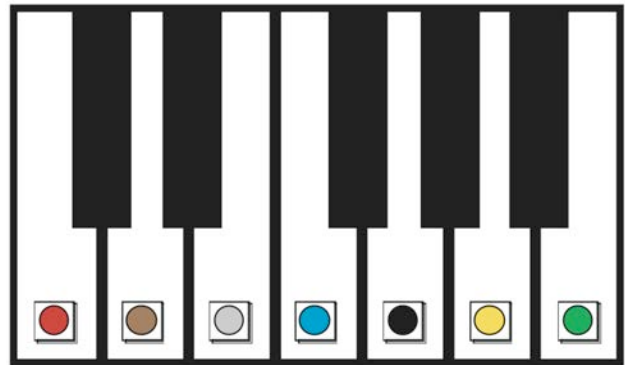
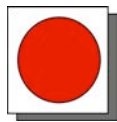


Figurenotes is a simple system designed to demystify the first steps in learning to read music. Each musical note has a corresponding coloured symbol. With the help of stickers on the instruments, **learners play what they see**.

There are no 'dots and squiggles' to be learned, just two simple concepts:

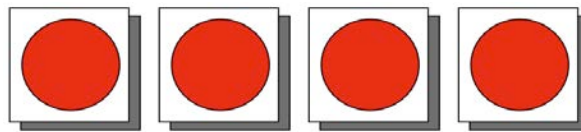
### MATCHING

Find the matching shape on your instrument and play it.



### PLAYING IN PULSE

Try and play the same note with a steady pulse.



1

2

3

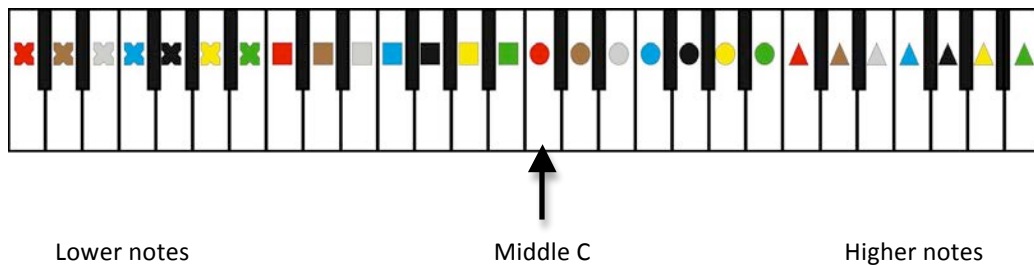
4



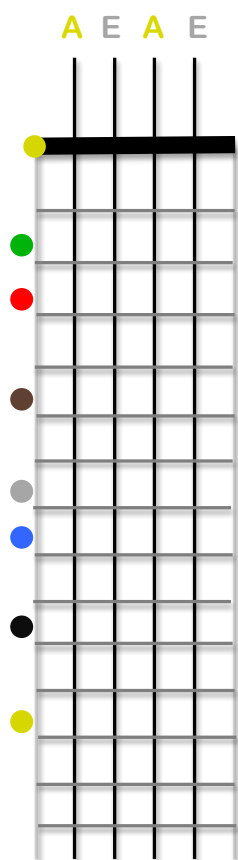
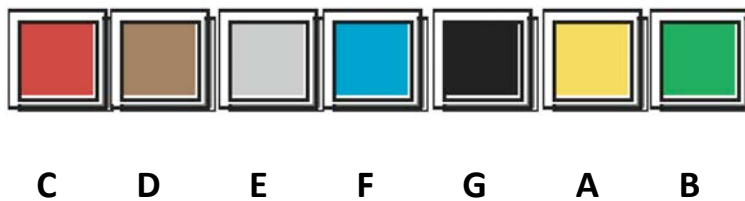
Figurenotes was invented in Finland by Markku Kaikkonen and Kaarlo Uusitalo at the Resonaari School in Helsinki. There they have been teaching adults with learning support needs to play, read, and perform music with great success for over 15 years. Drake Music Scotland has created and developed resources in English and pushed the system further by creating Figurenotes Software.

