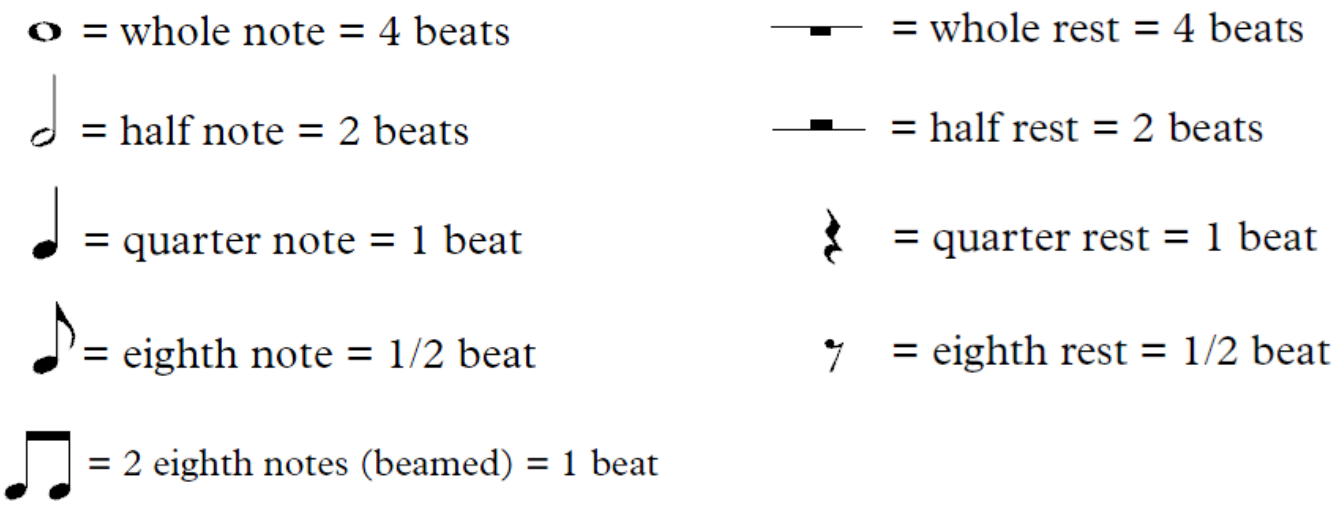
WILLIE MYETTE's

JAZZ EDGE

LESSONS

RHYTHMIC VALUES

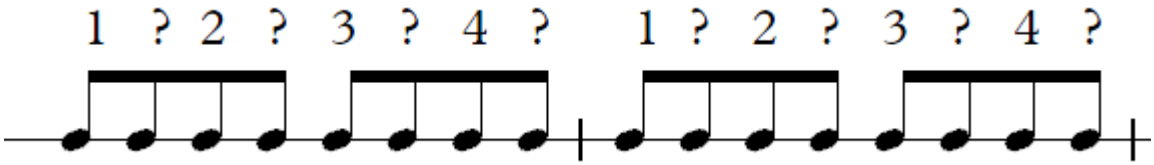
Music is built upon various elements. Pitch (the presence of sound created by playing various notes) is used to form the elements of melody and harmony. Rhythm refers to the use of time values which affect the duration of notes. Let's look at some of the basic rhythmic values that are commonly encountered in music.



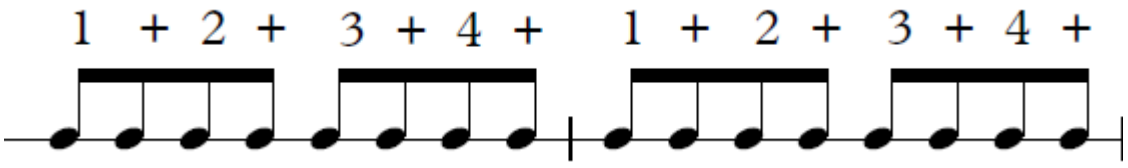
COUNTING & SUBDIVIDING

Notice that each of the rhythmic values has a symbol that represents to sound (pitch) and also silence (rest). Understanding how to count these rhythmic values is very important to being able to play the music correctly with a strong sense of time and meter. When learning to play these rhythms it is important to understand how to *subdivide*, which means counting these rhythmic values using the smallest division of the beat that we see present. Let's look at an example to better understand what is meant by "subdivide."

