

Clefs

There are 2 basic kinds of clefs. The clef you will see on your music depends on what instrument you play.

Treble Clef 

Bass Clef 

You might wonder why there are 2 different clefs. The reason is that most instruments using the bass clef usually have a lower pitch (sound) and regularly play low notes. If they were to use the treble clef the notes would appear so far below the [staff](#) it would be hard to read.

Here are the the names of the notes for both clefs. Although you only really need to know 1 or the other, it is good practice to know both.

The treble clef:



The bass clef:



Time Signatures

Time signatures tell you how many and what kind of notes per measure there are. The number on top is the number of notes per measure, and the bottom number is what kind of note. Let us explain further.

Let us take for example the most popular time signature, 4/4.

This means there is **4 quarter notes per measure**. How is this so?

Looking at 4/4, you saw the 4 on top. You already knew that meant there were 4 somethings per measure. Then looking at the bottom number probably confused you. The bottom number can be 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, etc. Look at this chart.

Bottom Number	Value
1	Whole note
2	Half note
4	Quarter note
8	Eighth note
16	Sixteenth note

For example:

3/4 is **3 quarter notes per measure**.

5/2 is **5 half notes per measure**.

6/8 is **6 eighth notes per measure**.

There are also 2 other common things you might see where the time signature should be.

♩

Common Time
Same as 4/4 time

♩

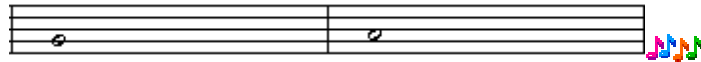
Cut Time
Same as 4/4 but everything is cut in half.
Example: a half note = 1 quarter note, a whole note = 1 half note.

Types of Notes:

1 of the most important parts of music is learning the types and values of notes. Here you will gain some understanding of how the notes look and sound. The 🎵 icon means you can listen to it. All of the music samples are recorded at the same speed and are just 1 measure.

The whole note:

Looks like:



an egg on its side, either with a line through it or not.

The half note:

Looks like:



the same as a whole not but with a vertical line attached to it.

The quarter note:

Looks like:



the same as a half note except the circle is filled in.

The eighth note:

Looks like:



the same as quarter notes but with a curly off the line. They can also be put in groups of 4, 3, or 2.

The sixteenth note:

Looks like:



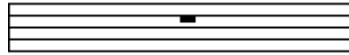
the same as an eighth note but has double curlies. Can also be grouped in 4, 3 or 2 but are joined by a double line.

Types of Rests:

For each type of note you learned beforehand there is a corresponding [rest](#).

The whole rest:

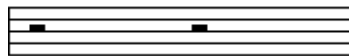
Looks like:



a dark rectangle attached to a bar line, facing downwards. (*1 shown*)

The half rest:

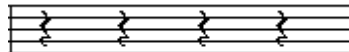
Looks like:



a dark rectangle attached to a bar line, facing upwards. (*2 shown*)

The quarter rest:

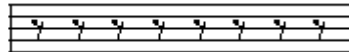
Looks like:



a squiggly line. (*4 shown*)

The eighth rest:

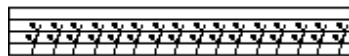
Looks like:



a slanted line with a dot. (*8 shown*)

The sixteenth rest:

Looks like:



a slanted line with a double dot. (*16 shown*)

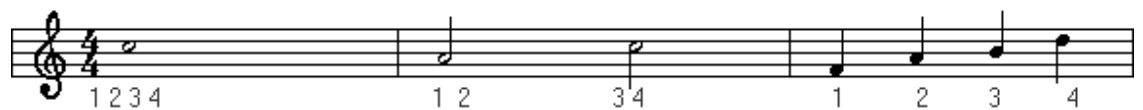
Basic Counting:

One of the most obvious questions is how musicians know when to play. Well, its easy.. they learn to count the beats.

First let us present you with this.

1 whole note = 2 half notes = 4 quarter notes = 8 eighth notes = 16 sixteenth notes.
Keep that in mind while looking at these examples.

Lets start with this example.



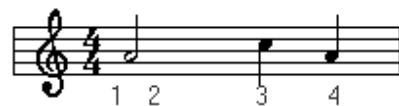
First off, looking at the time signature you know that there are **4 quarter notes per measure.**

In the first measure the whole note gets all the beats (1, 2, 3 and 4) because 1 whole note = 4 quarter notes, and there are a total of 4 quarter notes per measure.

