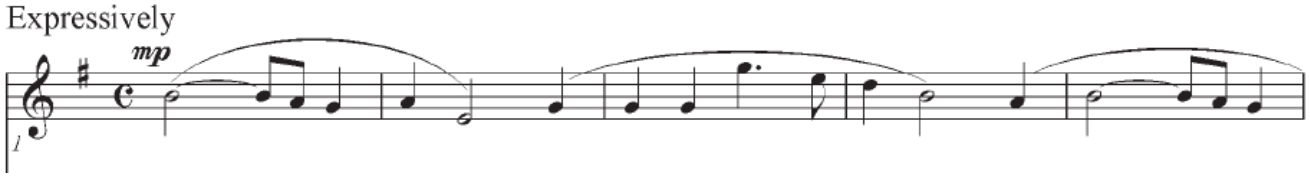
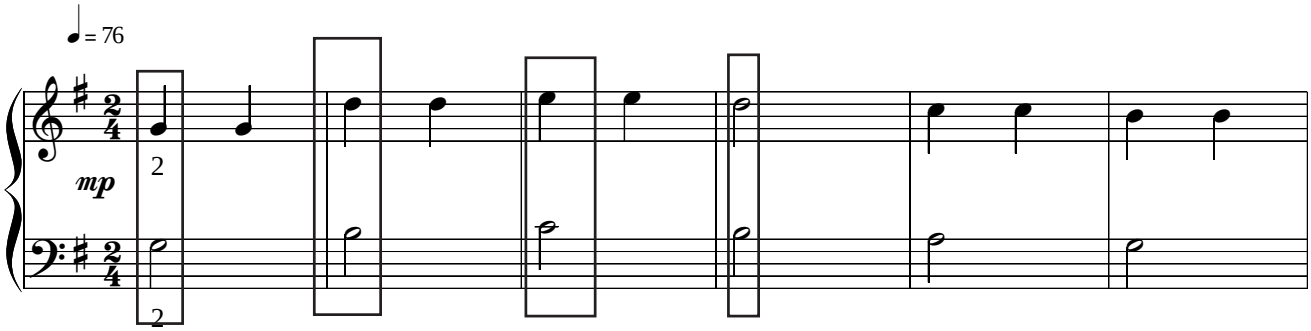
When a melody line only player, such as a flutist, reads music, their eye follows a horizontal line and flow of music.

Deep River

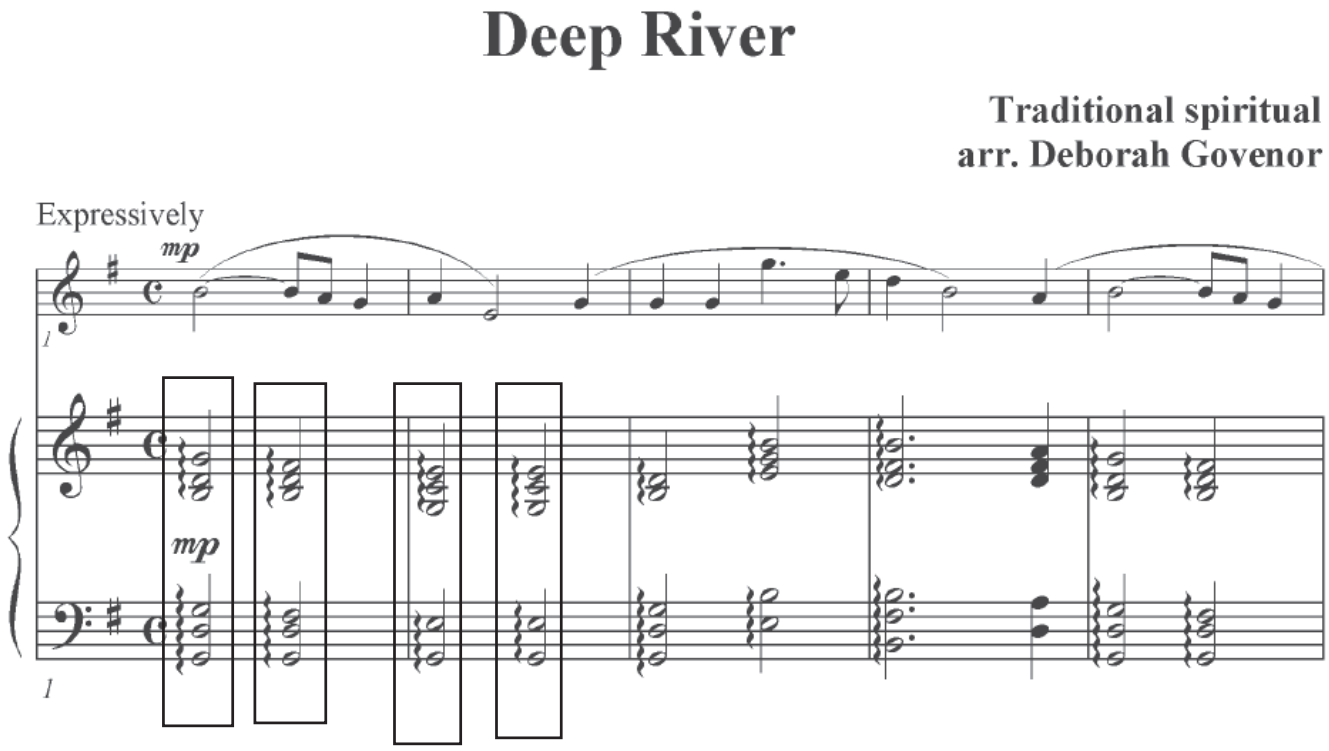
Traditional spiritual
arr. Deborah Govenor



