

LESSON 10

TIME SIGNATURES

The **TIME SIGNATURE** for a musical composition is found at the beginning, to the right of the key signature. The time signature is made up of two numbers:



Sometimes, the letter **C** or **♩** is used instead of numbers.

C stands for $\frac{4}{4}$, or **Common Time**.

♩ stands for $\frac{2}{2}$, or **Alla Breve**.

The **top** number of the time signature tells **how many beats each measure contains**.

The **bottom** number tells **which type of note receives one beat**.

2 = 2 beats or counts per measure

4 = Quarter note (♩) receives one beat

3 = 3 beats or counts per measure

8 = Eighth note (♩) receives one beat

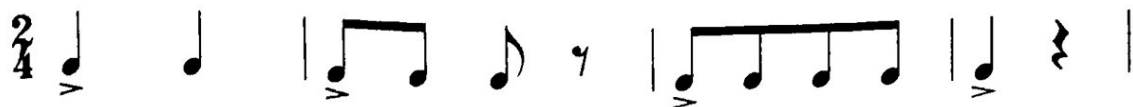
METER is a term that describes the equal division of rhythm by the number of beats in each measure. The time signature indicates the meter. For example, music with a time signature of $\frac{3}{4}$ has three equal beats per measure, and is in triple meter.

When the bottom number of a time signature is 4, a quarter note (♩) receives one beat. The following chart shows two possible types of counting. Other forms of counting are possible.

Quarter	♩ or ♪ = 1 beat	
Dotted Quarter	♩. = 1 1/2 beats	
Half	♩ or ♪ = 2 beats	
Dotted Half	♩. = 3 beats	
Whole	♩ or ♪ = 4 beats	
Eighth	♩ or ♪ = 1/2 beat	
Sixteenth	♩ or ♪ = 1/4 beat	
Triplet	= 1 beat	

An **UPBEAT** occurs when the music begins with an incomplete measure. The last beat or beats are "borrowed" from the final measure and placed at the beginning. The counts used for the upbeat measure will be the last numbers of the time signature. The final measure will have fewer beats than normal. The first full measure begins with count number 1.

In $\frac{2}{4}$ the first beat of each measure is strongest. There are two equal beats per measure.*



In $\frac{3}{4}$ the first beat of each measure is strongest. There are three equal beats per measure.



In $\frac{4}{4}$ the first beat of each measure is strongest, and the third beat of each measure is emphasized slightly. There are four equal beats per measure.



When the bottom number of a time signature is 2, a half note (♩) receives one beat. The following chart shows two possible types of counting. Other forms of counting are possible.

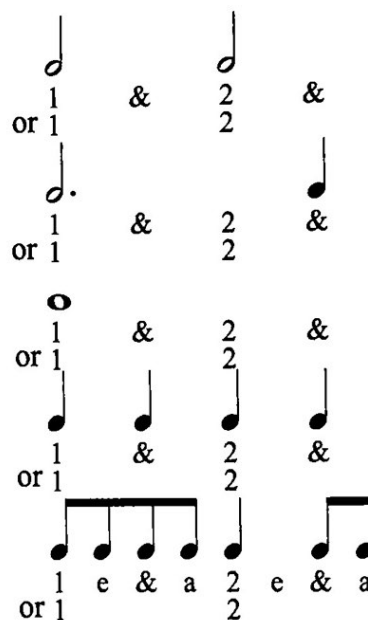
♩ or ♩ = 1 beat

♩. = 1 1/2 beats

♩ or ♩ = 2 beats

♩ or ♩ = 1/2 beat

♩ or ♩ = 1/4 beat



In $\frac{2}{2}$ the first beat of each measure is strongest.

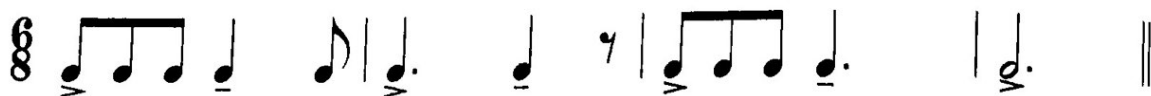


*The accents above are only intended to demonstrate strong and weak beats within the meter. They are not meant to indicate that every strong beat receives an accent.