---

**This is the Figurenotes Keyboard**



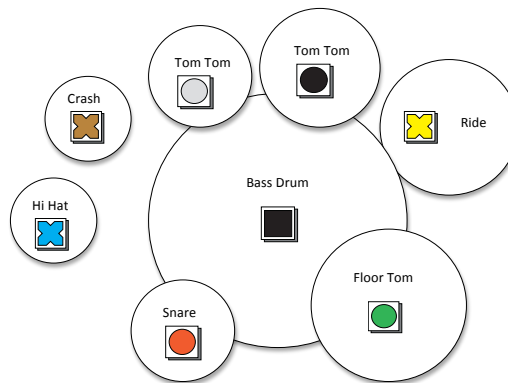
Notice that the pattern of colours repeats itself 4 times on the keyboard.  
The shape changes depending on the octave.



Figurenotes guitar can be adapted so that it contains 4 strings tuned to A, E, A, E.

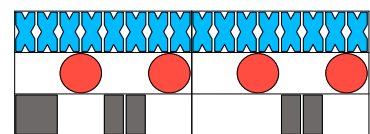
This means that playing chords is much easier. Stickers are stuck along the neck of the guitar and players bar the four strings to create the chord.

It is also much easier for those with physical disabilities to play, as it requires less pressure from the hand. Many players in wheelchairs find it easier to lay the guitar across their lap.



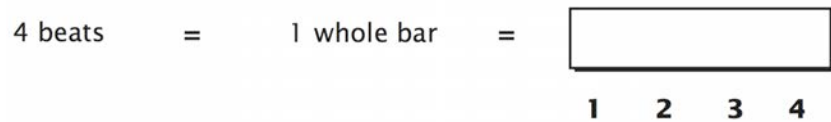
Example Drumbeat

Figurenotes works very well for rhythm, and is a great way to notate drumbeats.



## Rhythm

Musical ideas are arranged into boxes, just like bars in traditional music. The boxes will be the same size for the whole piece, unlike in conventional notation.



In Figurenotes, the note is as long as it looks.

This literal approach to rhythm makes a very abstract idea easy to master, reducing the need for complex explanation.

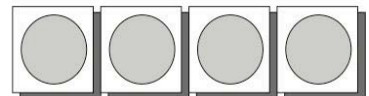
1 x 4 beat note (semibreve)



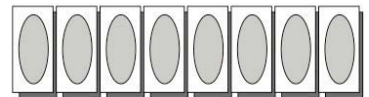
2 x 2 beat notes (minims)



4 x 1 beat notes (crotchets)



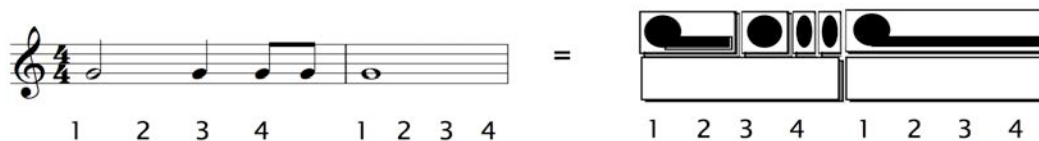
8 x 1/2 beat notes (quavers)



Rest are indicated by empty boxes:



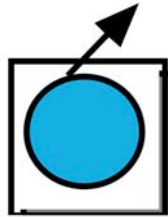
Below is a comparison between traditional music notation and Figurenotes:



## Sharps and Flats

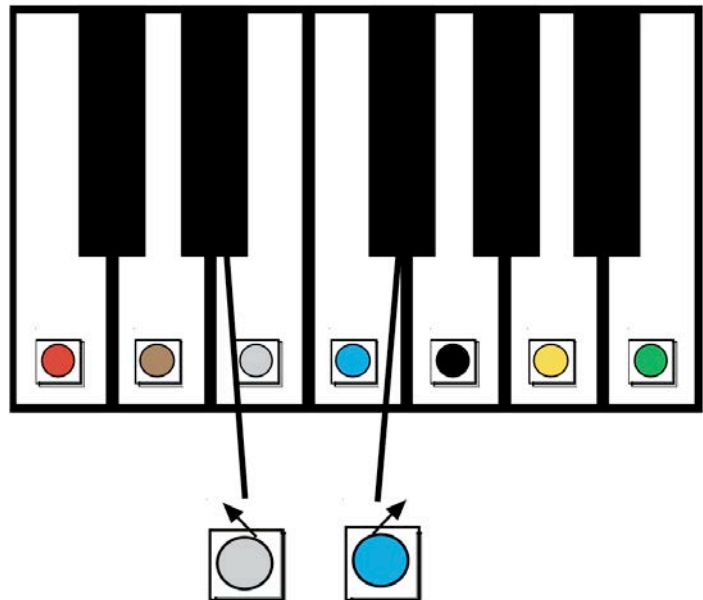
Figure notes colours and shapes specify the white notes of a keyboard.

If you need to use any of the black keys, this is indicated by the simple use of an arrow that points in the direction of the key.

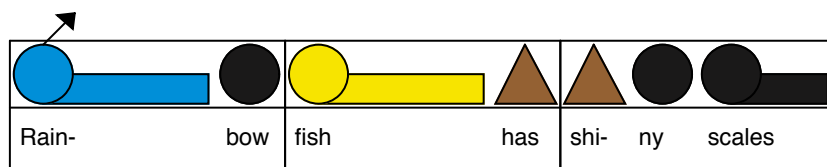


When a coloured symbol has an arrow it means you need to find the coloured shape and then play the black key in the direction of the arrow.

This may take a little bit of time to master but the use of an arrow gives a concrete representation of what the player needs to do.

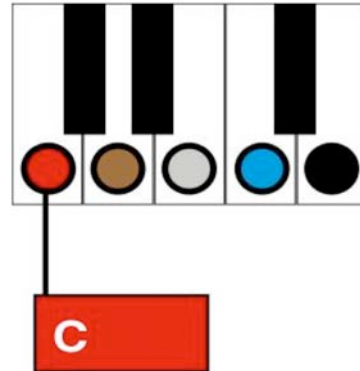


Here is an example of a tune using black notes:

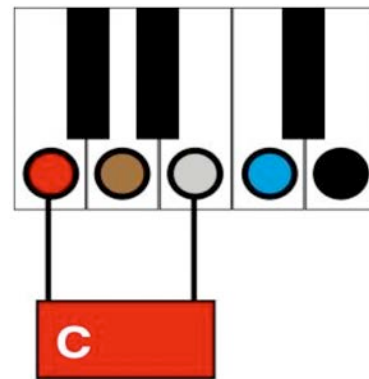


## Playing Chords

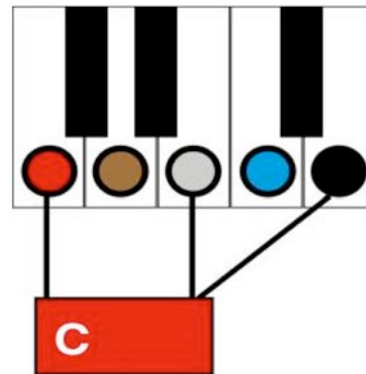
**Step 1**  
Play a colour  
(rootnote)



