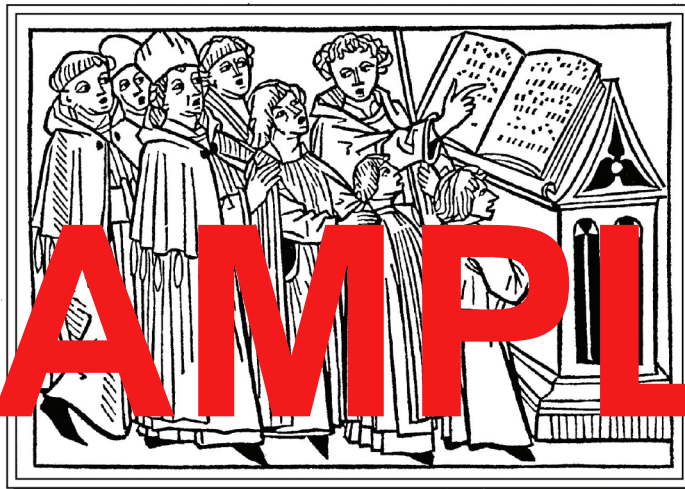


If you can sing
“Joy to the World”
you can learn to read and sing
Gregorian Chant.



Written for people
who do or do not read music.

Noel Jones, AAGO

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A Quick Reference Page

The Chant Musical Alphabet

DO

TI

LA

SO

FA

MI

RE

DO

We are all familiar with this alphabet, from the bottom up. as a result of the
The Sound Of Music song DO RE MI.
But people have trouble singing it from the top down. We can fix that easily.

Sing:
Joy to the world, the Lord is come

Now sing it with these words:
DO TI LA SO, FA MI RE DO

Now you know how to sing the chant alphabet both up and down.

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Important explanation for people who read music:

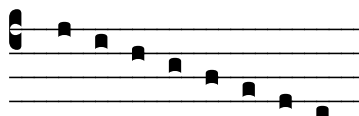
Gregorian Chant music is the foundation of modern music notation.

To learn to read and sing Gregorian Chant we are going to deconstruct modern music and strip it down to its bare bones, abandoning many of the things you worked hard to learn to understand and use. This may frustrate you at first - for example, removing two sharps from the key signature, as we are going to do shortly, would normally change the pitches we sing. But in this case we are taking them off the page, along with other signs which are used in modern music.

Instead, we are going to learn how to read a simple music staff that limits itself to the range of a human voice.

It might help to take time and look at this from the viewpoint of the person who does not read a note of music. The things we remove to get back to chant notation are things that have meaning to you, but were not, and are not, necessary when singing chant.

You are learning a new style of writing music. It is sort of like learning a foreign language, and discovering things that are the same, and things that are different.

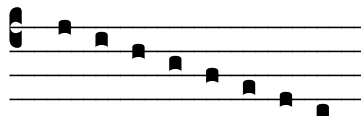


IF YOU CAN SING JOY TO THE WORLD YOU CAN LEARN TO READ AND SING GREGORIAN CHANT.

Everyone know something about reading music.

We begin by stripping away all the things that you learned about reading modern music.

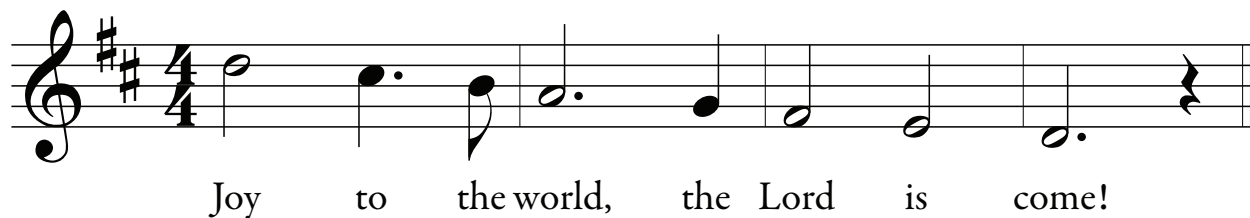
Then we start over fresh, learning only what you need to know to sing Gregorian Chant.