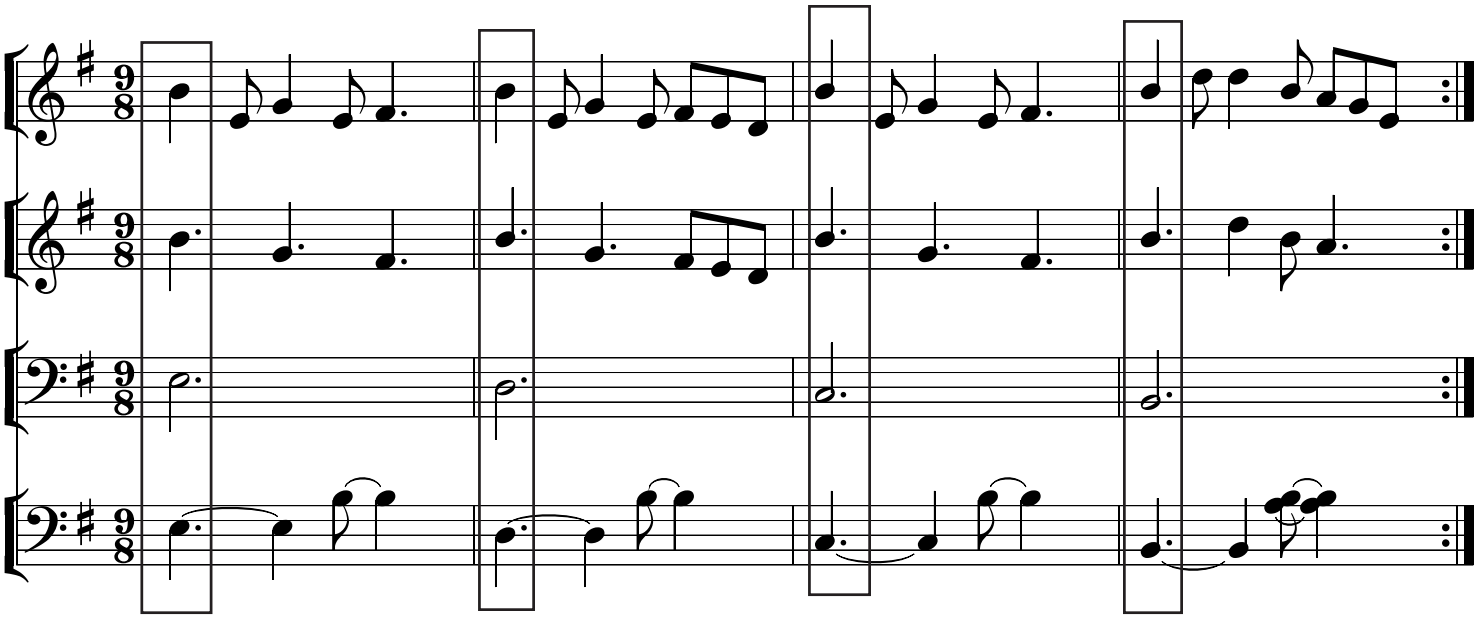
Harpists read COLUMNS (up and down) while at the same time looking ahead - sort of like driving a car.



