

Unit 1: Rhythm Ideas

“The beat makes the melody; therefore it is the soul of music. The beat not only animates melody, it also holds all elements of melody in their proper order.”

Leopold Mozart: Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing, 1756

Leopold Mozart wrote this treatise in the year his son, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, was born. He used the principles enunciated in the treatise for the musical upbringing of his son. In addition to his skills as composer, pianist, and violinist, Wolfgang was also an excellent and enthusiastic violist. Historians tell us that when he and Josef Haydn played string quartets together, each one wanted to play the viola part.

The Beat and Conducting Gestures

The beat is a regularly recurring sound or gesture in music. Learning to perform conducting gestures is one of the most effective ways to begin to develop rhythmic skill and understanding. Beat patterns in duple meter (two-beat), triple meter (three-beat) and quadruple meter (four-beat) are shown below. The direction of the conducting gestures is indicated with numbers and letters. The actual gestures for each beat may be performed in curves rather than in straight lines. The end-point of each beat has a short accented movement called the *ictus*. It is helpful to begin each new exercise with a preparatory measure: later this may be reduced a single beat that represents the last note in the given meter. Since the last note of all meters is in an upward direction, this beat is called an *upbeat*. A nickname for this motion is *pick-up beat*.

This lesson introduces the set of rhythm patterns that can appear in one bar of a simple meter. Students and teachers are encouraged to relate rhythm patterns in these exercises with similar patterns from the music that they are studying and playing. They are also encouraged to work

with a partner – one person singing or playing the patterns one at a time in random order and the other person repeating the patterns back and then identifying the bar in which the notation for the pattern is given. Students are encouraged to perform the traditional conducting gestures as they sing and listen. Duple Beat patterns are shown in duple meters (two-beat), triple meters (three-beat), and quadruple meters (four-beats). The direction of the conducting gestures is indicated with letters. Accented beats

Duple Meter

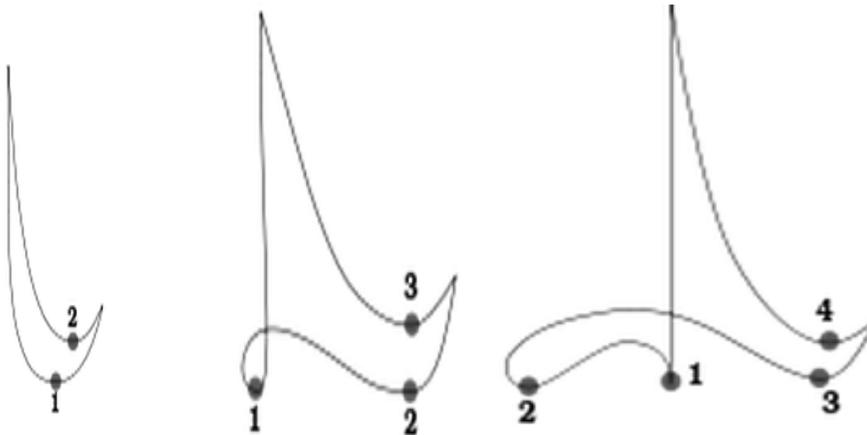
1(down) 2 (up)

Triple Meter

1 (down)
2 (right) 3 (up)

Quadruple Meter

1 (down) 2 (left)
3 (right) 4 (up)U (up)



The student is encouraged to practice the conducting beats shown above before they begin work on the examples in Unt 1. The conducting gestures should be used whenever it is necessary or helpful in performing the Exercises in Unit 1 and later Units. Study the diagrams of conducting gestures given above and then practice each one while listening to a performance by a teacher or fellow student.

Quarter Note Beat Patterns

Ex. 1: Duple Meter: Two beats in a bar with accents on the first beat (quarter notes ♩ and half notes ♪),

Ex. 2: Triple Meter = Three beats in a bar with accents on the first beat. This involves quarter notes, half notes and dotted half notes ♩ ♪ ♪.

