

READING RHYTHM WORKOUT 1

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Chapter 1: Basic Notation Components

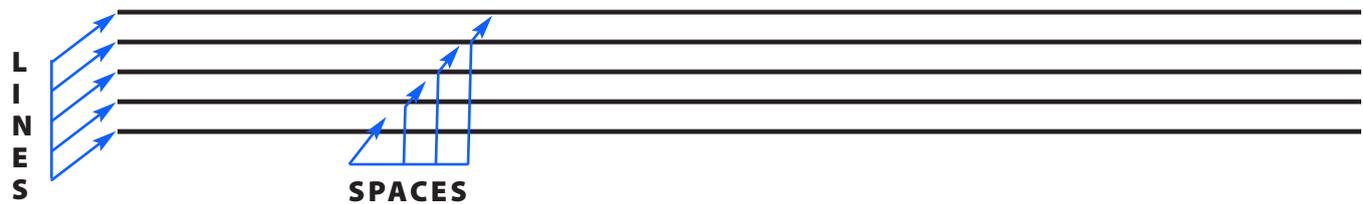
For a professional musician, reading music is a tremendous skill to have, and in specific situations it is an absolute necessity. The ability to read music also can be a big time-saver. For example, learning complex songs (or passages) by ear can be very time-consuming. If one is able to see the music (or part), then it can help speed up the learning process. In this lesson, we will give you the tools needed to read music today! Let's begin by looking at the basic elements of music notation.

This unit starts with the most basic building blocks of music notation. This is the foundation upon which all music notation is built. An understanding of the symbols and concepts below is the first step to reading music.

The Staff

The staff is an arrangement of five parallel lines and the four spaces between them. Both lines and spaces can represent musical notes (or pitches).

Ex. 1.1



Note Heads and Stems

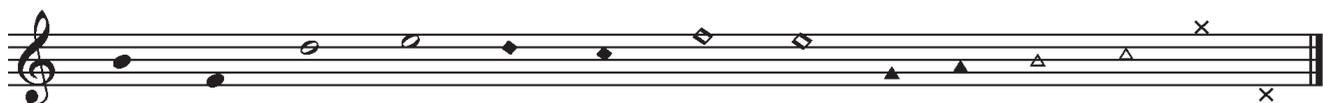
A **note head** is a symbol written on the staff (on a line or space) that displays where and when a particular pitch occurs. The varying appearance (or design) of note heads includes a multitude of choices ranging from solid dots, open dots, triangles, etc. For example:

Ex. 1.2



When they are placed on the staff, they look like this:

Ex. 1.3



A **stem** is a small line connected to a note head. If the stem is facing upward it should be on the right side of the note head. Likewise, if the stem is facing downward it should be placed on the left side of the note head. For example:

Ex. 1.4

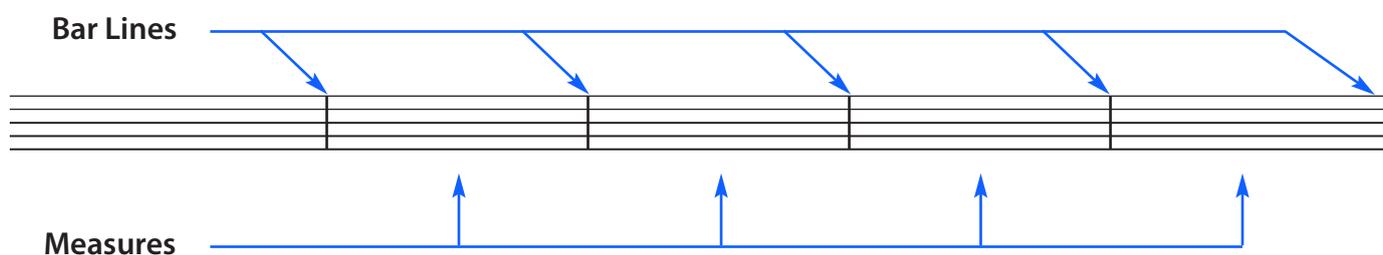


Structural Notation Elements

Bar Lines

The staff is divided into measures by using **single bar lines**. As you will see in Ex. 1.10 below, these lines also correspond with (and reset) the meter.