IF YOU CAN SING JOY TO THE WORLD YOU CAN LEARN TO READ AND SING GREGORIAN CHANT.

You do not need to be able to read music to learn to read and sing Gregorian Chant. All you need is the ability to sing simple, well-known songs.

Here is our first lesson:



Sing or hum this, with your index finger moving from note to note.



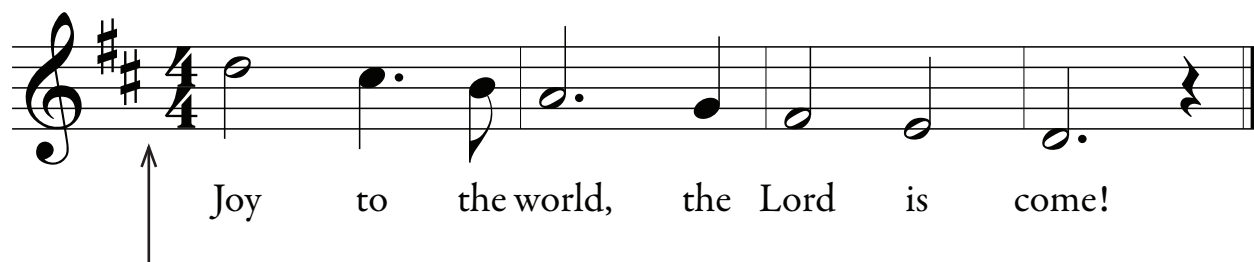
This is modern music notation. Modern notation uses a lot of signs which have to be learned before you can sing or play a piece of music.

On the next few pages we will explain what these modern signs and markings are, and what they mean. As we go along we will eliminate what we do not need when we sing chant.

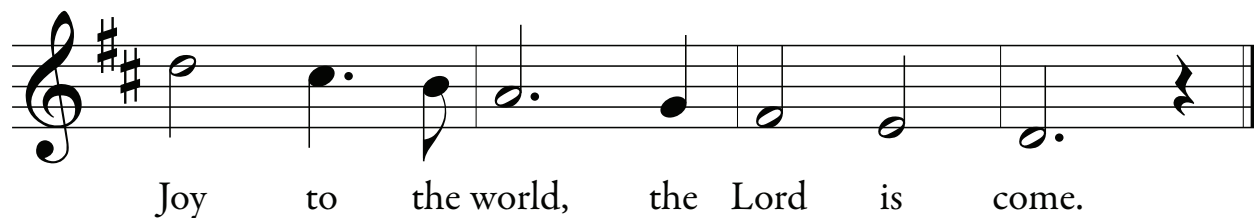


TIME SIGNATURES

In modern music notation a fraction on the music staff sets up the number of beats in a measure. Gregorian Chant does not have a set number of beats in its music. It's more free verse than structured poetry. There are no time signatures in chant.



Now sing the melody again following the notes from top to bottom with your finger as you sing them.

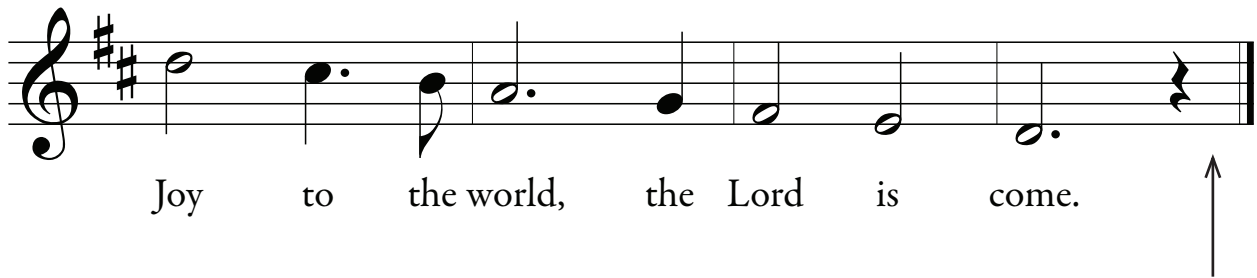


As you sing, note that the melody is not affected by removal of the time signature.

