
S L B
ESSENTIAL SIGHT READING FOR BASS
with Philip Mann
PART 6
COURSE BOOK
SCOTTSBASSLESSONS.COM

# Contents

# ESSENTIAL SIGHT READING FOR BASS

*with philip Mann*

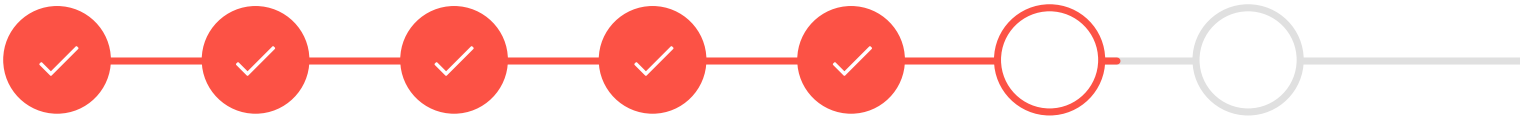
PART 6

## Introduction

So far, we've covered the open strings, whole notes, half notes, eighth notes and sixteenth notes. We've learned time signatures, bar lines, double bar lines, directional markers and repeats, ledger lines, articulations and key signatures.

In this seminal lesson, we'll continue our sight reading journey by looking at accidentals...

# The journey so far...



Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 **Part 6** Part 7

## Covered in Parts 1-5:

— The open strings: E–A–D–G
— Whole notes & half notes
— Quarter notes, eighth notes and sixteenth notes
— Time signatures, bar, double bar lines & repeats
— ***D.S. al Coda*** & ***D.C. al Coda***
— Ascending & descending slurs (hammer-ons & pull-offs)
— Articulations and dynamics
— Ledger lines and Key Signatures

*80%+ of the job!*

## In Part 6 we'll cover:

— Accidentals
— Key Signatures
— Triplets

*Gonna take some time!*

### IMPORTANT

Be honest with yourself. If you find yourself struggling with any topics from the previous parts, **DO NOT progress past this point!** You are not ready. You must be able to absolutely nail all those aspects—you should be able to read a piece of music as easily as you can read a book.

# Lesson 1

## Open Strings VS Fretted Notes

In previous parts, we've played the A, D and G notes as open strings. Now, we'll instead *fret* those notes to give us more control.

### Open Strings

— More bite and project the sound, but you can only play them *one* way.

### Fretted Notes

— A bit "rounder", with more bottom end.

— Fretted strings can be played with lots of variation; trills, bends, slides both into and out of the note, short, long, etc.

— Offer more control.

— Allows you to **manipulate the pitch**.

— Lets you **see** the notes.

***"Whenever you're sight reading, try to always fret your notes—it'll just give you a little bit more control."***

## Accidentals

What is an accidental? In short, it's a symbol in front of a note that raises or lowers the pitch of a note. When no accidental is present, we play the note as a natural.

### Sharps, Flats and Naturals

Let's first look at the three most common accidentals found in music:

### Sharp

*Raises* the note pitch by one half step (one semitone, or *up* one fret)

### Flat

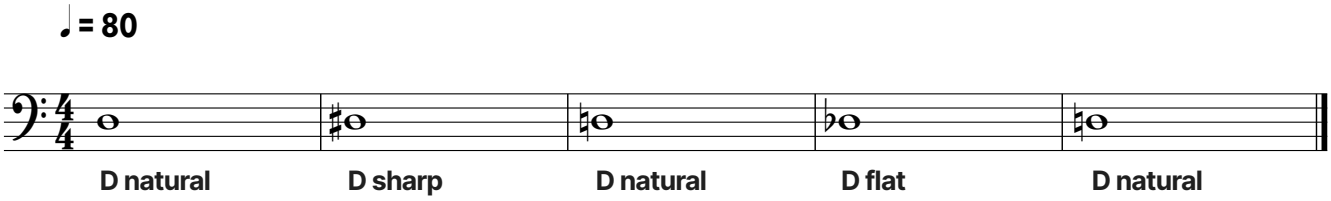
*Lowers* the note pitch by one half step (one semitone, or *down* one fret)

### Natural

Returns the note back to its *original* pitch.

# **LESSON 1** (continued)

## In-Studio Example 2



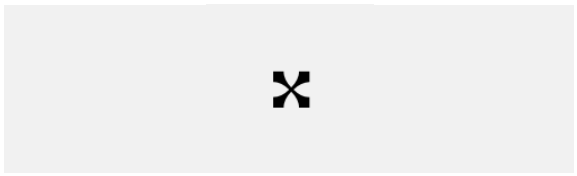

An accidental is always **on the note** that it affects. Notice how the sharp in Bar 2 is centered on the D line—it only affects the D note.

It's important to note that accidentals last only until the ***end of the bar***; the bar line *cancels* the accidental.

And although not strictly necessary, in Bar 3 we see a natural sign on the D note. While the bar line *does* cancel the sharp from the previous measure, you'll often see a natural written on the first occurrence of the note if it appears in the next measure. It's just a courtesy to remind you that yes, it's meant to be played as natural and not a sharp.

### Double Sharps and Double Flats

Sharps, flats, and naturals are not the only types of accidentals—you may also encounter double sharps and double flats, although they are much less common (and we won't be using them in this course):



#### Double Sharp

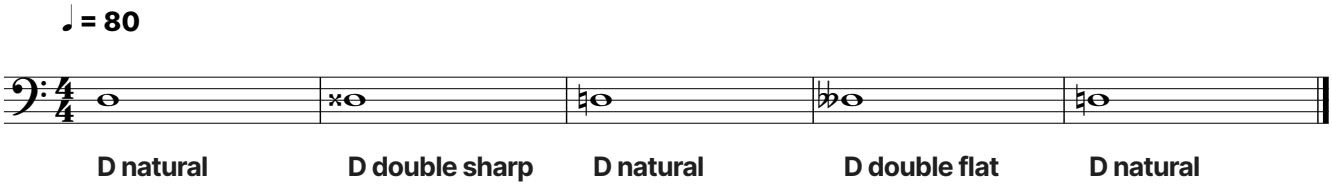
Raises the note by two half steps (two semitones, or *up* two frets)

#### Double Flat

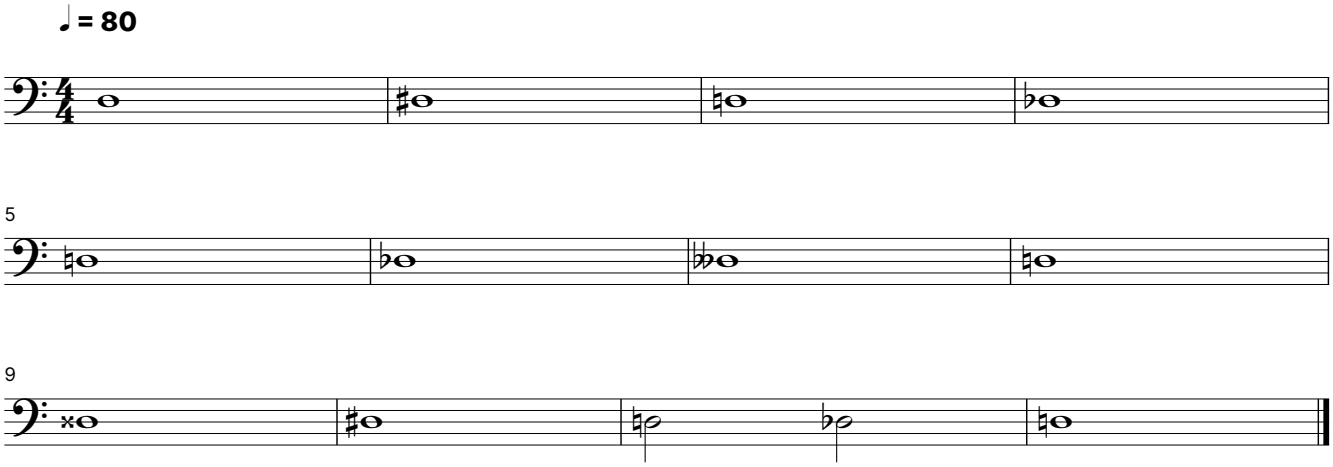
Lowers the note pitch by two half steps (two semitones, or *down* two frets)

# **LESSON 1** (continued)

## In-Studio Example 2




## In-Studio Example 3



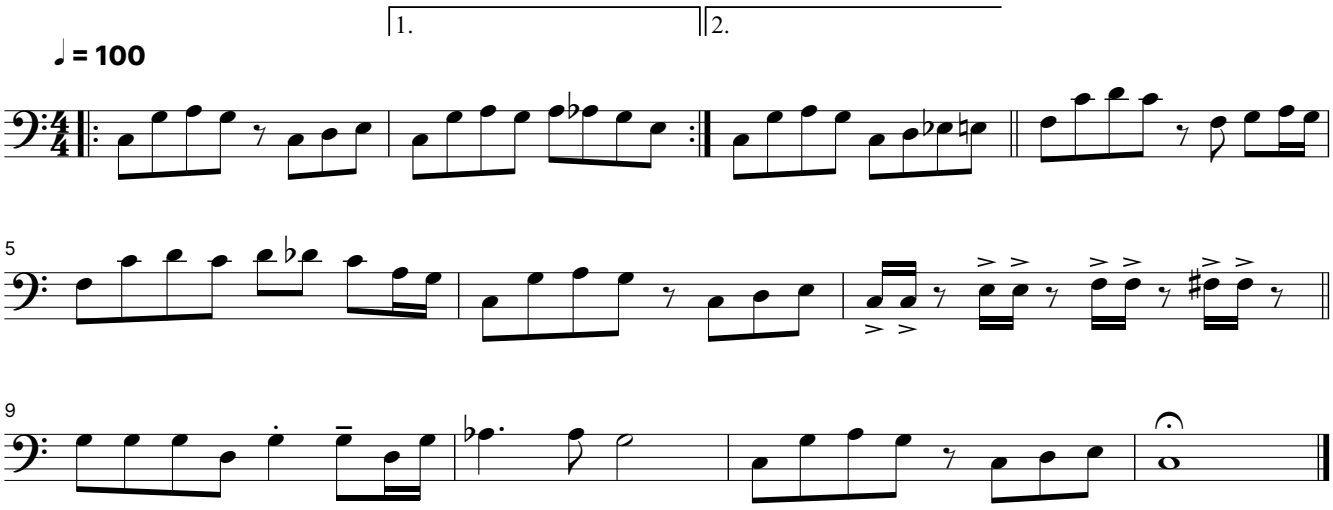

Note in Bar 11, we have two accidentals in the same measure—the first D note is played natural, the second is flat.

As you've no doubt noticed, a D double sharp (D𝄪)is the same note as an E natural (E♮)—they're **enharmonic equivalents**, meaning they're the *same* note, just different names. The same is true for D double flat (D𝄫) and C natural (C♮).

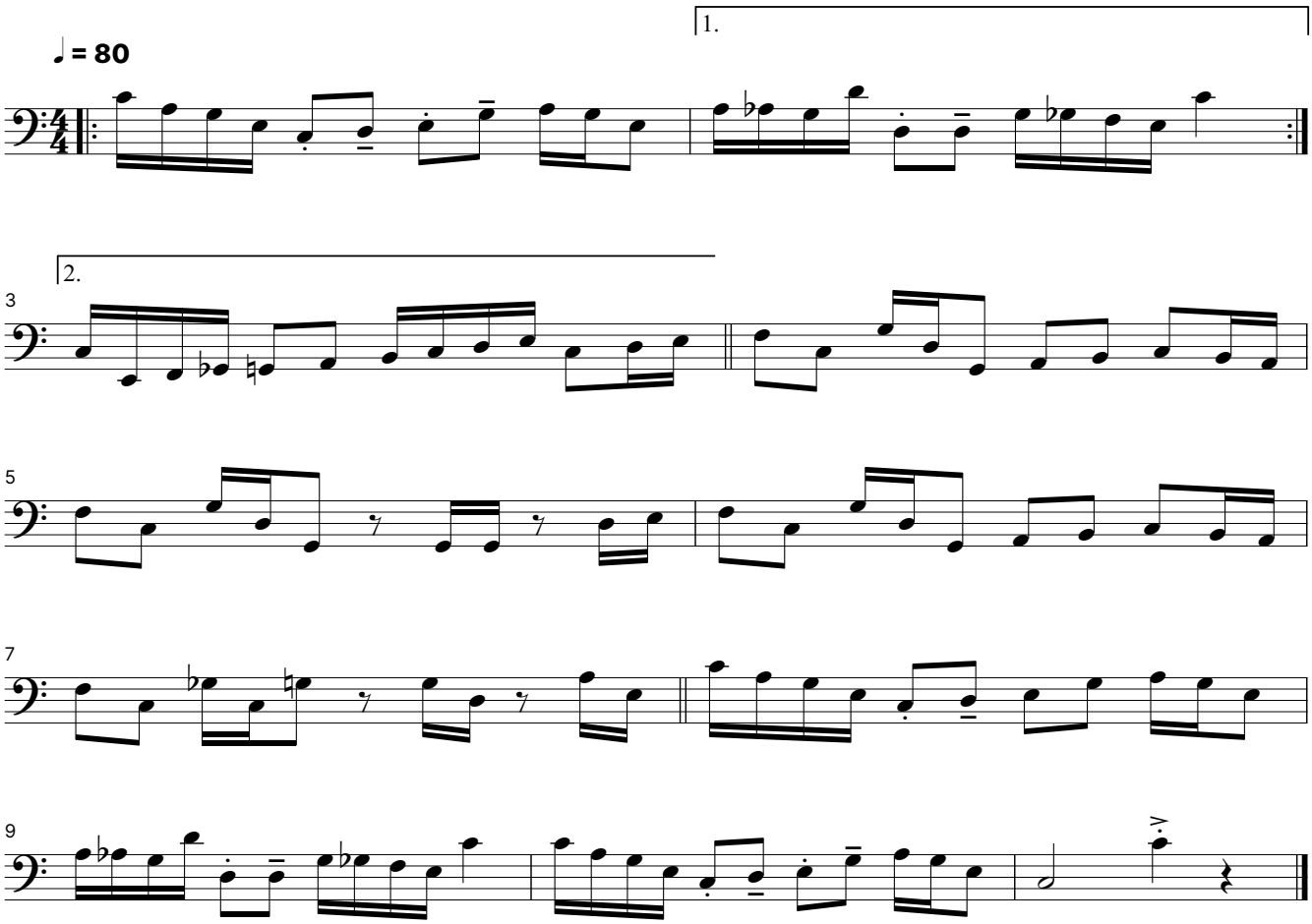
For now, we'll just concentrate on sharps, flats, and naturals. But double sharps and double flats are needed in certain *key signatures*, which will be covered next in this course.

