

Musicianship Lesson 1

Music is written on the **staff** or **stave**. The position of the *note* on the staff tells you how high or low the note is. The head of the note is what you need to observe: the higher on the staff, the higher the pitch.

The head of the note can be either on a line of the staff or on a space between the lines.

Underlying every piece of music is **the beat**. This is the steady pulse to which you dance, clap your hands, or tap your foot.

A **bar** is a musical unit containing a certain number of beats. Between each **bar** is a **barline**.



A note that lasts for **4 beats** is called a **semibreve** or **whole note**. It looks like a big circle with no stem.

A note that lasts for **2 beats** is called a **minim** or **half note**. The head is a circle, but it has a stem.

A note that lasts for **1 beat** is called a **crotchet** or **quarter note**. The head is solid, with a stem.

Half a crotchet beat is a **quaver** or **eighth note**. The stem has a little tail that can connect with other notes or stand alone.

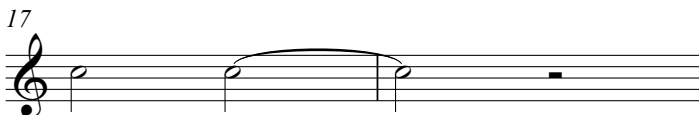
5 Clap these rhythms:



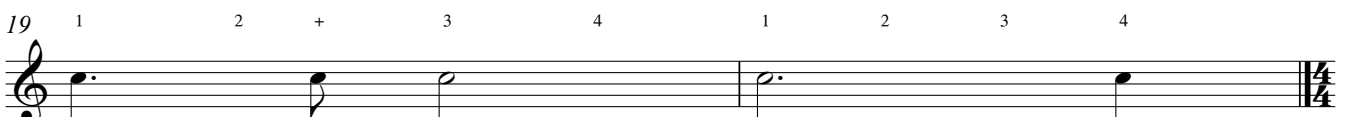
Rests are like notes; they have specific time values and a definite way of being written. The difference is that rests indicate silence rather than sound.



A **tie** is a curved line connecting *two notes of the same pitch*. When you see a tie, you sing the first note only, and hold the sound for the combined length of both notes.



A **dot** after a note is a device used to increase the length of any note by half its value. A crotchet is equal to two quavers, so a dotted crotchet lasts as long as three quavers. A dotted minim lasts as long as 3 crotchets.



Time signatures at the beginning of a piece of music tell you how many beats are in each bar.

Each bar will always have exactly the same number of beats throughout the piece of music, unless a new time signature appears in the middle of the piece, but don't worry about that now.

The top number of the time signature tells you how many beats there are in each bar.

The bottom number tells you what kind of note gets one beat, the *kind of beat* you're counting.

4/4 is the most common time signature. It tells you that there are 4 beats in each bar, and that we're counting crotchet beats (quarter notes) as our unit of measure. It is sometimes written as a C, meaning '**common time.**'

The number of beats in a bar can be made up of any combination of notes and rests, as long as there is the correct number of beats.

Subdividing the Beat

Any beat can be subdivided into smaller units. If you have 4/4 time and 4 crotchet beats in a bar, each note gets one beat and gets all of that beat. However, it is possible to divide the beat up into smaller parts. Since two quavers equal one crotchet, then in a bar of 4/4, you could substitute 2 quaver notes for every crotchet note.

21

1 2 3 4 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

To divide the beat up and count it out loud, you would say, "one-and, two-and, three-and, four-and."

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1 and 2 and 3 4 1 2 3 4 and

Here are some more rhythm exercises to clap:

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The Major Scale

A major scale is composed of a series of eight notes, always arranged in the same sequence of whole tones and semitones. A semitone is the very smallest distance you can travel on the piano, usually a white key to a black key, a black to a white, but sometimes two whites in a row. A whole tone is the distance of two semitones.

A **C scale** begins and ends with the note C, which is also called the **tonic**. All major scales have semitone between the 3rd and 4th steps and the 7th and 8th notes of the scale.

45

C D E F G A B C

In order to maintain the correct sequence of tones and semitones in a scale beginning on any of the other keys of the piano, it is sometimes necessary to add a **sharp (#)** or a **flat (b)** to a note. In any scale, each letter name of each note must be represented.

In the **G major scale**, there must be an **F#** added to maintain the semitone between the 7th and 8th notes of the scale. This **F#** is called the **key signature of G major**, and is represented by a # sign at the beginning of each line of music, on the staff.

G scale (without key signature written)

53

G A B C D E F# G

61 **G scale (with key signature)**

G A B C D E F# G

Similarly, to maintain the pattern of tones and semitones if we start on F and play an **F scale**, we need to add a **Bb** to the scale. The **Bb** is the **key signature** of the F scale.

69

F G A Bb C D E F

77 Try **sightsinging** through the following exercises based on the **C scale**.

1 2 3 3 4 5 5 6 7 1

85

1 1 2 3 3 3 4 5 5 5 6 7 1

93

And based on the G scale:

97

1 1 2 3 3 3 4 5 5 5 6 7 1

105

1 2 3 2 3 4 3 4 5 6 5 6 7 1

And based on the F scale:

109

1 2 3 4 5 5 6 7 1

115

1 1 2 3 3 3 4 5 5 5 6 7 1

Notes on the Staff

In this diagram, you can see notes in the treble clef and also on the keyboard. You need to know these notes well.

A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

etc.

A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C