

Why start here?

Rhythm is the first building block of music. All other building blocks (pitch, dynamics, structure, expressive techniques and tone colour) are dependent on rhythm.

To put this another way, if you took away pitch, dynamics and all the others, as long as there is rhythm, you would still have music.

Music is defined as sounds and silences within time. For this reason, rhythm is sometimes defined under the building block of duration – the duration of sounds, duration of silences.

Every building block contains its own associated terms and concepts. Here are the important terms for rhythm and beat.


BEAT	is regular is like a pulse when you tap your foot to music, you are tapping the beat
RHYTHM	is measured in numbers of beats is sounds and silences is long and short sounds
OSTINATO	is a repeated rhythmic pattern

Music is like a language

Every language uses symbols.

English uses letters, like the letter 'C'

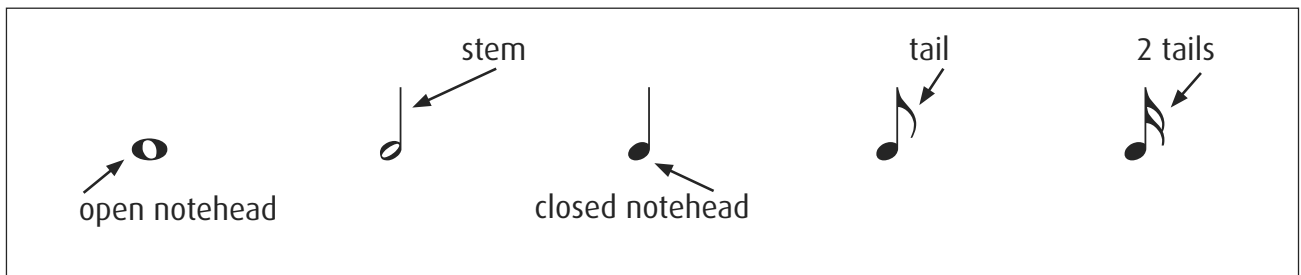
Chinese uses characters, like 漢

Ancient Egyptians used hieroglyphics, like 

Music also uses a set of symbols...

Notes

The most common musical symbols are notes. A note may have several parts.



All notes have a notehead, most have a stem, some have a tail(s)

When 2 or more notes with tails are next to each other, they can be grouped together with a beam. There are complex rules governing which notes can be grouped. In its simplest form, notes in the same beat can be grouped together. This is a way of visually organising music to make it easier to follow.



Sound and silence

In music, the basic units of time are **beats**.

Lengths of both sound and silence are measured in **numbers of beats**.

Each type of note represents a different **length of sound**.

There are also symbols called rests, that represent **lengths of silence**.













Don't freak out!!

On the following page, there is a table of the most common musical symbols, their names and meanings.

Read through the following table and place a small tick next to words or symbols you already understand.

Rhythm Table

Place a tick next to any word or symbol you understand already.

	MUSICAL SYMBOL	EUROPEAN NOTE NAME	AMERICAN NOTE NAME	NUMBER OF BEATS	FRENCH TIME NAME (note)	EQUIVALENT REST	FRENCH TIME NAME (rest)
		semibreve	whole note	4	ta - a - a - a		sa - a - a - a
		minim	half note	2	ta - a		sa - a
		crotchet	quarter note	1	ta		sa
		quaver(s)	eighth note	$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}$	ti - ti		si - si
		semiquaver(s)	sixteenth note	$\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}$	tika - tika		N/A








These notes are commonly grouped together to make a complete beat. On their own, they look as shown below.



What do I do now?

The following exercises walk you through each section of the table, bit-by-bit. Keep referring back to the rhythm table as required.






The first step is being able to recognise, name and draw each symbol

	=	<input type="text" value="crotchet"/>	crotchet	=	
	=	<input type="text"/>	semiquaver	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	semibreve	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	2 quavers	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	minim	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	1 quaver	=	<input type="text"/>

Length of sounds

Notes represent lengths of sound. They are measured in beats. For example the sound of a minim (♫) lasts for 2 beats.