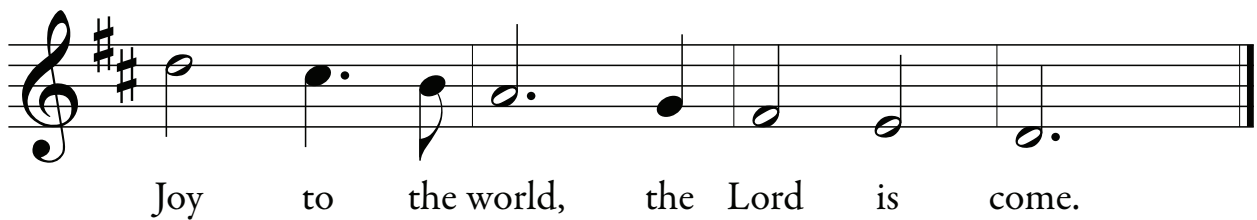


RESTS

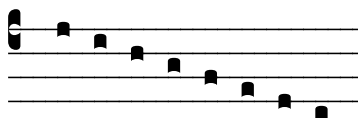
A Rest indicates a time to stop singing. When singing Gregorian Chant there are no breaks in singing until you come to the end of a line of music. This eliminates the need for rests.



Here is this melody without a rest.

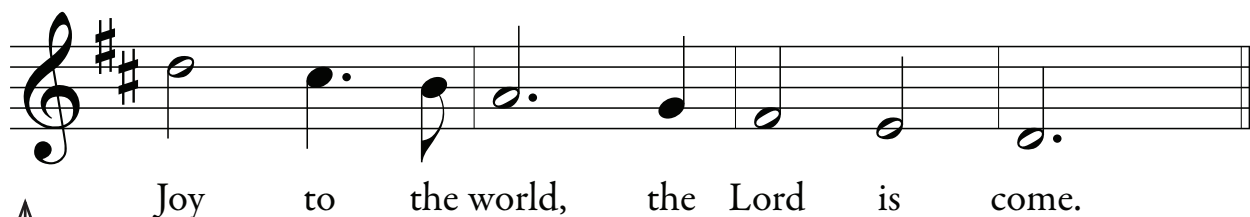


As you can see above, the melody is still clear and easy to sing.

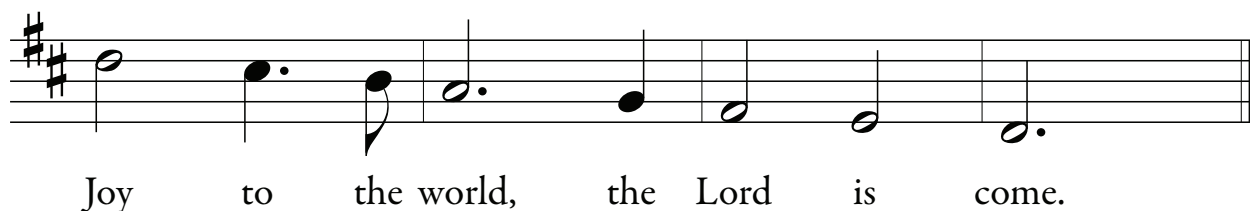


CLEFS

There are many clefs in use with modern music. These tell you exactly what note to sing or play. Why so many? Musical instruments cover a wide range of notes and clefs are used to tell which range of notes you are playing.



In Gregorian Chant there is no need for this kind of Clef, because the notes are the same whether they are sung low, by men; or high, by girls, young boys with unchanged voices, or women.

