

Notation Software

Before you buy

- Check system requirements.
- Make a list of your typical needs (keys, meters, instrument combinations) and check these with the software features.

Top free options:

MuseScore 2

Offers many advanced options such as complex meters and transposing instruments.

File formats (in addition to its own)

Import: MIDI, XML, Guitar Pro, Capella

Export: MIDI, XML, MP3, graphics

Finale Notepad

A perennial favorite. Handles up to 8 staves and will do compound meters.

Entire piece may be transposed but not individual instruments.

File formats (in addition to its own)

Import/Export: MIDI, XML

Lilypond

For computer mega-geeks only, but it will do everything.

File Formats

Every program has its own format, but many can import/export to shared formats.

- XML – The new generic music notation format.
- MIDI – Audio format that can be read by many notation programs.
- MP3 – Audio format. Plays on computers and other devices. Can be burned to audio CD.
- WAV – Audio format used by Microsoft.
- AIFF – Audio format developed by Apple.
- PDF – Document format for Adobe Acrobat Reader (free) and others. Easily shareable.
- Graphics formats: jpeg, gif, bmp, png, tiff, eps

Entry level options:

Finale PrintMusic \$120

Can export to graphic (jpeg), pdf, and audio (WAV or AIFF)

Up to 24 staves

Import/export MIDI and XML files

Some worksheets and flashcards included

Sibelius | First \$120

Up to 16 staves

Two computers, one user

No irregular bars except pick-ups

Import/export MIDI, XML; export to PDF

MagicScore Maestro \$60-80

Export to MIDI, XML, pdf, various graphic formats, and audio (WAV and MP3)

Windows only

\$30 discount for teachers, students, schools, and religious org. Code: MAESTRO8EDU

Top Ten Reviews gives Sibelius the nod with Finale and MagicScore in second and third. Finale may offer more options at this level for the independent music teacher, but Sibelius might be easier to use. MagicScore is half the price and would probably be sufficient. Get the free trial to check out note entry options as this may not be as easy in MagicScore Maestro.

Full-featured professional versions:

Finale (Educator pricing \$350)

The original. Private instructors qualify for academic pricing.

Sibelius (varied pricing)

Has often seemed more intuitive and easier to learn. (Still a big learning curve, however.)

Uncertain whether private instructors qualify for academic pricing.

Dorico (\$600)

The newbie – coming by the end of 2016. The core developers of the original Sibelius are building this from scratch. It promises to marry top notation to great page layout and give improved audio playback. Private teachers will probably receive academic pricing.

<i>Sibelius First</i>	<i>www.avid.com</i>	<i>MagicScore Maestro</i>	<i>www.musicaleditor.com</i>
<i>Sibelius</i>		<i>Musescore 2</i>	<i>musescore.org</i>
<i>Finale Notepad</i>	<i>www.finale.com</i>	<i>Dorico</i>	<i>www.steinberg.net</i>
<i>Finale PrintMusic</i>		<i>Lilypond</i>	<i>lilypond.org</i>
<i>Finale</i>			