

## A Beginner's Guide to Music

### Interrelated Dimensions of Music:

These are the main elements that make up music. In a piece of music there might be elements of all of them, or maybe just a few.

**PULSE** – This is the ‘heartbeat’ of the music. It’s the steady beat that runs through it...what you would tap along to when listening.

**RHYTHM** – This is the combination of long and short sounds that make up the music (like syllables in words). If you were singing a song, the rhythm would follow the pattern of the words.

**PITCH** – This is what creates the melody (tune) of a piece of music by moving between low and high notes.

**TEMPO** - This is the speed of the music: fast, slow, or somewhere in between.

**DYNAMICS** – This is the volume of the music: loud, soft (quiet) or somewhere in between.

**TIMBRE** – (pronounced TAM-BRUH) – This is the sort of sound in the music. In singing it might be humming, whispering or talking. In a piece of music it might be percussion sounds from a drum, tinkly sounds from bells or woodwind sounds from a flute, for example.

**TEXTURE** – This is how the music is built up, like making a layered sandwich but with sounds instead.

**STRUCTURE** – This is the way that the music is laid out: 4 crotchet beats in a bar, 5 bars to a phrase etc (a bit like how letters/words/sentences/paragraphs are laid out in a piece of writing).

## **Musical Instrument Families**

There are four main instrument families found within an orchestra. These are: string, brass, woodwind and percussion.

Here are two excellent links to help children explore the different families.

String and woodwind:

<https://insidetheorchestra.org/2020/03/18/learn-the-instruments/>

Brass and percussion:

<https://insidetheorchestra.org/2020/03/22/brass-and-percussion-families/>

It is also very worthwhile playing children Benjamin Britten's Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra as this also introduces the different instruments.

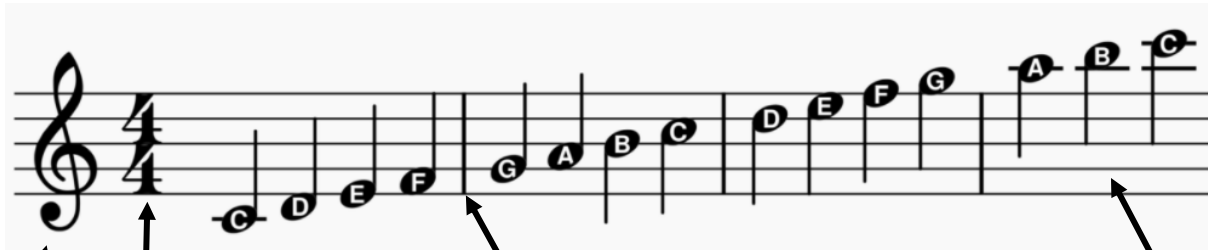
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcm-1UP5O2Y>

A more limited range of instruments can be explored in Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ueGfjBKbiE>

NB: Contrary to its appearance, the saxophone is actually part of the woodwind family, not brass, as it is played using a wooden reed in the mouthpiece!

## MUSICAL NOTATION



Treble Clef

**Bar Line** (separates each bar). A bar (sometimes called a measure) is a subdivision of the piece of music played at a particular tempo (speed) that is indicated by the time signature.

Stave

### **Time Signature:**

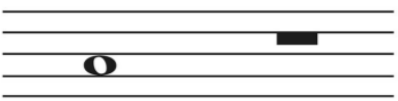
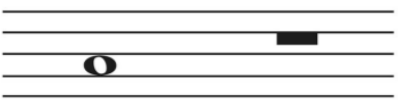
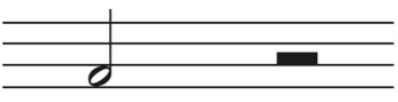
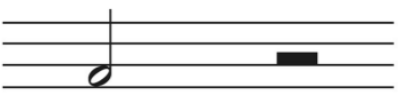
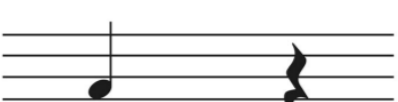
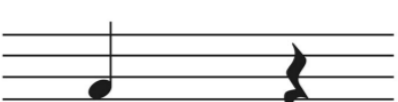




The bottom number tells us what sort of beat is in each bar. 4 means that they are crotchet beats, 2 means they are minim beats, 8 means they are quaver beats and 16 means they are semi-quaver beats.

The top number tells us how many of those beats there are. So this time signature tells us that each bar is made up of 4 crotchet beats.

