

# ABC Quick Reference Card

Version 0.6 – ABC v2.1 & some abcm2ps v6 – Steve Merrony

## Information & Headers

%abc                                    %abc-2.1 – First Line of file  
B:book  
C:composer  
D:discography  
F:file URL  
G:group                                G:flute  
H:history  
I:instruction  
K:key [clef] [middle=x]                K:G, K:AMix – **Last** Header\*  
L:note unit length                    L:1/8  
M:metre                                M:4/4  
m:macro                                m: ~n2 = (30/n/m/ n  
N:notes  
O:origin  
P:parts                                P:A, P:ABAC, P:(A2B)3  
Q:tempo                                Q:"allegro" 1/4=120  
R:rhythm                                R:R, R:reel  
r:remark  
S:source  
s:symbol line                         s: !pp! \*\* !f!  
T:title                                 **Second** Header  
U:user defined                        U: T = !trill!  
V:voice                                V:4 clef=bass\*\*  
W:words                                Lyrics after tune  
w:words                                Lyrics inline  
X:reference number                    **First** Header  
Z:transcriber                         Also put copyright info here

## \* Clefs

treble                                 Treble (default)  
treble-8                                Treble 8ve below eg.tenors  
treble+8                                Treble 8ve above eg.piccolo  
bass                                    Bass  
bass3                                    Baritone  
alto4                                    Tenor  
alto                                     Alto  
alto2                                    Mezzosoprano  
alto1                                    Soprano  
none                                    No clef  
perc                                    Percussion

## \*\* Voices

The voice name is a digit or a word followed by:  
clef=                                    clef of the voice  
perc                                    percussion staff  
name=xxx                                name at the left of the first staff  
sname=xxx                                name that appears left of later staves  
merge                                    indicates that this voice belongs to the same staff as the previous voice  
up or down                                forces the note stem direction  
gstem=up/down/auto                    forces the grace note stem direction  
stem=up/down/auto                    forces the note stem direction  
dyn=up/down/auto                    forces the placement of dynamic marks  
lyrics=up/down/auto                    forces the placement of the lyrics  
middle=<note>                            specify name of note on middle line  
staffscale=n                            sets the scale of the associated staff  
stafflines=n                            sets the number of lines of the staff

## Extended Information Fields

%abc-creator mxml2abc-0.6  
%abc-version 2.0                        % use for pre-2.1 ABC  
%abc-charset iso-8859-1                % default is UTF-8  
%abc-include mydefs.abh

## Formatting

### Page Format

%pageheight                            <length>                                %rightmargin                            <length>  
%pagewidth                             <length>                                %indent                                 <length>  
%topmargin                             <length>                                %landscape                             <logical>  
%botmargin                             <length>                                %staffwidth                            <length>  
%leftmargin                            <length>

### Fonts (Most take a font name and size as parameters)

%titlefont                             %measurefont  
%subtitlefont                          %repeatfont  
%composerfont                         %textfont  
%partsfont                             %voicefont  
%tempofont                             %vocalfont                             % w:  
%gchordfont                            %wordfont                             % W:  
%headerfont  
%historyfont  
%footerfont  
%annotationfont  
%infofont  
The specifiers \$1, \$2, \$3 and \$4 can be used to change the font within an [ABC string](#)  
%setfont-1/2/3/4 <ft> <sz>

## Spacing

%topspace                             <length>                                %titlecaps                             <logical>  
%titlespace                            <length>                                %subtitlespace                        <length>  
%titleleft                             <logical>                                %composerspace                        <length>  
%aligncomposer                        <integer>                                % -1 left, 0 centre, !1 right  
%musicospace                          <length>                                % between comp. & 1<sup>st</sup> staff  
%partsspace                            <length>                                %wordsspace                            <length>  
%vocalspace                            <length>                                %textspace                             <length>  
%infospace                             <length>  
%staffsep                              <length>                                % between systems  
%sysstaffsep                          <length>                                % between staves  
%barsperstaff                         <integer>  
%parskipfac                            <number>                                % space between parts  
%lineskipfac                           <number>                                % space between lines of text  
%stretchstaff                         <logical>                                | %stretchlast                         <logical>  
%maxshrink                            <number>                                % shrinking notes  
%maxstaffsep                          <length>                                | %splittune                            <logical>  
%maxsysstaffsep                      <length>  
%newpage  
%scale                                 <number>                                % scale EVERYTHING  
%staves                                <number>                                % eg. [(SA) (TB)] for short score  
%vkisp                                 <length>

## Measures/Bars

%measurefirst                        <integer>                                % number of 1st measure  
%barnumbers                            <integer>                                % numbers every n bars  
%measurenb                            <integer>                                % same as %barnumbers  
%measurebox                            <logical>  
%setbarnb                              <integer>                                % set measure #  
%contbarnb                            <logical>                                % repeat numbering  
%alignbars                             <integer>                                % align bars for next n lines