Sometimes harpists (or keyboardists) read more than their own score, as do conductors. Here is the Deep River flute example with the harp acccompaniment. It is a good example of how we must learn to read blocks of notes in a vertical manner. Even though there are boxes around the notes that the harp plays, the harpist ADDITIONALLY follows the flute part.



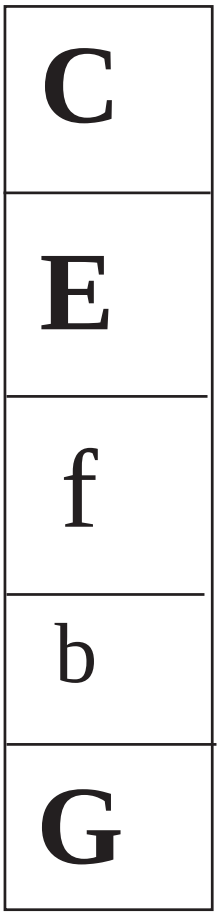
Below is a score where a conductor reads all 4 lines (parts) simultaneously. Focusing on the first beat of every measure gives you an anchor. To begin with, focus on the first beat of every measure and ignore the rest. When you are able to focus and gravitate toward the main beat of the music, then you may begin to absorb the rest. Example: The Butterfly for 4 harps.



Good sightreading is a matter of scanning both up and down, left and right, and commiting to short term memory. It is so very helpful to know theory, at least chords. If you can scan a piece of music and analyze the chords, your brain has something solid to commit to short term memory. Sightreading has much to do with short term memory - very short term. Some exercises follow.

1	2	3	4	5
C	D	E	D	E
B	F	A	E	A
G	G	G	A	C
D	C	D	G	B
E	D	C	C	G

The notes in a C chord are C E G. In the above graph, quickly scan up, down, right and left. Pick out the C E and G's.



To the left is one isolated beat. Look at it, get to know it, and then on your instrument, play the notes that are in the C chord and ignore the other notes.

Here is another exercise in getting your brain to work vertically.

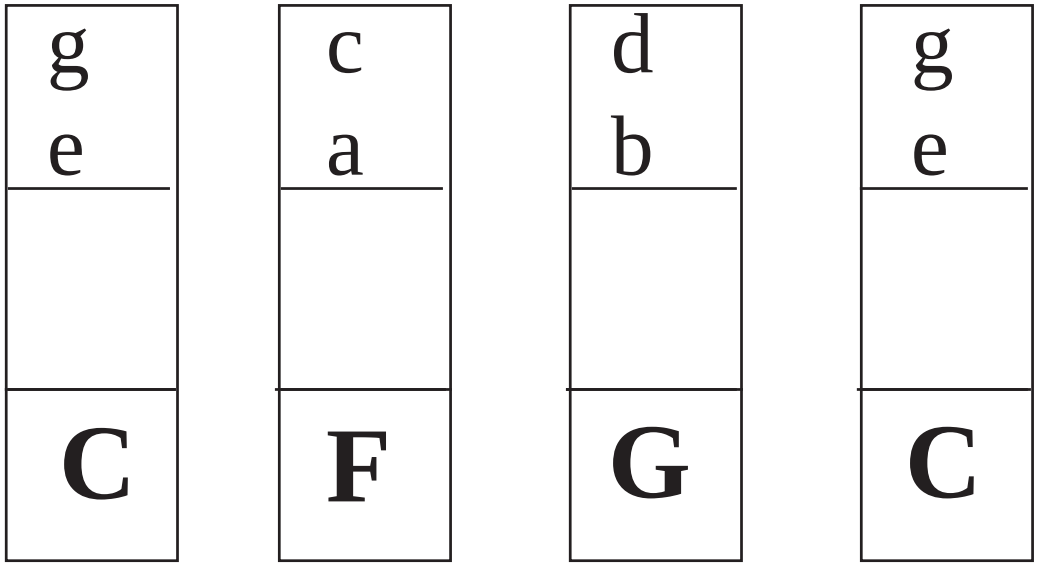
vertically work to brain your getting in exercise another yet is Here