In the second example, each half note gets 2 beats because 2 quarter notes = 1 half note.

In the third example, each quarter note gets its own beat because there are 4 quarter notes per measure (time sig).

Let's intermingle the 2 quarter notes and a half note.



The half note get the first 2 beats, and each quarter its own beat. This makes sense because the 4/4 time signature means there is **4 quarter notes per measure.** 2 quarter notes + 1 half note (which is really 2 quarters) = 4 quarter notes, the total number of quarter notes for that measure (time sig).

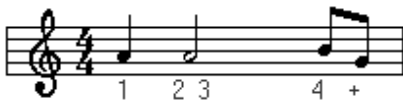
Lets add in the eighth notes.



In this example there is something new. The + sign. It just means "and". If you said 1 + 2 + ... out loud it would sound like this: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and
Each eighth note is 1/2 of a quarter note, therefore it takes **2** eighth notes to equal **1** quarter note. Think of it like this: the **1** and the **"and"** are both half of one quarter note and together they form 1 quarter note and from the time sig we know there are 4 quarters per measure.

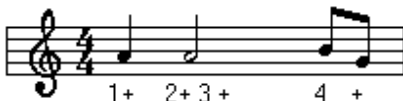
Basic Counting, Part 2:

Let's introduce a mixed example.



The quarter note is obviously beat 1 because from the time sig you know there are 4 quarter notes per measure. You also already know one half note = 2 quarter notes therefore the half note must be beats 2 and 3. Finally, you know that two eighth notes = 1 quarter note so they must be the "4 +".

When many different kinds of notes are intermingled, it starts to become tricky to count. Musicians will sometimes [subdivide](#) the notes so the counting flows more easily. Let's use the above example, but this time sub divide it.



Here every note in the measure is subdivided into 8th notes thus making it a lot more "fluid" to count. Its pretty easy to understand too... one quarter note is two 8th notes, so it gets "1 +". The half note is really four eighth notes so it get "2 + 3 +". And the each 8th note get a half so one is "4" and the other is the "and" of 4.

Here would also be a good place to throw in a few examples with rests. These will just show the counting and will not explain them. Just think of the rests in terms of their corresponding notes and you'll have no problem!



Counting the 16th note.



Basically counting 16th notes is similiar to 8th notes except that you need to add more things to count with. I was taught using "e" and "a", but feel free to use what you want. Each part, the "1", "e", "+", "a" are all 1/4 of 1 quarter note. Together they add up to 1 beat according to the time sig. (4 sixteenths = 1 quarter)

Different time sigs and different notes.

Here you are.. the top of the note hill. Just look at these and the counting section is over!



Remember.. from this time sig you are counting the 8th notes.



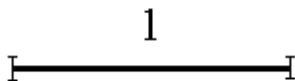
Remember you are counting half notes, and therefore you have to subdivide the eighth notes and quarter notes accordingly.

Other symbols

This page contains some of the symbols you might come across while reading music.

- # Play the note 1/2 step **up** (Sharp)
- b Play the note 1/2 step **down** (Flat)
- ♮ Play the note normally; pay no attention to the key signature

The above 3 symbols can also appear at the beginning of each line of music affecting the whole line. Also, if they are included in an individual measure, they override each other and carry through ties or slurs.



Compressed Rests. The number on top specifies how many measures of rest.



Fermata. Hold the note until cut off.



Repeat. Play through normally until 2nd symbol, then go back to 1st symbol and play again, this time ignoring 2nd symbol.



Begin and End. Marks the beginning and ending of a piece.



Tie. Make each note flow into the next. (Do not break them up)

Shaping and Volume of Music

For music to have some real feeling and expression it must be shaped.

Volume of notes

f	Loud
ff	Loud Loud
fff	As loud as possible
p	Quiet
mp	Medium Quiet
mf	Medium Loud
pp	Quiet Quiet
cresc	Louder

Stuff that affects notes

sfz	Hit note then back way off and build back up
tr	Trill
vibrato	Add waves to sound
legato	Smooth

Stuff that affects the speed of note

poco.	Gradually
accel.	Faster
rit.	Slower
dim.	Diminish
solì	Shared solo in section
solo	1 person solo (wow)