






Rhythm and Timing

The shape of the note tells you its value – how long it is held. For now, we'll talk about a measure that has four beats in it (the most common "time signature" – more on that later). The names for all the notes derive from that four-beat measure:

-  whole note, takes up the whole measure (4 beats)
-  half note, half of the measure (2 beats)
-  quarter note, a quarter of the measure (1 beat)
-  eighth note, an eighth of the measure ($1/2$ beat)
-  sixteenth note, a sixteenth of the measure ($1/4$ beat)

and so on.

The notes can be combined in any order, as long as they add up to 4 beats in the measure.

The tone (C, D, E, etc) of the note is based on where the round part of the notes is placed: the center of the round part on a line, or the round part of the note contained in a space.

When eighth or sixteenth notes are together, the flags merge together into bars.

A dot to the right of a note means that you add half of its original value to it: a dotted half note has three beats, a dotted quarter note has one and a half beats.

Ties (the sideways parentheses when the note stays the same) mean that the note is held for the combination of the values of the notes. Most often this is done when the note should be held across a measure boundary.

Examples in a song

Rests are places where you don't sing. Like the notes, the shape of the rest tells you how long the silence lasts.



whole rest, takes up the whole measure (4 beats)



half rest, half of the measure (2 beats)



quarter rest, a quarter of the measure (1 beat)



eighth rest, an eighth of the measure (1/2 beat)



sixteenth rest, a sixteenth of the measure (1/4 beat)

Unlike notes, you don't put rests of the same kind in a row, but like notes, you can have a dotted rest.

The combination of notes and rests still has to add up to 4 beats in a measure.

The placement of the rest goes with the placement of notes for your part – higher on the staff for tenor and baritone, lower on the staff for lead and bass.

Examples in a song

When you have multiple parts like we do, the music is written so that the notes of different parts line up on the beats so you can see how the rhythm (and notes) of the different parts fit together.

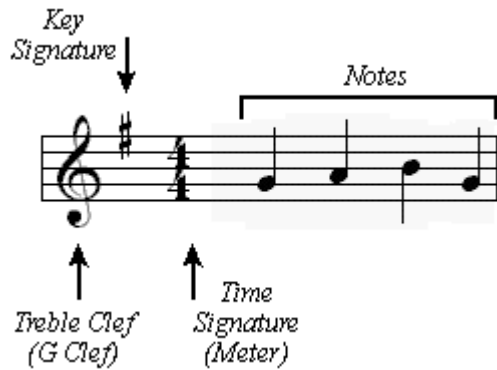
Examples in a song

The time signature tells you how many beats in a measure, and how long a “beat” is. The time signature is shown at the beginning of the song just to the right of the key signature, or at the beginning of a measure if the time signature changes in the middle of a song.

All the note and rest values are based on Common time, which can be shown as a time signature like this:



Otherwise, the time signature is two numbers, one on top of the other, such as



The top number is the number of beats in a measure, and the bottom number is the value of one beat. Common time is the same as 4/4 time, in other words, four beats to a measure and a quarter note gets one beat.

“Waltz” time has a 3/4 time signature, three beats in a measure, quarter note gets one beat (think oom-pah-pah).

The other time signature that’s fairly common is 6/8, which is 6 beats to a measure, and an eighth note is one beat. This sounds like a waltz, too, but a measure has two oom-pah-pahs in it.

Some more “roadmap” items:

We already talked about repeats and multiple endings.

You will notice that there is always a heavy double bar at the end of the song. This may be on the last page, or it may be at the end of the final ending. Another way to mark the end is with the word *Fine*, which is Italian for end (finish).

There are a couple more “roadmap” symbols:

ℳ this is the “sign” (*segno* in Italian)

⦿ this is a coda symbol (a tag, for us)

So, putting these together with some Italian directives, we have notations like this:

DC al Fine: *Da Capo al Fine*, or, from the beginning to the Fine notation.

DC al Coda: *Da Capo al Coda*, or, from the beginning to the Coda.

DS al Coda: *Dal Segno al Coda*, or, from the sign to the coda.