

RHYTHM: understanding and using it in the KS1/2 classroom

What is RHYTHM?

- Musical rhythms are created by combining notes of various lengths to make patterns. For example, this isn't a rhythm:



But this is:



And so is this:

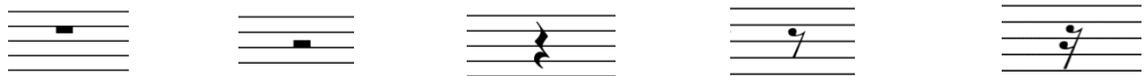


Why is rhythm important and useful to understand?

- Rhythm is an aspect of DURATION, which is one of the seven MUSICAL ELEMENTS.
- Here are the most common note VALUES (durations/lengths) you might use to create rhythm patterns:

Semibreve or 'whole' note	
Minim or 'half' note	
Crotchet or 'quarter' note	
Quaver or 'eighth' note	
Semiquaver or 'sixteenth' note	

- Each note value has a matching REST (silence):



Semibreve Minim Crotchet Quaver Semiquaver

Rhythm is an important ingredient of musical STYLE. For example:

Waltz:

Latin (South-American):

Jazz swing:

Nursery Rhyme:

March:

Syncopated (pop):

What do the numbers at the beginning of the examples above mean?

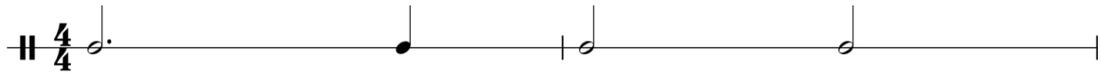
- These numbers are called TIME-SIGNATURES and they indicate
 - a) the number of beats (the top number), in each BAR and
 - b) the value /duration (bottom number) of the beat
- So, 4/4 = 4 crotchet (quarter) notes in each bar.

- Most music is counted in 'four' time.
- This means each group (bar) of beats add up to four and beat one is usually 'strong' (slightly louder).

Why are there sometimes dots after the notes?

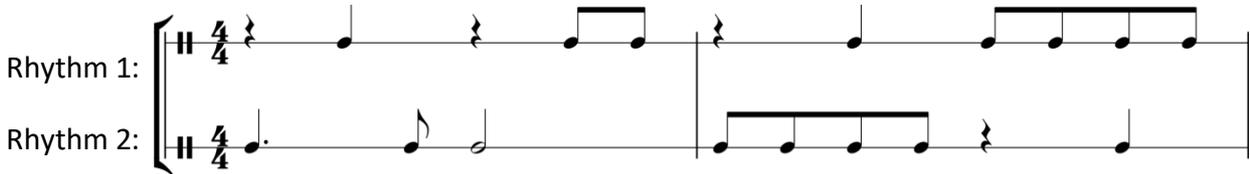
- Dotted notes make it possible to create and notate more complex rhythms.
- A dot after a note makes it half as long again.
- For example, 1 crotchet (1/4 note) = 2 quavers (1/8 notes) and a dotted crotchet = 3 quavers.

- Similarly 1 minim = 2 crotchets and a dotted minim = 3 crotchets.

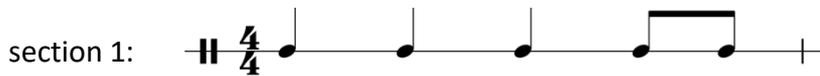


How can we use rhythm in more advanced ways, once we have covered the basics?

- Combine rhythms, for example:



- Create different sections in classroom compositions, with each section having its own distinct rhythm. For example:



- Listen to musical recordings in class and ask rhythm-based questions. For example:
 - Can you clap or tap the main rhythm pattern you hear in this music?
 - How many beats-in-a-bar does this music have?
 - Can you put your hand in the air when you hear a very long note?
 - Which instrument is playing the main rhythm pattern?
 - Can you put your hand in the air when the main rhythm pattern changes?

Useful vocabulary

Rest: a musical silence	Bar: a group of beats
Beat: the underlying pulse of the music	Duration: length of notes
Rhythm: note values (duration) & patterns	Musical Elements: 7 key musical ingredients
Tempo: the speed of the beat / pulse	Note value: how long the note is
Texture: layers of music	Dynamics: volume (loud / soft)
Improvise: make-up on the spot	Compose: create original music
Pitch: how high or low a note is	Time-signature: beats in the bar