Kalimba Christmas Songbook

A free sample of 5 of the 31 Christmas carols and holiday songs in the Kalimba Christmas Songbook, for a 17-key kalimba in C. The 7 pages after this one are the book's own pages, from its printable PDF (US Letter): the key to its tabs (2 pages) and 5 of its songs; each keeps its page number in the book.

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Why these songs are free to play

In the US, all music published before 1931 is in the public domain, and so are traditional tunes and other old music whose copyright has run out; the rules of other countries can differ. The book gives one entry per song, from the records of the song master its notes come from; here are its entries for these 5 songs. For Jingle Bells and Silent Night, the master records this basis: each tune is in a pre-1931 print named in its entry below.

Away in a Manger. Tune MUELLER by James R. Murray, published 1887; words anonymous, 1880s. Our tab follows Wikipedia score of MUELLER (melody, 3/4).

The First Noel. Traditional Cornish/English carol, printed by Davies Gilbert (1823) and William Sandys (1833). Our tab follows Mutopia Project "The First Noel" (cyberhymnal transcription), soprano line; barred here with the two-eighth pickup as in the 1928 print.

Jingle Bells. Written by James Lord Pierpont and published in 1857. This tab is the chorus. Checked against Heart Songs (1909), pp. 148-149; Songs the Whole World Sings (1915), p. 177; Blue Book (1928), p. 120. 50 of 51 notes. Note 24 (bar 7, note 4) is E5 here; the prints have C5 or C sharp 5. Ours is the form sung today.

Joy to the World. Lowell Mason tune ANTIOCH, words Isaac Watts 1719. Our tab follows The Blue Book of Favorite Songs (Hall & McCreary, Chicago, 1928), p. 71, "Joy to the World!" (Watts / arr. Lowell Mason): published 1928, public domain in the US since 2024.

Silent Night. Composed by Franz Xaver Gruber to words by Joseph Mohr, and first sung in 1818 in Oberndorf, Austria. Checked against Blue Book (1928), p. 67; Mutopia; Wikipedia score. 46 of 46 notes and the rhythm (the form sung today).

Made with AI. Newel Labs is a small studio run with AI tools. This book, the code that builds it and the tests that check it were made with AI.

