



BECOME A SIGHT READING “STAR!”



Playing a musical piece for the first time is called **sight reading**. The key to sight reading success is to know what to look for *before* you play. Use the word **S-T-A-R-S** to remind yourself what to look for, and eventually you and your band will become sight reading stars!¹

- S** - **Sharps or flats** in the key signature
- T** - **Time signature** and **Tempo markings**
- A** - **Accidentals** not found in the key signature
- R** - **Rhythms**; silently count the more difficult notes and rests
- S** - **Signs**, including dynamics, articulations, repeats and endings



MORE SIGHT READING HELP

THE SIX COMMANDMENTS FOR DEVELOPING SIGHT READING SKILL²

The ability to read music at sight with good musicianship is a necessary and important skill for every student musician to develop. At one time or another, you will be called upon to sight read unfamiliar music. Sight reading is a normal part of auditions that are routine for getting into school groups, state bands, community groups, military bands, music schools and conservatories. In addition, you will frequently have to read new music in school ensemble (group) rehearsals. Lacking the skill to be in control of these situations can be frustrating and sometimes embarrassing. The goal, then, is to help you develop skill and confidence in being able to read music fairly accurately the first time around. Highly developed sight reading skill is one mark of an accomplished musician.

On the following page, you will find some “words to live by” when it comes to sight reading. These will be referred to as the “**Six Commandments for Developing Sight Reading Skill.**” Become familiar with them, and soon you and your band will become sight reading stars!

¹ Lautzenheiser, Tim, Paul Lavender, John Higgins, Tom C. Rhodes, and Charlie Menghini. *Essential Elements 2000*. Book 2. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1999.

² Garofalo, Robert. *Blueprint for Band*. Meredith Music Publications, 1983.



THE SIX COMMANDMENTS FOR DEVELOPING SIGHT READING SKILL³ (CONTINUED)

1. **Sight Read More:** “We learn by doing.” Set aside a specific part of *each* practice period for sight reading practice. Just as you work to improve your tone quality, rhythm, and/or technical skill, the same is for sight reading. If you have difficulty sight reading music, start with easy material first. As your skills begin to improve, gradually increase the difficulty of material.

2. **Develop the Proper Attitude:** “A strong desire to become an excellent sight reader.” Every new piece of music encountered in rehearsal (including the music in your method book) should be viewed as an opportunity for developing your sight reading skill.

3. **Develop Your Powers of Concentration:** “A question of mind over matter.” Reading music at sight requires total concentration. Practice sight reading when your mind is fresh and alert.

4. **Don’t Stop:** “Good sight readers are constantly reading ahead.” When you sight read a piece of music, don’t stop until you reach the end. In ensemble (group) sight reading, always try to keep your place in the music by focusing on beat one in each measure: skip what is too difficult and come back in when you can.

5. **Know Your Instrument:** “Good sight readers recognize patterns of sound and rhythms.” Technical proficiency (know-how) on your instrument is necessary if you wish to become a good sight reader – scales, articulations (tonguing), dynamics, flexibility, tone, alternate fingerings or slide positions, and so on.

6. **Analyze the Music Before You Play It:** “Sight read it in your head before you sight play it on your instrument.” Use the **S-T-A-R-S** method!



³ Garofalo, Robert. Blueprint for Band. Meredith Music Publications, 1983.