# **LESSON 1** (continued)

## Exercise 1




## Exercise 2



# Lesson 2

## Key Signatures

Recall that accidentals *manipulate* a note's pitch either up or down. **Key signatures** appear at the beginning of a piece of music, and consist of a group of sharps (♯), flats (♭), or neither—but not both—that indicate which notes are raised or lowered throughout the *entire piece* of music, and in all octaves.

***"We've gotten to a point in your progression where basically you're gonna have to just lock down and work hard on the stuff you might not want to work on."***


### Key Signatures with Sharps

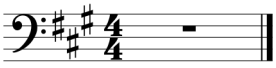
There is a specific order that the sharps appear in a key signature. Sharps get added to the key signature in intervals of **fifths**, and are *always* added in the **same order**:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F♯ | C♯ | G♯ | D♯ | A♯ | E♯ | B♯ |

### Identifying the Major Key with Sharps in the Key Signature:

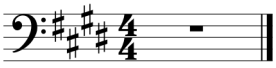
1. Find the last sharp (farthest right) in the key signature.
2. Raise that note one semitone.
3. The resulting note is your **major key**.
4. Done.

**Key Signature Example 1**



1. Three sharps, the last one is G♯.
2. G♯ raised one semitone is A.
3. The key signature is **A Major**.

**Key Signature Example 2**



1. Four sharps, the last one is D♯.
2. D♯ raised one semitone is E.
3. The key signature is **E Major**.

continued ⟶

# **LESSON 2** (continued)

## Key Signatures and the Major Scale

Key signatures not only indicate what key the music is in, but they give us an idea of **where** to play the music on the fretboard. If we have one sharp for instance, we're in G Major. All or most of the notes in the music should be found in, or related to, the G Major Scale. And notes that are *not* part of the scale that scale will be written with an *accidental*.

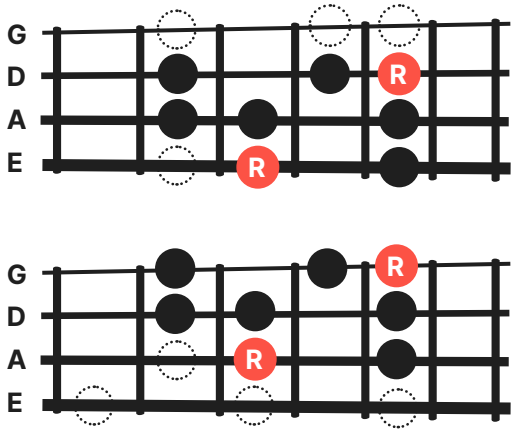
Recall that the major scale pattern* is created using a "tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone" note order. Starting on G, you'll see that using this pattern causes all the F notes to be *sharp*... exactly what's seen in the key signature.

This relationship between the key signature and the major scale is true for **any** major key. It doesn't matter how many sharps (or flats) are present: by playing a major scale pattern starting on the root of the corresponding key signature, the scale pattern takes care of all of them!

## Major Scale Patterns

Two "economical" major scale patterns you can use are shown on the right. The red circled "R" represents the root. Black dots make up the notes of the major scale in one octave.

Dashed circles show notes in the major scale above or below the root, as indicated.

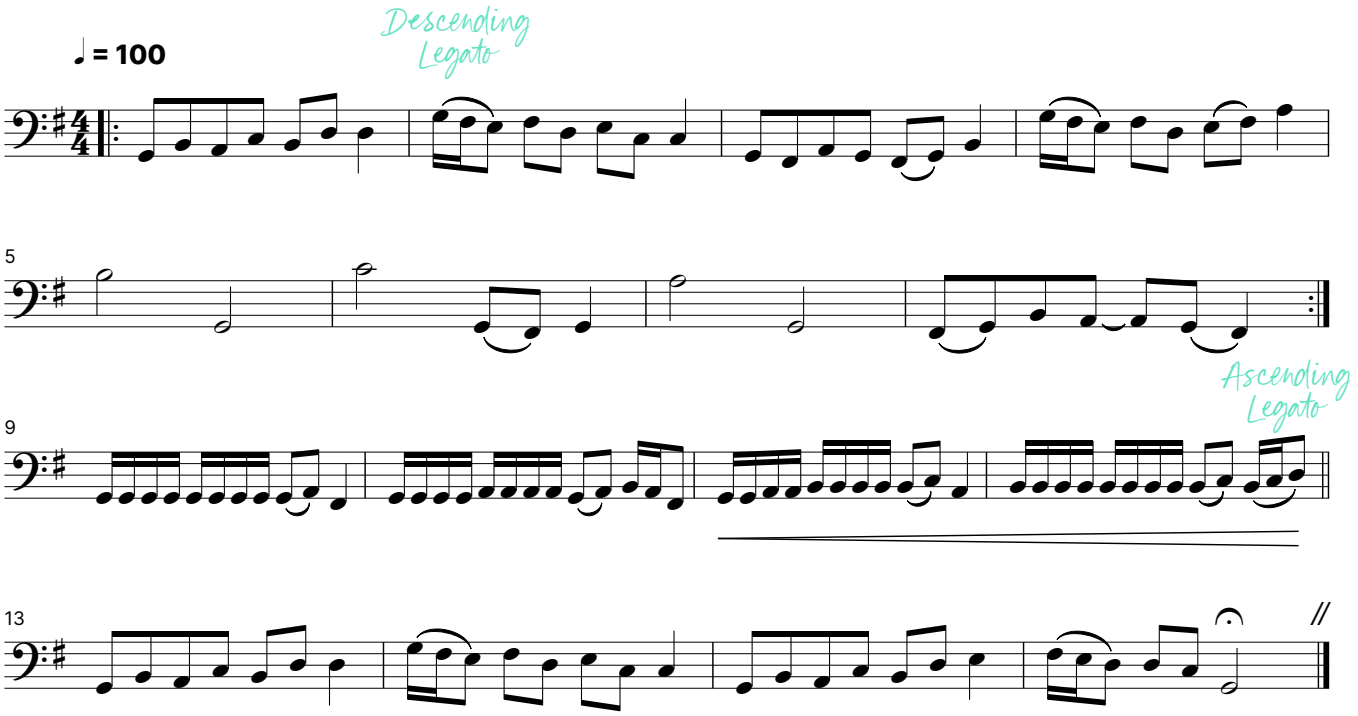



*For some additional information on scales, please see:

**FUNCTIONAL THEORY FOR BASSISTS, Vol. 1 in the SBL Course Library.**

# **LESSON 2** (continued)

## In-Studio Exercise 1




## Notes:

— Noting the key signature and location of the notes, we should put our fretting hand in a position to play a G Major scale starting on fret 3 of string 4.

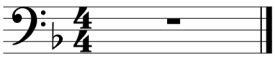
— This exercise contains many of the elements from the earlier parts of the program: repeats, ornaments, slurs, etc.

— We're introduced to something new in this lesson, the legato symbol—a slur over three notes or more. **Legato** means to play the notes under the slur as smoothly and flowingly as possible. Here, a double pull-off (descending) or double hammer-on (ascending) will work best. Be sure to only pluck the first note.

# **LESSON 2** (continued)

## Key Signatures with Flats

Just like sharps, we also have key signatures that contain flats. For example:



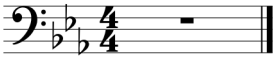
And again, there is a specific order that the flats appear in a key signature. Sharps get added to the key signature in intervals of **fourths**, and are *always* added in the **same order**:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B♭ | E♭ | A♭ | D♭ | G♭ | C♭ | F♭ |

## Identifying the Major Key with Flats in the Key Signature:

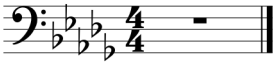
1. Find the penultimate (next-to-last) flat in the key signature.
2. That's it. That's your **major key**.
3. Done.

### Key Signature Example 3



1. Three flats, the penultimate is E♭.
2. The key signature is **E♭ Major**.

### Key Signature Example 4



1. Five sharps, the penultimate is D♭.
2. The key signature is **D♭ Major**.

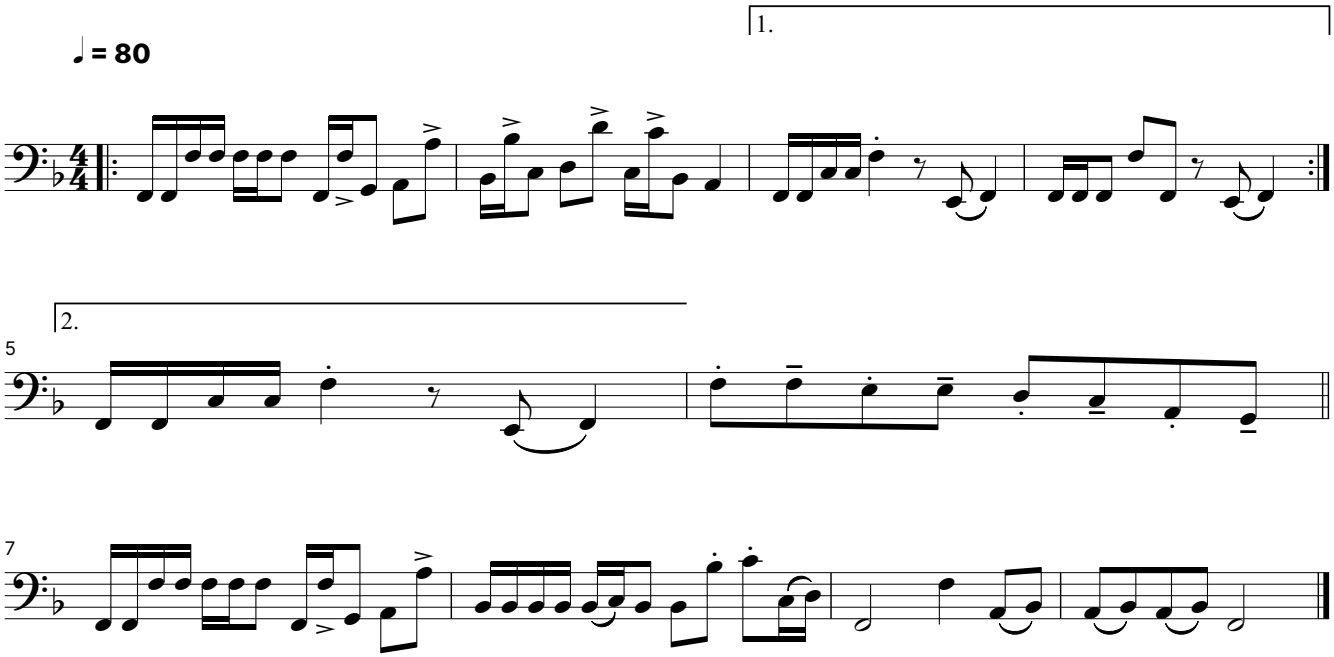
Finally, there are two key signatures that don't adhere to our "identification" rules:

*Memorize!*

- If there's only **one flat** in the key signature, it's the key of **F Major**.
- If there are **no** sharps or flats in the key signature, it's the key of **C Major**.

# **LESSON 2** (continued)

## In-Studio Exercise 2




## Notes:

— Noting the key signature and location of the notes, we should put our fretting hand in a position to play a F Major scale starting on fret 1 of string 4.

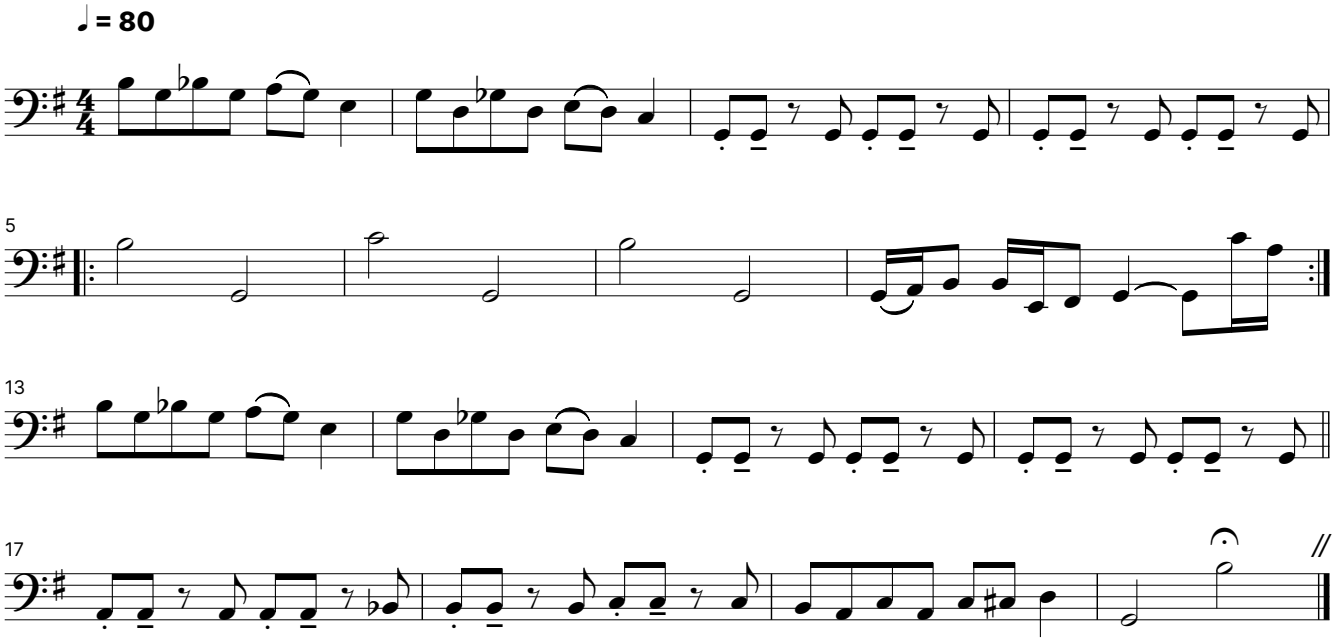
— Be sure to make note of the Volta brackets.