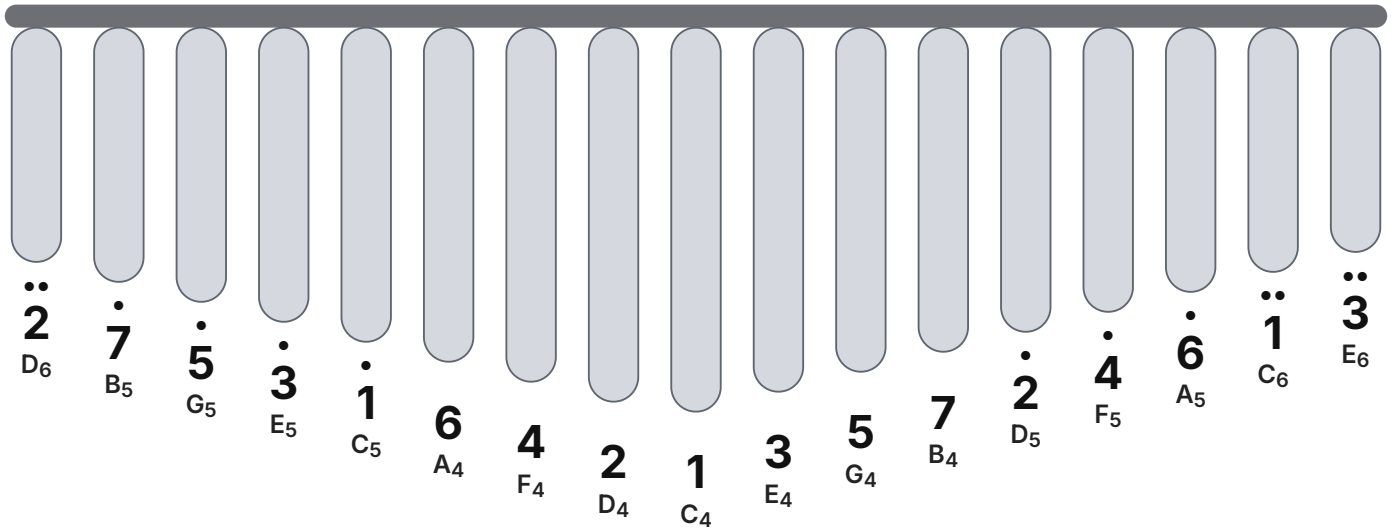
The full book

Printable PDF, US Letter and A4, in our own Etsy shop: **newelbyammar.etsy.com/listing/4598839677**

Paperback, 8.5 × 11 in, on Amazon: **amazon.com/dp/B0HQ69CWKS**

The key to the tabs

Every song here is written for a **17-key kalimba tuned to C major**, from C4 (middle C) up to E6, in **tab notation**: numbers and letters, not staff notation. The drawing is the key to the 17 tines, left to right as the player sees them: the longest, lowest tine is in the middle, and the notes climb outward, left, right, left, right.



Lowest note in the middle (1, C4); the dots and the letters show how the notes climb outward.

Numbers: the notes of the scale. 1 is C, 2 is D, 3 is E, 4 is F, 5 is G, 6 is A and 7 is B.

Dots above a number: the octave. No dot: C4 to B4, the seven lowest notes. One dot: one octave higher, C5 to B5. Two dots: two octaves higher, C6 to E6.

The small letter under each number: the same note by name. C4 is middle C; C5 is the C one octave above it.

Note lengths and bars

Each note's length is marked in beats, as in numbered notation.



1 beat
A number on its own lasts one beat.



2 beats
A dash after a note holds it one more beat.



3 beats
Two dashes: two more beats, and so on.



½ beat
A line under the number halves it.



¼ beat
Two lines: a quarter of a beat. Three lines: an eighth.



1½ beats
A dot after the number adds half again.



¾ beat
A line and a dot: half a beat plus a half of that.



2½ beats
Any other length is written out in beats, small, under the letter.

Bars. A thin line splits a song into bars; a double line ends it. A note held across a bar line keeps those bars together, so a few groups are longer than one bar. When the groups of a song are not bars, its page says so.

No rests. These tabs have no rest signs: each note lasts until the next one starts.

Tempo. Each song page gives its speed in beats a minute.

