

How Flutists Notate Pitch Names

Although the flute's low C, which is middle C on the piano, is called "C4" in standard pitch notation, flutists themselves use a different numerical designation for first octave, second octave, and third octave.

As the concert flute typically has a range of three full octaves, the lowest C is called "C1" and each higher octave is called "C2", "C3" and the highest C is "C4". The octaves numerical name changes between the notes B and C.

The lowest note on the modern B-foot flute is called "low B" or B \emptyset (it was invented late in the flute's history) and the standard highest pitch would be D4. These are shown on the chart below, and these three octave designations are typically used in flute articles, flute publications, flute sheet-music ranges, and by flute pedagogues only.

Note: Fingerings exist for E4, F4, G4 etc., but are seldom used.

Flute Octave Designation



A musical staff in treble clef showing a scale of notes from C4 to D7. The notes are grouped into four octaves. The first octave (C4 to B4) is marked with 'C4' below. The second octave (C5 to B5) is marked with 'C5' below. The third octave (C6 to B6) is marked with 'C6' below. The fourth octave (C7 to D7) is marked with 'C7' below. The notes are labeled with standard octave notation below the staff: c' d' e' f' g' a' b' c'' d'' e'' f'' g'' a'' b'' c''' d''' e''' f''' g''' a''' b''' c'''' d''''.

Standard Octave Notation

A good source for fingering charts, trill charts, and alternate fingerings, using the online resources is:

<http://www.wfg.woodwind.org/flute/>

Articles on the flute and links to other flute resources can be found at:

<http://www.jennifercluff.com>