Pick out the word “red”

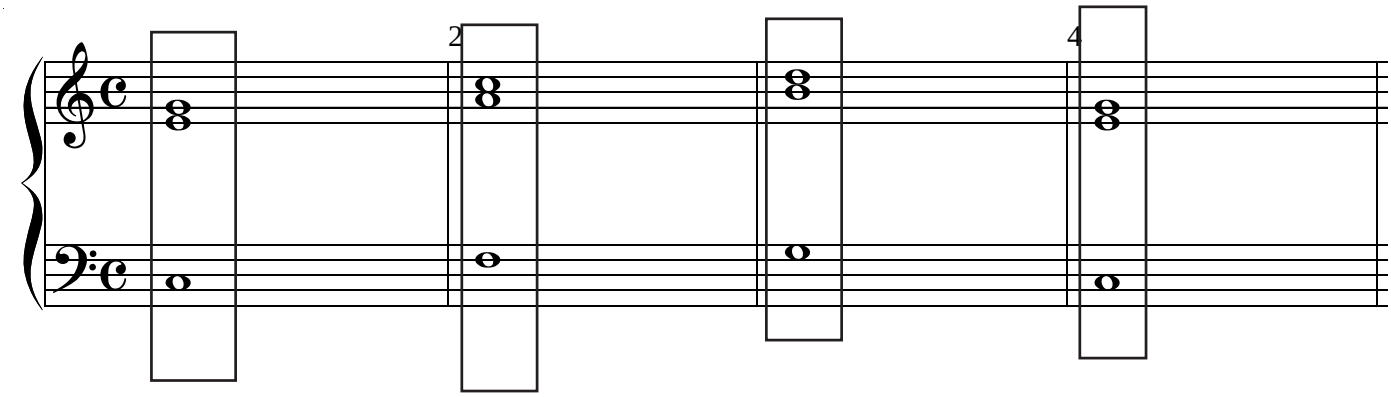
Red
shoes
are
fun
to
wear
with
red
socks
and
red
pants

Red shoes
are fun to wear
with red socks
and red shorts

Seeing, feeling and playing the downbeat is of utmost importance. If you can do that, you are well on your way because eventually the rest will fall into place. Review The Butterfly from previous page.

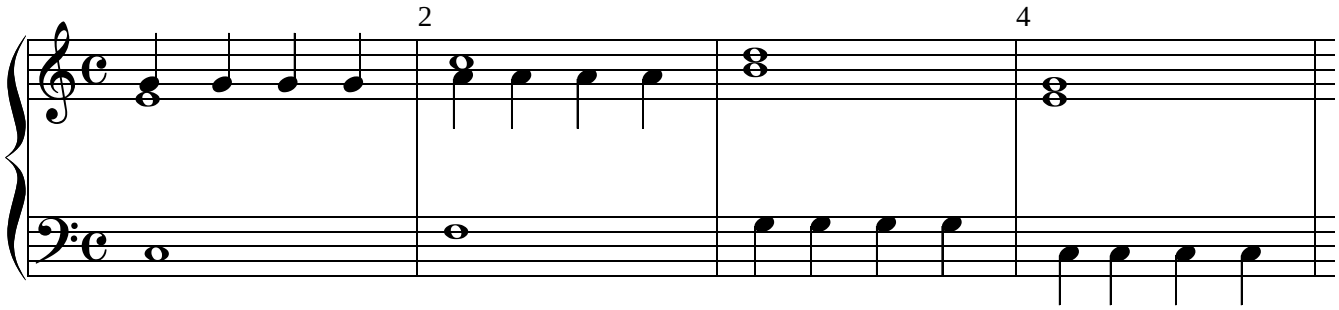


The preceeding tablature translated is:



Please try to quickly scan up and down to grasp the notes, as well as analyze the chords. When we sight read, we analyze, place, memorize, then play. Analyze each of the above chords, place your fingers on the corresponding strings, memorize by looking at your hands and at the music, then play.

Here is a variation on the preceeding example. The notes are the same, but there are more of them. See if you can absorb one measure at a time.



Analyze measure one
Place measure one
Memorize measure one
Play measure one while looking at measure 2

Steps 4 and 1 always overlap

Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play Analyze
Place
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Play Analyze
Place
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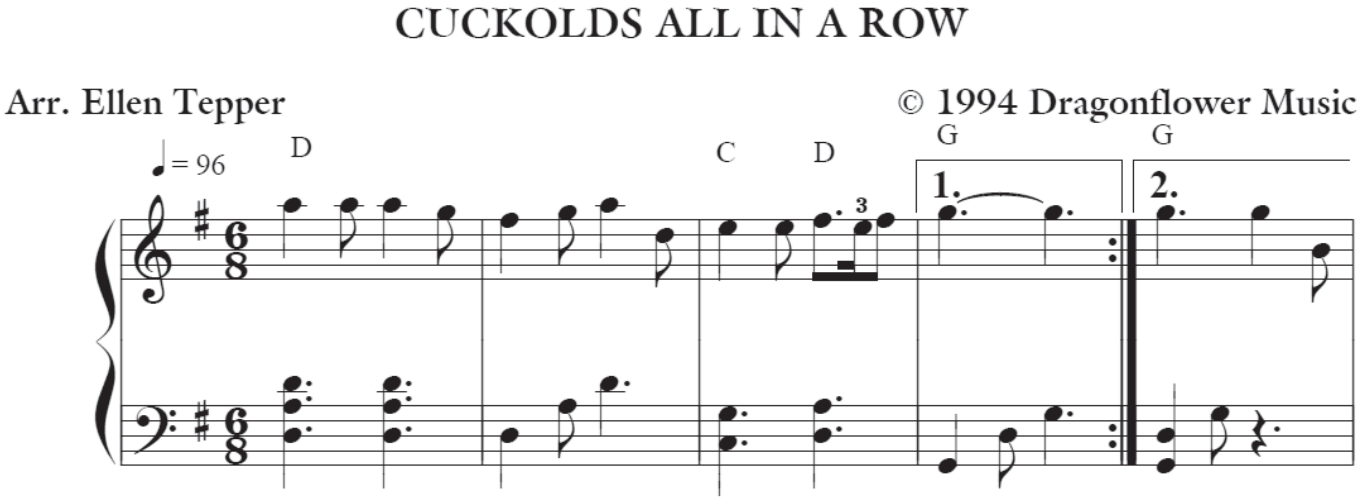
Play Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play Analyze
Place
Memorize
Play

Knowing some of the elements of composition will help your sight reading. We will discuss melodic countour and intervals.