## Text

%text                                   <ABC String>                            %%endtext  
%%textoption                          <string>                                %%sep                                    [# # #]  
%%center                               <ABC String>                            %%header  
%%begintext                            %%footer

## Misc

%autoclef                             <logical>  
%%beginps ...                          %%endps  
%bstemdown                            <logical>  
%comball                               <logical>  
%combinevoices                       <logical>  
%dateformat                           <string>  
%encoding                             <integer>                                % 0 – 6 for ISO-Latin-n  
%EPS                                    <string>                                % include external EPS file  
%extrabreve                           <logical>  
%extrbelow                            <logical>  
%flatbeams                            <logical>  
%freegchord                           <logical>                                % print '#', 'b' and '=' stet  
%gchordbox                            <logical>  
%graceslurs                           <logical>  
%hyphencont                           <logical>  
%infoline                              <logical>                                % rhythm & origin on same line  
%linebreak                            \$ or ! or <EOL> or <none>  
%musiconly                            <logical>                                % don't output lyrics  
%oneperpage                           <logical>  
%partsbox                              <logical>  
%postscript                           <string>  
%printparts                            <logical>                                % P:  
%printtempo                           <logical>  
%sep                                    <length> <length> <length>            % separator  
%shiftunison                           <logical>  
%squarebreve                           <logical>  
%slurheight                           <float>                                % <1.0 to flatten  
%staff                                 <number>                                % use nth staff  
%staffnonote                           <logical>                                % don't show empty staves  
%stemheight                           <float>  
%straightflags                        <logical>  
%timewarn                             <logical>                                % cautionary time sigs  
%tuplets                               <integer> <integer> <integer>  
%vocalabove                           <logical>  
%withxrefs                            <logical>                                % print X: index in title  
%writefields                           <list of field identifiers> [<logical>]  
%writehistory                         <logical>

## Notes

C,,	C,	C (middle-C)	c	c'	c''
^	sharp	( )	slur		
^^	double sharp	.-	dotted tie		
=	natural	(.)	dotted slur		
-	flat	-,	tie below		
--	double flat	(')	slur above		
Z	rest	{/g}	grace note		
Z	bar's rest	{3}	3 notes in time of 2		
x	invisible rest	{p:q:r}	p notes in time of q		
X	invisible bar rest		for next r notes		
y	spacer	[ceg]	chord		
-	tie	&	overlay temp voice		

## Repeats and Bars

	]		[	]:	:	::
[ ]						
.						
[1	[2					

invisible bar line  
dotted bar line  
1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> time repeats

## Chord Symbols

m or min	minor e.g. "Am7"A2D2
maj	major
dim	diminished
aug or +	augmented
sus	sustained
7, 9 ...	7th, 9th, etc.

## Lyrics

-	break between syllables within a word
-	last syllable is to be held for an extra note
*	one note is skipped
~	appears as a space; puts multiple words under note
\-	appears as hyphen; multiple syllables under note
	advances to the next bar

## Decorations

### Short Forms

.	Staccato	S	segno
~	Irish roll/turn	O	coda
T	trill	J	slide
H	fermata	R	roll
L	accent or emphasis	u	upbow
M	inverted mordent	v	downbow
P	mordent		

### Dynamics

!crescendo(! or !<(!	start of a < crescendo mark
!crescendo)! or !>(!	end of a < crescendo mark,
	placed after the last note
!diminuendo(! or !>(!	start of a > diminuendo mark
!diminuendo)! or !<(!	end of a > diminuendo mark,
	placed after the last note
!pppp! !ppp! !pp! !p! !mp! !mf! !f! !ff! !fff! !ffff! !sfz!	

### Ornaments

!trill!	"tr" trill, also !trill(! and !trill)!
!lowermordent!	short squiggle with a line through it
!uppermordent!	short squiggle
!mordent!	same as !lowermordent!
!pralltriller!	same as !uppermordent!
!accent!	> mark
!>!	same as !accent!
!emphasis!	same as !accent!
!fermata!	fermata or hold (arc above dot)
!invertedfermata!	
!tenuto!	horizontal bar
!trem1/2/3/4!	tremolo (on 2 <sup>nd</sup> note)
!xstem!	stem up to staff above
!slide!	!turnx! !invertedturn! !
invertedturnx!	!arpeggio!

## Text Annotations

"..."	above staff	"_..."	below staff
"^..."	left of note	">..."	right of note
"<..."	explicit offset		
"@x,y ..."			

## Fingering & Phrasing

!0! - !5!	fingerings
!plus!	left-hand pizzicato, or rasp for brass
!wedge!	small filled-in wedge mark
!open!	small circle above note indicating open string or harmonic
!thumb!	cello thumb symbol
!snap!	snap-pizzicato mark
!turn!	a turn mark
!roll!	a roll mark (arc) as used in Irish music
!breath!	a breath mark (apostrophe) after note
!shortphrase!	vertical line on the upper part of staff
!mediumphrase!	same, but extending down to the middle
!longphrase!	same, but extending 3/4 of the way down
!upbow!	V mark
!downbow!	squared n mark

## Repeat/Section Symbols

!segno!	2 s-like symbols separated by diagonal
!coda!	a ring with a cross in it
!D.S.!	the letters D.S. (Da Segno)
!D.C.!	the letters D.C. (Da Coda or Da Capo)
!dacoda!	!dacapo! !fine!