Ex. 1.5

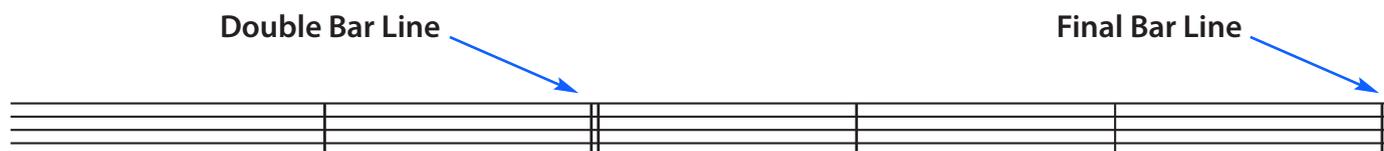


There are also other types of bar lines, such as:

The **double bar line** separates sections of music within a single piece of music. This is a visual aid for the performer to keep his or her place while reading the music.

A **final bar line** is placed at the end of a piece of music to confirm the ending.

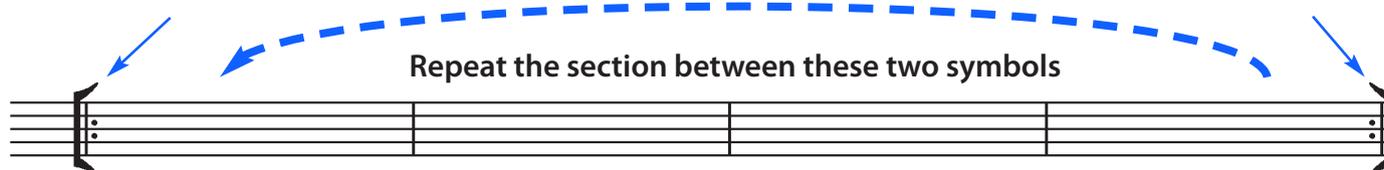
Ex. 1.6



Repeat Signs

A **repeat sign**, notated below with the bracketed bar lines and the two vertical dots, is the symbol that indicates a section should be repeated.

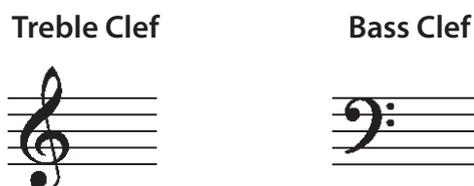
Ex. 1.7



Clefs

A **clef** is used to designate one particular line as a certain pitch. The remaining notes are mapped in ascending and descending order to that reference line. **Treble** and **bass** clef are the most commonly used clefs for melodic instruments such as guitars, keyboards and horns. For example:

Ex. 1.8

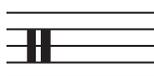


Rhythm Clef

Another clef that deserves mentioning is the rhythm (or neutral) clef. This clef is used for non-pitched instruments (such as some percussion instruments) and represents rhythmic values only.

Ex. 1.9

Rhythm Clef



Meter

Meter can be thought of as the pulse, the heartbeat of a piece of music. All music has momentum: a forward moving pulse that is counted in beats. Meter is measured in groups of beats with the most common being groups of two, three or four beats. For example:

Meter	Music
2 Beats	Country, Marches, Polka
3 Beats	Waltz
4 Beats	Pop, Rock, R&B

Counting Beats

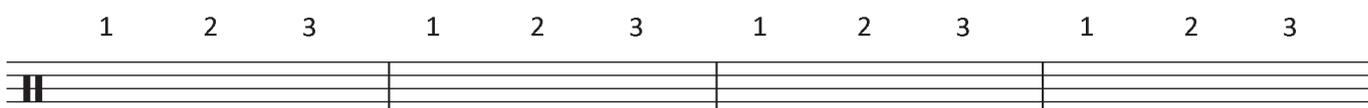
Once the meter of a piece of music is deciphered, a counting system is then put in place that represents the passing of each measure. For example:

Ex. 1.10

2 beats per measure



3 beats per measure



4 beats per measure



Time Signature

A **time signature** indicates the meter of a piece of music and the corresponding note value used within its notation. Placed to the right of the clef, the time signature is displayed as a stack of two numbers. The top number indicates how many beats there are in each measure. The bottom number displays the value of each beat. (Note values will be explained in the next chapter) For example:

Ex. 1.11

Two beats per measure Three beats per measure Four beats per measure

2 beats

1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2

3 beats

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

4 beats

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

C = Common Time Symbol

The most common meter in music is 4/4. For clarity purposes, the "4/4" time signature may be replaced simply by the letter C. For example:

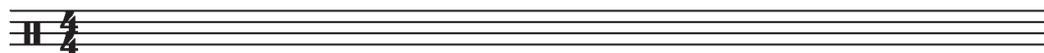
Ex. 1.12

Beats Per Minute (BPM)

BPM represents the pace (or tempo) of music measured by the number of beats occurring in 60 seconds (or 1 minute). Commonly, the BPM is indicated at the top of a piece of music. For instance, the following piece of music should be played at 120 BPM, which can be notated two ways (i.e. as BPM or with a quarter note equaling the BPM).

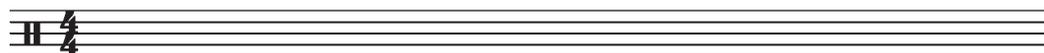
Ex. 1.13

♩=120



or

120 bpm



Chapter 2: Rhythmic Values

Within a 4/4 time signature (four beats per measure) we have three main note values: whole note, half note and quarter note.

Whole Note

A whole note is equal to four beats (i.e. a *whole* measure) and is indicated by a hollow oval note head. It is counted as follows:

Ex. 1.14



Exercise 1

While counting every beat out loud, play a whole note on beat 1 of every measure as follows:

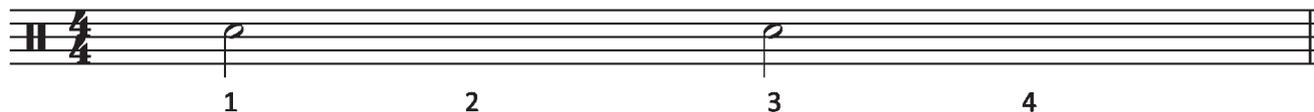
Ex. 1.15



Half Note

A half note is equal to two beats (*half* of a measure) and is indicated by a hollow oval head with a stem attached. It is counted as follows:

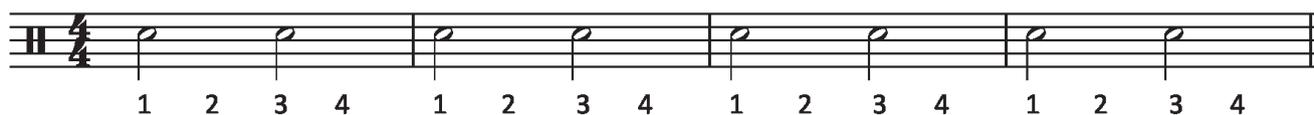
Ex. 1.16



Exercise 1

While counting every beat out loud, play half notes on beats 1 and 3 of every measure as follows:

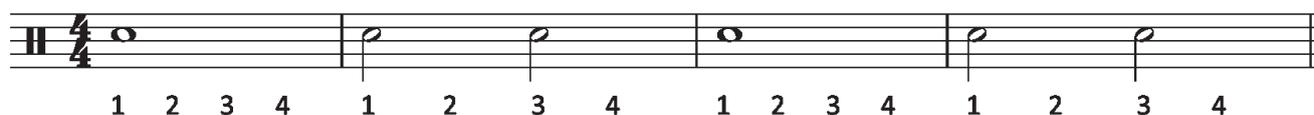
Ex. 1.17



Exercise 2

While counting every beat out loud, play the whole notes and half notes as follows:

Ex. 1.18



Quarter Note

A quarter note is equal to one beat (one *quarter* of a measure) and is indicated by a solid, oval note head with a stem attached. Quarter notes are counted like so:

Ex. 1.19



Exercise 1

While counting every beat out loud, play quarter notes on beats 1 to 4 of every measure as follows:

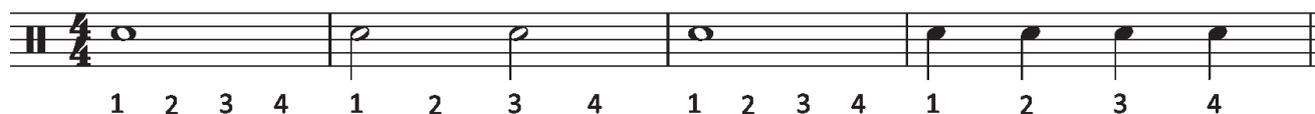
Ex. 1.20



All Together

While counting every beat out loud, play the whole notes, half notes and quarter notes as follows:

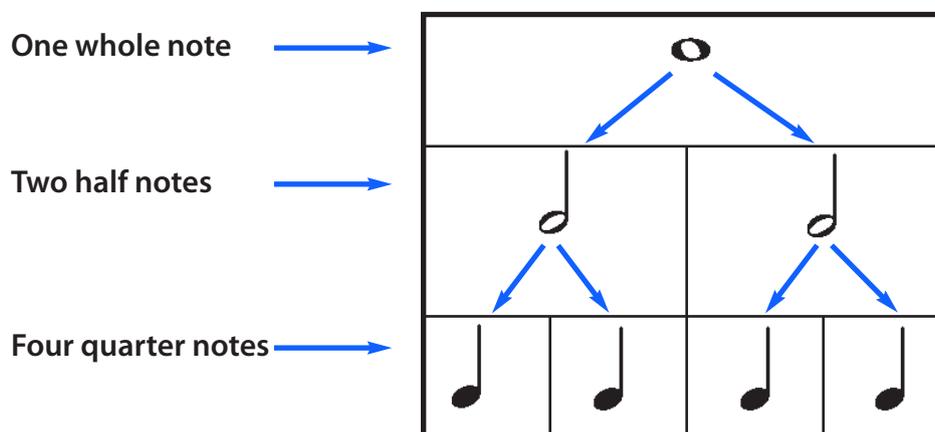
Ex. 1.21



Rhythmic Value Tree: Notes

As you have seen, a whole note is equal to two half notes, which are equal to four quarter notes. For example:

Ex. 1.22



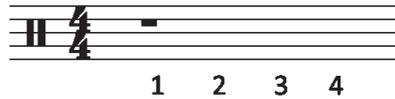
Rests

While a *note head* indicates **when to play** a rhythm (or produce a sound), rests indicate when there **should be silence**. Similar to note heads, rests have specific symbols for varying durations. Let's take a look at these:

Whole Rest

A whole rest is equal to four beats (i.e.: a *whole* measure) and is indicated by a solid rectangle that hangs down from the fourth line of the staff. It is counted as follows:

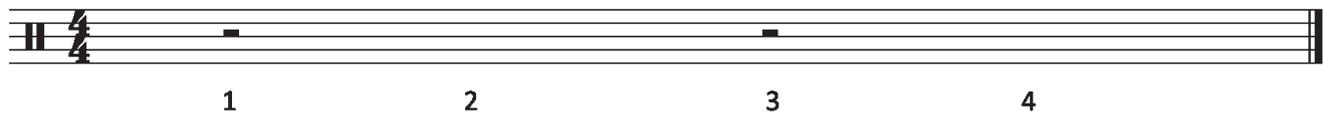
Ex. 1.23



Half Rest

A half rest is equal to two beats (*half* of a measure) and is indicated by a solid rectangle that sits on top of the third line of the staff. It is counted as follows:

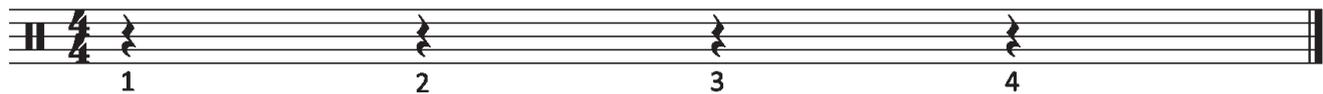
Ex. 1.24



Quarter Rest

A quarter rest is equal to one beat (*a quarter* of a measure) and is indicated with a squiggly line that slightly resembles the number three (3). Quarter rests are counted like so:

Ex. 1.25



Rhythmic Value Tree: Rests

As you have seen, a whole rest is equal to two half rests, which are equal to four quarter rests. For example:

Ex. 1.26