— Although not indicated, octaves with accents can also be played using slap.

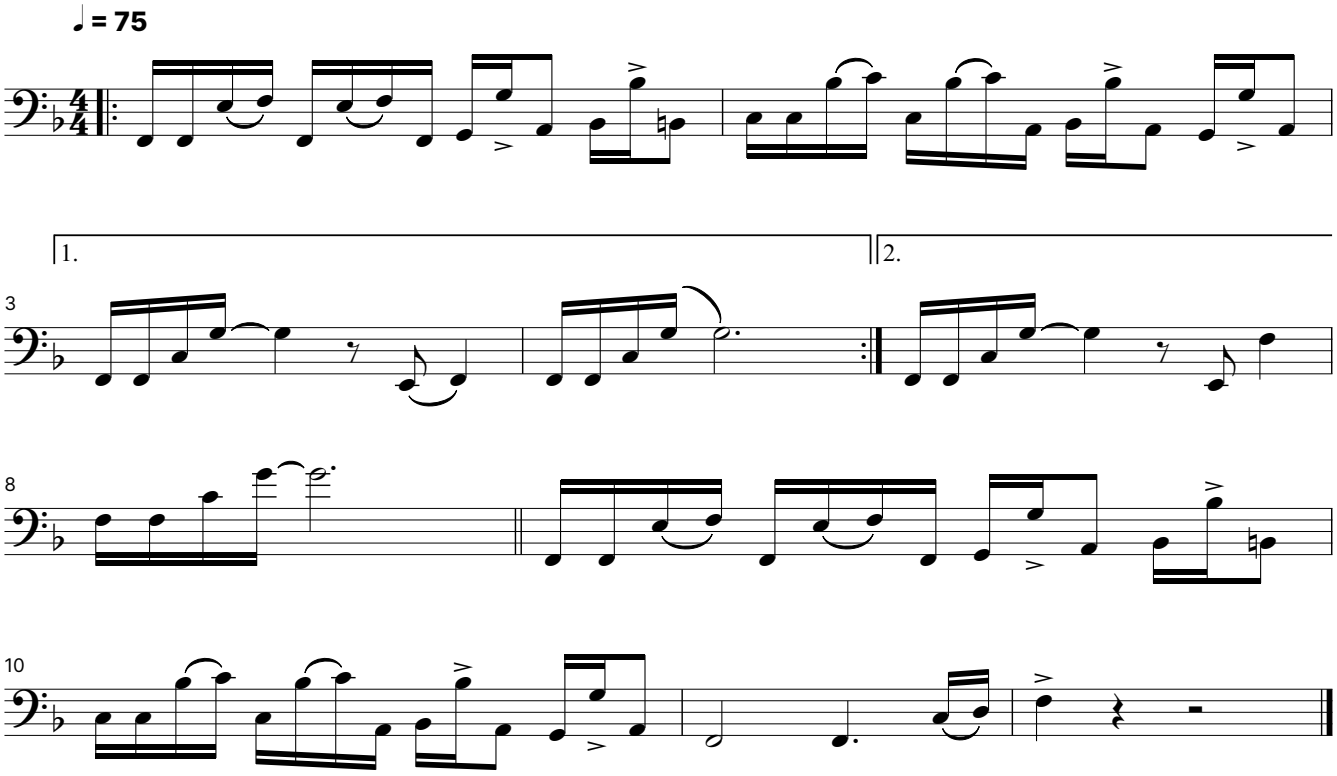
— Be sure to take the articulations into account in Bar 6.

# **LESSON 2** (continued)

## Exercise 1




## Exercise 2



# Lesson 3

## Key of D Major (2 Sharps)

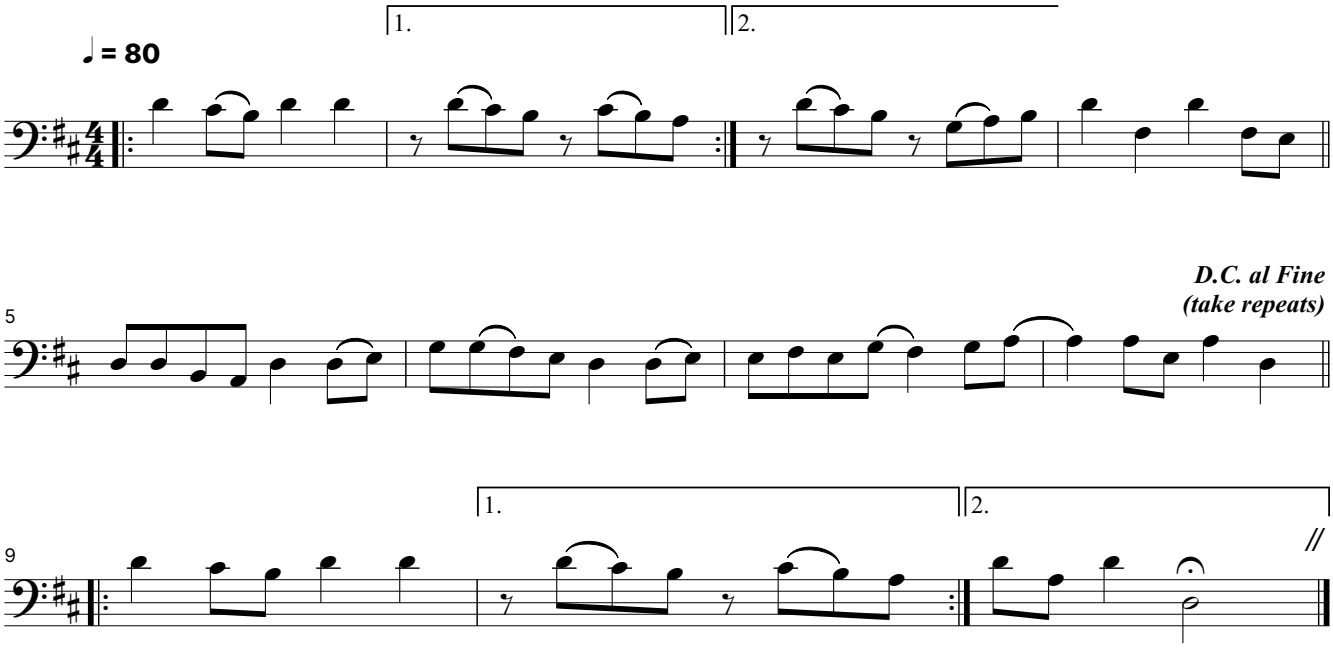
Building from the previous lesson, we'll next look at *two* sharps (F♯ and C♯) in the key signature—**D Major**.

As with our earlier example of G major, in D Major, all the F's and C's are played *sharp* across all octaves. But since there are three places on the fretboard to play a D note—open 2nd string, 5th fret of the 3rd string, and 10th fret of the 4th string—how do decide where to place out hand? **Scan the music** to find the highest and lowest notes, and find a position that accommodates that range.

continued ⟶

# **LESSON 3** (continued)

## In-Studio Exercise 2




## Notes:

— Give the music a good look before trying to play it. You should notice the Volta brackets immediately.

— We also see a new command: ***D.C. al Fine*** (*da capo al fine*). This instruction tells us to go back to the very beginning of the piece (*da capo*) and play to either the final bar line or the ***Fine*** indicator (*al fine*).

— You may find this exercise "counter-intuitive" because it stars in the upper register and works *down* "below" the root. Be sure you know your ledger lines!

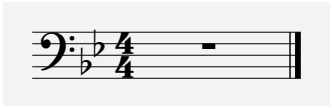
— Remember, too, that the sharps in the key signature apply to *all octaves*, not just the five regular system lines.

— By scanning the music and noting the range of the notes, you should have determined that starting the D Major Scale on fret 5 of the string 3 accomodates all the notes.

# **LESSON 3** (continued)

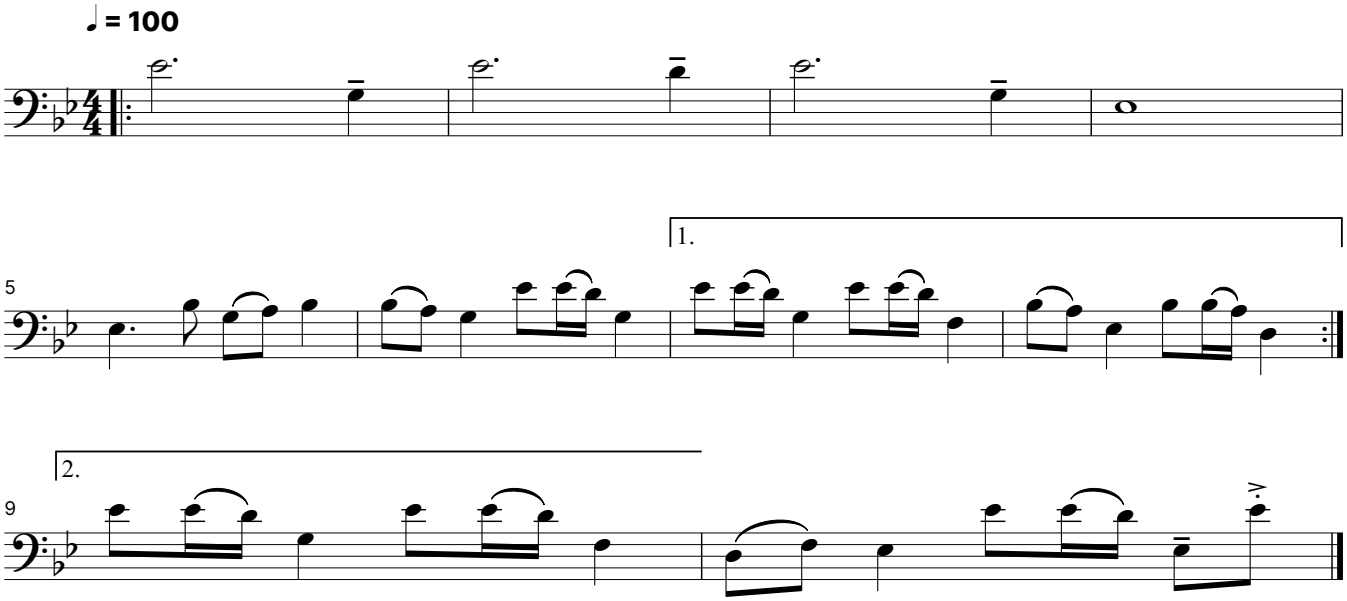
## Key of B♭ Major (2 Flats)

Next, let's look at two *flats* (B♭ and E♭) in the key signature—**B♭ Major**.



Since we see multiple flats in the key signature, we can use our "hack" mentioned on page 12—the penultimate flat in the key signature tells us the major key, and its a B♭, so we're in **B♭ Major.**

### In-Studio Exercise 2




## Notes:

— Recall the **dot** after a notehead tells us to play the note for one-and-a-half times its indicated length.

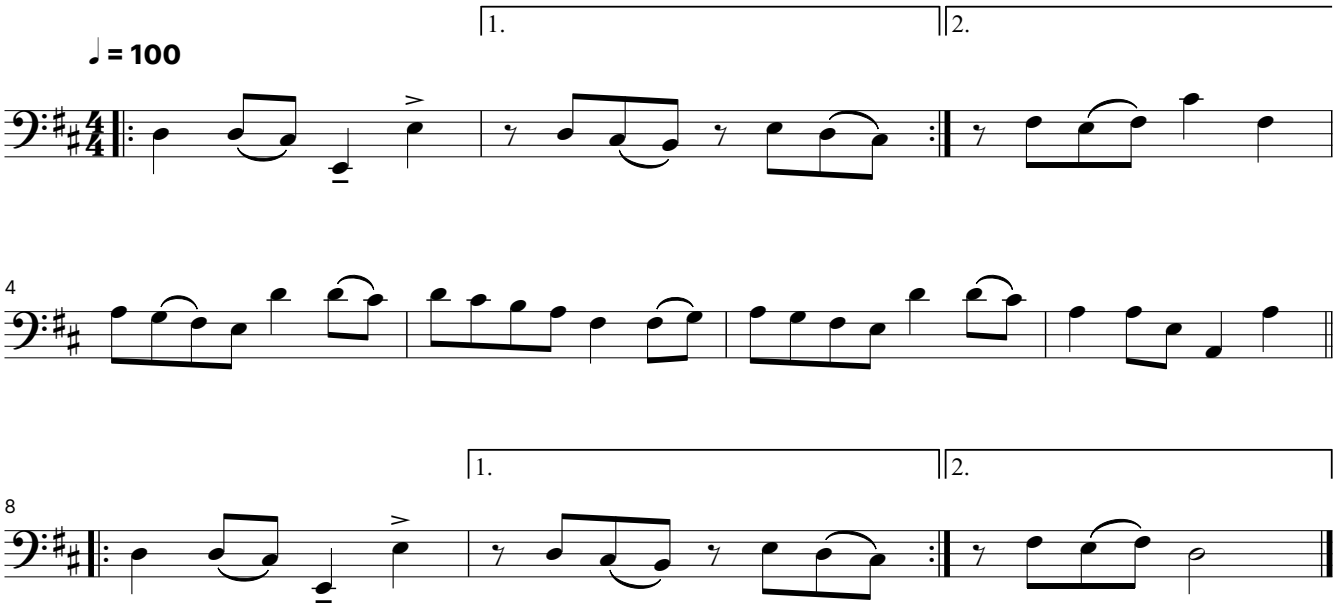
— The **tenuto** marking on beat 4 of Bar 1 is there to tell you not to rush or play the note too short.