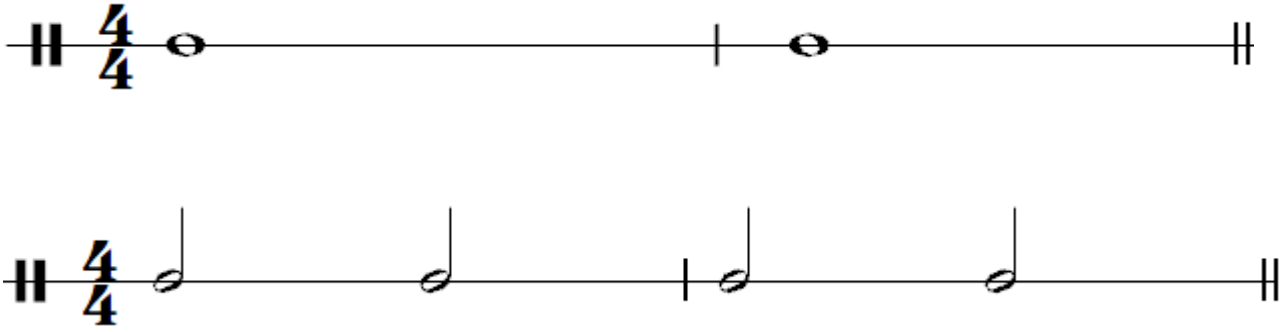
In order to count this measure, we first look to the time signature which tells us that there are 4 beats per measure (4 quarter notes per measure). Because of this, we simply count these quarter notes individually – 1, 2, 3, 4 – one count per each beat. But what if we had notes, such as eighth notes, in which a single beat is broken into multiple parts (i.e., halves)? How do we count the rhythms which do not fall on the beat but on the second half of the beat?