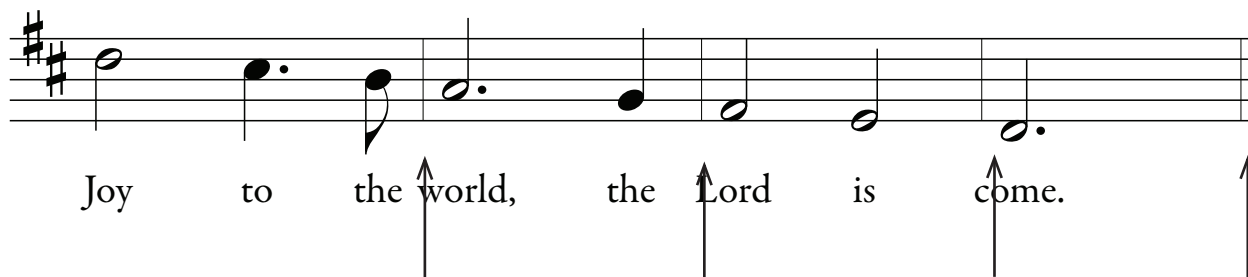


Chant uses two simple clef signs. Chant has only 8 pitches with 8 names.

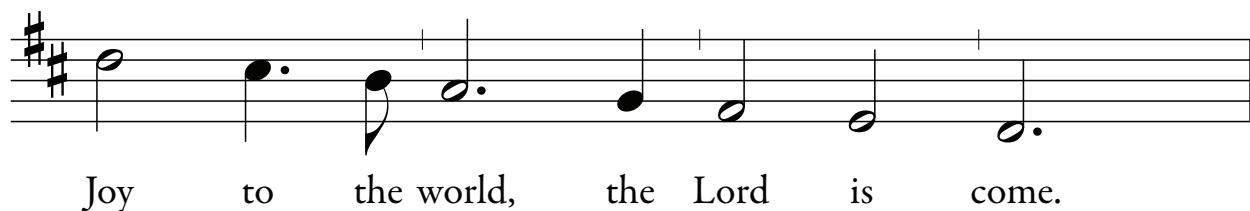


BAR LINES - I

Modern music Bar Lines serve to organize the notes, in a pattern determined by the Time Signature that we eliminated earlier. We do not need regularly-spaced bar lines because chant is neither arranged, nor counted, in strict groups.



In chant, only simple quarter, half and full bar lines are used.

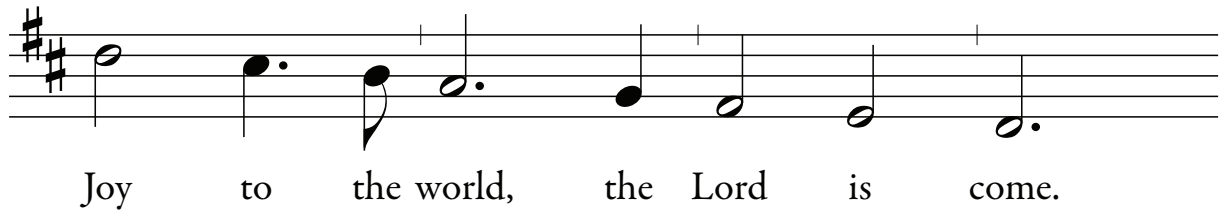


Quarter barlines in chant look like this.

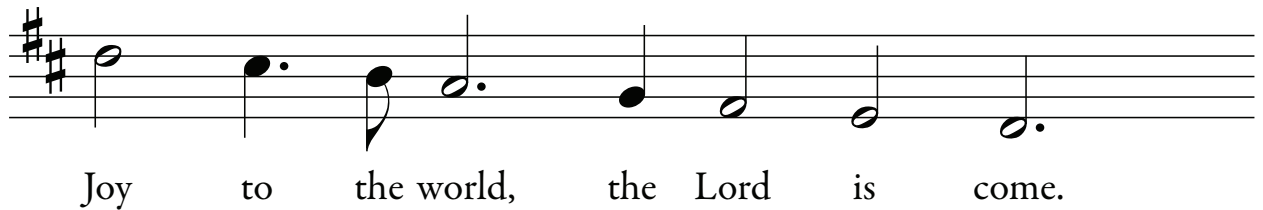


BAR LINES - II

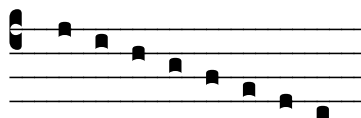
As we said, the little marking “ticks” help keep track of time, but have no musical meaning, and are not necessary.



