MUT 1001
FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC

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UNIT 3
SIMPLE METERS

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

In addition to specific pitches, the Western notation system makes it possible to place events (notes, rests, percussive sounds, or anything else) in a specific place within the duration of the piece. This is accomplished through time signatures and durations as well as tempo markings.

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

Notating and reading rhythms accurately can be quite challenging, but with practice we can learn to play rhythms precisely enough that we perceive them as being accurate. Playing even simple rhythms consistently accurately is nearly impossible, even for a professional musician. You may be surprised to hear that a certain degree of rhythmic inaccuracy is actually achieved intentionally for expressive purposes.

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

A beat is a steady pulse that continues for the entire duration of a piece. The rate at which the beats follow one another is called the tempo. In a score, the tempo can be specified exactly using a unit called Beats Per Minute (BPMs), or, if an exact tempo is not needed or wanted, using general tempo indications such as *Allegro*, or *Andante*.

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

Beats are not normally all equal in “weight.”
Instead, some beats are accented, forming regular patterns of 2, 3, 4, etc. The pattern used depends on the style and type of piece. A dauntingly large amount of Western music uses a 4-beat pattern, but many other ones are used as well. Note that not all music has a regular pattern. In fact, some composers do not use measures and time signatures at all. When a pattern is use, it is indicated with a time signature such as $\frac{4}{4}$ (read “4 4”). Instances of each beat pattern are separated into measures using barlines.

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

The most common accent patterns are by far 2, 3, and 4.

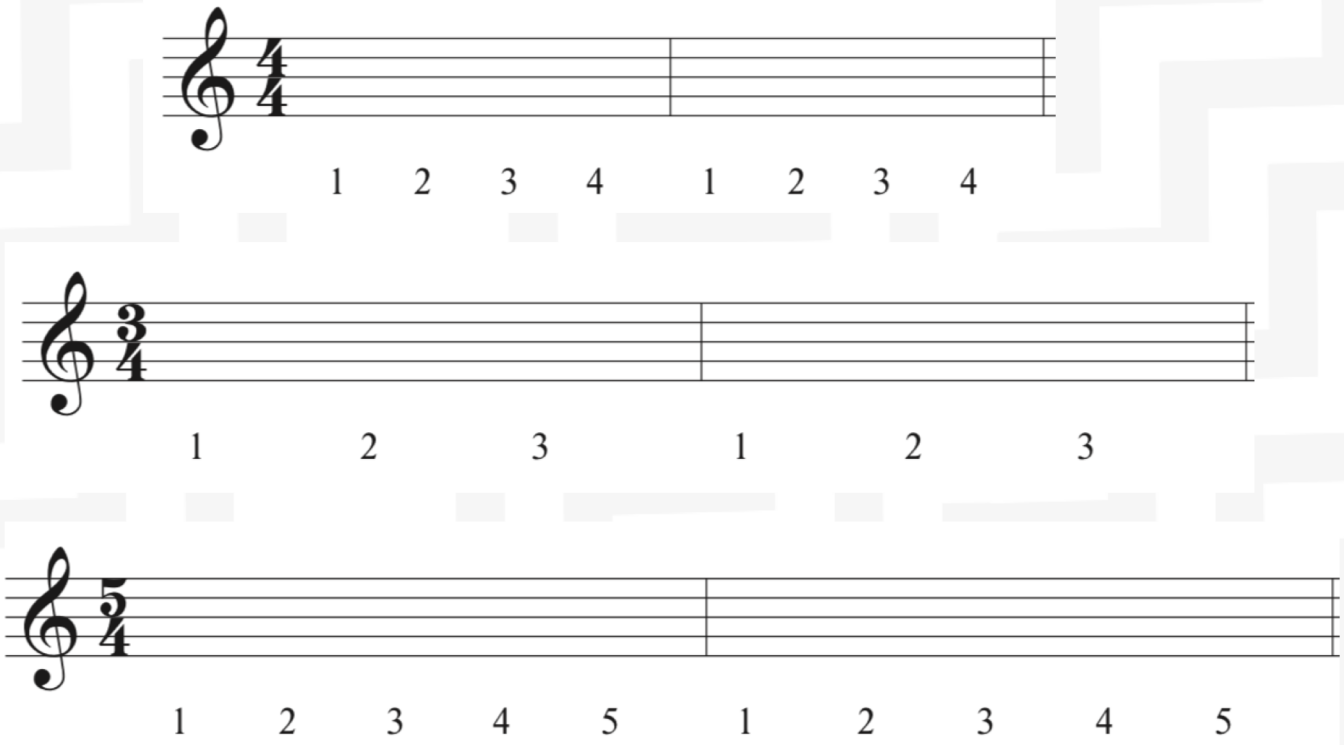
Common Beat Patterns **S = strong, s = less strong, w = weak**

1 2 | 1 2 etc.
S w S w

1 2 3 | 1 2 3 etc.
S w w S w w

1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4 etc.
S w s w S w s w

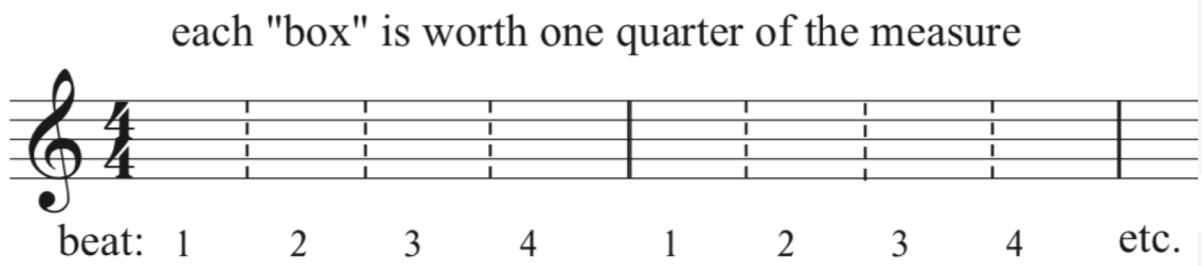
TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES



Ex. 3-1

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

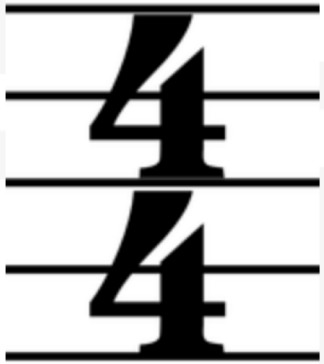
When reading music, musicians “scroll” though the music as if looking into a series of consecutive boxes. While the measures are separates using barlines, the beats are not. Below I have drawn imaginary lines separating each beat.



Ex. 3-2

TIME SIGNATURES AND MEASURES

While the top number of the time signature tells us what the accent pattern is, and consequently how many beats will be in a measure, the lower number tells us what the value of each beat.



Number of beats

Beat value (1/4 of a whole note)

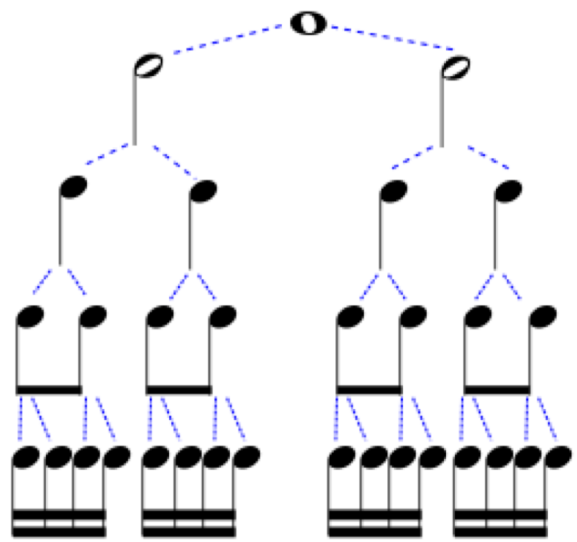
Ex. 3-3

NOTE VALUE

To indicate the duration of notes or rests a series of conventional symbols are used. The basic value is the whole note, which is then divided into any number of parts into a series of smaller values. While our systems makes it possible to subdivide durations by any number, the most common subdivisions are by two and three. We will begin by focusing on duple divisions, which is the one used in simple meters.

Simple meters are meters with a duple division of the beat.

NOTE VALUE



etc.

Ex. 3-4

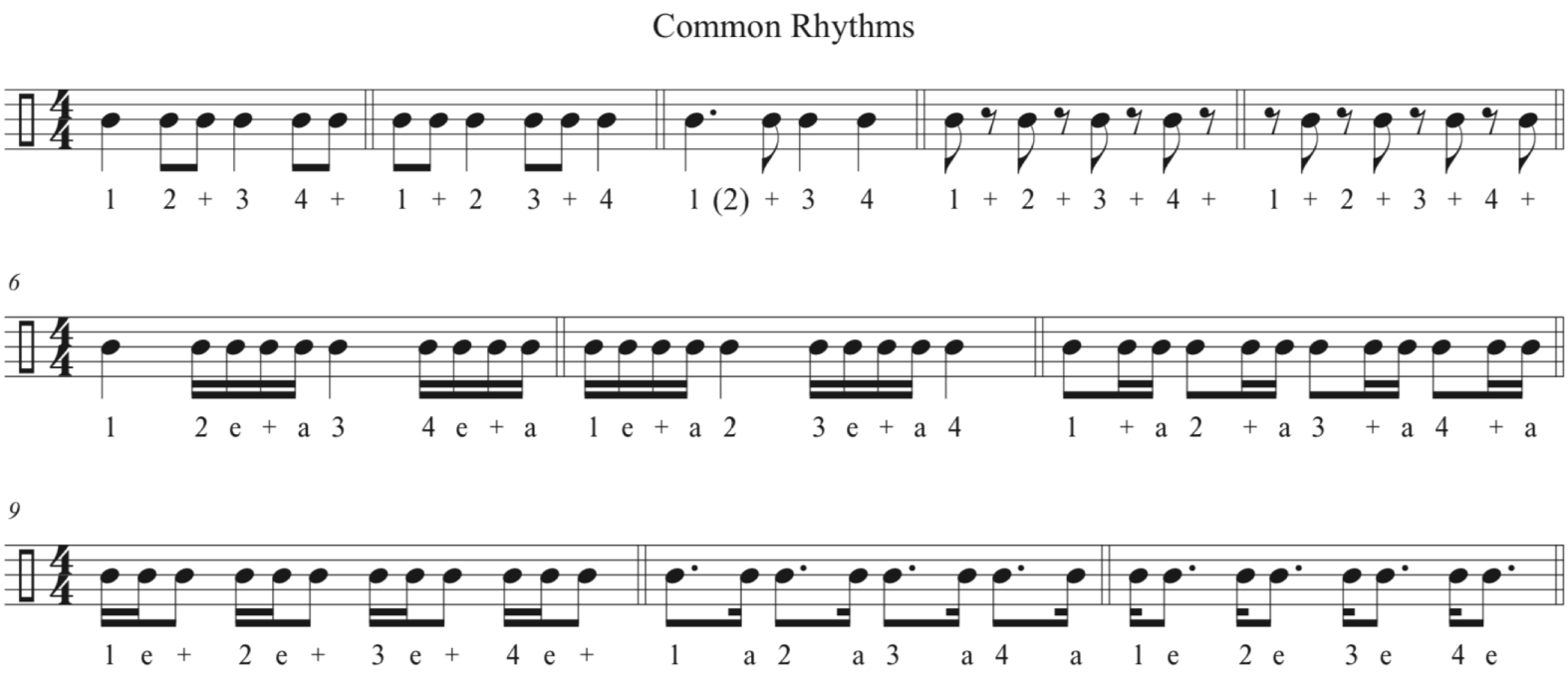
NOTE VALUE

Note Durations

Name:	breve	whole	half	quarter	eighth	sixteenth	thirty-second	sixty-fourth
Note value:								
Duration:	8/4	4/4	1/2	1/4	1/8	1/16	1/32	1/64
Rest equivalent:								

Ex. 3-5

READING RHYTHMS



Ex. 3-6