

hey, it's
kids!

SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!



Dear Sparky:
Q: I understand that we're supposed to beam rhythms to show the organization of beats in the measure, but is there an easy way to beam complex rhythms?

--A.Y., Owatonna, MN

A: WOOF!*

***TRANSLATION:** NOTES SHOULD BE BEAMED IN GROUPS THAT **ILLUSTRATE THE METER**. FOR SIMPLE RHYTHMS, THIS IS PRETTY EASY TO DO; SIMPLY GROUP ANY NOTES THAT CAN BE BEAMED (EIGHTH NOTES AND SMALLER) INTO GROUPS THAT ARE **EQUAL TO THE BEAT UNIT OF THE CURRENT METER**.



FOR **COMPLEX RHYTHMS**, HOWEVER, THINGS CAN GET COMPLICATED... WHEN A RHYTHM INCLUDES THINGS LIKE **SYNCOBATONS** OR OTHER **OFF-BEAT FIGURES**, ILLUSTRATING THE METER MAY INVOLVE **DIVIDING NOTES** ACROSS BEAT UNITS WITH **TIES**. FORTUNATELY, THERE IS A **STEP-BY-STEP SYSTEM** FOR CORRECTLY BEAMING THESE COMPLICATED RHYTHMS!

FOR EXAMPLE, LET'S TAKE THIS RHYTHM, WHICH IS WRITTEN WITHOUT BEAMING.

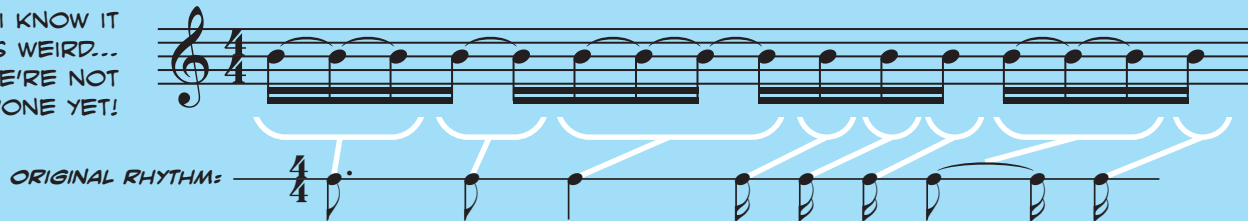


STEP 1: FIND THE SMALLEST NOTE VALUE USED, AND FILL A COMPLETE MEASURE WITH THIS TYPE OF NOTE, BEAMED IN GROUPS THAT ARE EQUAL TO A BEAT UNIT IN THE CURRENT METER.



STEP 2: ADD TIES BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL NOTES TO RECREATE THE ORIGINAL RHYTHM. MAKE SURE THAT EACH TIED GROUP CORRESPONDS TO A NOTE IN THE RHYTHM YOU STARTED WITH!

YES, I KNOW IT LOOKS WEIRD... BUT WE'RE NOT DONE YET!



STEP 3: FIND **EVERY** GROUP OF TWO OR MORE NOTES THAT ARE **BOTH TIED TOGETHER AND BEAMED TOGETHER**, AND REPLACE THEM WITH A **SINGLE NOTE OF EQUIVALENT VALUE**.

IF YOU HAVE NOTES THAT ARE TIED **OR** BEAMED, BUT NOT **BOTH**, THEN LEAVE THEM **ALONE**!



DON'T TOUCH!



HANDS OFF!



YES... SIMPLIFY IT!

A **CORRECTLY BEAMED RHYTHM** MAY INCLUDE **TIES**, BUT IT WILL **VERY CLEARLY** SHOW THE **BEATS** IN THE MEASURE... WHICH, IN TURN, MAKES IT **EASIER FOR THE PERFORMER TO READ**!

DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!