



## Sight-Reading - Hope is Not An Instructional Strategy!

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**STARS** - I use this acronym from Essential Elements for sight-reading because it's systematic and I can remember it. I try to teach or review one of these every class (especially as it applies to the literature I'm working on). Check the rubric for the level music you're playing and make sure you understand what will be expected. I use lots of worksheets, written quizzes and online reviews to test for knowledge.

### **S - Sharps and flats in the key signature (s)**

1. Make sure your students read note names ... **MANY** play by ear or watching their neighbor's fingers. **MANY** fake ledger line notes. Say note names out loud together. (It doesn't matter that they know all the Fs are sharp if they don't know which ones are Fs). [Musictheory.net](http://Musictheory.net) is a great site that includes alto & tenor clefs.
1. Check to make sure students know the order of sharps and flats in the key signatures, and that they affect the notes in all octaves.
2. Teach how the finger patterns change on different strings in different keys. (Finger pattern and scales!)
3. Teach half and whole steps and how they work on stringed instruments. (I use piano keyboards).

### **T - Time signatures and tempos**

1. Explain top and bottom number functions.
2. Teach basic tempo indicators.
3. Teach the conducting patterns and practice changing speeds (open strings & scales).
4. Work on your own conducting deficiencies.

### **A - Accidentals**

1. Teach how sharps and flats alter any note, how bar lines affect them, and how naturals function.
2. Find lines in a method book that practice chromatics.

## R - Rhythms - THE BACKBONE OF SIGHTREADING

1. Develop your own system and practice it regularly all year.
2. Clap and count! (LONG NOTES, RESTS AND TIES are dangerous!)
3. Use written assessments to spot check understanding.
4. Shadow bow. Many rhythmic problems are bow distribution issues.
5. Teach subdivisions and equivalencies, especially in rests.
6. Plan a strategy if they get lost. Teach students to play just the first beat of each measure on the downbeat to improve scanning in tempo and reading ahead.
7. Practice giving big cues at rehearsal numbers or letters.

## S - Signs and symbols

1. REPETITION SYMBOLS, dynamics, multiple-measure rests, repeated measure symbols, articulations, bowings, pizzicato, etc. (DC, DS and Codas especially)
2. Have students physically touch the music at the repetition spots.
3. Practice dynamics and articulations and the physical skills that control them.

\*\*\*Develop a set of sight-reading folders that includes sequenced exercises and pieces of different levels and in different keys to read on a regular basis throughout the year using the format you'll use in the Sight-Reading room. Ask students to work in pairs and write out the STARS process for a new piece (especially if an administrator is observing - cooperative learning, writing, analyzing, etc). They love that stuff. It's also a good sub plan.

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### Resources:

Essential Elements for Strings - Allen, Gillespie and Hayes - Hal Leonard Music

Method book that introduces the "STARS" acronym.

Sight Reader for Young Strings - Books 1 and 2 - Hudahoff & Ward - Educational Music Service (ems.com or 845-469-5790)

This is a sequential set of short sight reading exercises that review the notes used, rhythms, and short, harmonized pieces, starting with open strings and 1<sup>st</sup> fingers and advancing through about D level.

Essentials for Strings - Gerald Anderson - Kjos

Best rhythmic and bowing exercises I've found for string players as well as one, two and three octave scales for all instruments.

Musictheory.net

(online lessons and drills - note names, key signatures, piano keyboards, all clefs)