









Music Notation and Sightreading

Rhythmic notation provides a system for indicating the length of sound or silence.

The symbols used are called notes or rests and are mathematically related to each other. Those symbols and their names are as follows:

Notes						
	whole	half	quarter	eighth	sixteenth	etc.
Rests						

The actual length-of the note or rest will vary, depending on the note chosen to receive one beat. A whole rest is generally used to indicate silence for an entire measure regardless of the time signature. A "beat" in music is simply a term used to indicate a *length of time*. It is measured by saying numbers, moving the foot or hand, and/or noting the distance between the ticks of a metronome.

These beats are grouped together in patterns of two or three (or their multiples: 4,6,9, etc.) which are referred to as meter. Each is a measure and is set off by vertical lines on the staff known as barlines. The terms duple, triple, and quadruple meter are used.

Time signatures (2/4, 3/4, 6-/4, 6/8, etc.) are placed at the beginning of the music to help the performer know how many beats will occur in the measure, and what note will receive one beat. The upper number indicates the number of beats in the measure and the lower number, the note that will receive one beat. if the lower number is read as a fraction by mentally placing the number one above it, the note worth one beat is easily determined, as in the following examples:

$\frac{2}{4}$	$\frac{2 \text{ beats/measure}}{1/4 \text{ note}(\downarrow) \text{ is 1beat}}$	$\frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{3 \text{ beats/measure}}{1/8 \text{ note}(\downarrow) \text{ is 1 beat}}$	$\frac{2}{2}$	$\frac{2 \text{ beats/measure}}{1/2 \text{ note}(\downarrow) \text{ is 1 beat}}$
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While the number of beats each note will receive will vary, depending on what note is chosen to receive one beat, the mathematical relationship between notes is constant (if 1/4 note is one, then a 1/2 note is two beats and an 1/8 note is 1/2 beat).

Since fractions of beats are created in this system, subdivision of the beat is accomplished through systems of counting using words and vowels. One such system is illustrated at the top of the next page:

4/4

1 2 3 4 | 1 and 2 and 3 a and a 4 & | 1 an an 2 an an 3 a a & a a 4 &

1 2 3 4 | 1-4

6/8

1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 and 3 4 5 and 6 | 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 5 and 6 a and a | 1-6

The speed of the beat is referred to as tempo and is designated through the use of Italian terms such as *allegro*, *adagio*, *andante*, *presto*, *vivace*, and others. If the tempo is rapid enough, 6/8 time is beat in two beats, as indicated above, rather than six, with the counting of six being divided into two segments, 1-3 and 4-6. When this double layering of beat occurs, it is known as compound time.

Additional Information:

A dot placed after a note increases its value by half of the original

value ($\text{♩} = 2 + 1 = 3$) ; ($\text{♩} = 1 + 1/2 = 1 \frac{1}{2}$) ($\text{♩} = 1/2 + 1/4 = 3/4$).

Successive flagged notes are usually connected by the use of lines

known as beams ($\text{♩}'\text{s}$, $\text{♩}'\text{s}$, $\text{♩}'\text{s}$)  etc.

Metric flow and feeling affect how beams are drawn or dots placed. Two examples of incorrect and correct uses are on the right.