### Tips

To remember the names of the notes in the stave you can use the reminder 'Face in the Space' as the notes F, A, C, E are in the spaces of the stave.

To remember the notes on the lines of the stave, you can use the mnemonic 'Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge'.

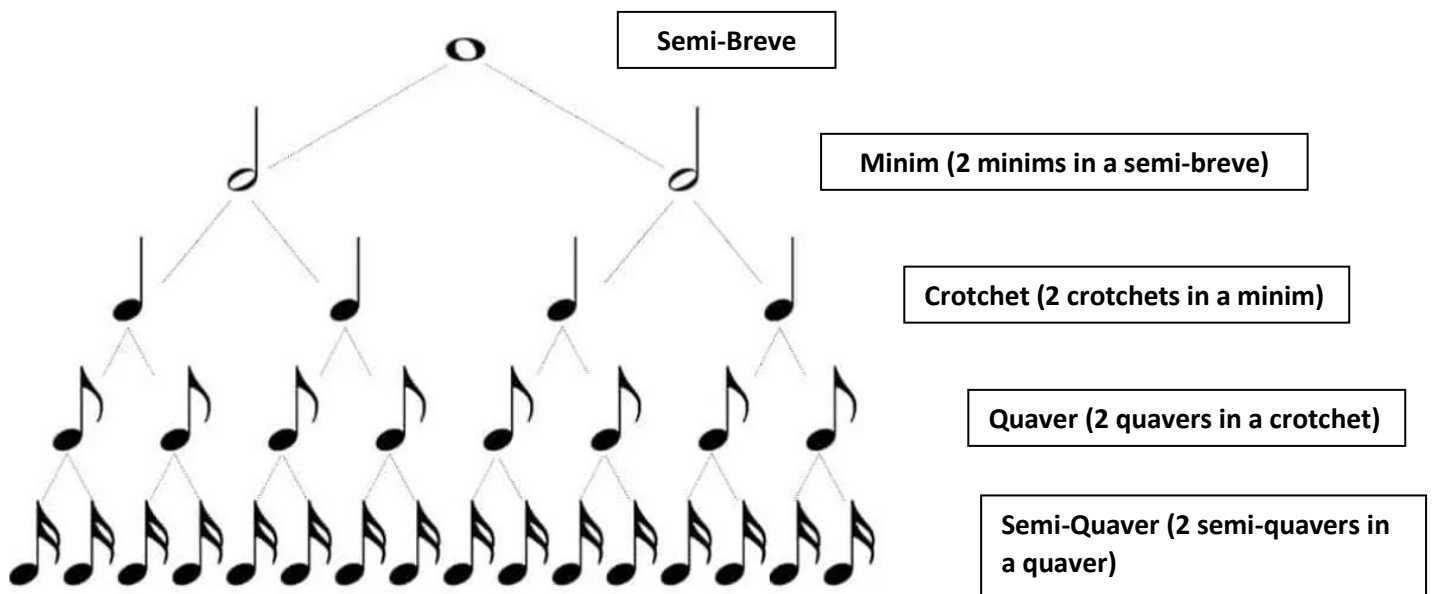
name	relative length	note	rest	in $\frac{4}{4}$ time
semibreve	whole note			4 beats
minim	half note			2 beats
crotchet	quarter note			1 beat
quaver	eighth note			$\frac{1}{2}$ beat
semi quaver	sixteenth note			$\frac{1}{4}$ beat

A rest is a period of time in which no note is played. Each type of note has its own type of rest symbol. So a crotchet rest would last for one beat.

Quavers and semi-quavers can be beamed (joined together) in groups of upto two crotchets' worth of beats but there are quite tricky rules on when and where you can do this. Quavers have one beam at the top of the stem (representing the single flag on a quaver note), semi-quavers have a double beam at the top (representing the double flag on the note).

1 semi-breve = 2 minims/4 crotchets/8 quavers/16 semi-quavers.

A semi-breve lasts twice as long as a minim, four times as long as a crotchet etc.



## Useful Tips

To help remember the rhythm of notes and combinations of notes, here are some words you can use for some of the more common ones.

♪ Tea

♪♪ Cof-fee

♪ Miiilk

♪♪♪ Co-ca Co-la

♪♪ Lem-on-ade

♪♪ Cream so-da

Using the opening bars of Drunken Sailor as shown below, the rhythm would be as follows:

Cream so-da cream so-da, cof-fee cof-fee

cream so-da, cream so-da, cof-fee cof-fee, cream so-da cream so-da, cof-fee cof-fee

cof-fee cof-fee, tea tea

