

drums

READING RHYTHM WORKOUT 2

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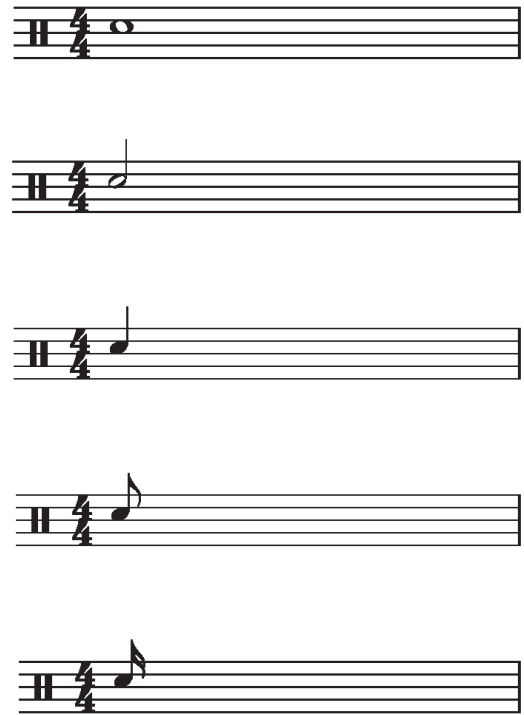
Chapter 1: Duration, Sustain and Tied Notes

Duration and Sustain

As previously discussed, a note value represents the relative duration of a note. This musical notation of said duration(s) actually refer to sustain, which denotes the period of time a sound remains (extends) before it becomes inaudible, or silent. Drum and percussion instruments usually have the shortest sustain, while wind instruments such as woodwinds, brass or the pipe organ have (theoretically) an unlimited amount of sustain.

With this in mind (and up until this unit), our reading materials have focused solely on the rhythms contained within each note value, with little emphasis on the duration (or sustain) of these figures. As you notice within the example to the right (Ex. 1), each note value begins on beat one. However and as each note has a different duration/sustain), these each sound incrementally different. Let's take a detailed look:

Ex. 1.0



Ties

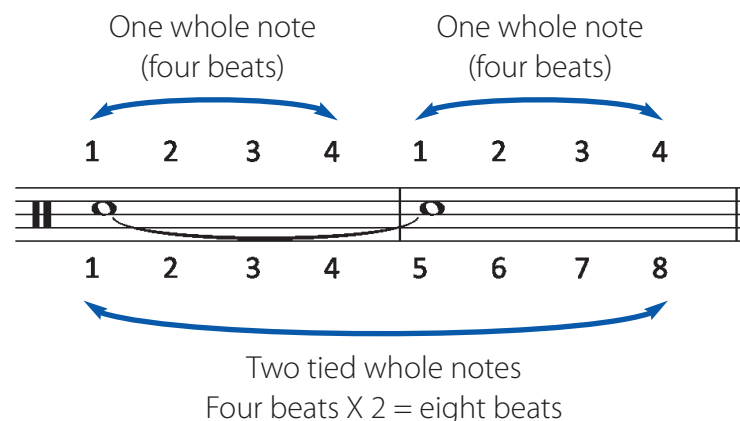
A tie extends the duration (i.e. sustain) of a note by connecting it to a secondary note value. This is notated via a curved line like, this:

Ex. 1.1



Therefore (and by using the archetype within example 1.1 above), this sustain of this whole note has been extended from four beats to eight beats, which, again, is accomplished through "tying" these two whole notes together. Thus, its duration is now as follows:

Ex. 1.2



In Use

Ties are normally utilized within the following three scenarios:

1. Extending a Note Value across a Bar Line

A tie enables a note to sustain past the allowable amount of beats within one measure.

Quarter Notes:

Thus (and in the example below), the quarter note on beat four is tied to a whole note, which is not a new note to be played on the downbeat of 1. Thus, it is simply extending the value of the previous quarter note on beat 4, like this:

Ex.1.3

The diagram shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a half note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note on beat 4. A blue dashed arrow points from the quarter note on beat 4 to a whole note on the downbeat of the second measure. Below the staff are three boxes with arrows pointing to the notes: the first box points to the half note on beat 1, the second box points to the quarter note on beat 3, and the third box points to the quarter note on beat 4. Above the staff, the first measure is numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, and the second measure is numbered 1, 2, 3, 4.