Below we have removed them.

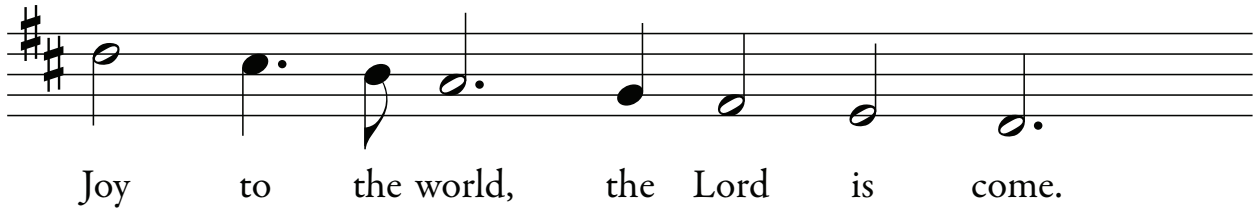


With your index finger following the notes one by one, sing the melody of Joy to the World.

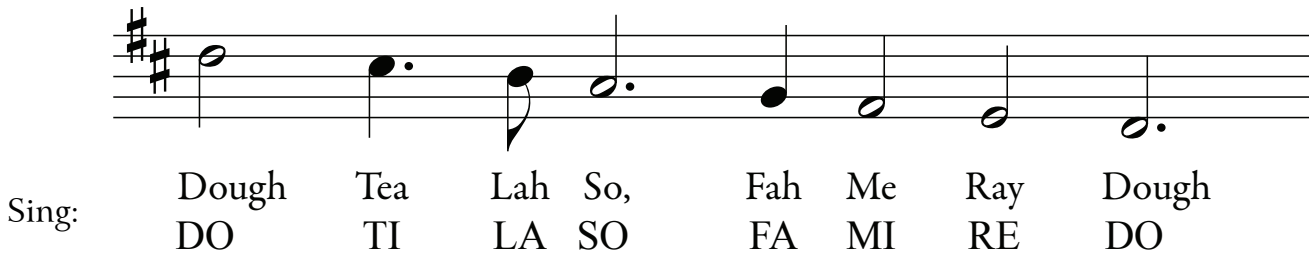


BASIC NAMES OF LINES AND SPACES OF THE STAFF

Sing this, with your index finger following the notes:



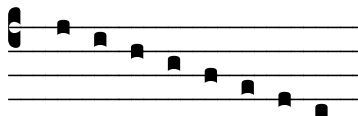
It may seem strange that we have used these same notes over and over to teach you how to read and sing chant. But there is a reason for this. Sing it using the words below starting with: DO



Under each of the notes is the sound of the two letter words that professional musicians use to name and sing notes.

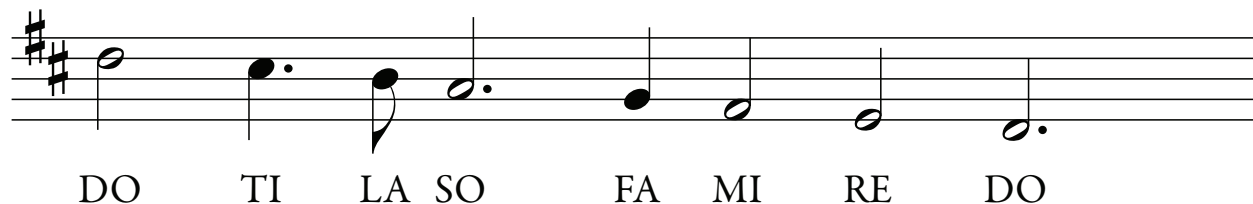
Why learn these?

