

# Rhythmic Reading Glossary

## The Time Signature, Measures and Systems

### Time Signature

↓ The top # tells you how many counts per measure.

The most common time signature is 4/4, and therefore is sometimes substituted with a "C" - for common time.



The bottom # tells you which note value gets 1 count.

↑ Measures are separated by a vertical line.

A line of measures is often times referred to as a **system**. For example: In the fourth measure of the system above, the time signature changes from Common Time (4/4), to 2/4 time. The time signature then changes back to 4/4 time in the first measure of the second system on this page (below). Notice at the end of the fourth measure of the first system that composers (and notation programs) will often times indicate the change in meter (a synonym for time signature) in order to prepare you for the change.

## Note Values in 4/4 Time

**Whole Note**  
(4 counts)

**Whole Note Rest**  
(4 Counts)

**Half Note**  
(2 Counts)

**Half Note Rest**  
(2 Counts)

**Quarter Notes**  
(1 Count)

**Quarter Note Rests**  
(1 Count)



**8th Notes**   **8th Note Rests**  
(1/2 of a Count each)

**16th Notes**   **16th Note Rests**  
(1/4 Count each)

**32nd Notes**

**32nd Note Rests**



Notice on the Whole Note shown above that even though you only play on count one, it is helpful to count all four beats. This is called subdividing. Subdividing is when you count the numbers, &'s, e's and/or a's between the notes you play. Subdividing is helpful to ensure rhythmic accuracy at slower tempos and/or when you have large amounts of rest between notes.

### Triplets

**8th Note Triplets**

**Quarter Note Triplets**

**16th Note Triplets**



### Dotted Notes (in 4/4)

A dot next to a note makes the note longer. It adds half of the notes original value to itself.

A quarter note gets 1 count (equal to two 8th notes), but a dotted quarter note will get 1 and 1/2 counts (which is equivalent to three 8th notes).

An 8th note gets 1/2 of a count ( equal to two 16th notes), but a dotted 8th note will get 3/4 of a count (which is equivalent to three 16th notes).