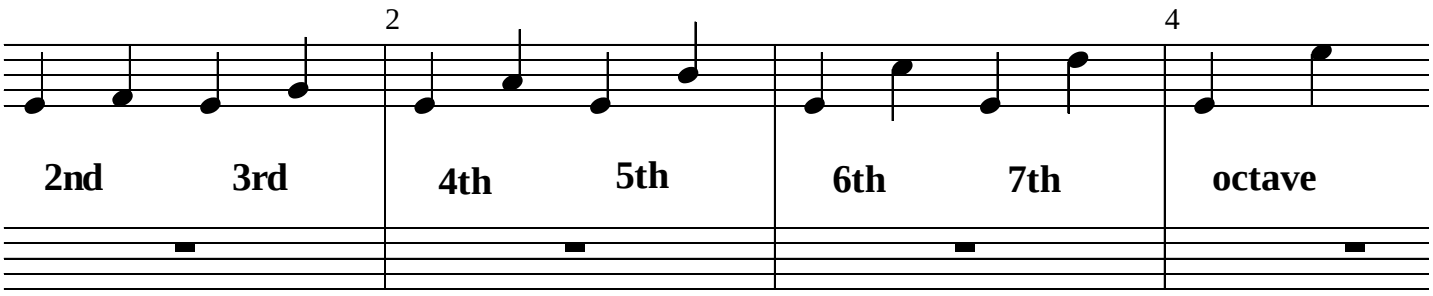
Melodic Contour is the direction of the melody. You could take a pencil and draw arrows to outline or follow the direction of the melody.

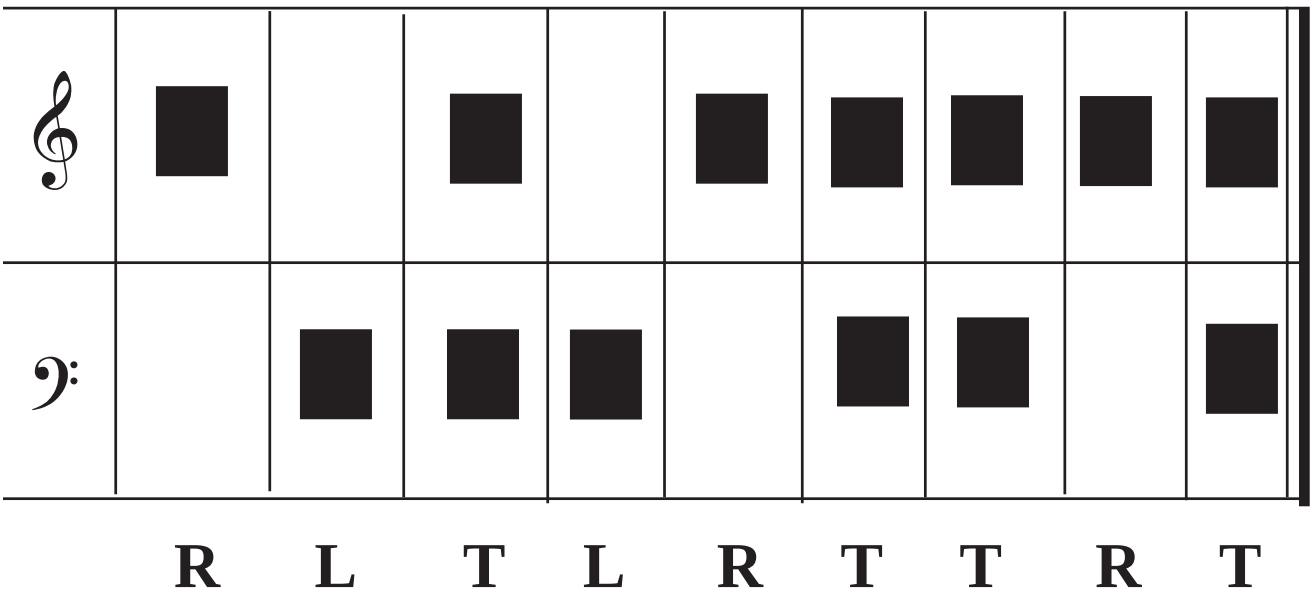
If you can analyze the melodic contour and interval relationships briefly ahead of time, you have a good start to knowing the map of the tune before you begin to play.



Follow the melody with your finger while it is played
Follow the melody silently
Follow the melody and say the intervals-
Follow the melody and say the distances ex: repeat, down one, etc.