— Even though we start playing most measures on an E♭ note, don't be fooled into thinking you're in the *key* of E♭ Major! You may want to play the A notes as A♭ but don't—we're in *B♭ Major.*

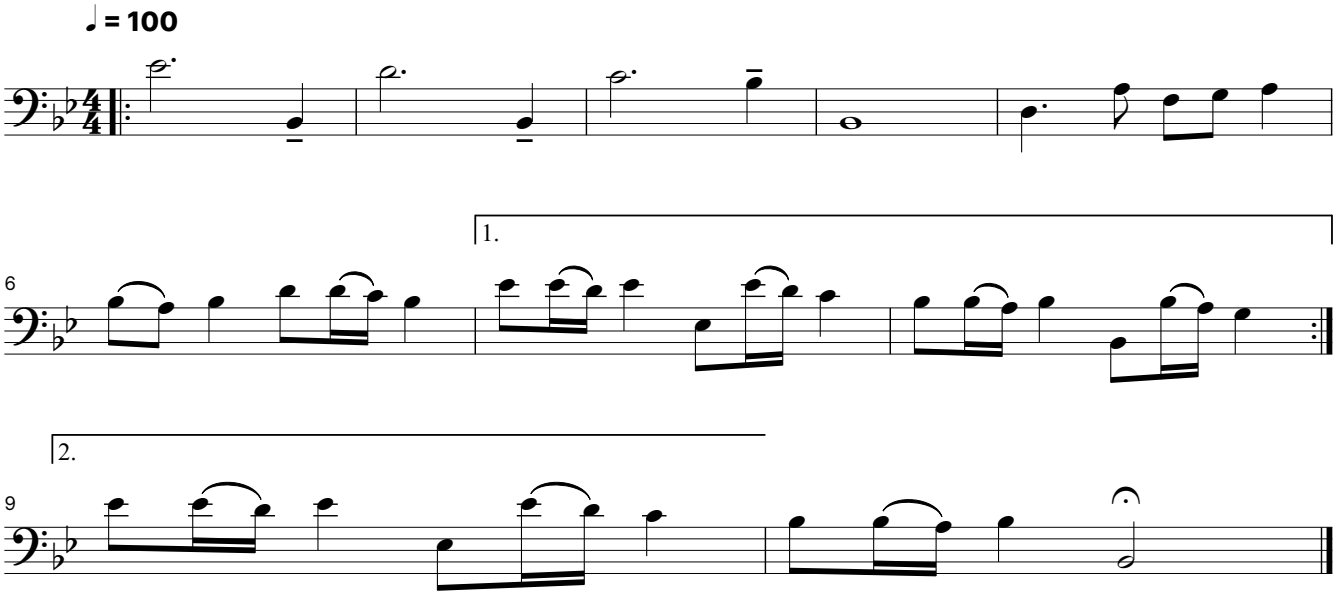
— The last note of the piece has two ornaments, an **accent** and a **staccato**. Play it loud and short!

# **LESSON 3** (continued)

## Exercise 1

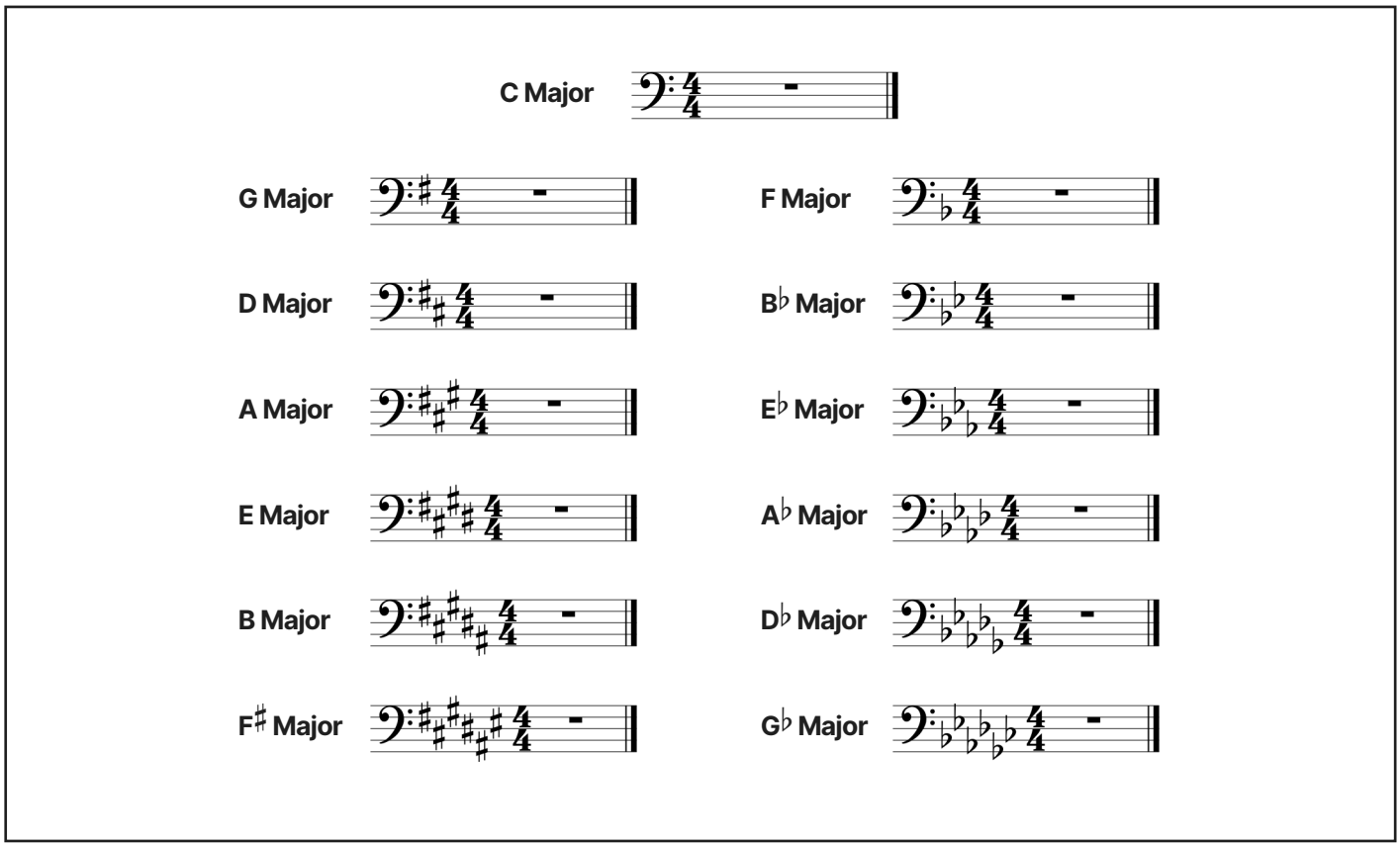



## Exercise 2



# Lesson 4

In total, there are *15* different key signatures—seven with sharps, seven with flats, plus the key of C Major (which has neither). Functionally, there are really only 13 keys signatures (6 with sharps, 6 with flats, plus C Major); the others are enharmonic equivalents:




You'll note that F♯ and G♭ are enharmonic, as are C♯ and D♭ (not shown).

For the next few lessons, we'll limit ourselves to no more than three sharps or three flats in the key signature.

## Shortcut

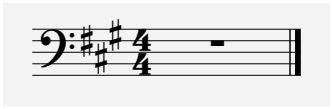
To communicate a particular key, a "handy" shortcut is to just use your fingers—point up for sharps and down for flats. For example:

2 fingers up = Key of D Major
3 fingers down = Key of E♭ Major

# **LESSON 4** (continued)

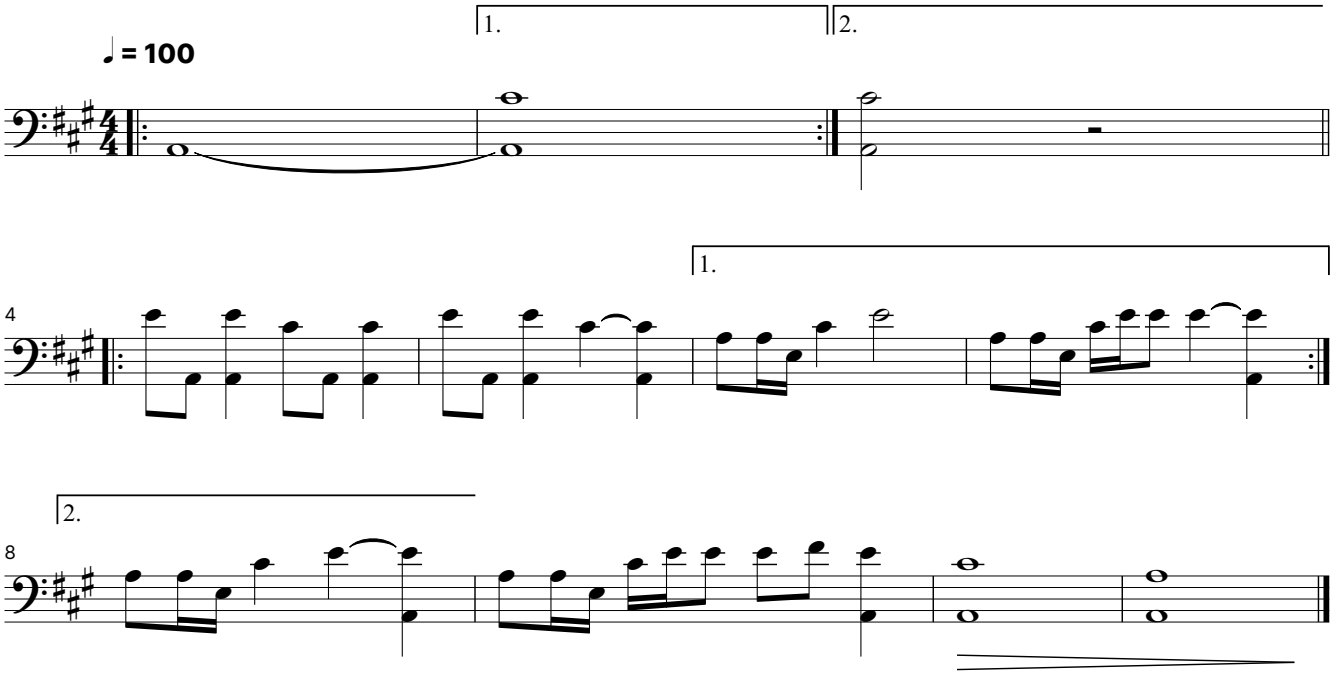
## Key of A Major (3 Sharps)

Next, we'll next look at *three* sharps (F♯, C♯, and G♯) in the key signature—**A Major**.



As before, if we play our major scale pattern starting on the A note (5th fret on string 4), we find that the three sharps fall right under our fingers.

### In-Studio Exercise 1

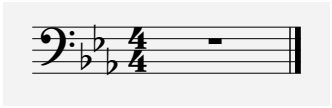



## Notes:

- The C♯ in Bar 2 is a **tenth**—a 3rd that's up one octave.
- Note that the tie does *not* extend into the second Volta bracket.
- Bar 3 introduces a **double stop**—two notes played together.
- To clean up the notation, *let ring* is often used in place of ties. It means the same thing.

# **LESSON 4** (continued)

## Key of E♭ Major (3 Flats)



Finally, we'll look at *three* flats (B♭, E♭, and A♭) in the key signature—**E♭ Major**.

As before, if we play our major scale pattern starting on the E♭ note (6th fret on string 3), we find that the three flats fall right under our fingers.

