

Meter is the organization of musical time into recurring patterns of strong and weak beats. Each complete pattern is a measure. The patterns group into

duple (two beats per measure) or **strong** weak
triple (three beats per measure) or **strong** weak weak
quadruple (four beats per measure) or **strong** weak **less strong** weak

Additionally, the *number of subdivisions per beat* provides more information about the meter.



The meter signature (or time signature) at the beginning of a musical score establishes the meter *and* the grouping of the subdivisions within the beat.

Simple meter refers to the beat being divided equally into *two* parts.

whole = 2 halves; half = 2 quarters; quarter = 2 eighths; eighth = 2 sixteenths

Compound meter refers to the beat being divided equally into *three* parts.

Compound meter normally has a dotted note as the beat.

dotted half = 3 quarters **dotted quarter** = 3 eighths
dotted eighth = 3 sixteenths

Here is an **IF-THEN** chart to help determine meter.

The numbers in this chart refer to the *top* number in the time signature.



	Duple	Triple	Quadruple
Simple	2	3	4
Compound	6	9	12

IF the top number is a 2 or a 6, **THEN** you have duple meter.

IF the top number is a 3 or a 9, **THEN** you have triple meter.

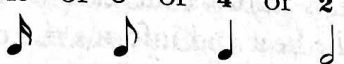
IF the top number is a 4 or a 12, **THEN** you have quadruple meter.


IF the top number is 2, 3, or 4, **THEN** you have simple meter.


IF the top number is 6, 9, or 12, **THEN** you have compound meter.

Simple Meter

"What you see is what you get" represents a time signature in **simple meter**. The top number represents the number of beats per measure and the bottom number represents the fractional equivalent of the note that is the beat. There will never be a time signature with a 7 on the bottom or a 10 on the bottom because there is no such thing as a "seventh note" or a "tenth note." Therefore:

- A time signature of $\frac{2}{16}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ or $\frac{2}{4}$ or $\frac{2}{2}$ is Simple **Duple**.
The beat note is: 

- A time signature of $\frac{3}{16}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{2}$ is Simple **Triple**.
The beat note is: 

- A time signature of $\frac{4}{16}$ or $\frac{4}{8}$ or $\frac{4}{4}$ or $\frac{4}{2}$ is Simple **Quadruple**.
The beat note is: 


You may also see other time signatures that represent simple meter. For example, *c*, called common time, is frequently used to represent $\frac{4}{4}$, and *♩*, sometimes called "cut time" or *alla breve*, is a substitute for $\frac{2}{2}$.


Compound Meter

If in compound meter the beat is normally a dotted note, there is no fraction that represents a dotted quarter ♩. or dotted half note ♩. ; therefore, in **compound meter** the time signature represents the *subdivision* and not the beat. For example, a $\frac{9}{4}$ time signature represents triple compound meter. There are nine quarter notes (or the durational equivalent) per measure. The beat note is the dotted half note.



You would conduct in three. Each dotted half note receives one beat and the beat is divided equally into three parts (quarter notes).

- A time signature of $\frac{6}{16}$ or $\frac{6}{8}$ or $\frac{6}{4}$ or $\frac{6}{2}$ is Compound **Duple**.
The beat note is: 

- A time signature of $\frac{9}{16}$ or $\frac{9}{8}$ or $\frac{9}{4}$ or $\frac{9}{2}$ is Compound **Triple**.
The beat note is: 

- A time signature of $\frac{12}{16}$ or $\frac{12}{8}$ or $\frac{12}{4}$ or $\frac{12}{2}$ is Compound **Quadruple**.
The beat note is: 