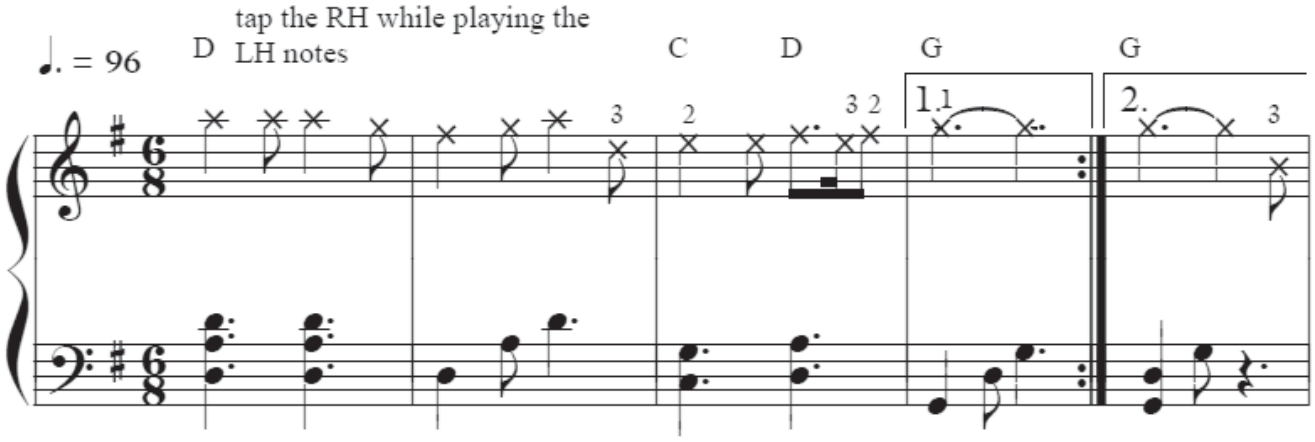
Intervals are the distance between notes, and if you are a good judge of intervals, you are well on your way to easy sightreading. The below exercise begins on a treble clef E. Try also playing it by starting on any other note.

