

Rhythm (Unit 1)

A Riff on Rhythm

Rhythm beats in firefly flashes, soft splashes of sunrise, hummingbird wings, and claps of thunder. Rhythm whirls like a dervish, dances like a flame, charges like an elephant, and bubbles like a spring. Galloping horses, circling birds, and mating beasts are totems of rhythm. It's as simple as walking and complex as creation.

Elements of Rhythm

Beat - a combustible cauldron of percussive tone

Note - A symbol signifying beat duration

(Whole note , half note , quarter note , eighth note , sixteenth note )

Measure - a grouping of beats

Tempo - how quickly/slowly we move between beats

(120 beats per minute resembles a walking tempo)

Dynamics - how loudly/softly the beats combust

Organizing Rhythm

Time Signatures

4/4 is an example of a time signature. The top number signifies how many beats are in a measure. The bottom number signifies the note value equivalent to the duration of one beat. In this case, a measure consists of 4 beats and a quarter note is equivalent to one beat.

It looks like this |     |

Beat Subdivision

To understand this idea, let's zoom in on a single beat.

We'll use two forms of notation, one linear and the other cyclical.

Here is an undivided beat (Rhythm Card #1)

Here is the first subdivision where the duration of two eighth notes is equal to the duration of a single quarter note (Rhythm Card #2)

Here is the next subdivision where the duration of two sixteenth notes is equal to the duration of two eighth notes equal to the duration of a single quarter note (Rhythm Card #3)

Next we can make patterns that combine the first and second subdivisions (Rhythm Cards 4-6)

The Musitron 2000

The Musitron 2000 zooms out to a full measure of quarter notes in 4/4 time.

Let's use this template to design some basic rhythms.