For how many beats do the following examples last?

	=	<input type="text" value="4 beats"/>	4 semiquavers	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	2 quavers	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	1 crotchet	=	<input type="text" value="1 beat"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	1 minim	=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>	1 semibreve	=	<input type="text"/>

A Ram Sam Sam

Moroccan Folk Song

Allegro ♩ = 120
F C⁷

A ram sam sam a ram sam sam Gu - li gu - li gu - li gu - li gu - li
ah rahm sahm sahm a rahm sahm sahm goo - lee goo - lee goo - lee goo - lee goo - lee

4 F C⁷ F

ram sam sam. A ra - fi, a ra - fi, Gu - li gu - li gu - li gu - li gu - li ram sam sam.
rahm sahm sahm ah rah - fee a rah - fee goo - lee goo - lee goo - lee goo - lee goo - lee rahm sahm sahm.

1. Circle a crotchet
2. Circle a minim
3. Circle a set of 2 quavers
4. Circle a set of 4 quavers
5. Write 2 rhythms you have learnt which are NOT in this song
6. Underline a set of 4 quavers followed by a crotchet
7. Underline a crotchet followed by a minim



Note names

In Australia, music is mostly taught using the European note names (crotchets, quavers etc). There is a different set of names, which can also be used. They are commonly used in America. While it is important to know and understand both sets of terminology, they are generally used separately. It doesn't make sense to mix the systems.









Name the following notes using the American system

	=	eighth note		=	
	=			=	
	=			=	

French Time Names

French Time Names are NOT another system of naming notes. They are a method of vocalising rhythms, where different syllables represent different note values (lengths). They are a common and effective teaching tool as they enable actual sounds to be given to otherwise lifeless symbols. There are many versions of rhythm syllables. We are using the Pierre Perron (Canada) version derived from Kodaly, pronounced koh-DAH-ee (Hungary).

What are the French Time Names for the following notes?

	=	<input type="text" value="ta"/>		=	<input type="text" value="ta ti-ti"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>
	=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>

Rhythm Song

Collins & Edmonds

Allegro ♩ = 120



Write the French Time Names under the notes.

Rests

So far you have learnt about lengths of sound in music. There are also silences. The musical symbols for these are called rests.

Complete the following table

Write down how many beats each rest is worth in the first column. Draw the appropriate symbol in the second column. If you have trouble, refer back to the rhythm table.












	=	1 beat	1 beat	=	
	=		half a beat	=	
	=		2 beats	=	
	=		4 beats	=	
	=		quarter of a beat	=	

French Time Names and Rests

The French Time Name system also has syllables for rests. This is important because silences in music involve waiting for set a period of time, which can be difficult. As strange as it may seem, although there are limitations, the French Time Name system involves making sound!

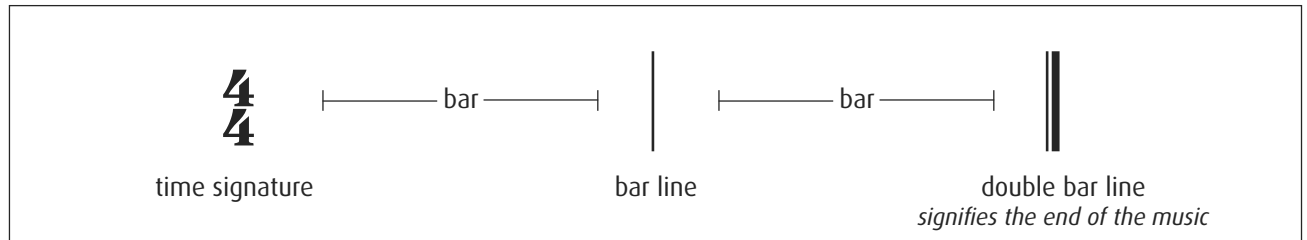
Complete the following table

Write the appropriate French Time Name for each symbol in the first column, and then the symbol for each French Time Name in the second column.