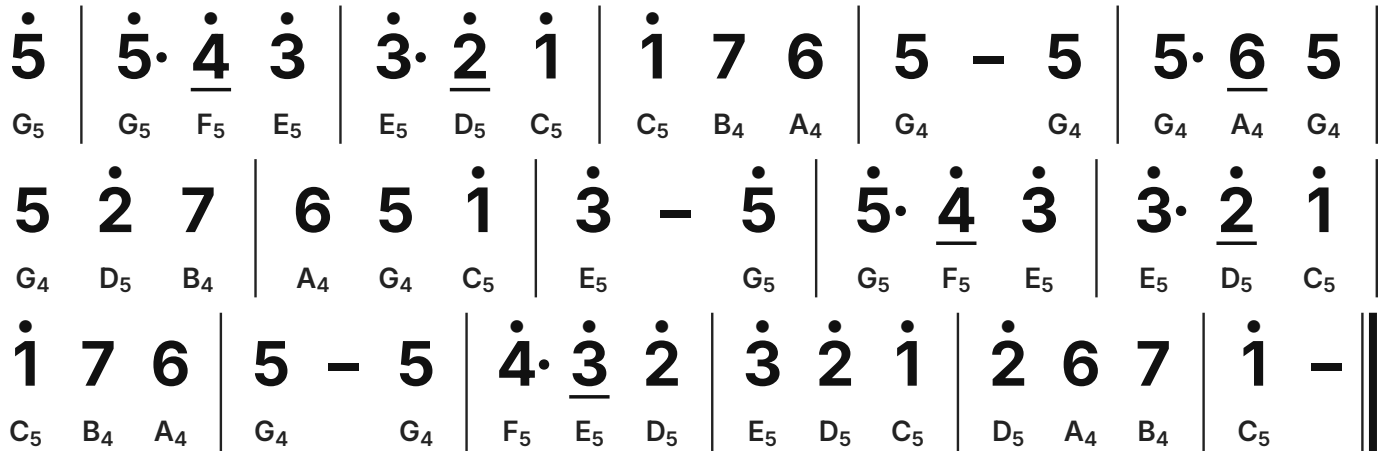
Away in a Manger

This is the tune most often sung in the United States, “Mueller” by James R. Murray, published in 1887. In Britain the carol is usually sung to William J. Kirkpatrick’s “Cradle Song” (1895).

The song’s free page

44 notes on 8 tines, G4 to G5 · Level 2 of 5 (easy) · 100 beats a minute · This tab is the whole tune