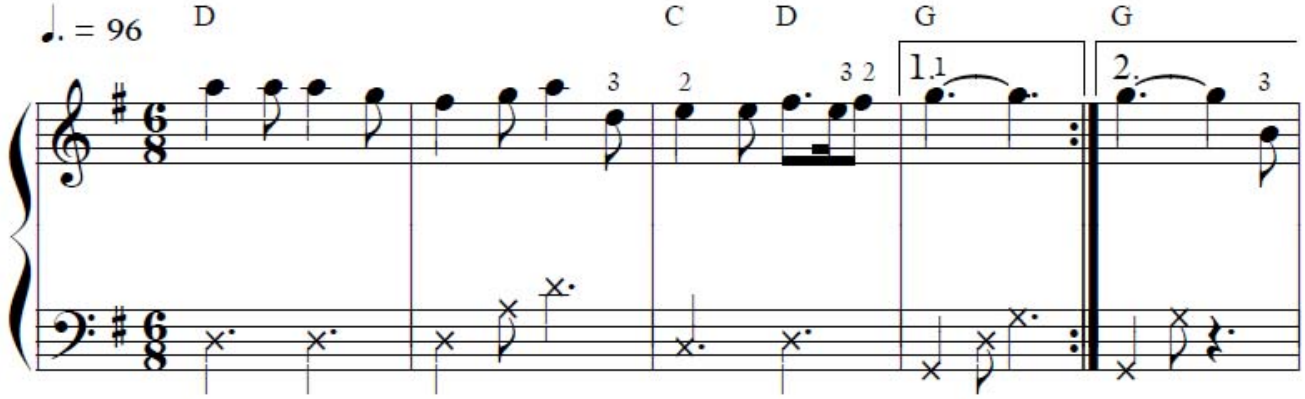




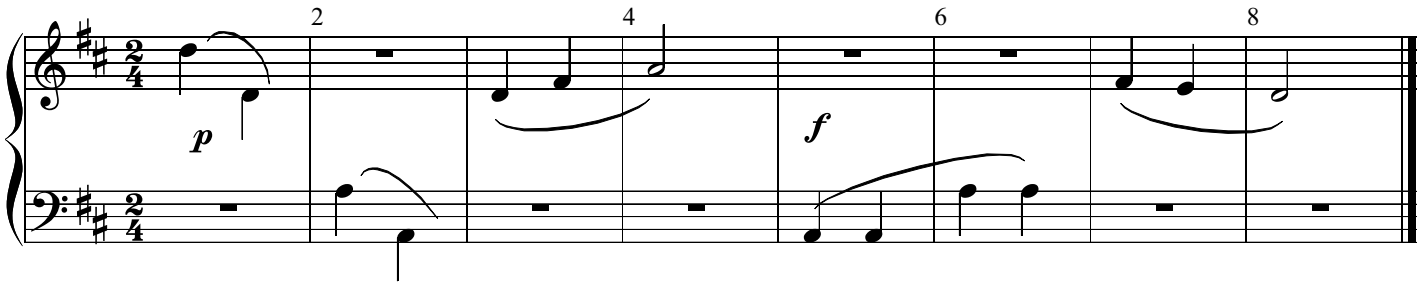
R= right
L= left
T= together
Say out loud while tapping
You can tap on your lap, or pretend to be playing the harp, or you can actually tap your harp strings
Even the above exercise is asking you to look at three levels vertically: RH, LH and the R,L or T underneath the boxes.

You may want to try tapping one hand while playing the other. This has worked well for some people who really had a challenge in sight reading. This exercise works many parts of the brain. Try one measure at a time. Baby steps is the way to go. The interesting thing about this exercise is that if you have the rhythm memorized, you do not have to look at the notes of the hand that is doing the tapping. If you like, try it hands separately first, but really give it a good go hands together.





Here is number 13 from page 29 of "Sightreading for Harp" book one by Anna Dunwoodie and Lisa Williamson of New Zealand. Please take notes on how one would best sight read this passage.



Sightreading Check List from **Sightreading for Harp volume 1 by Anna Dunwoodie and Lisa Williamson:**

Check the key-signature-lever/pedal settings

Check the time -signature - how am I going to count?

As you read through, look for patterns, repeats, performance directions, dynamics, rests, tricky rhythms, tied notes.

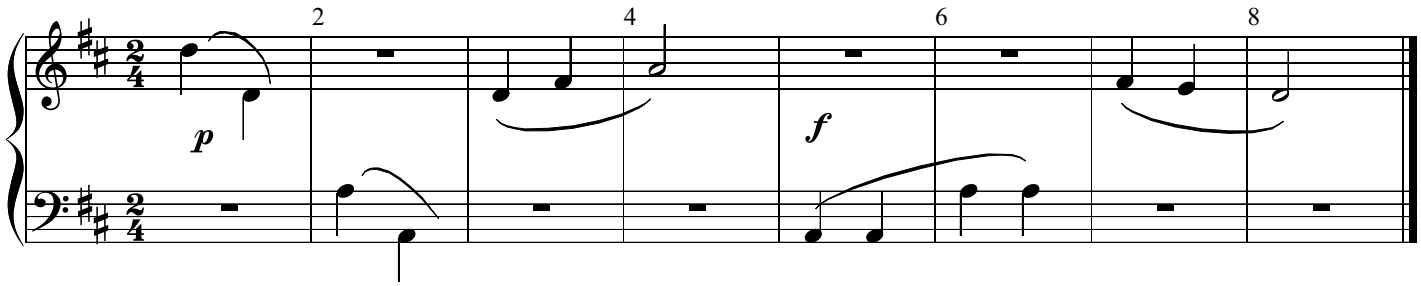
Work out the fingering

Try out anything that looks difficult, but don't play the entire exercise

count in one bar before you start

don't stop to go back and correct mistakes.

Sightreading for Harp is available in three volumes. It is a New Zealand publication, and available at Melody's Traditional Music www.folkharp.com



Analysis of above exercise:

Octave Ds and octave As can be prepared ahead of time. While you are playing measure 1 you should be looking at measure 3. Measure three you will already have analyzed as a D major triad. The half note in measure 4 gives you a chance to look ahead and see that the next 2 measures are octave As - easy to place while you are playing the half note in measure 4. While you are playing the octave As in measures 5 and 6, prepare your RH on the descending 3-note pattern.