, etc.

Look at bar 3

3. Right hand. rest, *mf* 5th F with its 4th 2, F with its 6th, F with its 4th.

\* **Chords.** In the **left hand** intervals are counted from the bottom up as we think of chords, but in the **right hand** the top note is given and any intervals counted down. Count the top note as one and then count down. Yes left hand reads up and right hand reads down.

\* **Octaves.** Start each line with its octave

Example 16

thanks again Johann

\* **In accord right hand**

In this example the right hand divides into 2 parts. Dictate the upper part first then say "In accord" and dictate the lower part thus

10 Right Hand: 5th D min dot tie, in accord rest, 5th C, B, A, G, F 2. bar  
 2 Left hand: 3rd B crotch, G crotch, B crotch

\* **Tie.** Called after the note.

continueing for bar 2

Right Hand: 5th D D, C B, A B, in accord 4th E min, A crotch 2 slur 1 tie bar

Left hand 4th C etc.

\* **Finger change.** The fingers changed from 2 to 1. Dictate as 2 slur 1.

Example 17

39 Right hand: 4th F F, E D, E crotch 4 tie, in accord 3rd B crotch, crotch rest 4th C flat B.

7 Left hand: 3rd G 1 comma, 2nd G, 3rd C3 , flat B 4 with its 6th, A 5 G 4.

Notice a little crotchet rest I had to make up ?

Example 18

Here is an interesting example.

1 Right hand: 4th D 1 E, F G, A B 4 in accord 4th D crotch dot E, F crotch 1 tie

1 Left hand: 3rd C min dot tie in accord 3rd F G, A etc.

\* **In accord left hand**

Just as chords in the right hand read down and chords in the left read up, in accords are the same. Right hand - upper part then the lower, left hand lower part then in accord the upper. Think both parts come from the outside to the inside.

Then the Right hand goes on 5th C min, rest 4th G in accord 4th F etc.  
The left hand can go 3rd C min dot with its 5th **tied chord**.

\* **Tied chord**. Here there were 2 notes to tie, hence the tied chord.

The next Right hand is a bit tricky.

Right hand: crotch rest, quave rest, 4th B, C crotch **pause**,  
in accord quave rest 4th E tie G min with its 3rd,  
in accord 4th C min dot.

In this bar the right hand has 3 parts. You must start from the top with the 4th B, C crotch. Then the next line has E tied to E min but the E is the lower note so it is G min with its 3rd and lastly the lowest part - a simple C min dot.

\* **Pause** Call after the note.

Example 19



Here we have 7 thirds in a row.

**Doubles 4:** 4 consecutive intervals can be doubled. Dictate the first note and add "with its 3rd doubled" and after the last note say "with its third."

Right hand: 5th E with its 3rd doubled bar F F, F E, D C with its 3rd, crotch rest bar.

Example 20



Here we can make the music easier to read by using Right hand Left hand with an octave after each change of hand.

\* **Right Hand and Left Hand**

semi rest Left hand 2nd octave G semi, B D F semi, RH 3rd G B D bar B semi LH



3rd G B D, F semi Rh. 4th G B D, B semi LH 4th G B D, F semi RH 5th G B F, etc.

Example 21



The L.H. here can read 3rd D min dot tie with 4th moving to 5th 1, moving to 6th 2 bar D min dot with 5th 1 moving to 4th moving to sharp 3rd bar

\* **Moving notes.** 2 parts without the in accord which sometimes makes more sense musically.

Hoping these short notes may help you to dictate music and allow a blind friend to participate in music making. R. D.