

**Autumn Term: October**

**Music Theory**

**TIME SIGNATURES: How to count music!**

## **Rhythm**

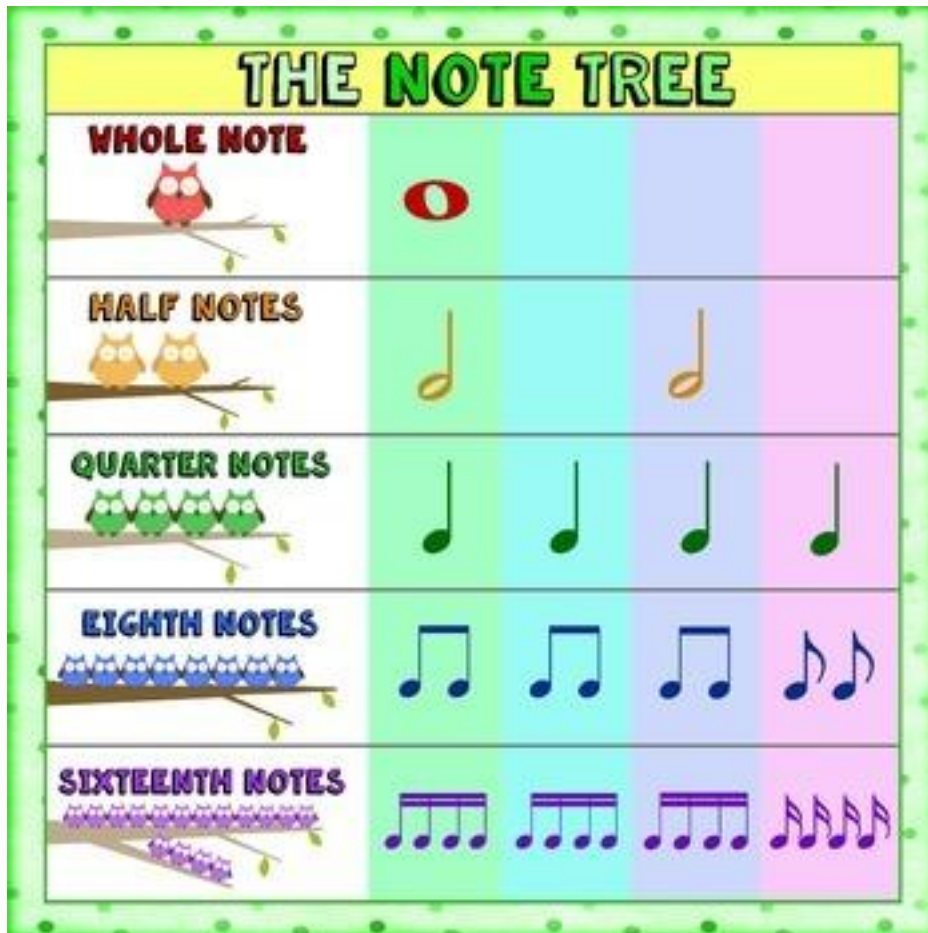
There are TWO important aspects to music. The first is PITCH (high/low notes) and the second is RHYTHM.

Last month we looked at PITCH when we considered TONES and SEMITONES. This is how pitch is measured. If you haven't already read this first sheet please do so now 😊

So, what is RHYTHM? And how is it measured?

RHYTHM is made up of notes of different lengths. Not all notes are the same length.

Everybody playing piano should know these note lengths, regardless of your experience/level because they are super important. The note tree shows the value of these notes in order of size. Look how many smaller notes fit into a whole note size!



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In America, musicians use the number value as the name of the note. In the UK we say the following:

Whole Note = SEMIBREVE

Half Note = MINIM

Quarter Note = CROTCHET

Eighth Note =QUAVER

Sixteenth Note = SEMIQUAVER

Quavers are the only notes we can join together. We often join them to make whole ones (half plus half = one) You can see this in the chart above. It makes them easier to read.

## Dotted Notes

Sometimes we don't want the next note in size but a half size. This is what I need in shoes, maybe you too? I'm not quite a 7 but a 6 is too small. Composers sometimes use these in between notes and we call them dotted notes. Adding a dot to the side of the note means we add half of its value on as extra. A dotted crotchet is therefore 1.5 beats. **How much is a dotted semibreve?**

(It's 6 beats – 4 original ones plus half (2) =6)



A Dotted Minim is 2 plus 1 = 3 beats in total.