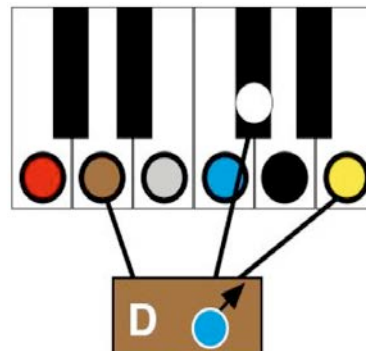
**Step 2**  
Play a colour and a friend  
(Rootnote and third)  
NOTE: A friend is NOT a neighbour



**Step 3**  
Play a colour and two friends  
(Rootnote, third and fifth)



Chords with black notes

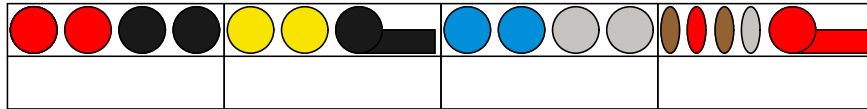


# Progression

Move from Figurenotes to conventional notation in three simple stages.

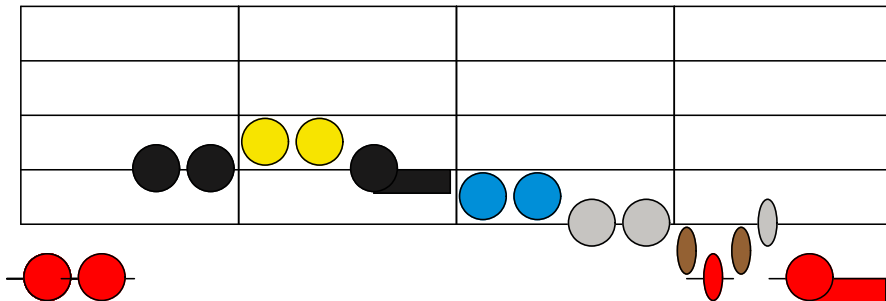
## Stage 1

Melody in Figurenotes



## Stage 2

Figurenotes on the staff



## Stage 3

Coloured notes



## Feedback on Figurenotes

“Figurenotes has opened a door of immediate access to music activities that would not have been previously possible, especially for children with special needs. No extra explanation or adult support, just hands on practical activities as an equal within a group of peers...It has also made skills transferable to instruments that would be otherwise be dusty in the classroom. A wonderful confidence booster for many children in the sometimes difficult practical side of music...A creative door of expression has surprised and surpassed expectations for children and staff alike in notating there own work with simplicity and ease.”

Emma Holderneffe, Teacher at Glaitness Primary School, Orkney:



“The immediate success has brought about a new confidence in some of our pupils who tend to be fearful of new things. They look at a page of Figurenotes and immediately think ‘I can do this.’”

Donna Macaulay, Kaimes School, Edinburgh



“Figurenotes is so intuitive it needs little of no explanation, which is such a benefit when dealing with pupils who find verbal instructions difficult. I have also seen some very distractible children maintain focus for longer than ever before.

Maggie Malloch, pre-school nurseries, Dumfries and Galloway



“It has ‘opened the eyes’ of mainstream pupils who can realise that anyone can play music just like they can. A highlight was watching one pupil with Additional Support Needs playing a duet with our Patron violinist Nicola Benedetti at our Big Noise concert.”

Alison Gornall, Tutor, Big Noise Project, Sistema Scotland



“It is such a diverse way of communicating the different participants' musical ideas and skills, so that they are all reading from the same page. Also, if only one person from a group is reading Figurenotes, this does not exclude them from the others, it is such a friendly and diverse way to bring together all musicians' levels of performance.”

Matilda Brown, Drake Music Scotland Associate Musician

---





# Au Clair de la Lune

Trad.

Melody	●	●	●	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	—	
Chords	G				G	D	G	D	G						

Melody	●	●	●	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	—	
Chords	G				G	D	G	D	G						

Melody	●	●	●	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	—	
Chords	A <sup>m</sup>				E <sup>m</sup>				A				D		

Melody	●	●	●	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	—	
Chords	G				G	D	G	D	G						