Ex. 3: Quadruple Meter = Four Beats in a bar with a strong accent on beat one and a somewhat less strong accent on beat 3

The notation for all notes used in **Lesson 1** is shown below
quarter note, half note, dotted half note, whole note



The term “measure” may be used instead of “bar.” For complete information on rhythm notation, see the last page of this module

Lesson 2: Simple Duple Meter, Quarter Note Beat: Bar Patterns

With **Lesson 2** we begin our study of rhythm patterns. One of the most important things about reading and playing rhythm patterns is to focus on the sound of the whole pattern and not learn the pattern note by note. After the student feels comfortable with the patterns, the teacher should play either Ex. 1 or Ex. 2, and should then ask the student which example they think was played. If correct, the student should go to the next lesson. If incorrect the teacher should repeat the exercise. Then the teacher may point to a pattern, ask the student to play it and indicate if the student is correct. If incorrect the student should repeat the pattern

Each lesson title provides three items of information. In **Lesson 2** this includes the following:

1. Type of meter. Simple Duple Meter: Meter refers to the time element of music. In particular it refers to the number of beats in a bar. Duple meter means there are two beats in a bar. The term Simple tells us how the beat can be divided into smaller notes.
2. Type of Beat. Quarter Note Beat indicates that each beat will last one quarter note. The beat may be fast or slow, but it remains the same speed (or “Tempo”) throughout each exercise in this module. Later we will learn that this is not always the case and there might be some change of tempo in some examples
3. Type of Pattern. Bar Patterns indicates that each pattern lasts a complete bar. Since there are just two types patterns in 2/4 meter it is not necessary to have additional exercises.

Lesson 3: Simple Triple Meter, Quarter Note Beat: Bar Patterns

This lesson is in triple meter – three quarter note beats per bar. This results in four possible bar patterns. The student should study these and then sing through them while conducting triple meter. When ready, the teacher will play one of the three exercises and the student will indicate which exercise was played. If correct the student goes to the next lesson, if wrong the teacher plays the correct exercises. Then the teacher will ask the student to play one of the exercises and indicates if the performance was correct. These procedures will be used for each of the following exercises.

Lessons 4 to 11 are similar to ***Lesson 3***, but are in different meters.

Lesson 12: Simple Duple Meter Quarter Note Beat: Division Level Patterns with DaBaDiBi Syllables on EACH 8TH NOTE DIVISION

Simple meter division patterns are shown for half note beats, quarter note beats, and eighth note beats. These exercises use the same practice and testing techniques as in the preceding Beat Level meters. However instead of using conducting gestures, the student may now work with DabaDibi syllables and finger tapping. The **DabaDibi** system was invented by Asher Zlotnik and has been used for teaching rhythm with great success. We will be using it in the following lessons and also in later lessons.

DabaDibi syllables for division level patterns use the syllables **Da** and **Di** to represent the two divisions in each simple meter beat.

These two syllables show relative accentuation of pulses within a beat

Da on the first division indicates the strongest pulse

Di on the second division indicates a moderately strong pulse

Finger taps may also be used in coordination with syllables as shown in Table 1A. Doing these finger taps on a hard surface can produce aural clicks that indicate when beats and divisions occur.

Table 1A summarizes information on divisions in simple meter bars.

Table 1A

Syllables	DA	Di
Finger Taps	T (thumb)	M (Middle)
Emphasis	STRONGEST	Strong

Table 1B shows the specific pattern used in the first bar of *Lesson 3, Ex. 2*. Notice that finger taps are shown for all four division level notes. Syllables and Emphasis is shown only for sounded notes.

Table 1B

Syllables	Da	Ba	Di	Bi
Finger Taps	Thumb	Index Finger	Middle Finger	Ring Finger
Emphasis	STRONGEST	Weak	Strong	Weak

Learning Routine for Rhythm

To work with these patterns it is helpful to use the following learning routine – not just for these exercises, but also for any of the exercises in *Viola Skills*. For this reason we recommend that this Learning Routine (adapted to the subject matter) in each in all Units of Viola Skills.

1. Work in pairs – two students or a student and teacher. One acts as guide, the other acts as a performer. The guide produces an exercise by sounding the patterns with handclaps, or sounding them on a neutral syllable such as la (not with DaBaDiBi), or sounding them with notes on the viola.
2. The performer repeats this exercise as correctly as possible.
3. The guide indicates if the performer was correct this time. If correct the performer goes on to a new pattern. If incorrect the guide has the performer repeat the exercise one more time. If this is still incorrect the guide chooses or invents a new exercise that is similar to the first but shorter and/or easier.

Throughout the procedure the guide is careful to be encouraging, but not condescending.

Lesson 13: Simple Duple Meter, Quarter Note Beat, and Subdivision Level Patterns with DabaDibi Syllables

Now we move to the subdivision level in Simple Duple Meter with Quarter Note Beat, where there are 4 EIGHTH note divisions in each bar. The first four bars may be used to practice the syllables for these divisions. There can also be other subdivision patterns involving eighth, quarter and half notes. The teacher can demonstrate the four bars at the beginning of ***Lesson 12***, and then the student can perform these with **DabaDiBi** syllables and with finger tapping.