	=	sa	sa - a	=	
	=		sa	=	
	=		sa - a - a - a	=	
	=		si	=	

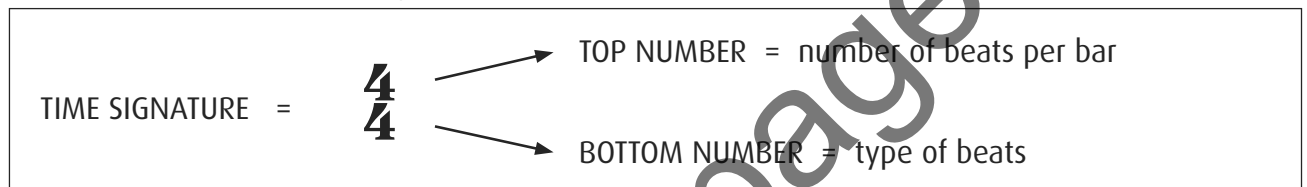
How are rhythms organised?

When music is written, it is divided into bite-sized chunks that make it easier to read. Each chunk is called a bar. Bars are separated by barlines.






Time signatures

A time signature appears at the beginning of the music and tells us how many beats we can fit into each bar. They look like a fraction without the line between the two numbers. The top and bottom numbers tell us different things.




Bottom number

The top number can be any number and is quite easy to understand. However, the bottom number can only be certain numbers and is most commonly 2, 4 or 8. Remember those American note names? They come in handy for understanding the bottom number.

If the bottom number is	4	then the beats are crotchets	
If the bottom number is	2	then the beats are minims	
If the bottom number is	8	then the beats are quavers	

Revisit the American names for each of the above note values.
Can you explain the connection?

The result...

TIME SIGNATURE: $\frac{4}{4}$ = 4 CROCHET () BEATS PER BAR

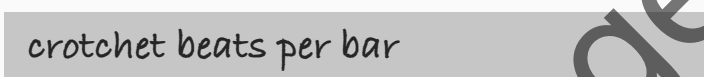

Describe the following time signatures

The bottom number is 4, which means each beat is a crotchet beat.

$\frac{4}{4}$		crotchet beats per bar
$\frac{2}{4}$		crotchet beats per bar
$\frac{3}{4}$		crotchet beats per bar




Describe the following time signatures

This time, the bottom number changes.

$\frac{4}{4}$	4		crotchet beats per bar
$\frac{4}{8}$	4		
$\frac{4}{2}$	4		




Let's see how good you are

This time, both numbers change.

$\frac{2}{8}$	
$\frac{3}{2}$	
$\frac{6}{8}$	

Filling a bar

Bars can be filled with any number of different notes so long as they all add up to the correct number of beats.

$\frac{4}{4}$			
	4 crotchets = 4 beats	8 quavers = 4 beats	combination = 4 beats

Simple time and compound time

Time signatures can be divided into two groups - simple and compound. In simple time, each beat can be divided in two. In compound time, the beat are divided into three. Below are the most common time signatures.

SIMPLE			COMPOUND		
$\frac{2}{4}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{6}{8}$	$\frac{9}{8}$	$\frac{12}{8}$
What do you notice?					

Simple vs compound

The key to understanding the difference is the way each beat is divided. Beats divide into either groups of 2 or 3. These are the only options. In simple time, each beat is worth 2 quavers. In compound time, each beat is worth 3 quavers.



$\frac{4}{4}$		$\frac{6}{8}$	
4 crotchet beats per bar	groups of 2	6 quaver beats per bar	groups of 3

Hearing the difference

You can tell the difference between simple and compound time just by listening to music. If you feel like marching to it, then it is simple time. If you feel like skipping, then it is compound time.

You may be wondering...

Two of the time signatures mentioned above actually contain the same number of quavers, but one is simple and one is compound. The difference between the two is how the beats divide.

$\frac{3}{4}$		3 groups of 2 quavers. Each beat is worth a crotchet.
$\frac{6}{8}$		2 groups of 3 quavers. Each beat is worth a 'dotted crotchet' <i>learn what this means in the next chapter</i>