DO RE MI FA SO LA TI, and TE, eight syllables. The only syllables you need to learn to sing any Gregorian Chant.



SOLFEGGIO

Using the simple syllables teaches better singing because they focus on pure vowels, which is the foundation of singing lessons.



Instead of English, these words are from Latin and Italian, two languages that have only ONE sound per vowel.

O = Oooh

I = Eeee

A = Aaah

E = Aay

[U = Uuh is the other pure vowel commonly used]

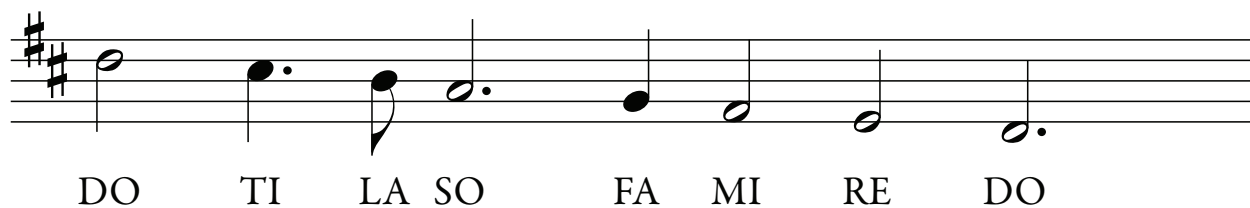
Just four sounds to master to sing the scale.

Sing this over and over again - at least 25 times, to lock these notes and their names in your memory. Do it while waiting in traffic.

Please read this: These 7 words plus one, TE (sounds like Tay), are all you need to know to sing every note of any Gregorian Chant ever written.

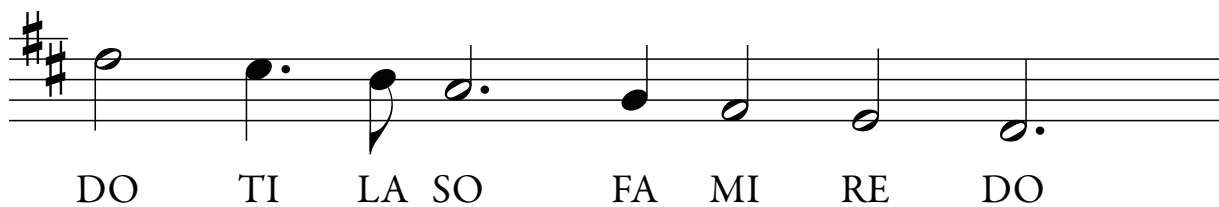


STAFF LINES



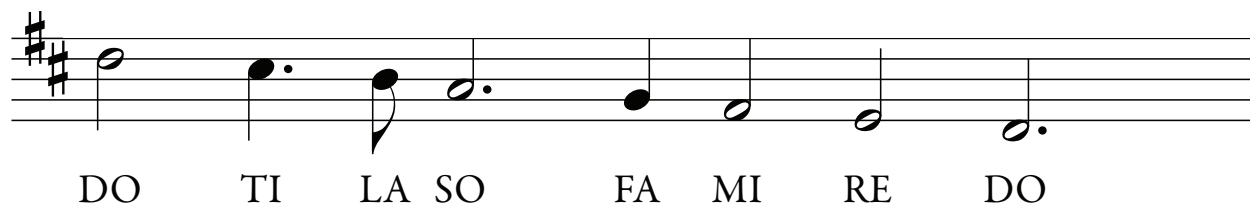
Notice, too, that the top line and space below it are not used when we sing Joy To The World.

Most chants are written for the range of an untrained voice, so the four lines and five spaces are sufficient.