## Correct Order of Elements

<grace notes><chord symbols><decorations><accidentals>  
<NOTE><octave><note length><tie>

## General MIDI Instruments

Specify inline with [I: MIDI=program <n - I>]

1 Acoustic Grand	22 Accordion
2 Bright Acoustic	23 Harmonica
3 Electric Grand	24 Tango Accordion
4 Honky-Tonk	25 Acoustic Guitar(nylon)
5 Electric Piano 1	26 Acoustic Guitar(steel)
6 Electric Piano 2	27 Electric Guitar(jazz)
7 Harpsichord	28 Electric Guitar(clean)
8 Clavinet	29 Electric Guitar(muted)
9 Celesta	30 Overdriven Guitar
10 Glockenspiel	31 Distortion Guitar
11 Music Box	32 Guitar Harmonics
12 Vibraphone	33 Acoustic Bass
13 Marimba	34 Electric Bass (finger)
14 Xylophone	35 Electric Bass (pick)
15 Tubular Bells	36 Fretless Bass
16 Dulcimer	37 Slap Bass 1
17 Drawbar Organ	38 Slap Bass 2
18 Percussive Organ	39 Synth Bass 1
19 Rock Organ	40 Synth Bass 2
20 Church Organ	41 Violin
21 Reed Organ	42 Viola

43 Cello	86 Lead 6 (voice)
44 Contrabass	87 Lead 7 (fifths)
45 Tremolo Strings	88 Lead 8 (bass+lead)
46 Pizzicato Strings	89 Pad 1 (new age)
47 Harp	90 Pad 2 (warm)
48 Timpani	91 Pad 3 (polysynth)
49 String Ensemble 1	92 Pad 4 (choir)
50 String Ensemble 2	93 Pad 5 (bowed)
51 Synth Strings 1	94 Pad 6 (metallic)
52 Synth Strings 2	95 Pad 7 (halo)
53 Choir Aahs	96 Pad 8 (sweep)
54 Voice Oohs	97 FX 1 (rain)
55 Synth Voice	98 FX 2 (soundtrack)
56 Orchestra Hit	99 FX 3 (crystal)
57 Trumpet	100 FX 4 (atmosphere)
58 Trombone	101 FX 5 (brightness)
59 Tuba	102 FX 6 (goblins)
60 Muted Trumpet	103 FX 7 (echoes)
61 French Horn	104 FX 8 (sci-fi)
62 Brass Section	105 Sitar
63 Synth Brass 1	106 Banjo
64 Synth Brass 2	107 Shamisen
65 Soprano Sax	108 Koto
66 Alto Sax	109 Kalimba
67 Tenor Sax	110 Bagpipe
68 Baritone Sax	111 Fiddle
69 Oboe	112 Shanai
70 English Horn	113 Tinkle Bell
71 Bassoon	114 Agogo
72 Clarinet	115 Steel Drums
73 Piccolo	116 Woodblock
74 Flute	117 Taiko Drum
75 Recorder	118 Melodic Tom
76 Pan Flute	119 Synth Drum
77 Blown Bottle	120 Reverse Cymbal
78 Skakuhachi	121 Guitar Fret Noise
79 Whistle	122 Breath Noise
80 Ocarina	123 Seashore
81 Lead 1 (square)	124 Bird Tweet
82 Lead 2 (sawtooth)	125 Telephone Ring
83 Lead 3 (calliope)	126 Helicopter
84 Lead 4 (chiff)	127 Applause
85 Lead 5 (charang)	128 Gunshot

## Accented Characters etc.

Accent	Examples	Encodings
grave	À à È è Ò ò	\A \a \E \e \O \o
acute	Á á É é Ó ó	\^A \^a \^E \^e \^O \^o
circumflex	Â â Ê ê Ô ô	\^A \^a \^E \^e \^O \^o
tilde	Ã ã Ñ ñ Ö ö	\~A \~a \~N \~n \~O \~o
umlaut	Ä ä Æ æ Ö ö	\"A \"a \"E \"e \"O \"o
cedilla	Ç ç	\,C \,c
ring	Å å	\oA \oa
slash	Ø ø	\O \o
breve	Ă ă Ę ę	\uA \ua \uE \ue
caron	Š š Ž ž	\vS \vs \vZ \vz
double acute	Ő ő Ű ű	\HO \Ho \HU \Hu
ligatures	ß æ œ	\ss \AE \ae \oe
copyright	©	&copy; or \u0022
sharp/nat./flat	# ♯ ♭	\u266f \u266e \u266d