Half note:
worth
two beats

Quarter
note:
worth
one beat

Quarter note tied to
a whole note: worth
five beats

Eighth Note:

To illustrate this further, we have enlisted an eighth note on the "&" of 4, which is also tied to whole note as follows:

Ex. 1.4

The diagram shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a half note on beat 1, and three eighth notes on beats 2, 3, and 4. A blue dashed arrow points from the eighth note on the "&" of beat 4 to a whole note on the downbeat of the second measure. Below the staff are three boxes with arrows pointing to the notes: the first box points to the half note on beat 1, the second box points to the three eighth notes on beats 2, 3, and 4, and the third box points to the eighth note on the "&" of beat 4. Above the staff, the first measure is numbered 1, 2, 3, &, 4, &, and the second measure is numbered 1, 2, 3, 4.

Half note:
worth
two beats

Three
eighth
notes:
worth one
and a half
beats

Eighth note tied to a
whole note: worth
four and a half beats

Any note value (not just whole notes) may appear after a tie. In the example below, the eighth note on the “&” of 4 is tied to a quarter note on beat 1, which is immediately followed by three quarter notes. After playing the eighth note on the “&” of 4 of measure 1 (tied to the quarter note), you must be sure to count beat 1 (of measure 2) and be prepared to play the following quarter notes on beats 2, 3 and 4 of measure 2. For example:

Ex. 1.5

1 2 3 & 4 & (1) 2 3 4

Half note: worth two beats

Three eighth notes: worth one and a half beats

Eighth note tied to a quarter note: worth one and a half beats

Three quarter notes: worth three beats

Sixteenth Notes:

Sixteenth notes may also be used to extend past the bar line, like this:

Ex. 1.6

1 2 3 & 4 e & a (1) 2 3 4

Two quarter notes: worth two beats

Two eighth notes: worth one beat

Three 16th notes: worth 3/4 of a beat

One 16th note tied to a quarter note: worth one and 1/16 of a beat

Three quarter notes: worth three beats

2. Across the Imaginary Bar Line in 4/4 Time (Between Beats 2 and 3)

It is common practice to separate the downbeats of both beats 2 and 3 in 4/4 time. By placing an imaginary bar line between beats 2 and 3, the measure is split into two, two-beat sections (making notation easier to read). This is also called the “2/3” or “two-three” rule. For example:

Ex. 1.7

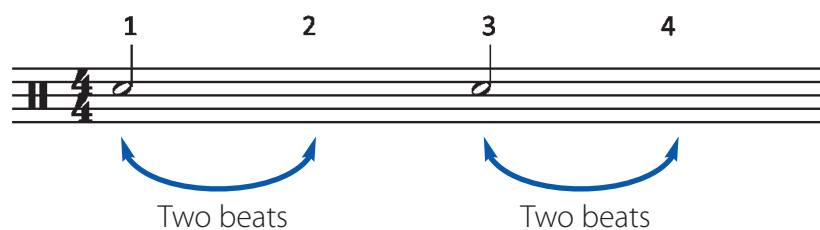
Imaginary bar line

1 2 3 4

By following the “2/3” rule, there are inherent situations where ties will be necessary. The following are practical examples of where ties are needed for “clear notation.”

