

Sightreading Hierarchy

1. Time Signature

- a. How many beats in each measure? (Number on top)
- b. What note gets the beat? (Number on bottom)
 - i. 2=half-note
 - ii. 4=quarter-note
 - iii. 8=eighth-note

2. Key Signature

- a. How Many Flats/Sharps?
 - i. Order of Flats: B-E-A-D-G-C-F
 - ii. Order of Sharps: F-C-G-D-A-E-G
- b. What Major/Minor scale has that key signature?

3. Scan for changes in **Time** or **Key Signature**

4. Accidentals

- a. Check for flats/sharps/naturals
 - i. Sharp=note is half-step higher
 - ii. Natural=note is neither flat nor sharp
 - iii. Flat=note is half-step lower
- b. Accidentals carry through the entire measure
- c. Scan for the notes you would be most likely to miss and think about fingerings (really high notes/really low notes)

5. Tricky Rhythms

- a. Scan for any syncopation or hard rhythms
- b. Try to count out anything that looks uncommon
 - i. When in doubt, subdivide the music into 8th or 16th notes
 - ii. Count/Clap/Tizzle/Wind Pattern

6. Road-Map

- a. Look for any repeats or direction changes
 - i. Repeats=play selected section again. If no forward repeat bar, go back to the beginning
 - ii. Endings=Play first ending first, repeat, play 2nd ending, etc.
 - iii. D.C. al Coda=go to the beginning, then go to the Coda
 - iv. D.C. al Fine=go to the beginning, then play until it says Fine
 - v. D.S. al Coda=go to the Sign, then go to the Coda
 - vi. D.S. al Fine=go to the Sign, then play until it says Fine

7. Dynamics

- a. Scan for any dynamics markings/dynamics changes
 - i. Over-do the dynamics
 - ii. Always play with support and a good sound
- b. Specific Markings:
 - i. From softest to loudest: pp – p – mp – f – ff
 - ii. Crescendo=get louder

- iii. Decrescendo/Diminuendo=get softer
- iv. Poco a poco=little by little
- v. Subito=suddenly

8. Tempo

- a. Check your starting tempo
 - i. Never play faster than you can play accurately (slow & steady > fast & sloppy)
- b. Check for any changes in tempo
- c. Tempo Markings
 - i. Slow: Largo, Grave, Adagio
 - ii. Medium: Andante, Moderato, Allegretto
 - iii. Fast: Allegro, Vivace, Presto
 - iv. Accelerando: gradually get faster
 - v. Ritardando/Rallentando: gradually get slower
 - vi. Allargando: Slower and louder
 - vii. Fermata: Hold the note out or wait on the rest

9. Style

- a. Check for any starting Style Markings
 - i. March=upbeat, notes with emphasis and separation
 - ii. Maestoso=majestically; played with accents
 - iii. Cantabile=in a singing style; played legato
- b. Scan for Articulation Markings
 - i. Staccato=short, detached; with separation (don't "chicken peck")
 - ii. Accent=Louder front to note, slight separation; with emphasis
 - iii. "Rooftop"=Short and Loud
 - iv. Tenuto=sustain full value; make this note last the entire beat(s)
 - v. Slur=don't tongue unless the note repeats (trombones articulate lightly)
 - vi. Legato=smooth and connected

10. Strategies for Success

- a. Practice without playing
 - i. Notes
 - 1. Finger parts
 - 2. Say note names
 - 3. Sing/Hum
 - ii. Rhythms
 - 1. Tizzle/Wind Pattern
 - 2. Count
 - 3. Clap/snap/air drum
- b. Relax! Take in a good full breath before you start to play
- c. Don't stop and start over – keep going. If you get lost, find the last thing you played and start there
- d. Always keep a steady beat (tap your foot and sub-di-vidé)
- e. Play confidently! "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take" – Wayne Gretzky

- Michael Scott