Then the teacher can perform the following 8 bars, which show the 8 possible division level patterns in 2/4 meter. Then the teacher can have the student imitate the performance. Finally the teacher can call upon the student to perform one of the five exercises with finger tapping and syllables and can indicate if this was accurate. Some students may find this difficult and others may not. Before proceeding to the next exercise the teacher should try to lead each student to a high degree of accuracy in the performance of these bars.

Lesson 14: Simple Duple Meter, Half Note Beat: Division Level Patterns

This lesson is similar to ***Lesson 12***, but now the patterns are based on half note beats. The same teaching techniques may be used.

Lesson 15: Simple Quadruple Meter Patterns with Rests and Ties

This lesson adds rests and ties to the notes used in preceding lessons. Students may find these more difficult than lessons with only notes, but they may find that using finger tapping will assist them in learning them. As soon as they can perform them accurately they should take away the finger tapping and the teacher should indicate if the student is maintaining accuracy.

Lesson 16: Simple Triple Meter, 8th note beat, Division Level Patterns with Rests and Ties (CHALLENGE EXERCISE)

This exercise illustrates patterns with Ties, note durations achieved with arched lines that connect two or more notes of the same pitch into a single duration. In Ex 1 (first two bars) we see an eighth note tied to a sixteenth in order to sound like a dotted eighth note. In bars 5 and 6 the same two notes are used in reverse order, again to produce a dotted eighth note. Why is this necessary? It allows us to have the correct number of sixteenth note values in each of these bars.

Lesson 17: The Anacrusis (up beat or pickup).

Many passages in music literature begin with an incomplete measure with fewer beats in it than indicated by the meter signature. This measure is called an anacrusis or an upbeat or a pickup. This lesson offers a brief introduction to this rhythmic gesture. In subsequent examples in the Module there will be other examples exploring this. The teacher can suggest beginning with a preparatory conducting beat before the anacrusis (upbeat or pickup). In quadruple meter, as in Lesson 16, this would mean a preliminary third beat conducting gesture moving to the right before the following upbeat. The teacher may demonstrate this.

Lesson 18: Write out the rhythm only for examples from works you are performing or from other literature

Lesson 19: Compound Duple Meter, Dotted Quarter Note Beat, Beat Level Patterns

Compound meter may seem quite complicated when stated in words. However, when the student hears or plays examples in compound meter they will not seem so complicated. There are two ways compound meters differ from simple meters. The first is the number of divisions in a beat.

In a ***simple meter*** there are 2 divisions in each beat.

In a ***compound meter*** there are 3 divisions in each beat.

The second way compound meters differ from simple meters is the meaning of the time signature.

In a *simple meter time signature* the top number indicates the number of beats in each bar, and the bottom number indicates which note lasts one beat. The time signature $\frac{3}{4}$ indicates in the bottom number (4) that the quarter note is the beat note. The time signature $\frac{3}{4}$ indicates in the top figure (3) that there are three beats in each bar.

In a *compound meter time signature* the bottom number indicates which note lasts one division of a beat; the top number indicates the number of divisions in a bar. The time signature $\frac{6}{8}$ indicates in the bottom figure (8) that the eighth note is the division note, and the top figure (6) indicates that there are six divisions in each bar.

To determine the beat note in a compound meter take the bottom note value of the time signature (eighth note in this exercise) and then find the note value that is three times as long – this note will be the beat note. Three eighth notes equal one dotted quarter note. This means that the dotted quarter note is the beat note in this example. There are two dotted quarter note beats in each bar.

Another way of understanding compound meter signatures is by comparing them with a special type of meter signature that has a number for the top figure and a dotted note for the bottom figure as shown below. Some modern composers use this format.

6	2	9	3	12	4	6	2
8 =	♩.	8 =	♩.	8 =	♩.	16 =	♩.

Students should test their understanding of compound meters by covering up the last column of **Table 1 C** and then deciding the number of beats in each bar and the beat note for each of the given meter signatures. They should not look at the last column until they have completed all answers.

In the Correct Answer Column of use the following abbreviations:
 E. = dotted eighth, Q. = dotted quarter, H. = dotted half.

Table 1C

Meter Signature	Beats in a Bar	Beat Note	Correct Answer: Beats in a Bar & Beat Note
9/8			3 Q.
12/4			4 H.
6/16			2 E.
12/8			4 Q.
9/4			3 H.
6/8			2 Q.
9/16			3 E.
12/16			4 E.

Compound meters are those in which the division level of each beat has three possible attack points and the subdivision level has six possible attack points. The subdivision level notes are organized into three groups of two notes each. This calls for new syllable names (Du bu). Names of other finger taps remain the same. For attack points 5 and 6 the middle finger (M) is used for the syllable “Du”, and the index finger (i) is used again for the syllable “bu”.