The song’s free page, with a play-along: newellabs.com/play/kalimba/tabs/manger/



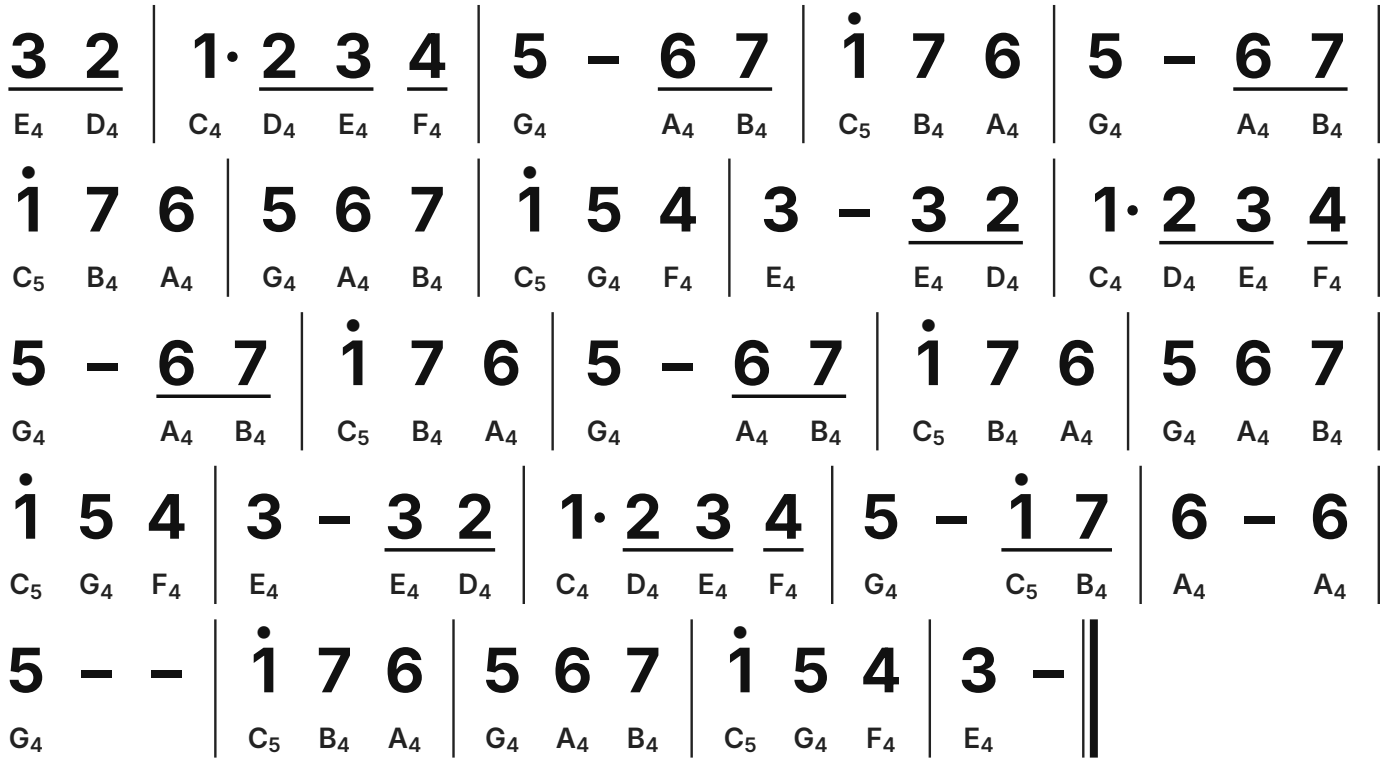
The First Noel

A traditional English carol from Cornwall, in print since 1823.

72 notes on 8 tines, C4 to C5 · Level 4 of 5 (harder) · 112 beats a minute · This tab is the verse and the refrain

The song's free page

The song's free page, with a play-along: newellabs.com/play/kalimba/tabs/noel/



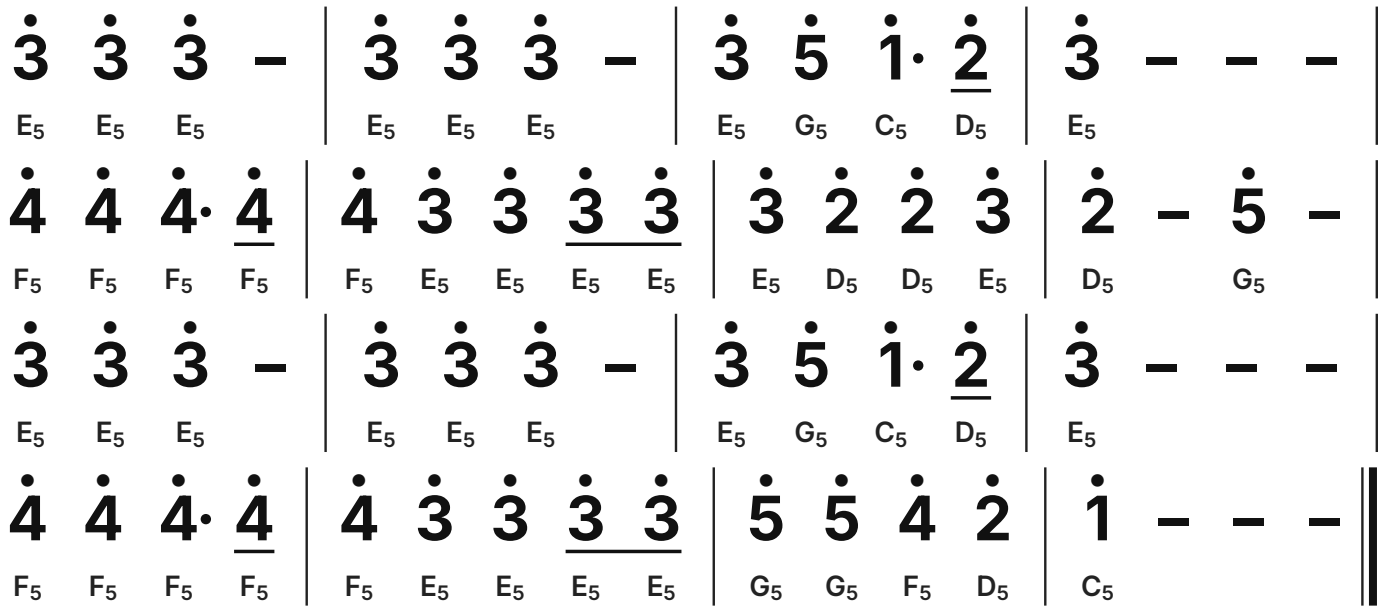
Jingle Bells

Written by James Lord Pierpont and published in 1857. This tab is the chorus.