## So, how do we organise these notes?

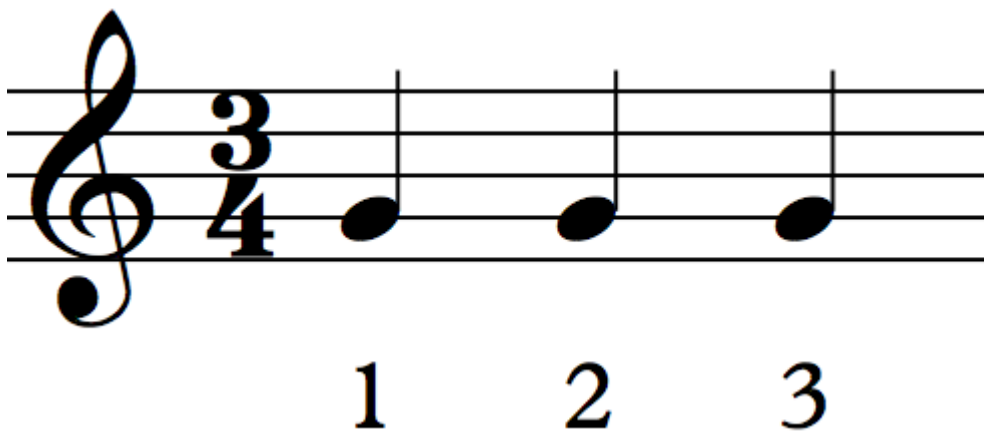
We use BARS! Music must have a steady and regular pulse, it's like a heartbeat. Each bar must contain a regular, set number of beats to regulate that heartbeat.

**This is called a TIME SIGNATURE.** The **top** number tells us how many beats we will play in each bar. Let's look at an example:



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This TIME SIGNATURE tells us we can count three beats in the bar. Let's see how we could count that:

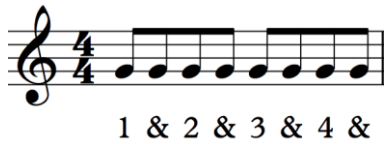


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In this example TIME SIGNATURE there are three beats in the bar made up of CROTCHETS. Remember CROTCHETS are one beat each.

What other notes could we use to make THREE beats?

So, how do we count quavers? We can't say ONE, TWO, THREE etc. for every quaver note we see because quavers are not a whole one but only a half. We therefore use the word 'and' to count quavers:



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Take a look at one of your pieces you are playing at the moment and see if you can count the beat. Write the number of beats (like the example above) in your music and show me it in your next lesson.

Remember if you have a longer note to count 1,2,3,4 or whatever you need in the space before the next note. Have you noticed that the notes are spaced out for this? There are always gaps after longer notes before the next shorter notes! It's really cool when you spot it!

You should be counting whenever you play to ensure your music is in time.

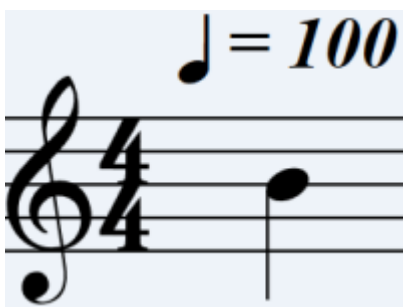
I've given you a worksheet attached to this to practice writing bar lines and counting beats. Use the note value chart to help you. Please complete it this month. Parents -please print this out 😊 I'll ask to see it in your October lessons.

The bottom number of the time signature tells us how we count the beats. We will look at this in your lesson as my explanation will be based on your reading ability in music.

## TEMPO –“a crotchet is one second” is the wrong answer! Here is why...

This is where lots of beginners make an error. Quavers are not fast notes! They are SHORTER notes. **The TEMPO tells us how fast or slow to play.**

Have you ever seen a tempo marking on your music? It looks like this...



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It's at the very beginning in the top left corner. You'll see a note and then a number. The number tells us how many **beats per minute (bpm)**. This is why we don't say a quaver is half a second, it is half a **beat**. Tempo is what measures the time not the note itself.

It is SUPER important that you don't speed up or slow down when you play your music, unless the music instructs you to do so. We call this a **CONSTANT TEMPO**. The whole piece should be kept at a set speed and not changed.

You cannot fail an exam (even grade 8) by playing a wrong note but you can fail any grade exam by

neglecting to keep a constant, accurate tempo and/or not counting your notes correctly.

### **Top tips!**

- If you go wrong when practicing always try to keep going without restarting
- Start your practice at different bar numbers so you learn the piece thoroughly.

Trying to play a piece from memory, before learning it from sight first, is a typical way to get it wrong because you're learning the pitch alone. It's like trying to make a beautiful cake but only using eggs.

Worse still, you can end up learning it incorrectly. Try to avoid it and use your memory to remember your piece and show it off without your music once you've put the work in first 😊

We use a metronome to help us measure tempo because it's hard to do in your head. If you don't already have a metronome and you're working to grade 1 + please consider getting one.

Next month we will look at MUSICAL TERMS