

Rhythm, Time Signatures and Tempo

Rhythm is defined as a strong, regular repeated pattern of movement or sound. It is the backbone of any musical piece. Every time a sound repeats can be thought of as a pulse just like a heartbeat. This is called a **Beat**. Beats have to be **measured** and put together in a defined space. A measure is called a **Bar** in musical terms. Since every Bar has beats, there is a need to define how many beats there are in each bar. This will determine the **Time Signature** of a musical piece. The most common time signature has 4 counts in one measure/bar. And is written as 4/4. The numerator defines how many beats will be there in a bar. The denominator defines the note value of each beat. Hence 4/4 means there will be 4 quarter notes in a Bar. 3/4 means there will be 3 quarter notes in the bar.

Let us count from 1 to 4. This will be our first bar. A bar sign for the beginning and end of a bar is written as a double “|”. The first beat is always accented and it is called the downbeat. This is necessary to be able to join in on the first count in case one is lost in count.

____ 1 Bar in 4/4 ____
|| **1** 2 3 4 ||

Tempo is the Italian word for time, and we use it to describe how quickly a piece of music is performed. We measure tempo with **Beats Per Minute**, or **BPM**. If something is defined as 60 BPM then we know there is a beat every second, and if a piece of music is set to a specific BPM then those beats will fall to a strict time.

Strumming & Picking



Downstroke



Up Stroke