51 notes on 5 tines, C5 to G5 · Level 1 of 5 (easiest) · 132 beats a minute

The song's free page, with a play-along: newellabs.com/play/kalimba/tabs/jingle/

The song's free page



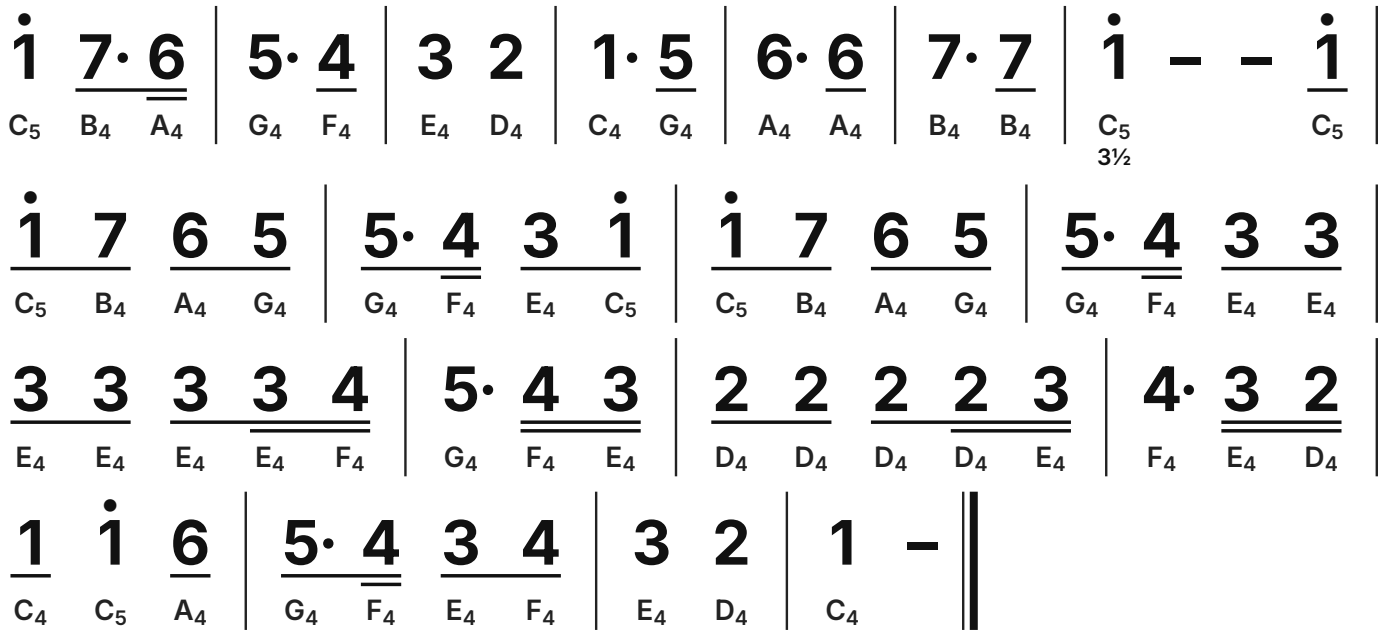
Joy to the World

Isaac Watts wrote the words in 1719. The tune, known as Antioch, is an arrangement by the American composer Lowell Mason (1792–1872) and has long been credited to Handel.

The song's free page

57 notes on 8 tines, C4 to C5 · Level 3 of 5 (moderate) · 96 beats a minute · This tab is the whole tune

The song's free page, with a play-along: newellabs.com/play/kalimba/tabs/joy/



Silent Night

Composed by Franz Xaver Gruber to words by Joseph Mohr, and first sung in 1818 in Oberndorf, Austria.

The song's free page

46 notes on 11 tines, C4 to F5 · Level 5 of 5 (challenging) · 150 beats a minute

The song's free page, with a play-along: newellabs.com/play/kalimba/tabs/silent/