### In-Studio Exercise 2

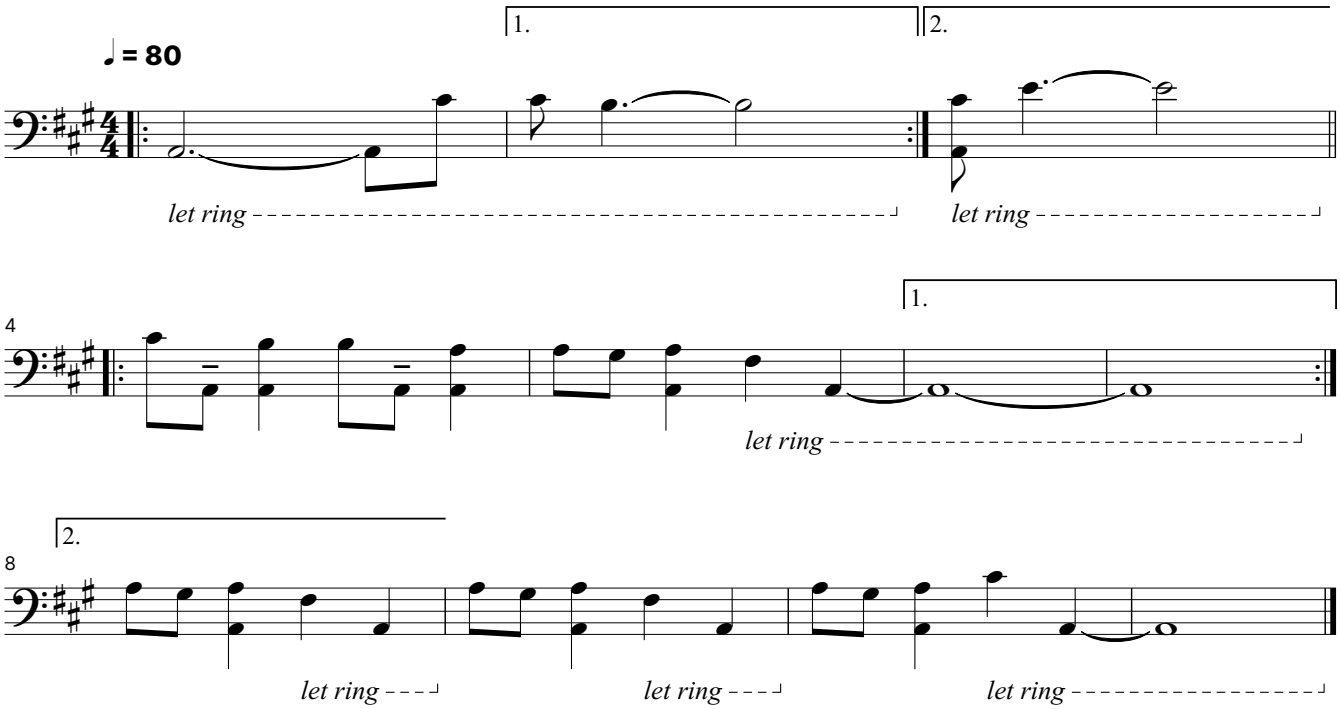

## Notes:

- Be sure to examine the entire piece of music before deciding *where* to play on the fretboard. Although the beginning can be played over the fretboard around the first fret, by taking note of the hammer-ons, it's best played at the **6th fret.**
- Don't be intimidated playing in the middle of the neck!
- Know your major scale, and the notes "behind "the scale, and try to play the majority of the piece in that position (here, starting on the 6th fret).
- Don't be afraid to clap out the rhythms in the last system even before you pick up your bass.

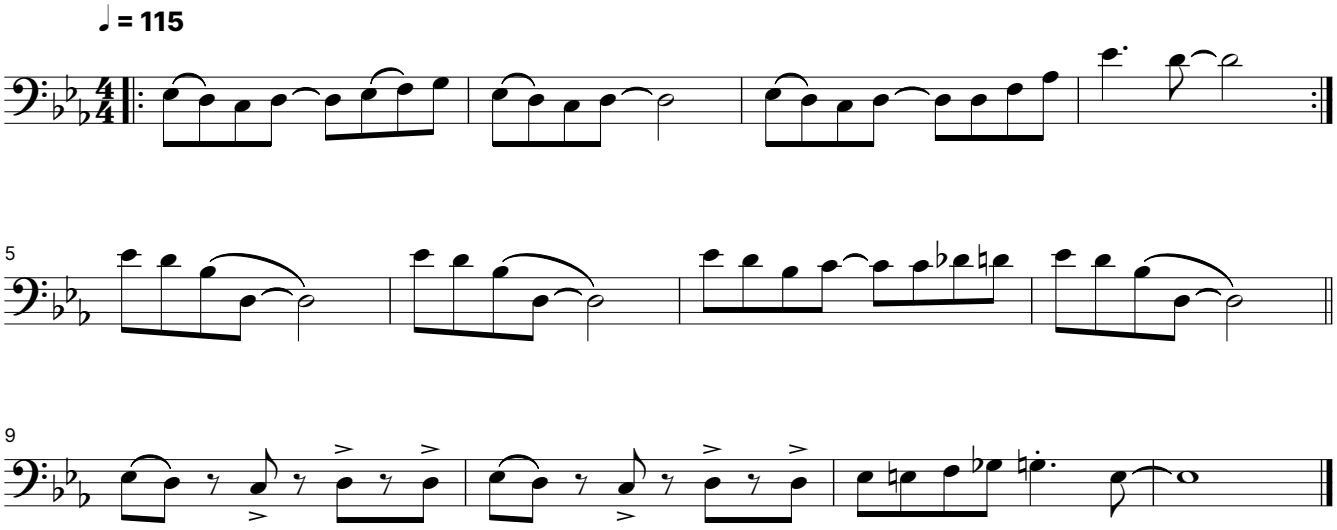
***"You can drive a car with your feet. It doesn't mean you should."***

# **LESSON 4** (continued)

## Exercise 1




## Exercise 2

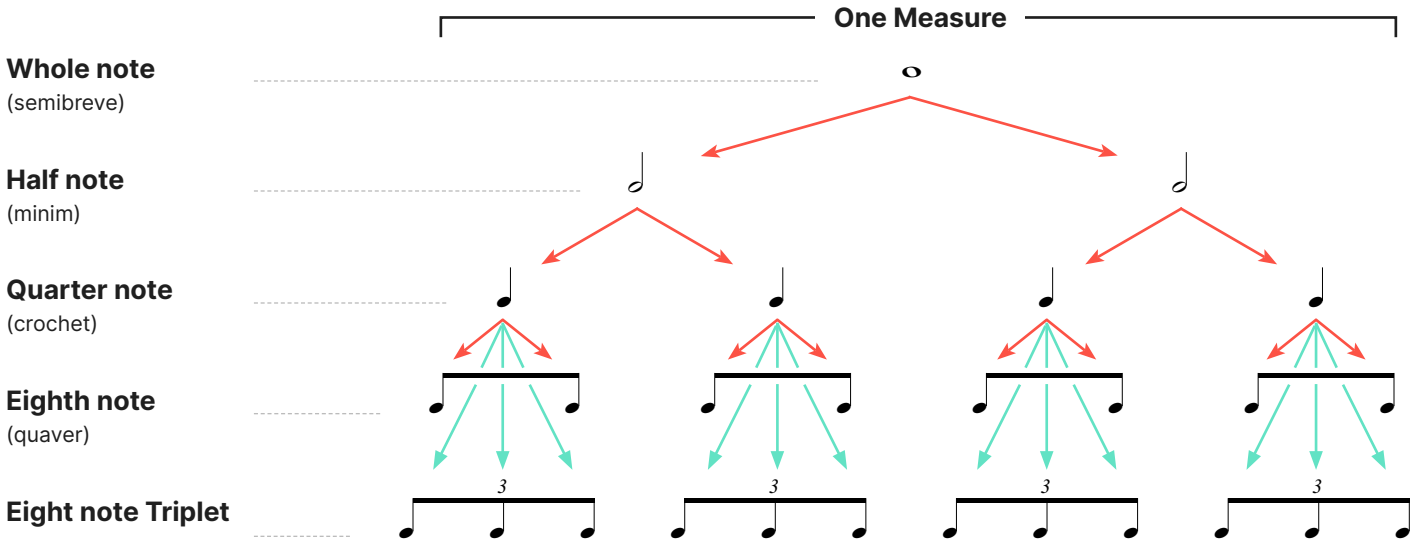


# Lesson 5

## Triplets

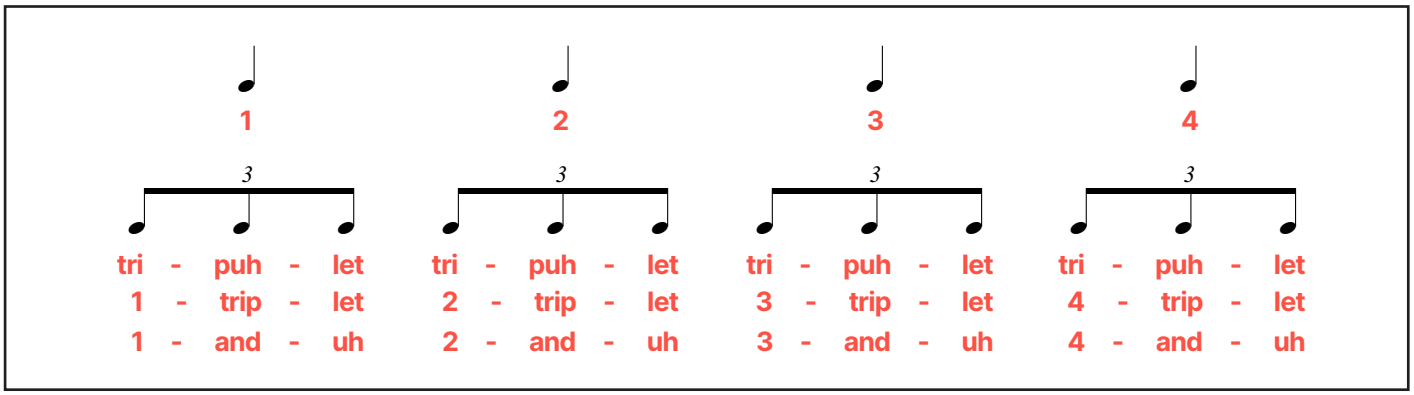
A **triplet** is a group of *three* notes played evenly over the span of *two* notes, and is indicated with a number "3" over the notes, sometimes with a bracket (always with a bracket if a rest is involved).

Understanding the rhythm of triplets is fundamental to your continued learning—they often define the "feel" in genres like the blues and jazz, where swing notation is common. Let's see how they might fit in a typical measure in 4/4 time:



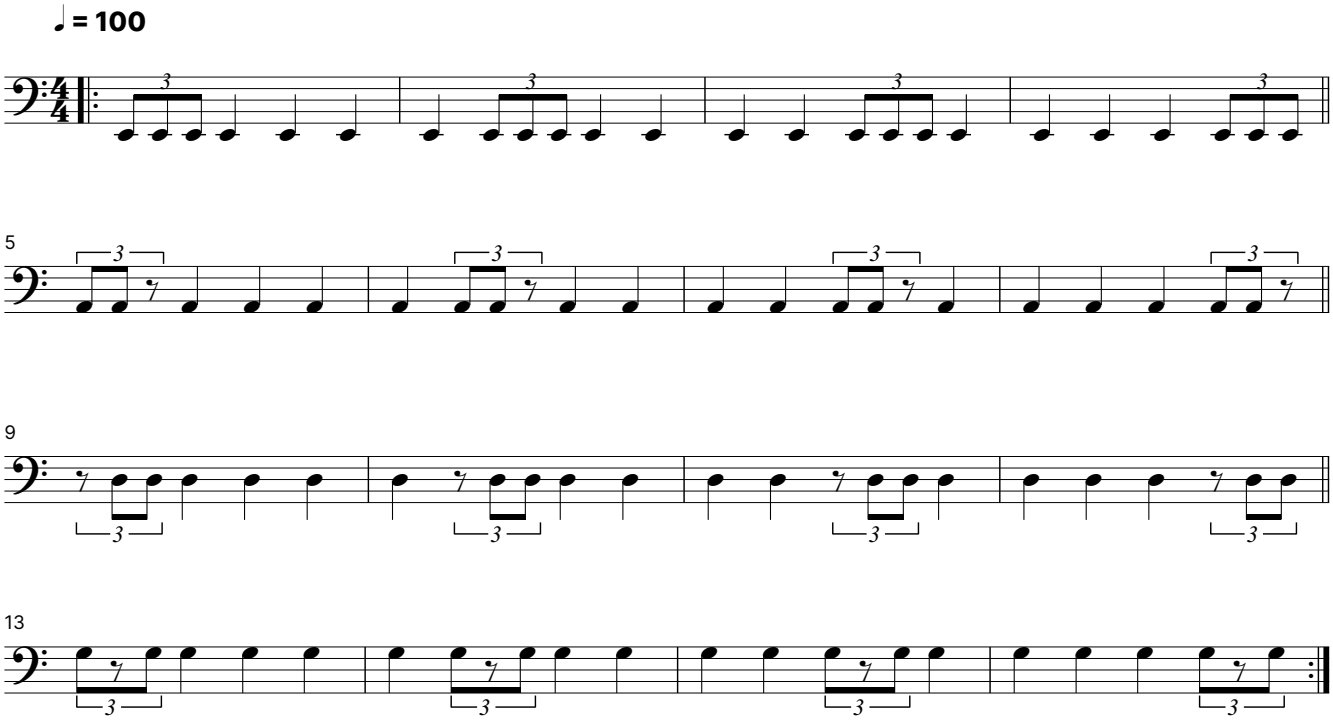

## Counting methods for triplet eighth notes

As you might expect, there are couple ways you can count out eighth note triplets. Here are a few for you to consider:



# **LESSON 5** (continued)

## In-Studio Exercise




## Notes:

— If this seems familiar, it's because this exercise is similar to an exercise you did in Part 5 using sixteenth notes.

— Feel free to break this exercise up system-by-system before playing it in its entirety. The different rhythms may take a few tries to get the hang of.