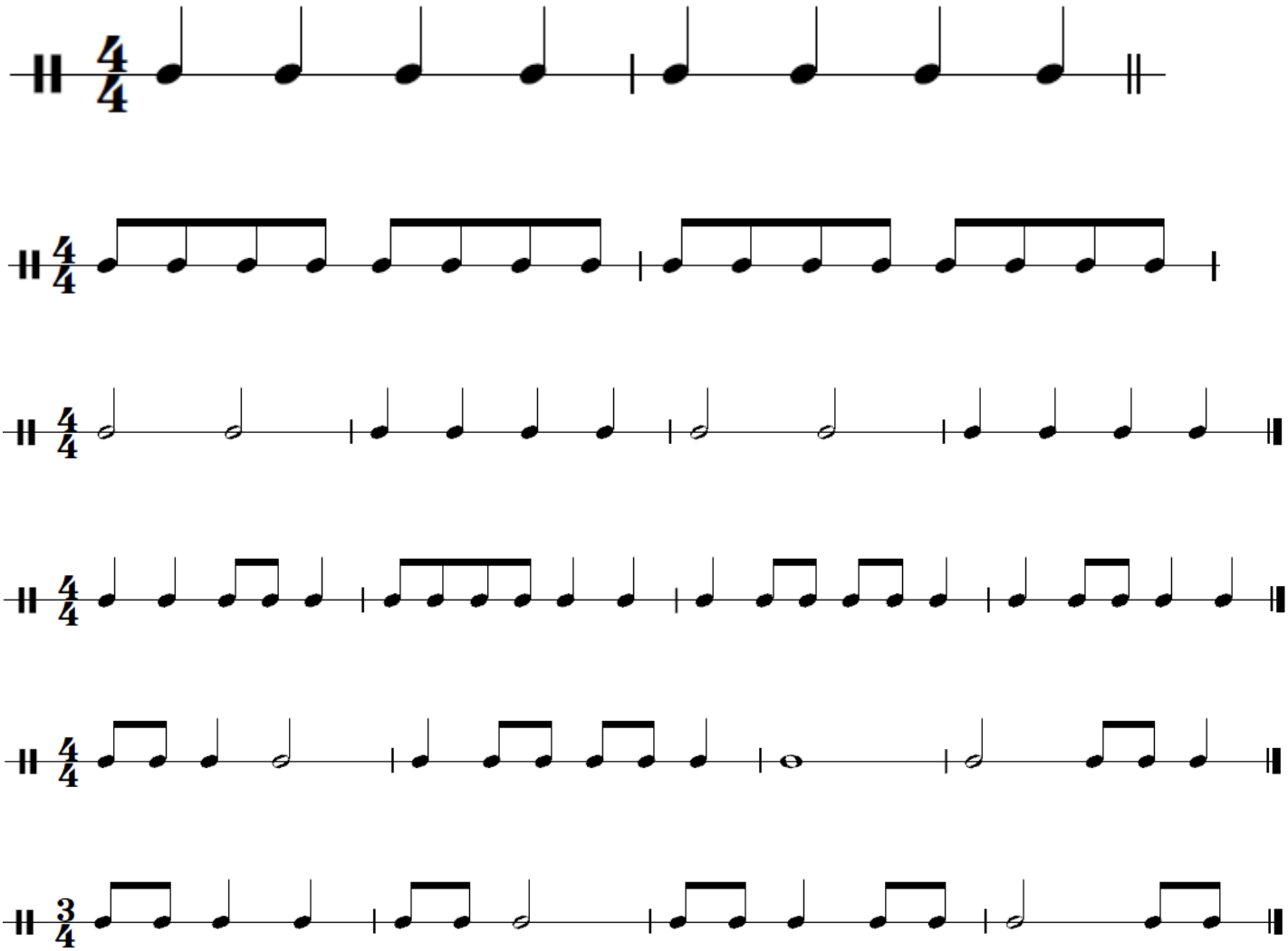


Because we have to count each eighth note, and we need to assign some value to the second eighth note in each pair (which represents the second half of the beat) we count by saying ***"1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and"*** where the "+" sign represents the "*and*." In music, we refer to the numbered beats as *downbeats* and the "+" signs (i.e., "*ands*") as *upbeats*.



Practice clapping and counting the rhythmic examples below, paying close attention to the time signature so as to know how many beats are present in each measure.



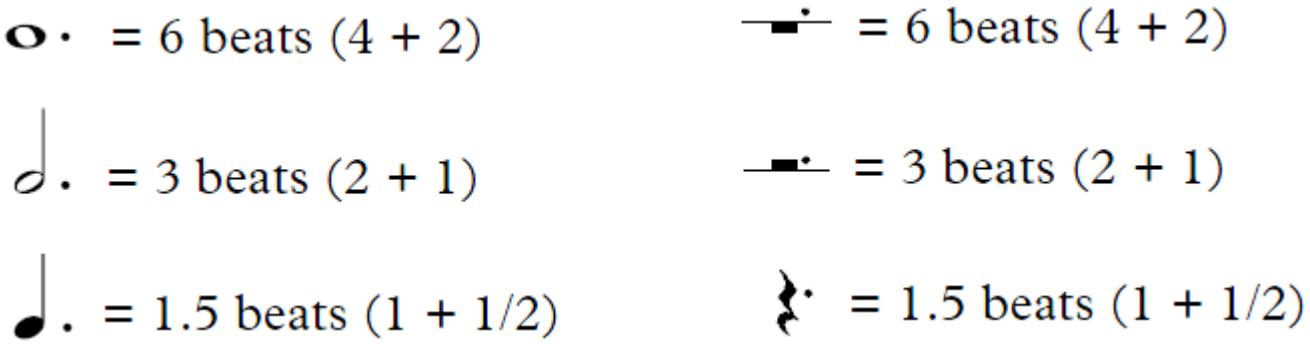


After clapping and counting through the rhythmic examples above, practice playing the rhythms on a random note at the piano. (Use a metronome and practice at slow and fast tempos).

