

Understanding Rhythm

Music is written in “Bars” which are divided by vertical lines on the Staff. Each bar contains the same number of beats and this defines the rhythm of the music.

Seeing 4/4 at the beginning of written music tells two things:

- 1) There are 4 beats in each bar, and
- 2) A quarter note gets one beat each.

So 4/4 means there are 4 quarter notes in each bar, or any combination of other notes that add up to 4 quarter notes.

Quarter Notes receive 1 beat each



Half Notes receive 2 beats each



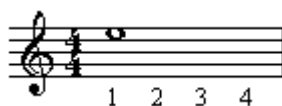
Combinations of Quarter notes and Half notes



We are mainly concerned with rhythm so the notes will usually appear like this for strumming.



Whole Notes ring for 4 beats, ie strum or played on the first beat and ring for the whole bar



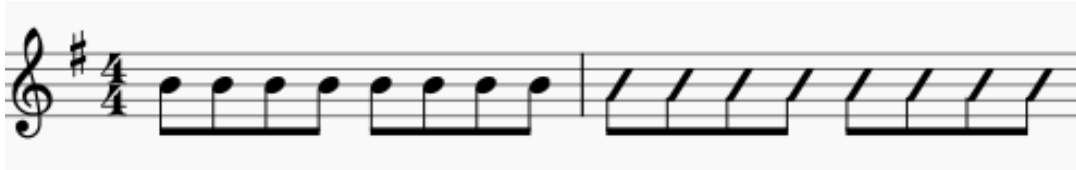
or



Eighth Notes receive half a beat each.

Two eighth notes = one quarter note,
so a bar of 4/4 can have 8 eighth notes in it.

or as strum marks



Count 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &



& is the half way point between beat 1 and 2



--- 2 or more 8th notes are **beamed** together



--- single 8th notes use a **flag**

When strumming 8th notes it is common to strum down on the main beats (1 2 3 4) and up on the “&” beats.



Combination of quarter and eighth notes – every bar will add up to 4 beats

8th note exercise



Other Time Signatures – 3/4

4/4 is the most common time signature for 90% of music, but there are other times signatures such as 3/4 which is sometimes called waltz time.

In 3/4 there are 3 quarter notes to a bar.



A **time signature** consists of two numbers placed at the beginning of a piece of music.

The top number tells you how many beats are in each measure.

The bottom number tells you which type of note gets one beat - 4 stands for a quarter note.

A common song in 3/4 is Happy Birthday.

Dotted Half Notes receive 3 beats



A **dot** placed after a note will increase it's value by half the original.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{P} & + & \cdot & = & \text{P} \cdot \\ 2 & + & 1 & = & 3 \end{array}$$

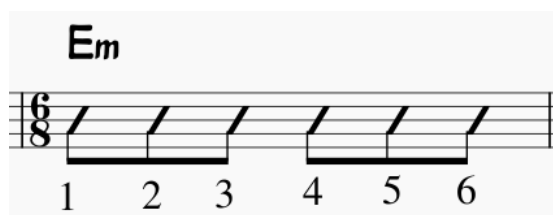
Each of these bars add up to 3 beats.



6/8 Time Signature

6/8 means there are 6 eighth notes in a bar.

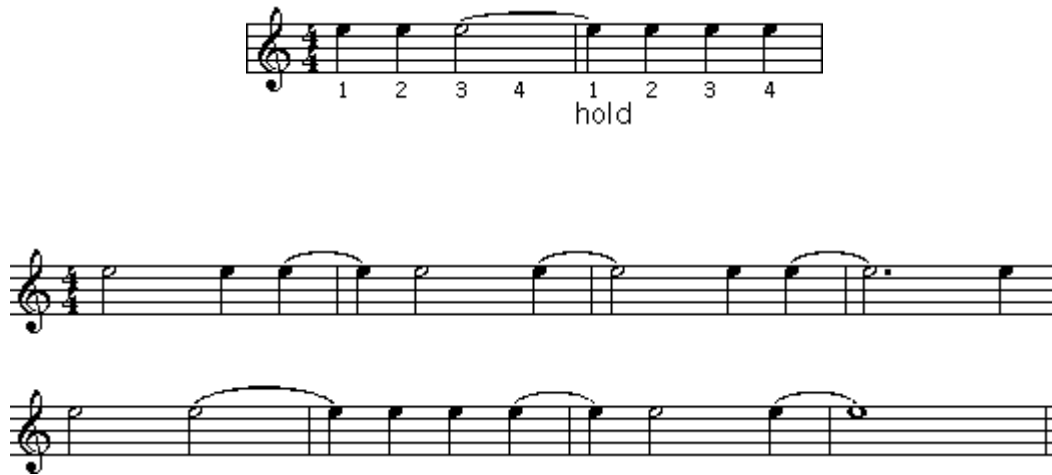
An eighth note gets on count.



Songs in 6/8 include House of The Rising Sun and Unchained Melody

Tied Notes

A rule in music is no note can ring longer than a bar.
For a note to ring past the bar length it must be tied to a note in the next bar.



Rests

Every note in a bar must be accounted for.
If silence is needed then a rest would be inserted.

Symbols used to indicate silence in music are called **rests**. When a rest is used the string of strings must be stopped from ringing for the indicated period of time. There are two ways that this can be achieved:

Below is a catalog of the rhythms learned so far, including rests and rhythmic slashes.

note names	quarter	half	dotted half	whole
number of beats--	1	2	3	4
rhythmic slashes used to represent rhythms without pitch often used for chord stumps				
rests				



Dotted Quarter Notes receive 1 and a Half beats.

A **dot** placed after a note will increase it's value by half the original.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{♩} & + & \cdot & = & \text{♩} \cdot \\ 1 & + & 1/2 & = & 1\frac{1}{2} \end{array}$$

The easiest way to get a grasp on rhythms is to start to recognize pattern that reoccur. Below are 2 different 2 beat rhythmic patterns that use dotted quarter notes. If you can start to see these patterns instead of just a mess of different rhythms, then you are on your way.

Pattern #1



Pattern #2



The following exercise uses these 2 patterns. In the top line, half the measure is one of the 2 patterns, and half is either a half note or 2 quarter notes. In the bottom line the are only the 2 patterns. It can look like a big mess until you are able to see the patterns.

dotted quarter note exercise

