Getting started

If you play another instrument – or if you learnt the piano a long time ago – you may not need to work through everything on pages 3–5. However, you may like to use these pages for revision!

Feeling the beat

Just as you have a regular heartbeat, music has a regular beat (or pulse) too. Note and rest values are defined by a number of beats or counts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note and rest values</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♩ = semibreve or whole note*</td>
<td>4 counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♩ = minim or half note</td>
<td>2 counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♩ = crotchet or quarter note</td>
<td>1 count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♩ = quaver or eighth note</td>
<td>1/2 count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♩ = semiquaver or sixteenth note</td>
<td>1/4 count</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* English followed by US terms are given throughout.

Time signatures

These appear at the beginning of a piece of music and tell you how many beats or counts there are in each bar (or measure). The top figure tells you the number of beats in each bar; the bottom figure tells you the value of those beats.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{4/4} &= 4 \times \text{♩ counts in each bar} \\
\text{2/4} &= 2 \times \text{♩ counts in each bar} \\
\text{3/4} &= 3 \times \text{♩ counts in each bar} \\
\text{♩} &= \text{whole-bar rest for any time signature}
\end{align*}
\]

Activities

Work on your sense of pulse with the following activities. You’ll need a CD player and a bouncy ball!

1. Listen to 1 on the CD. This track is in 4/4 time (with a count-in 1 2 3 4).
2. Play 1 again, but this time count the beats in each bar ‘1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4’ etc.
3. Listening to 1, bounce your ball so that it hits the floor on beat 1 of each bar. Try this exercise again but in double time, so the ball bounces on beats 1 and 3.
4. Practise clapping the following rhythms to the accompanying CD tracks:

   2. ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
   3. ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
The keyboard

The keyboard has groups of black and white notes, which form a repeating pattern. The black notes are grouped in twos and threes. The white notes are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet: A B C D E F G. The distance between each note, black and white, is called a semitone (half-step).

Middle C is the C closest to the centre of the keyboard. On the stave, middle C has its own line (called a ledger line). In the treble clef, it looks like this:

Activities

1. Can you find and play middle C on the keyboard?
   
   **Top tip** If you are absolutely centred at the keyboard, middle C should be in front of you.

2. Find and play all the Cs on the keyboard.

3. Find and play all the As on the keyboard.

4. Listening to 1, play four bars of Cs. Use either the right or the left hand.

5. Now play four bars of Cs to 1.

   **Top tip** Always keep relaxed and don’t forget to breathe!
Sunday morning

Spanish eyes

Fact file: This piece is in E minor.

New notes: E minor

Did you know? The note B can also be called C flat, and that another name for C is B sharp? These are called enharmonics: every note has another enharmonic name.