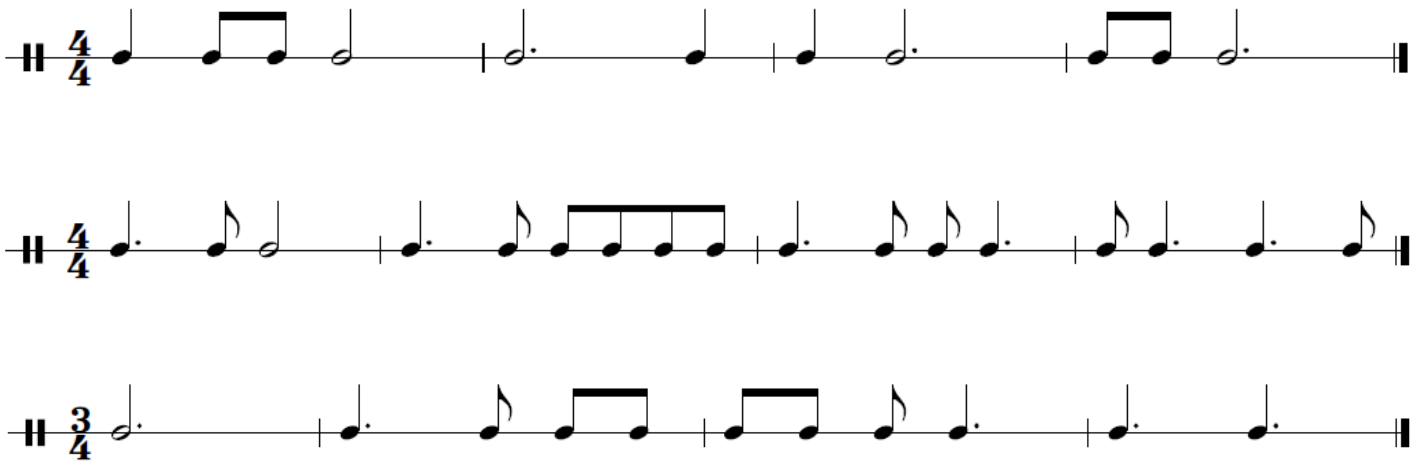
DOTTED RHYTHMS

Any note or rest can be followed by a dot (i.e., dotted half note, dotted quarter note, dotted quarter rest, etc.). It is important to notice that a dotted note is a note with a small dot written *after* the note, slightly to the right of the note. (A dot written *under* the note is a staccato marking which indicates that the note is to be played with a short or detached

articulation). A dot after a note or rest increases the value of the note/rest by half of its original value. For example, a half note has a value of 2 beats. However, a dotted half note has a value of 3 beats. The half note receives 2 beats and the dot acts by adding half of the note's value (1 beat) back to the orginal note (2 + 1 = 3). A whole note receives 4 beats, but a dotted whole note receives 6 beats: the dot adds half of the value of the whole note (2 beats) back to the original note's value (4 beats): 4 beats + 2 beats = 6 beats.



Practice clapping and counting the rhythms below which include dotted rhythms. After you have clapped and counted the rhythms, choose a random pitch at the piano and practice playing the rhythms. Use a metronome and practice at various tempos.



MORE RHYTHMIC VALUES

We can continue to divide rhythms into smaller and smaller units. Let's look at some other rhythmic values.

