

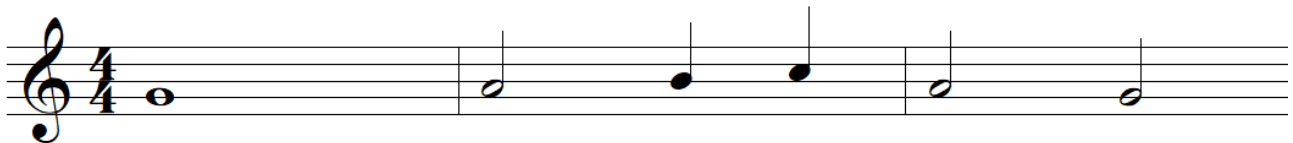
MUSIC THEORY COURSE – Module 1

How to Read Rhythm

Playing only the right notes isn't enough to make a song recognizable. We need to play the right rhythm as well. And let's be honest, what would be music without rhythm? It compares to talk without ever stop to articulate sentences, or make questions and exclamations. Rhythm is a vital component of the music and it also gets its own vocabulary in music notation.

Representation of the Rhythm





Notes are placed on the staff located in different lines and spaces according their respective pitch but they are also represented with different shapes, known as rhythm.



Decoding the Rhythm Notation

Music notes are coded in symbols that represent a time value – the beat. The beat is measured in bpm's (beats per minute) and can be adjusted according to the pace of the song or piece.

The basic symbols used to code notes in beats are:



	Whole note (semibreve)	4 beats
	Half note (minim)	2 beats
	Quarter note (crotchet)	1 beat
	Eighth note (quaver)	Half beat

There are more ways of subdividing the beat and that you will learn later on during this course.

Notice that the whole note it's a long note (4 beats) represented with a single circle. Adding a stem to a note makes it double as fast, therefore a white note with a stem (half note) is only 2 beats long.

If you fill the note (quarter note) it becomes again double as fast as a half note, lasting one beat.

In order to make the rhythm even faster we keep using the filled note and start adding tails to the stem, as you can see on the eighth note. Each tail added, speeds the note up twice.

	Eighth note (quaver)	Half beat
	Sixteenth note (semiquaver)	Quarter beat
...

The measure or bar

Each box you see on the staff is called a measure or bar and, in this case, each measure comprises 4 beats.



A group of notes within the same measure cannot surpass the total of 4 beats.



This is not correct:







Both examples have a measure filled with 5 beats, which is incorrect in a 4/4 measure.

Musical Rests

The rests – absence of sound – in music are as important as the notes. Rests also make music rhythmic and upbeat and help the musical speech to become more cohesive and understandable.

Music rests follow the same logic but are represented differently.





	Whole rest	4 beats
	Half rest	2 beats
	Quarter rest	1 beat
	Eighth rest	Half beat

The Dotted Notes



If you would only have the measure subdivisions presented above, music would be very limited in terms of rhythm. Compositions became more complex overtime and the need to create unequal and irregular subdivisions brought us the dotted notes and rests.

The function of the dot is merely to add half of the duration of a given note.

Example:

	Half note	2 beats
	Dotted half note	3 beats
	Quarter note	1 beat
	Dotted quarter note	1 beat + 1/2

The rests make use of the dot, as well.

	Quarter rest	1 beat
	Dotted quarter rest	1 beat + 1/2

Examples:

