



# Unit 4

## Getting into the Groove: Rhythm and Meter

Uncover the mystery of what makes music “tick,” including concepts like tempo, meter, rhythm, notes, and rests.

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“A Simple Melody,” music and lyrics by Nick Scarim, © 2000 Nick Scarim, © 2008 Carnegie Hall. Performed by Sue Landis and Michael Mizrahi.

“Tideo,” traditional American song. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

“De Colores,” traditional Mexican song. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

“Ode to Joy” by Ludwig van Beethoven. Adapted by John Whitney. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

“Au Claire de la lune” by Claude Debussy. Arranged by Richard Mannoia. Performed by Sue Landis.

“Hot Cross Buns,” traditional American song. Performed by Sue Landis.

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# Unit 4: Getting into the Groove

**Violet:** I just love singing, and my heart is still beating from being so excited about it.

**Elvis:** Hey, did you say “beating”? That’s a musical word, isn’t it?

**Composer:** Yes, you’re right! The **beat** is the constant and steady part of the music that you can tap, clap, or dance to—similar to how your heart beats in a steady pulse. Try to feel it— see if we can clap the beat as we listen.



**listen to**

Caprice for Solo Violin No. 24 by Paganini

(Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)



**Elvis:** That was fun! The beat really helps me feel the music.

**Violet:** Let’s look at another piece of music. How about some Beethoven? What’s the beat like in a part of his Symphony No. 3?

**Composer:** Why don’t you tell me?



**listen to** Second Movement, Symphony No. 3, “Eroica” by Beethoven

(Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)

Is the beat faster or slower?

**Violet:** It’s slower and feels much more relaxed.

**Elvis:** But I love how my heart races when the beat is really fast! Oh! I can hear the orchestra playing something fast right now!

**Composer:** Right you are! They’re playing Glinka’s *Ruslan and Lyudmila* Overture. Let’s clap along.



**listen to** Overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila* by Glinka

(Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)

You kids are great at these beat games and finding the speed of the music. In music, we call the speed of the music the **tempo**. Music can, of course, have many different speeds, but there are musical words to describe

- very slow
- slow
- moderate
- fast
- very fast

These musical words are in Italian and they are

- Largo (LAR-goh) / Adagio (Ah-DAH-zhee-oh)
- Andante (Ahn-DON-tay)
- Moderato (Mahd-er-AH-toh)
- Allegro (All-LEG-roh)
- Vivace (Vee-VACH-ay) / Presto (PRESS-toh)

Can you find your heartbeat or pulse? Can you clap to your heartbeat? Can you clap to the steady ticking of a clock?



Here are some more examples of different tempos. Let's clap along to each one. Which tempo would you use to describe each example?



**listen to**

Fourth Movement, Symphony No. 3  
by Schumann (Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)

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**listen to**

Slavic Dance No. 2 in E Minor by Dvořák  
(Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)

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**Composer:** There's something more you should know about beats.

**Elvis:** What's that?

**Composer:** All beats are not created equal.

**Violet:** What do you mean?

**Composer:** Well, some beats are strong and some beats are weak. For example, when you march, your feet naturally fall into a left-right, left-right pattern like this:



**listen to Track 14**

The left foot gets the strong beats and the right foot gets the weak beats. Try imitating the marching beat by saying "STRONG-weak, STRONG-weak." Start with your left foot.



**listen to Track 15**

So the strong and weak beats make a pattern, one-two, one-two, and so on. This is a two-beat pattern.



**listen to Track 16**

reflection **discussion**

Follow-up discussion questions: What are some tempos in our lives? How would you describe the tempo of a car? A turtle? How about the flow of the school day? What about the flow of the weekend? When does time seem to drag on and when does it fly by? Do people speak or walk with different tempos? Do certain tempos have feelings associated with them? How can you relate these ideas back to music?

**Elvis:** But what about other patterns? Can you make a 100-beat pattern?

**Composer:** Well, technically you could, but it would take a long time to keep counting that high! The most common patterns are of two, three, or four beats. These are what you'll find most in LinkUP!

**Violet:** OK, let's try a three-beat pattern.



listen to **Track 17**

**Composer:** Excellent! Now try a four-beat pattern.



listen to **Track 18**

**Elvis:** This is really fun! Now I want to know how all the musicians know what beats to play.



Beats are grouped together in regular patterns or units called **meter**. In most music, the meter stays the same throughout, meaning each of the measures has the same number of beats. Once the right number of beats has been "measured" out, the measure ends and a new one begins. In  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter, there are three beats in each measure no matter what!

### Experience Meter with Your Students

1. In groups, have students experiment with meter and strong and weak beats. Have students

- try making different beats strong (for example,  $\frac{3}{4}$  could be STRONG-weak-STRONG or weak-STRONG-weak)
- "orchestrate" meters by putting different beats in different body parts or percussion instruments (for example,  $\frac{4}{4}$  could be stomp-clap-snap-clap)

2. Share and reflect. What was it like to play with meter? [US 2, 4; NYC 1, 2, 3]

lesson **extension**

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**Violet:** Wow, beats sound like a secret language—how cool! Can we see some of the symbols so we can figure out musical codes?

**Composer:** Sure. One kind of symbol is a note, and another kind is a rest. When musicians see a note, they know to make a sound. When they see a rest, they know to be silent. Take a look at this music:

Music is made up of different symbols. When performing a piece of music, musicians are actually reading those symbols—which tell them what to play (notes, rhythms) and how to play (volume, expression, phrasing)—and making the music you hear!



**examples of notes**



**examples of rests**

**Elvis:** Uh oh, this is getting hard ...

**Composer:** Not to worry. We'll take them one at a time.

Let's begin with the **quarter note**



and the **quarter rest**.



The quarter note and the quarter rest are the easiest types of notes and rests to learn, because they each last for one beat in the music. When you see a quarter note, you make a sound that lasts for one beat. When you see a quarter rest, you are silent for one beat.

**Elvis:** Quarter note—sound for one beat. Quarter rest—silent for one beat. I think I can remember that.

**Composer:** Good! Let's try it. First, listen to your teacher and point to each symbol as you hear it. Then, read through the example and clap your hands together when you see a quarter note, and pull your hands apart when you see a quarter rest.



Congratulations! You're cracking the code! You just clapped your first LinkUP! rhythm. A rhythm is a combination of notes and rests. Let's try another one.





**Violet:** I'm getting the hang of this! Elvis, see if you can decode this rhythm:



Help Violet make up a rhythm pattern with quarter notes and quarter rests for Elvis to decode.

### lesson **extension**

#### **Play "Decoding Rhythms"**

Split the class into two groups. Have each group make up and practice rhythm patterns using quarter notes and rests. Can students from one group figure out the patterns created by the other group? Have students write the patterns down on paper. [US 3, 5; NYC 1, 2]