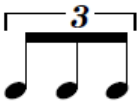
 = eighth note = 1/2 beat

 = sixteenth note = 1/4 beat

 = 2 sixteenth notes = 1/2 beat

 = dotted eighth note = 3/4 beat

 = 4 sixteenth notes = 1 beat

 = 3 eighth note triplets = 1 beat

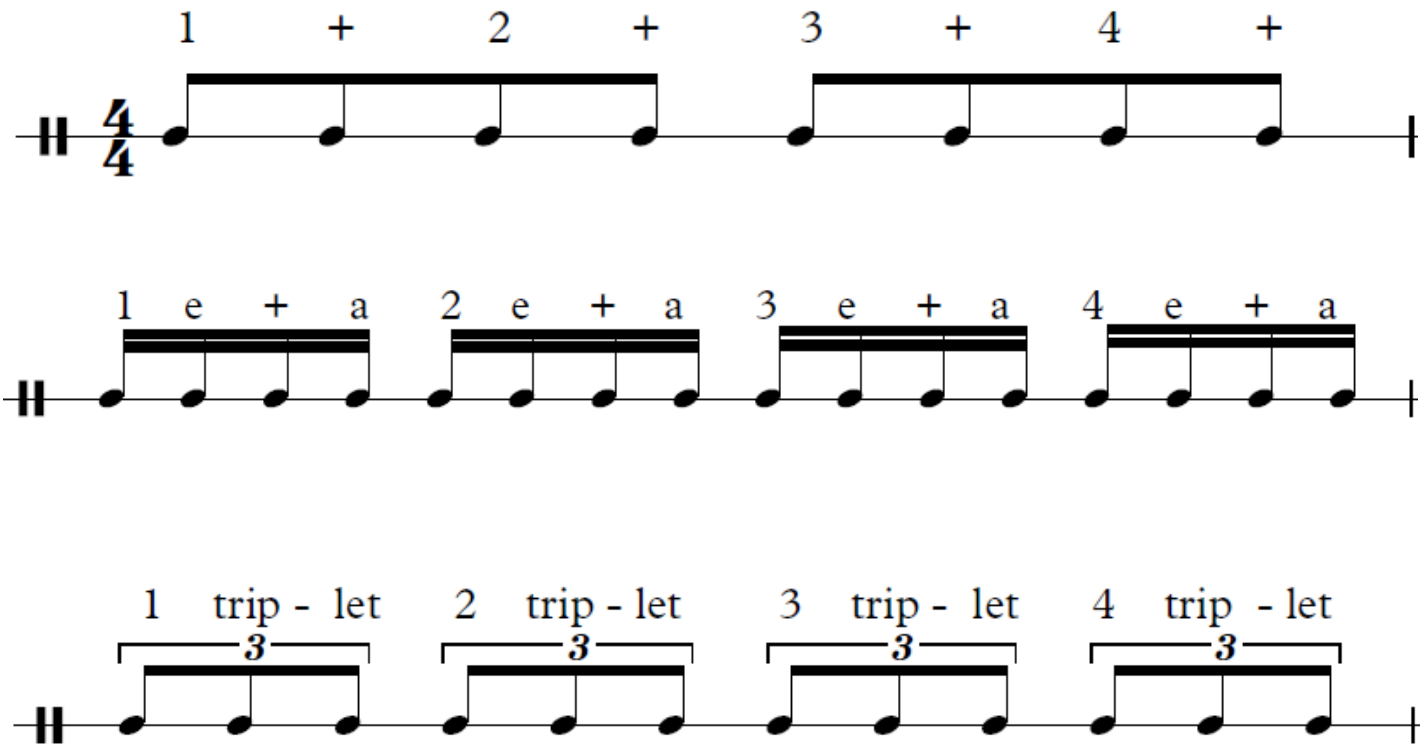
 = eighth rest = 1/2 beat

 = sixteenth rest = 1/4 beat

 = dotted eighth rest = 1/2 beat

As you can see from the examples above, sixteenth notes are equal to 1/4 of a beat, and so 4 sixteenth notes equal 1 beat. A dotted eighth note follows the rule for dotted rhythms: add half of the value of the note back to the original value (i.e., ½ + ¼ = ¾ beat). Eighth note triplets are shown above as three eighth notes beamed together with a bracket and the number "3" within the bracket. Three eighth note triplets equal 1 beat, so the individual eighth-note triplets equal 1/3 of a beat each.

As we continue to subdivide these rhythms, we need to have ways of counting these new subdivisions. Below are some of the counting practices musicians use to count these rhythmic subdivisions.



As the above rhythms demonstrate, each subdivision of the beat is counted so as to ensure that they are given accurate value when played. We have already learned that the eighth-note subdivision is counted "*one and two and three and four and.*" As we move to the next level of subdivision (sixteenth notes) we count "*one-ee-and-ah, two-ee-and-ah, three-ee-and-ah, four-ee-and-ah.*" Eighth-note triplets represent a single beat divided into three equal parts. When counting eighth-note triplets, count "*one-trip-let, two-trip-let, three-trip-let, four-trip-let.*"

COUNTING & SUBDIVIDING

Practice clapping and counting the rhythms below. Remember to use a metronome and practice at various tempos. Once you have mastered these rhythms, practice playing these rhythms using a random note at the piano.