An 8 as the bottom number of a time signature indicates that an eighth note (♪) receives one beat. However, time signatures with a bottom number of 8 have basic beats of a dotted quarter note (♪.), with three sub-beats within each basic beat. ♩ has two pulses per measure. Other forms of counting are possible.

♪ or ♪ = 1/2 beat	 or 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 &
♪. or ♪. = 1 beat	 or 1 & a 2 & a
♩ or ♩ = 2 beats	 or 1 & a 2 & a
♩. = 3 beats	 or 1 & a 2 & a
♩. or ♩. = 6 beats	 or 1 & a 2 & a
♩. = 12 beats	 or 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a

In ♩ , the first beat of each measure is emphasized, and the fourth beat receives a slight emphasis.



1. Fill in the blanks. The first one is given.

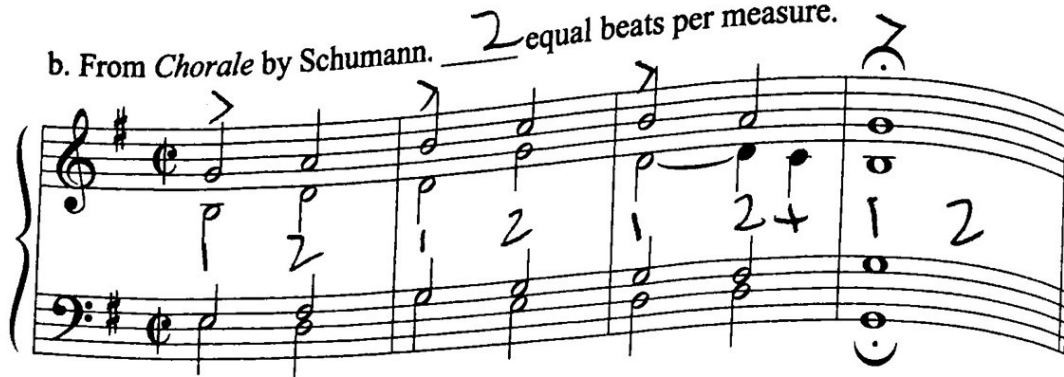
- 2 = 2 beats per measure
 4 = Quarter note receives one beat
 3 = 3 beats per measure
 4 = Quarter note receives one beat
 3 = 3 beats per measure
 8 = Eighth note receives one beat
 C stands for Common Time
 C stands for Alla Breve
 2 = 2 beats per measure
 2 = half note receives one beat
 7 = 7 beats per measure
 4 = Quarter note receives one beat
 6 = 6 beats per measure
 8 = eighth note receives one beat

2. Write counts between the clefs for each of the following phrases. Draw accents on the strong beats and write the number of equal beats per measure. The first measure is given.

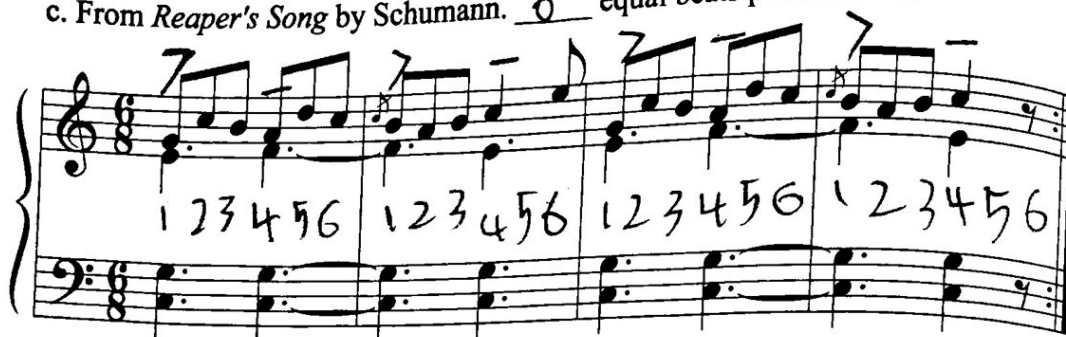
a. From *Allegro Scherzando* by Haydn. 2 equal beats per measure.

