






**This article is designed to give you a fundamental understanding of rhythm reading. It provides the basic information that you'll need to get started and the accompanying audio examples make it easy to understand.**

**The Notes** A note is a symbol that represents a sound of a specific length. The most commonly used notes, their different names and their values (in beats) are shown in the table below:

Note	European Name	American Name	Value
	Semibreve	Whole Note	4 beats
	Minim	Half Note	2 beats
	Crotchet	Quarter Note	1 beat
	Quaver	Eighth Note	½ beat
	Semiquaver	Sixteenth Note	¼ beat

**The Rests** A rest is a symbol that represents a silence of a specific length. The most commonly used rests, their different names and their values (in beats) are shown in the table below:

Rest	European Name	American Name	Value
	Semibreve Rest	Whole Note Rest	4 beats
	Minim Rest	Half Note Rest	2 beats
	Crotchet Rest	Quarter Note Rest	1 beat
	Quaver Rest	Eighth Note Rest	½ beat
	Semiquaver Rest	Sixteenth Note Rest	¼ beat

**Beaming** In order to preserve the metric structure of the bar, eighth notes and sixteenth notes often have their tails 'joined' together. This is called beaming.

For example,



Once beamed, the bar becomes clearer, less ambiguous and therefore easier to read.



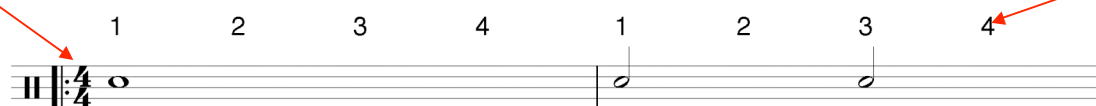
## Exercise 1

## Audio Example 1

- ✓ Take a look at the following exercise. Then, download and listen to the accompanying audio file to see how this exercise sounds. Once you have done this try playing it, counting aloud throughout.

Time Signature

Counting Systems



Clef

Repeat Brackets

**Time signature** This defines the contents of the bar. Here we see the time signature 4/4, which tells us that each bar will contain four beats. Notes and rests can be combined in different ways to create various rhythms but the contents of a bar of 4/4 must always add up to exactly four beats.

**Counting systems** These are the way in which we calibrate musical time so that we know exactly when to play any given note. In 4/4 we describe each beat with its respective number (1, 2, 3 and 4) and use the word 'and' (represented by '+') to divide the beat into two. When we want to divide the beat into four, we simply add the phonetics 'ee' and 'ah' (represented by 'e' and 'a').

**Clef** This defines which pitch or sound each line (or **stave**) of the **staff** represents. In this case **percussion clef** is used.

**Repeat brackets** These surround a section of music that is to be immediately repeated.

## Exercise 2

## Audio Example 2

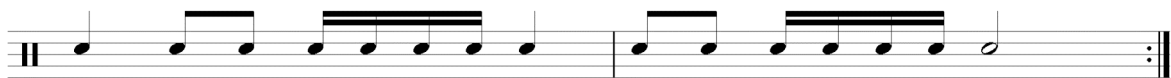
- ✓ The following exercises feature bars that combine the different notes that you have encountered so far. Try playing this exercise whilst counting aloud:



## Exercise 3

## Audio Example 3

- ✓ Print out the following exercise and write the appropriate count above each bar, being careful to make it line up accurately with the relevant notes.
- ✓ Once you've done this try playing the exercise, counting aloud throughout.



### Exercise 4

### Audio Example 4

- ✓ The following exercises incorporate quarter note and eighth note rests. When working out the count, treat them just like notes but don't forget that they will remain silent when you play the piece.

Exercise 4 consists of four staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter), followed by a quarter rest, 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The second staff shows: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter rest), 4 (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter rest), and 4 (quarter). The third staff shows: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 2+ (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 1+ (quarter), 2 (quarter), 2+ (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The fourth staff shows: 1 (quarter), 1+ (quarter), 2 (quarter), 2+ (quarter), 3 (quarter), 3+ (quarter), 4 (quarter), 4+ (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 1+ (quarter), 2 (quarter), 2+ (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The piece ends with a double bar line.

### Exercise 5

### Audio Example 5

- ✓ Print out the following exercise and write the appropriate count above each bar, being careful to make it line up accurately with the relevant notes and rests.
- ✓ Once you've done this try playing the exercise, counting aloud throughout.

Exercise 5 consists of four staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff shows: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter rest), 4 (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The second staff shows: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The third staff shows: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The fourth staff shows: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter), followed by 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), and 4 (quarter). The piece ends with a double bar line.