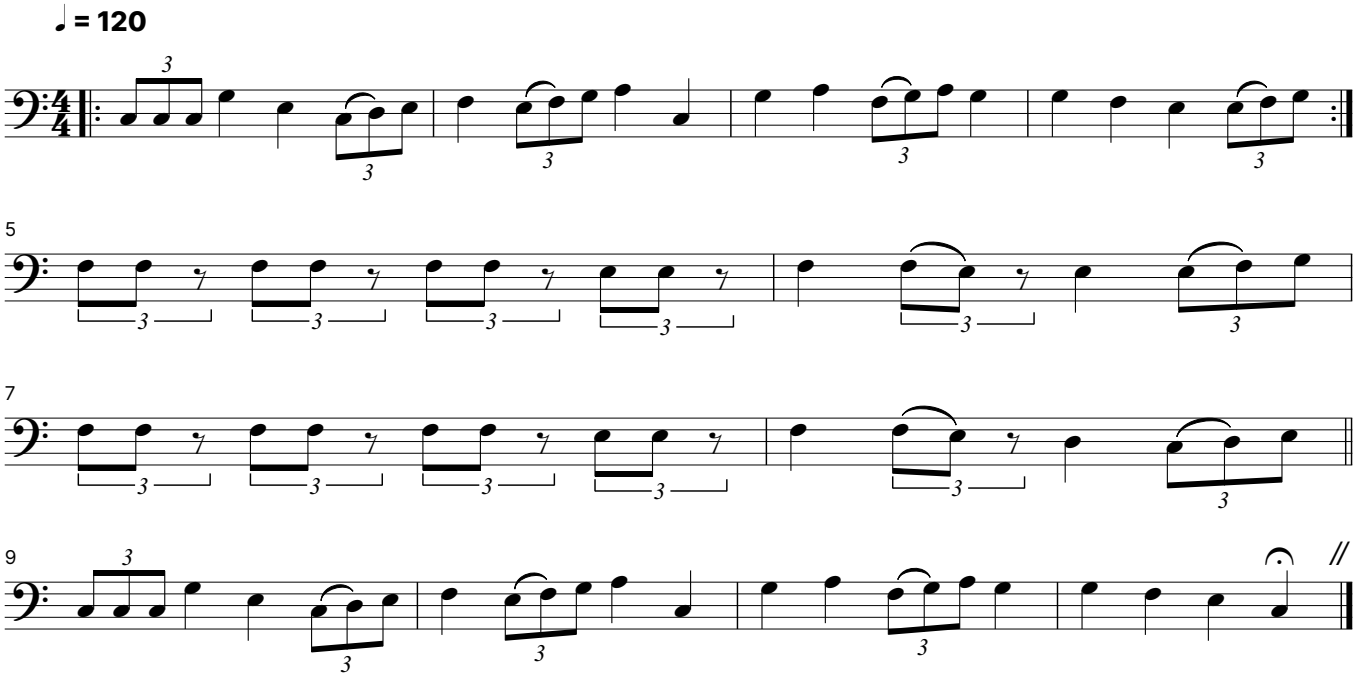
— You may want to consider clapping out the rhythm before even picking up your bass.

— You must be **accurate** when playing triplets that contain rests. Do not treat them as simple eighth notes.

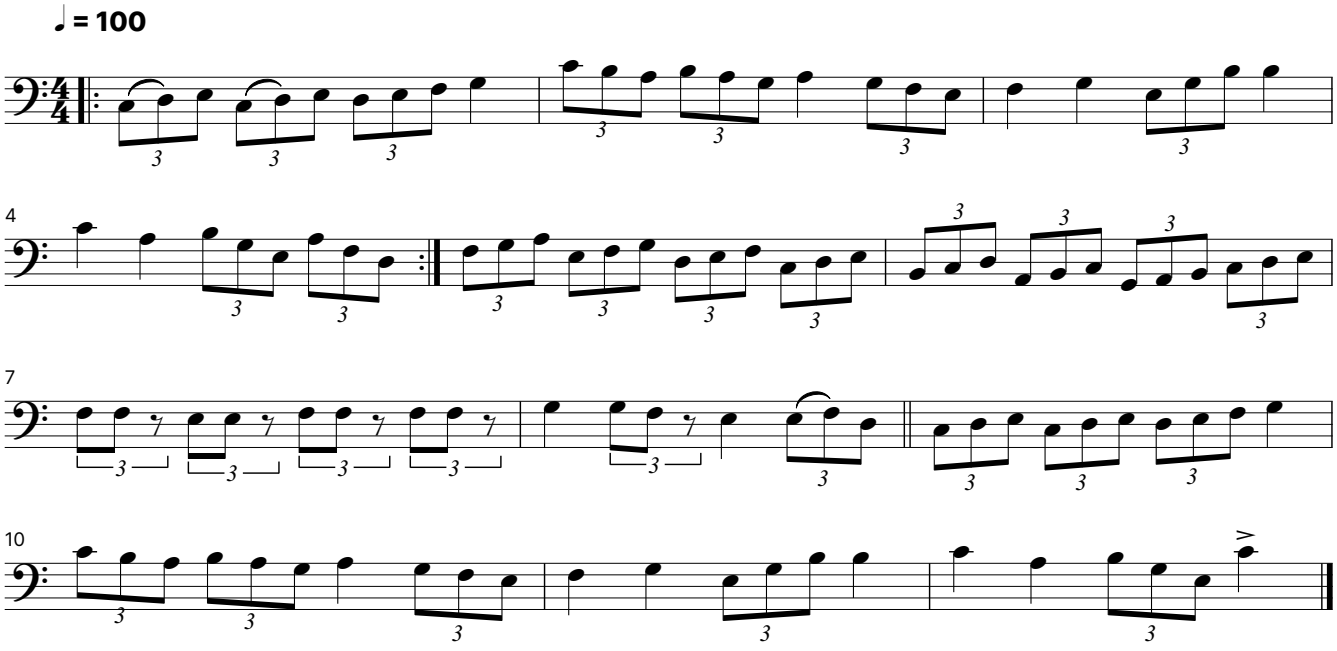
— The "triplet" beats in the last system mimic how you might play **swing**.

# **LESSON 5** (continued)

## Exercise 1




## Exercise 2



# Lesson 6

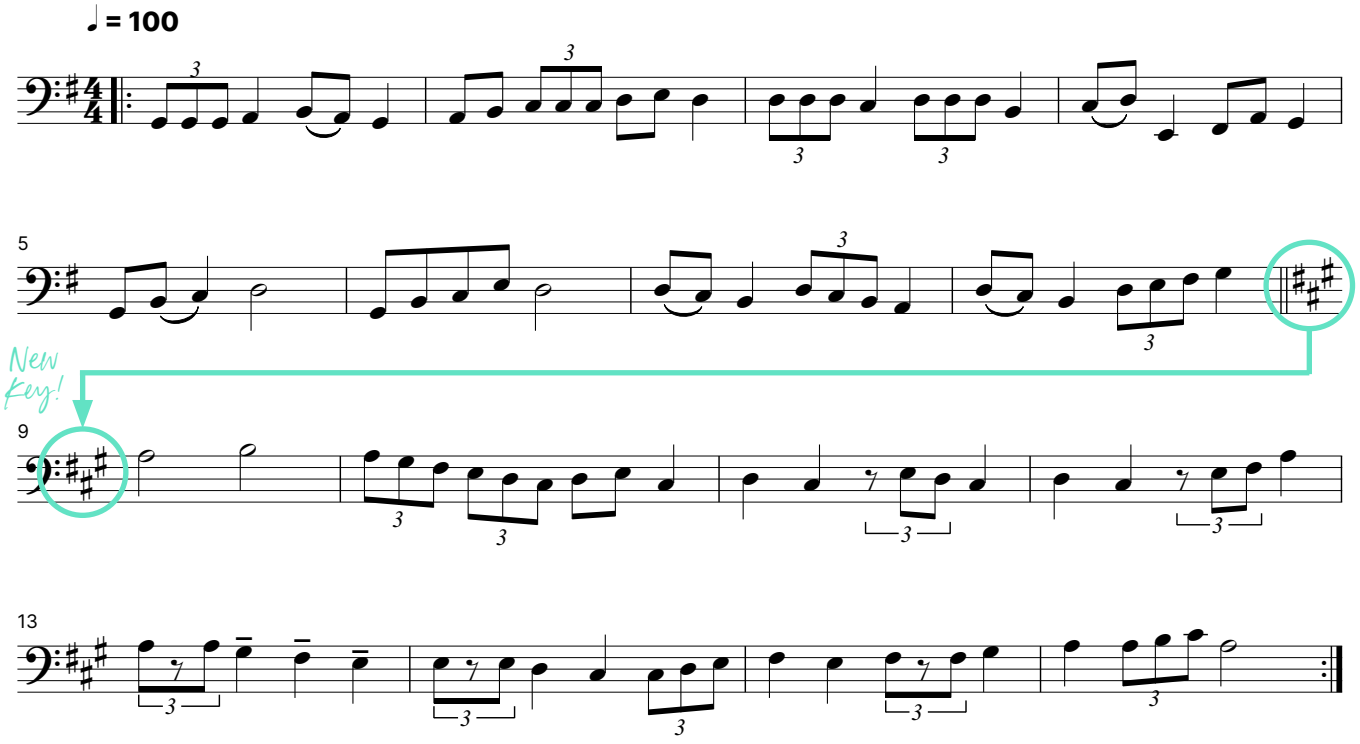
## Change of Key

We continue incorporating triplets into our exercises, but now we'll introduce a **change of key** within the piece.

Changes of key can occur anywhere within a piece of music, and are indicated by a double bar line followed by the new key signature. (See the end of the second system below, for example). It simply means that from that point forward, the piece should be played in the new key. There can be multiple key changes, too. Key changes do not affect the meter.

***"Take your time, and absorb every element of all of the lessons. Make sure you perfect them before you move on."***

### In-Studio Exercise




continued ⟶

# **LESSON 6** (continued)

## Notes on the Studio Example

— No articulations, not many rests. The idea is to get used to playing triplets while also playing a **melodic** line—single-note phrases.

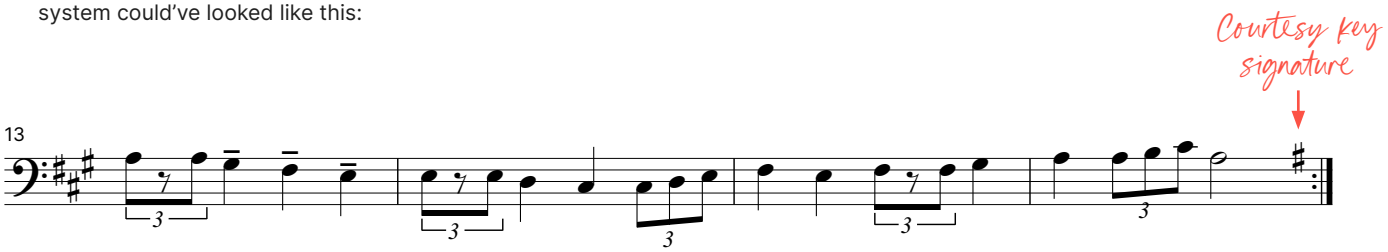
— The eighth notes in Bar 1 (and elsewhere) should feel "square" or "rigid" in comparison to the triplets when played.

— All the notes should be right under your fingers if you've chose the correct position to play the exercise.

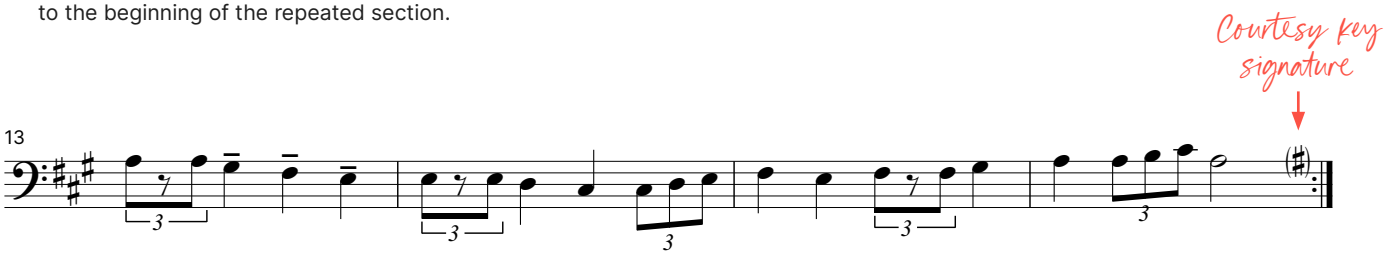
— Changing to a new key in a piece of music is called **modulation**. In this exercise, we modulate to A Major from our initial key of G Major.

— Be sure you do *not* play through the rest in the triplets in the last system.

— And although not seen in this exercise, it's not uncommon to show a courtesy key signature just before the end repeat bar line when the key of the start repeat bar differs from the bar just played. In this example, the last system could've looked like this:

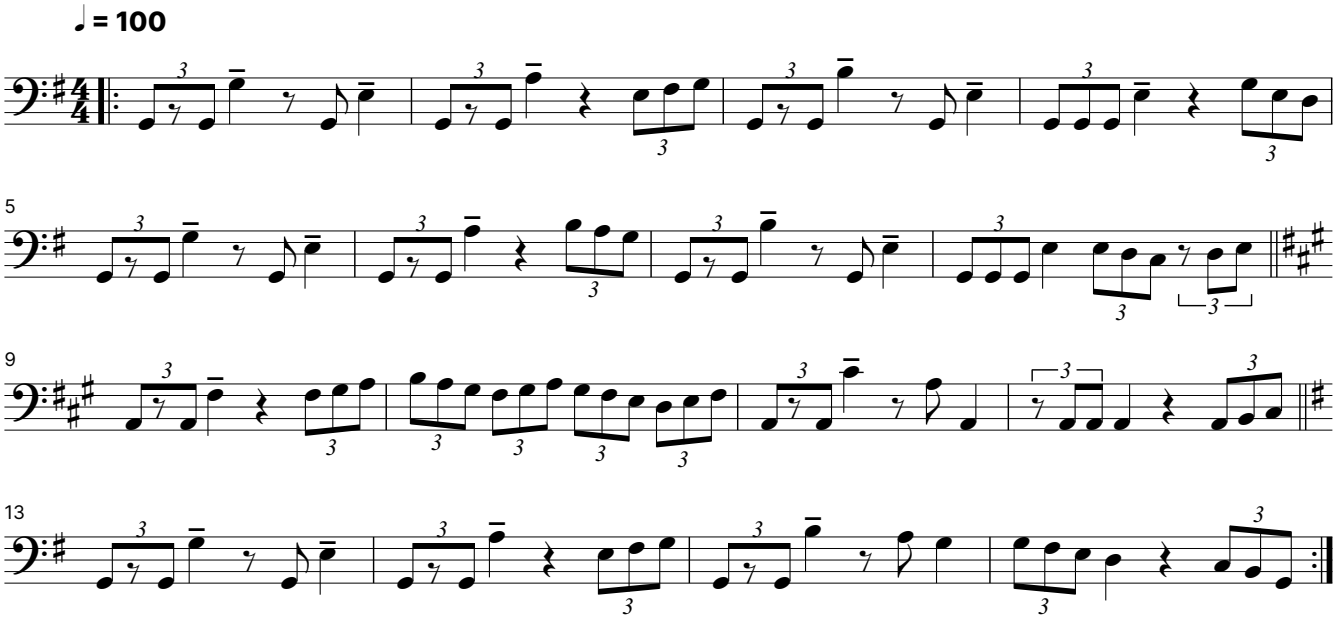



— You may also see the courtesy key signature enclosed in parentheses. Both mean exactly the same thing—prepare for a change of key when you return to the beginning of the repeated section.

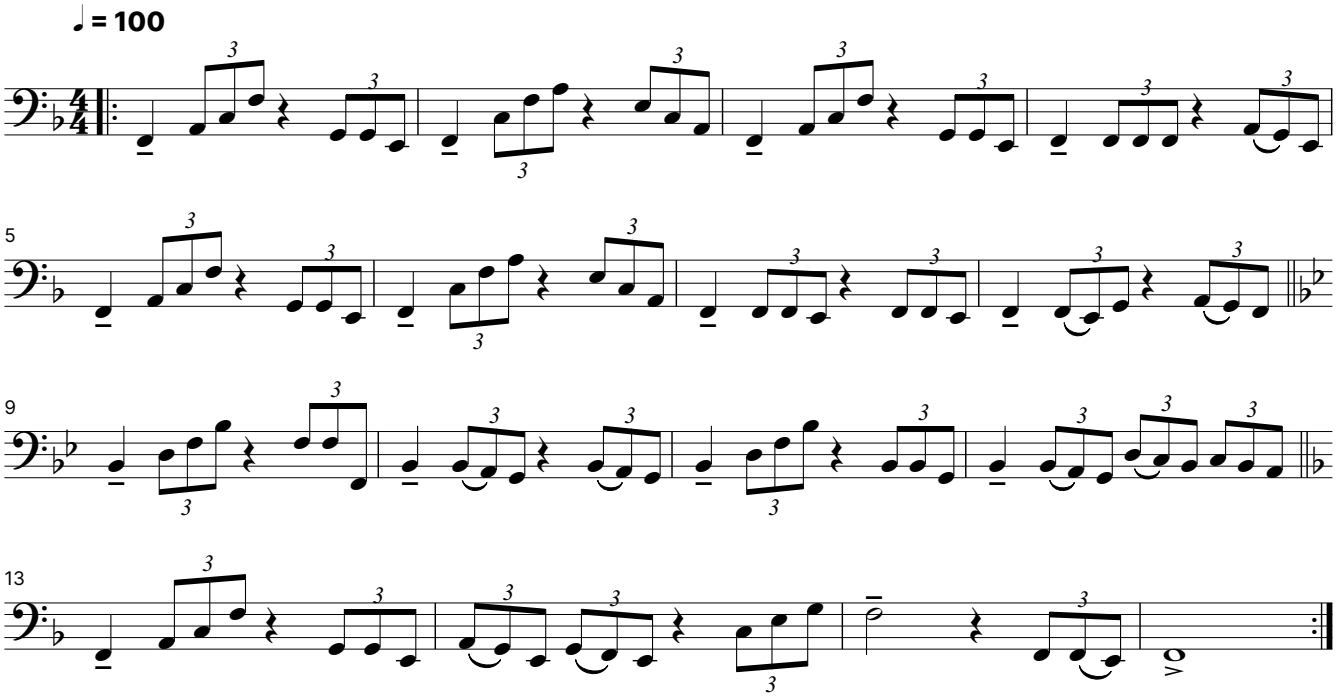


# **LESSON 6** (continued)

## Exercise 1




## Exercise 2



# Lesson 7

## The Blues, Part I

It's now time to bring together the components we've largely looked at separately so far—triplets, key signatures, and accidentals—by introducing a new style of music: the **blues**. Blues music very often incorporates a triplet feel—particularly emphasizing the first and third triplet notes of the triplet grouping.

A typical blues progression involves the **I**, **IV,** and **V** chords of the major scale. But instead of playing the "major" chords that result from harmonization of the scale*, we use dominant 7th chords instead.

A **dominant chord** (indicated by a "7") consists of the Root, 3rd, 5th and a *flattened* 7th. But since the major scale has a "regular" 7th, we just modify the note using an accidental.

Our example in this lesson is a 12-bar **Blues in G**, and the **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords are G7–C7–D7.

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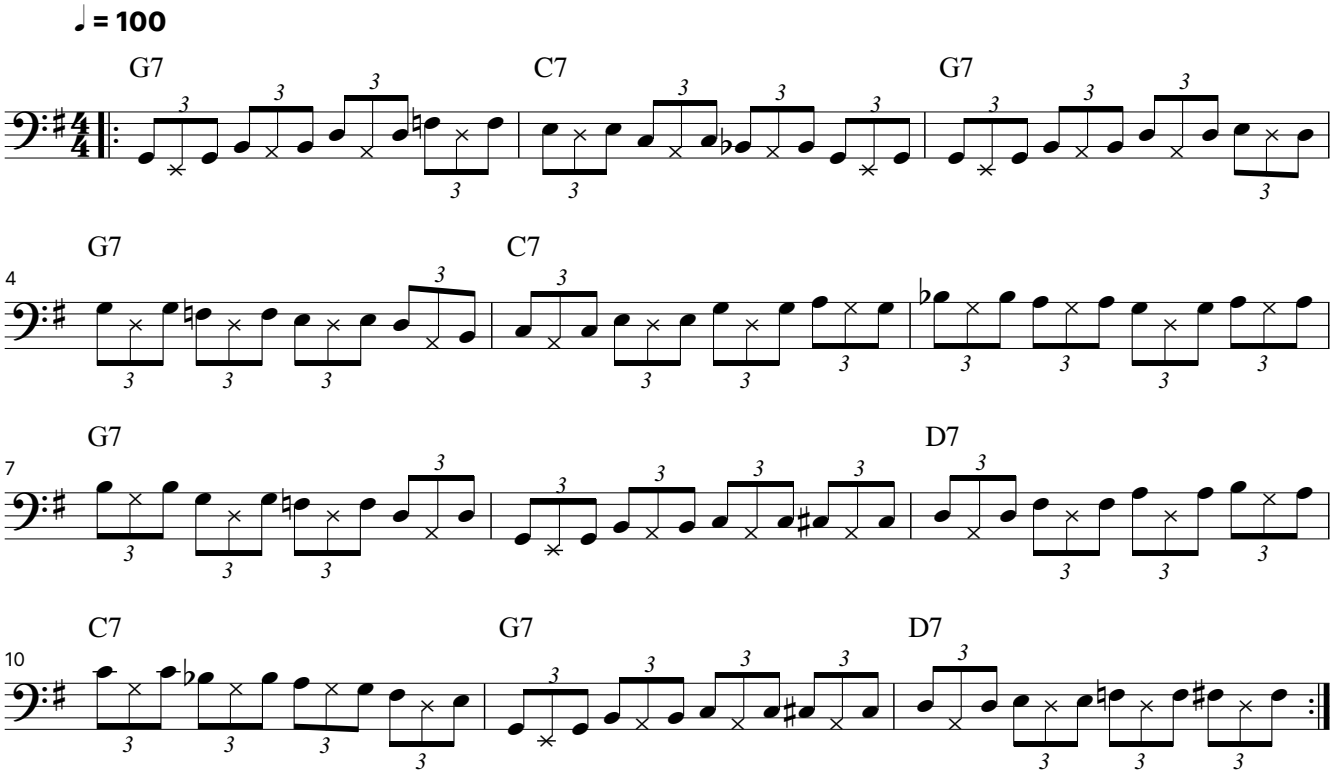
*For some additional information on harmonization of the major scale, please see:

**FUNCTIONAL THEORY FOR BASSISTS Vol. 1 in the SBL Course Library.**

# **LESSON 7** (continued)

## In-Studio Exercise




## Notes:

— All three notes of the triplets are present, but you should **mute** the middle note of each triplet by taking the pressure off the string, but *not* lifting your hand away from the fretboard.

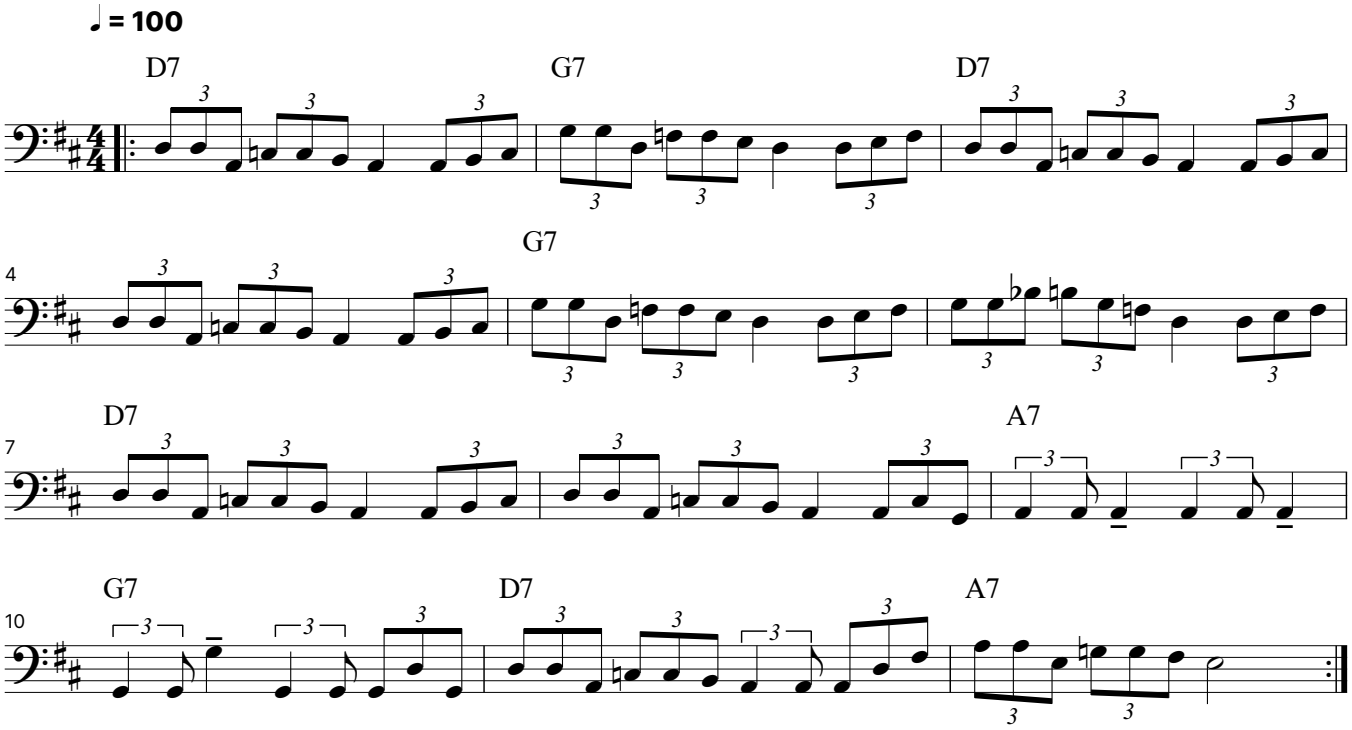
— Notice the natural sign (♮) on the F notes when the G7 chord is played. That's the flattened 7th.

— The flat symbol (♭) on the B notes played over the C7 chord indicate a flattened 7th, too. (The 7th of C Major is B natural.)

