

NOTES ON TONALITY

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FUNDAMENTALS

1.1 METRES

In music, a steady and regular pulse is a *beat*, which may be *strong* or *weak* and are grouped into *bars* or *measures* separated by *bar lines*. The first beat of each bar is accented and referred to as the *downbeat*.

An arrangement of rhythm into a pattern of strong and weak beats is a *metre*, which is defined by a *time signature*, consisting of two stacked numbers. The bottom number determines the note value of each beat, and the top number determines the number of beats in each bar. The metre is *simple* if the beat unit is not dotted and *compound* otherwise.

1.1.1 SIMPLE METRES

In simple metres, the quarter note is the most common beat, and the eighth note and the half note may also function as the beat. The quadruple simple metre with the quarter note as the beat $\frac{4}{4}$ is known as *common time* and written **C**. The duple simple metre with the half note as the beat $\frac{2}{2}$ is known as *alla breve* or *cut common time* and written **♩**.