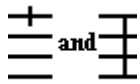


Gregorian Chant Notation

This is a description of the traditional Gregorian Chant notation, so that anyone will be able to read the notation and sing it.

Chant is written in **neumes**, which are notes sung on a single syllable.

Gregorian Chant has no meter at all, though it does have a rhythm of groups of 2 or 3 notes. Vertical lines separate musical phrases and may sometimes allow a pause for taking a breath, like



Chant is not in a major key or a minor key, but in *modes* (though there are some modes which can sound like a modern scale).

Chant is written on a 4-line staff, instead of 5 lines as music is written on now.



marks where **DO** is on the staff. Here it is on the third line from the bottom, so if **DO** is on C then the lines would go F-A-C-E.



would mean that **DO** is on the top line, so if **DO** is on C the notes on the lines would be D-F-A-C.



is a **Fah Clef**, and indicates where **Fah** is on the staff. Here, **DO** would be on the bottom space.

The Neumes

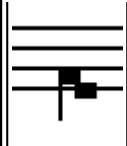

Chant notation is on the left.

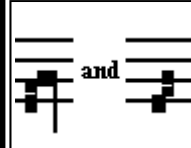

The modern equivalent is on the right.


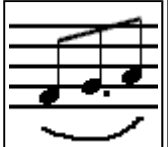
	<p>Punctum This is just a single note</p>	
	<p>Virga This is the same as a punctum.</p>	



	<p>Podatus (pes) When one note is written above another note like this, the bottom note is sung first, and then the note above it.</p>	
--	---	--







	<p>Clivis (flexa) When the higher note comes first, it is written like this.</p>	
---	---	---



	<p>Scandicus Three or more notes going upward.</p>	
---	---	---



	<p>Salicus Three or more notes going upward, but the middle one has a vertical episema: that note is slightly lengthened.</p>	
---	--	---



	<p>Climacus Three or more notes going downwards.</p>	
---	---	---

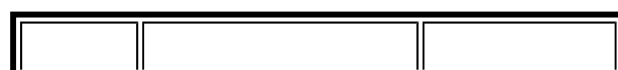
	<p>Torculus (pes flexus) Three notes that go up and then back down.</p>	
--	---	--



	<p>Porrectus (flexus resupinus) A high note, a low note, and a high note. The line starts at the first note and goes down to the middle note.</p>	
---	--	---



	<p>Scandicus flexus Four notes, going up and then dropping down.</p>	
---	---	---



	<p>Porrectus flexus A porrectus with a low note on the end.</p>	
---	--	---

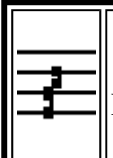

	<p>Climacus resupinus The opposite of a scandicus flexus.</p>	
---	--	--





	<p>Torculus resupinus Low-up-down-up.</p>	
---	--	--



	<p>Pes subbipunctus One note up and two notes down.</p>	
---	--	--



	<p>Virga subtripunctis Four notes in a row, going downwards.</p>	
---	---	---



	<p>Virga praetripunctis Four notes in a row, going up.</p>	
---	---	--

Liquescent Neumes

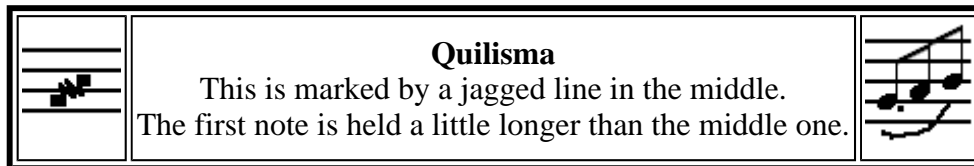
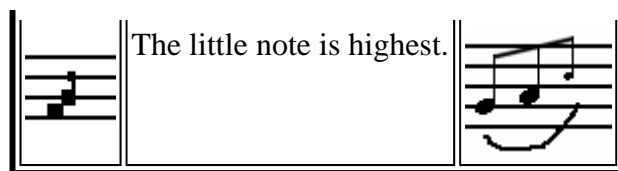
	<p>Epiphonus (liquescent podatus) Little notes lose some of their fullness because they are sung on a complicated syllable.</p>	
---	--	---

	<p>Cephalicus (liquescent flexa) In liquescent neumes like that look like this, The top note comes <i>before</i> the bottom note!</p>	
---	--	---


	<p>Pinnosa (liquescent torculus) Again, the top note comes before the note underneath.</p>	
---	---	---


	<p>Porrectus liquescens The little note always comes last.</p>	
---	---	--

	<p>Scandicus liquescens</p>	
--	------------------------------------	--





These are other ways of showing that a note is held:

One is by putting a dot (**punctum-mora**) after the note. 

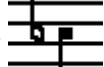
It is a little bit like a dotted note in modern music. 

The second way of showing that a note is held is by having more than one of the same note in a row on the same syllable.

This is called a repurcussive neume. 

A horizontal line (**episema**) above a neume means to hold the note, or slow down, a little like like *rit.* in modern music. 

A vertical line (**episema**) written under a note means it has a mild emphasis, like an accent mark. 

There is one accidental that may be used in Chant notation, it is the B-flat  which does look a

lot like the modern B-flat 

Sometimes the flat sign can be written at the beginning instead of in front of the note, and then it's like a key signature. Otherwise, it only lasts for one word.

At the end of a line of chant, a little, skinny note (**custos**) is written to show what note is coming up next in the following line.



And that is how to read Gregorian Chant notation!



There are some chants in [Guitar notation](#) on another page on this site.




Jeff Ostrowski at the **St. John Mary Vianney Choir** in Kansas is selling CD's of Gregorian Chant music on his web site at <http://jeff.ostrowski.cc/CD.htm> and [Summi et Aeterni Sacerdoti CD](#)



The [LPH Resource Center for Catholic Homeschoolers](#) has elementary-level classes available in Latin and Music.

You can write to me at: Rick Kephart <rmkpa@Lphrc.org>

HOME	Religion	Latin Mass	Denton	Prayer Requests	 Homeschooling
Stories	Art	*****		Commodore	Miniatures
England	Italy	Florida	Musical	Gregorian Chant	LPH Resource Center

My book:
The Man Under the Hill
 (A science fiction tale.)

