

MCC SABER BANDS

HOW TO COUNT RHYTHMS

STEP 1: DETERMINE THE TIME SIGNATURE

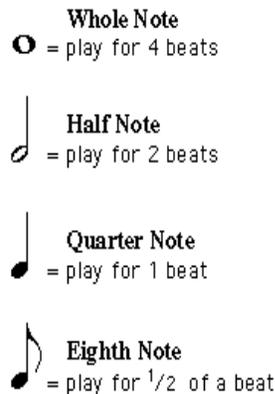
Look at the beginning of the first staff. You will notice two numbers, one atop the other. Look at the top number – this will tell us how many beats are in each measure (area between vertical barlines dividing the music up into a specific number of beats per measure).

STEP 2: KNOW YOUR NOTES AND RESTS

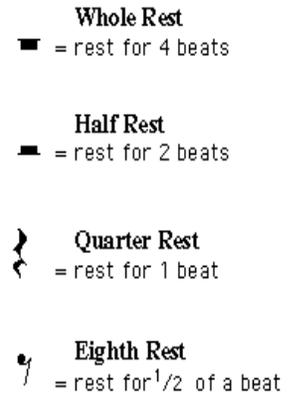
It is impossible to count unless you know how many beats a particular note or rest is worth. Please refer to this chart:

**Please note that it is common practice to place a whole rest in an ‘empty’ measure even if the amount of the whole rest (four beats) exceeds the upper number of the time signature (for example 3/4 or 2/4)

Note Values:



Rest Values:



STEP 3: START ON ONE

The first note or rest in EVERY measure begins on beat one regardless of its value. We are essentially placing notes and rests on a numberline, and you always start at one.

STEP 4: COMPLETE EACH BEAT

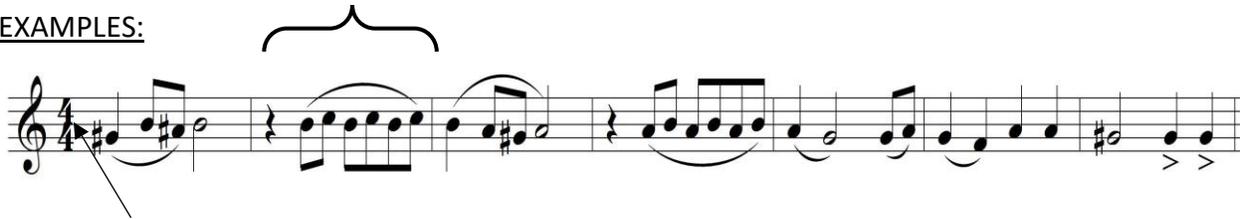
Once you have your “1” marked, ask yourself “does this note or rest complete all of beat 1?” If yes, then go to beat 2 (or 3 or 4 depending on the length of the note on beat 1). If no, then ask yourself “how much of beat one is left?” If it half a beat, mark it with the symbol for “and” – “+”. Now go on to beat two.

STEP 5: MAKE SURE THE MEASURE HAS THE CORRECT NUMBER OF BEATS

Look at the measure and make sure you have used all portions of every beat. If you are in 4/4 time, you cannot end a measure on “3” – you must use all four beats. If somehow you have gone past the top number of your key signature you need to go back to 1 at the beginning of the measure and re-do that measure.

One measure

EXAMPLES:



The top number in our time signature is 4, so we must use 4 complete beats in each measure. Looking at the first measure, and knowing we always start on 1, we have a quarter note. Write 1 under it. Now ask – does that use all of beat one? Yes it does, beat 1 is now complete, so we go on to beat 2. The next note is an eighth note. We write 2 under it. We ask ourselves – does this complete beat 2? No, it does not. Eighth notes are only worth $\frac{1}{2}$ a beat each, so we need to label the second $\frac{1}{2}$ of beat two, called the “and” or represented by a plus sign “+”. Write a plus sign under the second eighth note in measure one. Now beat 2 is complete, so we go on to beat 3. We draw a 3 under the half note and ask ourselves – does this complete beat three? Yes it does – and more! A half note is worth 2 full beats, so since it started on beat 3 it is worth all of beat 3 AND all of beat 4 as well. Now check the first measure – Did you start on one? Did you use 4 complete beats? Yes you did. Move on to the second measure and start over again on one.

Written out, the above example would look like this (beats that fall on rests are written in parenthesis):

1 2+3 | (1) 2+3+4+ | 1 2+3 | (1) 2+3+4+ | 1 2 4 | 1 2 3 4 | 1 3 4