

Comments and Corrections

For George Heussenstamm's *The Norton Manual of Music Notation* (© 1987)
for use in classes by Dr. Ronald Caltabiano

Music notation standards are constantly evolving and different music publishers employ slightly different standards. Various genres (classical, jazz, Broadway, etc.) may exhibit significantly different standards, and even various media (orchestral, chamber, solo) within the same genre can have differences in notation.

The standards expressed by Heussenstamm were correct at the time it was written (1987) and correct for working with the standard materials of the time: pencil or fountain pen on paper with pre-drawn staves. The comments below take into account those changes that have become standard in the last 20 years and also note differences in what is acceptable for working by hand versus working with software. They express the most widely held concepts of contemporary classical music notation in use today.

PAGE	LOCATION	COMMENT
8	Example 1-10	Abbreviations for common and cut time are no longer used in classical music.
10	Example 1-16	The simplified double-sharp sign is preferred
11	1st sentence	Add the word "up": All noteheads, with the exception of the whole note, have an oval shape tilted up to the right.
16	¶ 2 and example 1-31	The word "loco" is always used in handwritten notation, but only when necessary for clarity in computer-engraved notation.
20	1st sentence	Replace "2½ to 3 staff spaces" with "one octave."
22	Example 1-47, third chord	When multiple seconds are present in a chord, choose the arrangement with the fewest notes on the wrong side of the stem.
24	Example 1-54	Easier than remembering these patterns is to follow this rule for adding accidentals to large chords: <i>Add accidentals from right to left, cutting back right whenever there's room.</i> Note: early versions of Finale and multiple versions of other software may place accidentals incorrectly. Current versions of many software programs insert too much space between multiple accidentals on chords under their default setting.
29	Example 1-63	The reason that the incorrect examples are wrong is because the beams go across the midpoint of the measure. This should never occur in measures of 2, 4, or 8 beats.
35-36	Example 1-82	See replacement example, attached.
43	Example 1-103	This adjustment is not acceptable with computer notation.
46	Example 1-111a	This is no longer acceptable.
52	Example 1-131	No. Accents must always be placed by the noteheads.
54	Example 1-142	The "modern" method is preferred.
55	Example 1-143	The slur is not optional; it is <i>required</i> .
55	Example 1-144	The "possible" notation is preferred.
56	Example 1-148	These abbreviations should be avoided in classical music, but are common in other types of music.
64	Example 2-7b	The "traditional" notation is now incorrect.
65	¶ 1 and example 2-10	The "equality of note value" sign should be used only when needed for clarity.
69	Example 2-26	When a courtesy accidental is applied to the first note of a system, that accidental should be placed within parentheses.
72	Example 2-34	The second example is not clear because it obscures the midpoint of the measure.
73	Example 2-36	line 3: Reverse recommended/not recommended, line 4: Reverse recommended/not recommended (disguises syncopation and implies 3/4). line 5: Reverse recommended/not recommended (disguises syncopation and implies 3/2).
73	¶ 2	Note: Never use rounded (slur-like) tuplet brackets in classical music. They may be used in other styles of music if the piece is otherwise devoid of slurs.
75	Example 2-43	These adjustments are acceptable in hand notation but not computer notation, in which staves may be variably spaced.
81	Example 3-7e	Not acceptable.
93	Example 3-25	These adjustments are acceptable in hand notation but not computer notation, in which staves may be variably spaced.
136	First system	The first system should be indented.

Heussenstamm: Example 1-82, revised

In compound meters:

Group full-beat rests into beats, so $\text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$ and $\text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$ (when within the same beat) become $\text{♩} \cdot$.

Do not group rests of less than a beat into values larger than the numerator. For example, in 6/8, use $\text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$ instead of $\text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$.

	Traditional	Now Acceptable	<i>Preferred</i>
a.			
b.			
c.			
d.			
e.			
f.			
g.			

In simple meters:

Rests smaller than the numerator may be grouped or not, but should be consistent throughout.

h.			<i>either</i>
i.			<i>either</i>
j.			<i>either</i>