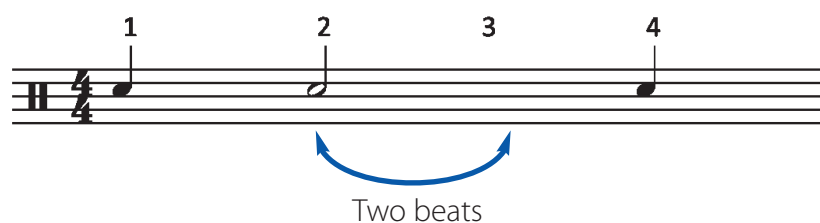
Ex. 1.8

While it is acceptable to place half notes on beats 1 and 3:



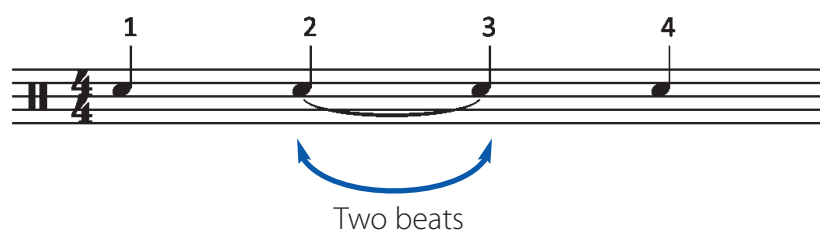
A half note should not be placed on beat 2 (as it would obscure the downbeat of beat 3).

Ex. 1.9



Therefore, tied quarter notes are used to replace the half notes. For example:

Ex. 1.10



If played on an instrument that lacks sustain, the examples contained within Ex. 1.11 (below) sound the same. However, it is important to understand the difference in note lengths when playing instruments that utilize sustained notes.

Ex. 1.11



Note: While it is theoretically correct to follow the 2/3 (two-three) rule, you will encounter situations where an inexperienced composer (or arranger) may break the 2/3 rule. This occurrence may be especially common with simple rhythms (quarter notes and half notes). Thus, you must still be able to read the chart while also avoiding conflict and confrontation over notation rules (and preferences).

Syncopated Rhythms: Quarters and Eighths Alongside the Imaginary Bar Line

Syncopated rhythms emphasize weaker beats (i.e. upbeats such as the “&”s and “ah”s). For instance (and up until this point within both examples and exercises), quarter notes have fallen on downbeats. By utilizing syncopation, quarter notes can now be placed on upbeats.

In the example below (Ex. 1.12), an eighth note is placed on beat 1, which (as we already know) is equal to a half of a beat. Thereafter, the quarter note is placed on the “&” of 1, which sustains for one full beat—i.e. across the downbeat of beat 2. Therefore, the next available place for a note to occur is on the “&” of beat 2. For example:

Ex. 1.12

1 & 2 & 3 4

Half a beat One beat Half a beat One beat One beat

You can also utilize tied eighth notes to illustrate the rhythm contained within Ex. 1.12. Thus, the quarter note on the “&” of 1 can also be visually split into two eighth notes tied together as follows.

Ex. 1.13

1 & 2 & 3 4

Half a beat One beat Half a beat One beat One beat

It is important to realize that both examples (Ex. 1.12 and 1.13) are acceptable. However (and due to the 2/3 rule), there are circumstances where ties are not only preferred, but viewed as the only correct option. For instance, a quarter note cannot be placed on the “&” of 2. This will most certainly obscure the downbeat of beat 3, like this:

Ex. 1.14

The downbeat of 3 is obscured

The downbeat of 3 is clear

Here is another example of how quarter notes can be placed on an upbeat:

Ex. 1.15

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

While this rhythm (Ex. 1.15 above) can be accepted as a “2/3 rule breaker,” the performer will have a better chance of successfully executing the rhythm if ties are used, like this:

Ex. 1.16

Again, by using ties the downbeat of 3 is clear:

Ex. 1.17

3. Syncopated Rhythms: 16ths Alongside the Individual Beats

When 16th notes are being used, each beat must also have a clearly displayed downbeat. In a similar fashion to the 2/3 rule that encompasses beats 2 and 3, each beat must now be clearly marked. For example, the following rhythm is mathematically correct; however, only two of the four downbeats are clearly displayed:

Ex. 1.18

Upon using ties, this example clearly marks each beat correctly:

Ex. 1.19

**Obviously, a performer will have an easier time reading Ex. 1.19 over Ex. 1.18 due to clear notation.

To illustrate this concept further, the following measure is practically unreadable (even by a seasoned pro):
Ex. 1.20



However, by adding one tie the entire phrase comes in to shape, clearly displaying each of the downbeats.
For example:

Ex. 1.21