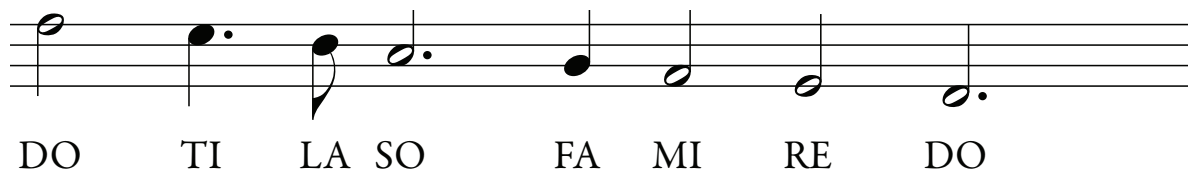


KEY SIGNATURES

Finally, we now remove the two sharps, the Key Signature, at the beginning of the staff. Key Signatures are used in modern music to tell you which notes are raised in the modern 8 note scale. Sharps are never needed in chant. Only one note, TI, is ever marked with a Flat Sign, and is then called TE.



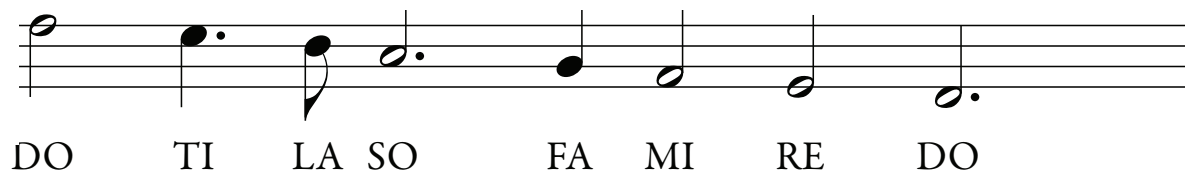
So we now have a staff that looks like this:



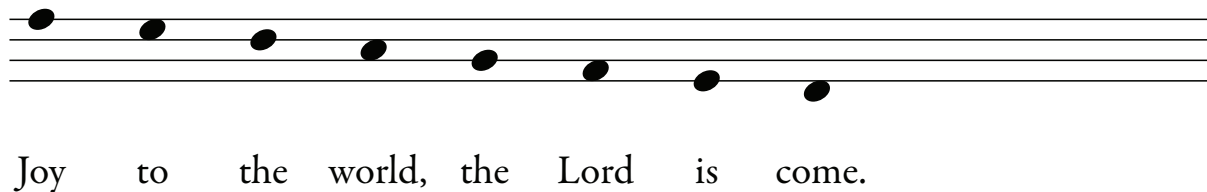
OPEN NOTES, STEMS AND FLAGS

Modern notation Open Notes indicate a longer note value than a solid black note. Stems are added to make it possible to add Flags, which tell you to shorten solid black notes. Dots are used to add time to a note.

All chant notes are the same so there is no need for open notes, stems or flags.

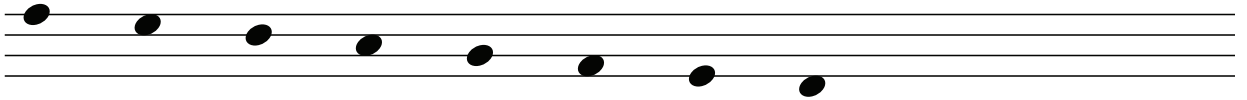


Now we have removed all the open notes, stems and flags.



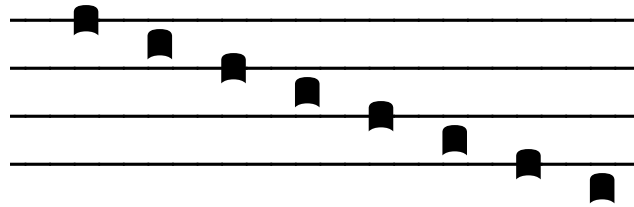
SQUARE NOTES

Square notes are easier to draw than round ones, when drawn using a quill pen and ink, the traditional way of notating chant.

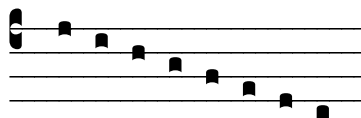


Joy to the world, the Lord is come.