The musical score is for a piano piece in 2/4 time, consisting of five measures. The first measure is given as an example. The counts written below the staff are: & 1 & 2 &, 1 + 2 +, 1 + 2 +, and 1 + 2. Accents are drawn over the first and third beats of each measure.

b. From *Chorale* by Schumann. 2 equal beats per measure.



c. From *Reaper's Song* by Schumann. 6 equal beats per measure.



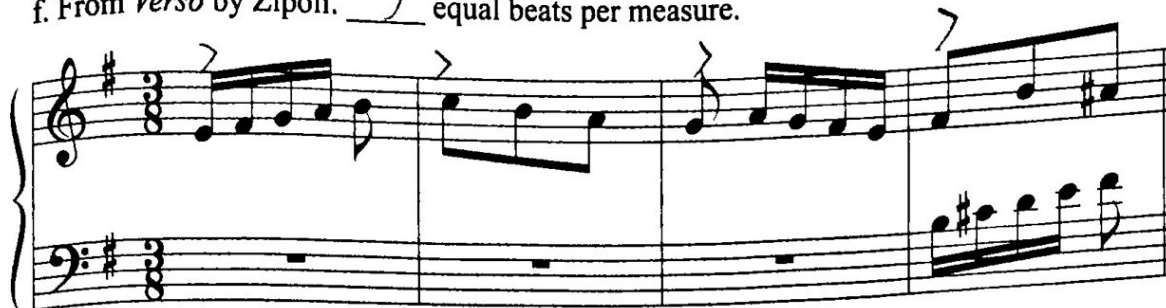
d. From *Sonatina, Op. 36, No. 3*, by Clementi. 4 equal beats per measure



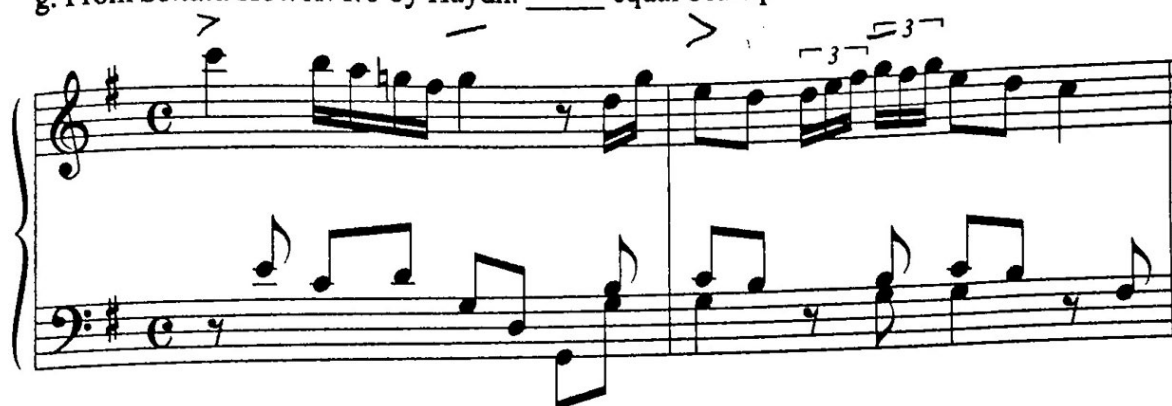
e. From *Batgatelle* by Beethoven. 3 equal beats per measure.



f. From *Verso* by Zipoli. 3 equal beats per measure.



g. From *Sonata Hov. XVI:8* by Haydn. 4 equal beats per measure.



h. From *Prelude, Op. 11, No. 4*, by Scriabin. 6 equal beats per measure.



3. Determine whether each of these phrases is in $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{6}{8}$. In $\frac{3}{4}$, the eighth notes will be divided into groups of two. The eighth notes in $\frac{6}{8}$ measures will be divided into groups of three. Circle the correct time signature for each example.

a. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ 


b. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ 

c. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ 

d. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ 

4. Add one note to each measure to complete the following rhythm patterns.

a. $\frac{6}{8}$ 

b. $\frac{3}{4}$ 

5. Add one rest to each measure to complete the following rhythm patterns.

a. $\frac{3}{4}$ 

b. $\frac{3}{4}$ 