The student should tap the finger taps and chant the syllables. Notice how the tapping can bring out the strengths or characteristics of the syllables. This is suggested by the descriptions given in the “**Emphasis**” row in Table 1C.

Table 1C

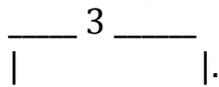
Syllables	Da	ba	Di	bi	Du	bu
Finger Taps	T	i	M	r	M	i
Emphasis	Strongest	weak	Strong	weak	Strong	weak

In working with Lessons 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 the student can use the same learning and testing procedures as in Lesson 5

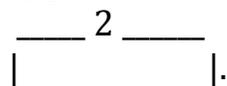
LESSONS 20 TO 28 on COMPOUND METERS are based on similar activities as the parallel lessons for SIMPLE METERS. Notice the “Siciliano” patterns in Ex. 26.

Lesson 29 Tuplet Patterns

“Tuplet” is the generic name for rhythm patterns that use note values that are different from the values normally found in a given meter. In Ex. 1 Simple Meter Measure Patterns, a measure would normally contain 2 quarter notes. If the composer wishes to use three quarter notes instead of 2 quarter in a measure he designates them as a “triplet” and marks them with the number three above the notes. Sometimes the notes appear with a bracket as shown below.



In 6/8 compound duple meters each beat would normally contain 3 eighth notes or 6 sixteenth notes. If the composer wishes to use 2 eighths in a beat as in Ex. 2 bar 1, he designates them “duplets” and marks them with the number 2 above the notes. Sometimes the notes appear with a bracket as shown below.



Other examples of tuplet rhythm patterns are given here. There are many more such patterns that could appear, especially in contemporary music.

Lesson 30: Patterns with Ties

Ex. 1 shows several patterns that include sounds that cannot be written with single notes. For example, in bar 1 the first note is meant to last for 5 sixteenth notes, but no single note can express this. Instead a note lasting 5 sixteenth notes is written as a quarter note connected to a single 16th note. The connecting line looks like a slur, but is actually shaped slightly shallower. It is called a “tie” and it indicates that two or more durations have been made into a single duration. In writing tied notes the composer tries to show as clearly as possible where beats begin. Ex. 2 shows how certain passages with ties can be written in a confusing way that does not show the beginning of the beat. Then Ex. 2 shows another version that does clearly show the beginning of the beat. The “not preferred” ties do not clearly show where the beats occur, the “preferred” ties do.

Lesson 31: For this lesson students are encouraged to write out passages interesting patterns compound meters that they have invented themselves or that come from music they are studying.

Lesson 32: Rhythm Notation Symbols

This lesson summarizes rhythm symbols for most commonly used notes, dotted notes and rests. It also indicates mathematical relations between these elements. After you have studied the notes and rests, a teacher or fellow student may test you with the following activities:

1. Pointing to one of the notes or rests and saying its name (eighth note, half note, etc.)
2. Pointing to two notes or rests and describing the relation between the two notes according to the number of the smaller notes that are present in the larger note. For example, in a half note there are eight 16th notes. .

Lesson 33: Note Names and Values

United States Note Names and Values (in terms of Whole Notes)

Note Name	Value	Dotted Value	Doubly-Dotted Value
sixty-fourth note	1/64	1/64 + 1/128	1/64 + 1/128 + 1/256
thirty-second note	1/32	1/32 + 1/16	1/32 + 1/64 + 1/128
sixteenth note	1/16	1/16 + 1/32	1/16 + 1/32 + 1/64
eighth note	1/8	1/8 + 1/16	1/8 + 1/16 + 1/32
quarter note	1/4	1/4 + 1/8	1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16
half note	1/2	1/2 + 1/4	1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8
whole note	1	1 + 1/2	1 + 1/2 + 1/4
double whole or breve	2	2 + 1	2 + 1 + 1/2

Rhythm Note Names: British, German, French Spanish

French	British	German	Spanish
quadruple croche	hemidemisemi-quaver	Vierundsechzigstel	Semifusa
triple croche	demisemi-quaver	Zweiunddreizigstel	Fusa
double croche	semi-quaver	Sechzehntel	Semicorchea
croche	quaver	Achtel	Negra
noire	crotchet	Viertel	Blanca
blanche	minim	Halbe	Redonda
ronde	semibreve	Ganze	Cuadrada
carré	breve		

This lesson provides a reference resource for teachers and students when these terms are used in music that is being studied or played.