In chant these round notes become square.

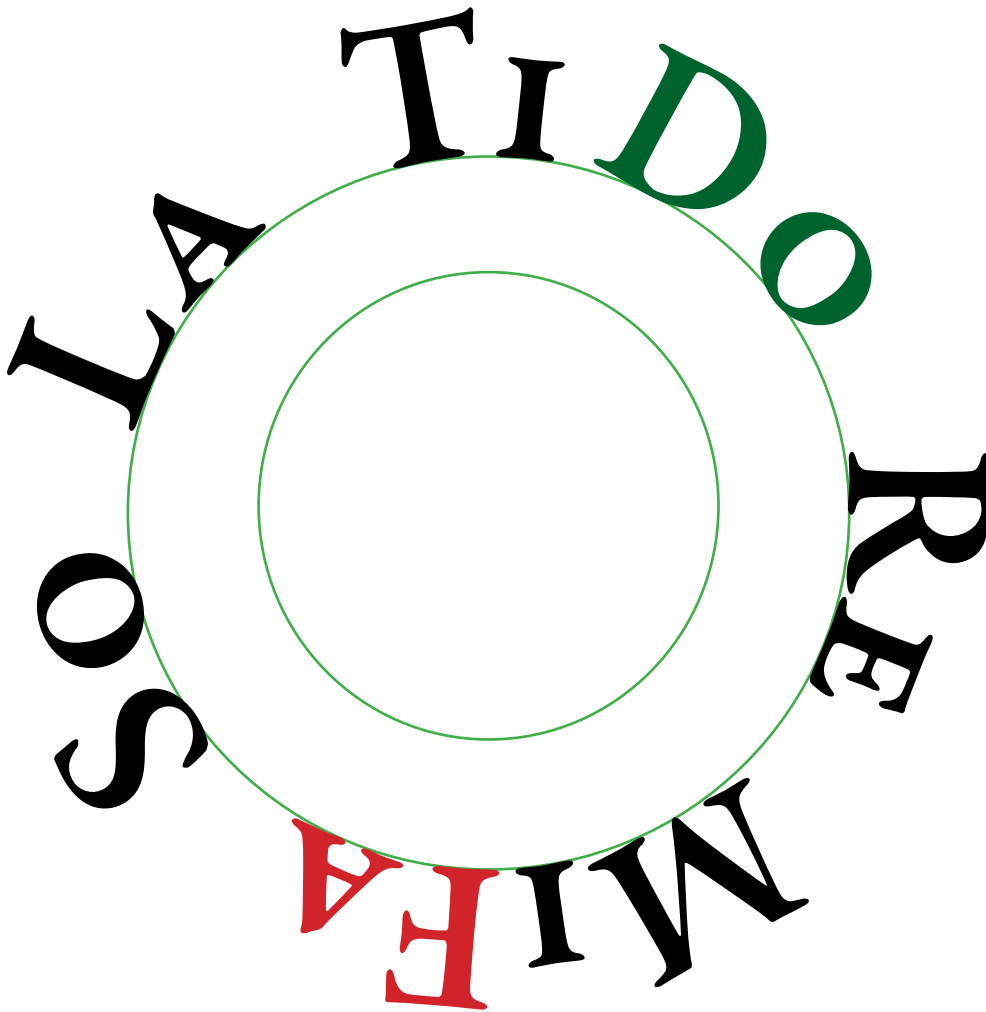


Joy to the world, the Lord is come.



THE SCALE WHEEL

Composers of chant pick one of the pitches from the wheel below to begin a chant and another one to end it. The last note of the chant is used to name the MODE. Each of the 7 MODES has a different sound even though all modes use the same 8 notes.



All modern music became centered on the scale that starts and ends with DO. Some music is written using a scale starting on LA, referred to as the Minor Scale. Even when a scale begins on LA, it is often modified to sound like the Modern Scale on DO.

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do