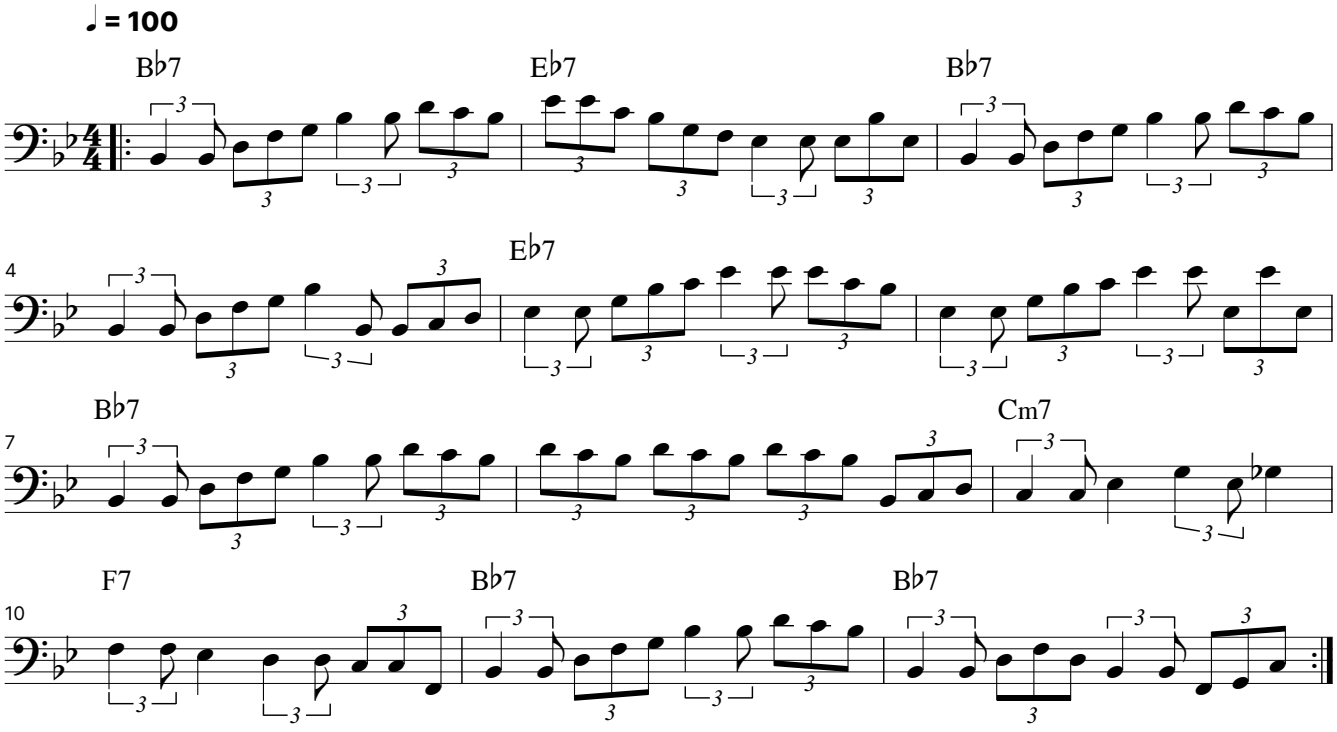
— The C♯ in Bar 8 is a **chromatic** passing note, as is the F♮ in Bar 12.

# **LESSON 7** (continued)

## Exercise 1




## Exercise 2



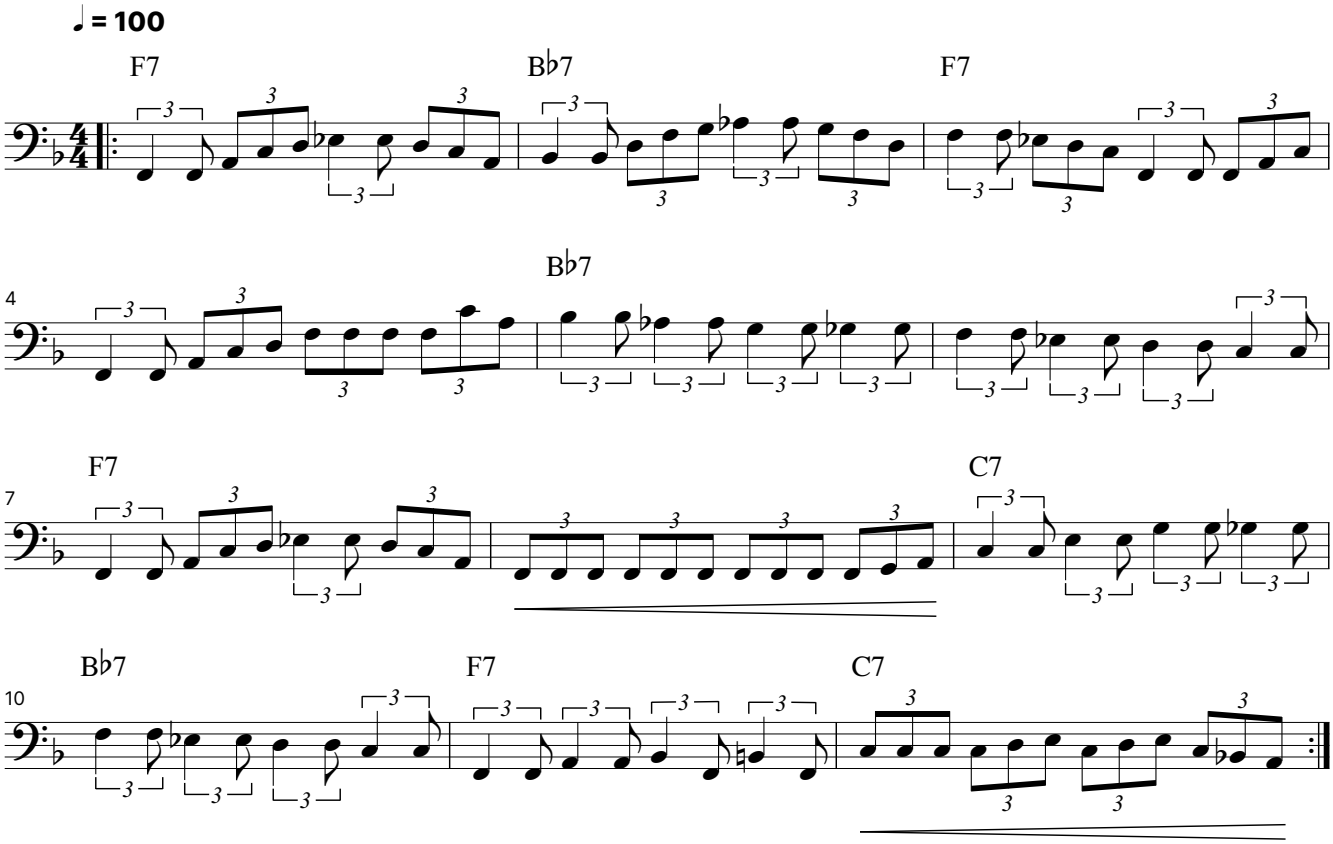
# Lesson 8

## The Blues, Part II

In our final lesson, we'll continue our exploration of triplets and the blues. In Lesson 7, we emphasized the triplet rhythm by muting the middle triplet note. Here, we'll *combine* the first two notes of the triplets, plucking on the first and third beats of the triplet, giving a **swing** feel.

Our example in this lesson is a 12-bar **Blues in F**, and the **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords are F7–B♭7–C7.

### In-Studio Exercise

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# **LESSON 8** (continued)

## Notes on the Studio Example

— Notice the **tempo marking** at the beginning of the piece. It indicates a tempo of 100 beats per minute (bpm). But how can we estimate that if we don't have a metronome handy? Here are a couple "tricks" to get you close:

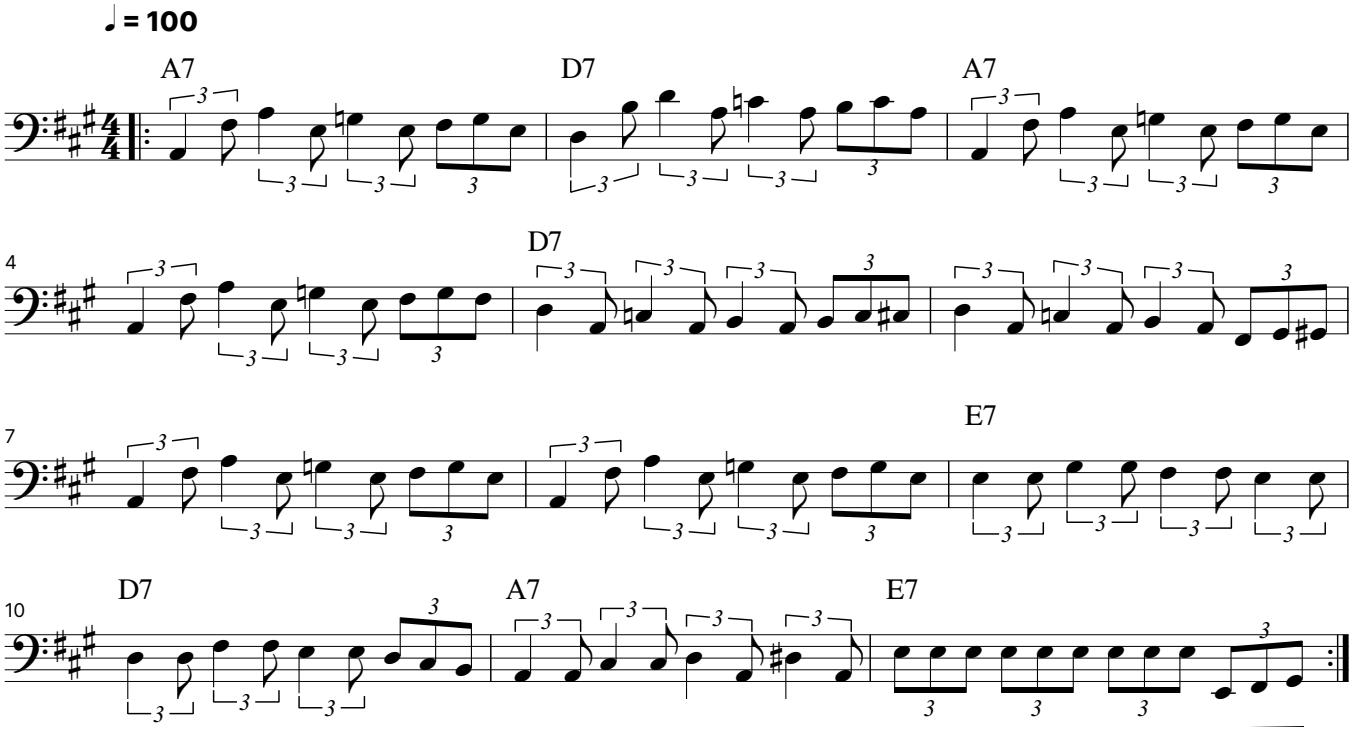
> "**One Mis–sis–sip–pi**" takes about one second to say = **60 bpm**.
> If you double that, you get **120 bpm**.

— Of course, 100 bpm falls in between these two estimates, but you should get reasonably close.

— Remember, the key signature gives you a suggestion as to where your hand should be placed on the fretboard. With the blues however, notes tend to be played **linearly** (up the string) instead of across the strings.

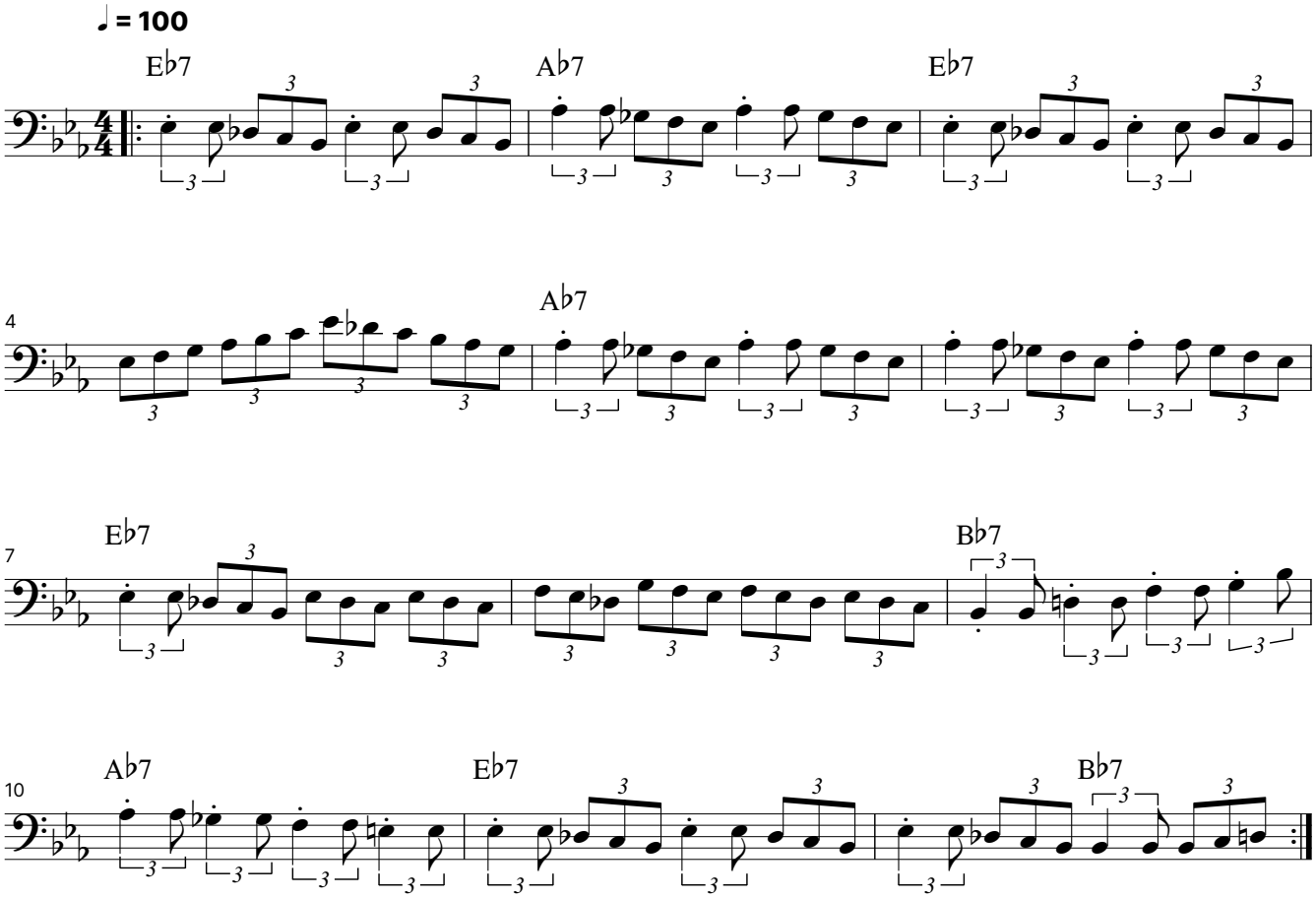
— When returning back to the **I** chord, try to repeat the same line—it sets the groove.

## Exercise 1



# **LESSON 8** (continued)

## Exercise 2




S
L
B