

METER or TIME SIGNATURE

Musicians read the timing of a piece of music the same way a traffic officer reads a parking meter or anyone reads a clock—by looking at the numbers to which the red pointer (on a parking meter) or hands on the clock are pointing. We look for numbers on the musical staff. These numbers look like fractions and appear at the beginning of the staff and are called METER or TIME SIGNATURE. Isn't that neat? A *meter* has numbers and we look at a clock to tell the *time*.

So, what does the TIME SIGNATURE mean? We must first deal with the top number. Here are time signatures you have seen in your book:

4	3	6	2	2
4	4	8	4	2

The top number tells us how many beats per measure or how high to count before starting over again at 1. It also tells conductors what pattern to direct. Remember a measure is the space between bar lines:

\ measure / \ measure / \ measure / \ measure /

Once you have used the top number to determine the number of beats (counts) per measure, replace the top number (in your mind) with the number 1 to make a fraction:

1	1	1	1	1
4	4	8	4	2

What is another word for the fraction $\frac{1}{4}$? _____

What is another word for the fraction $\frac{1}{8}$? _____

What is another word for the fraction $\frac{1}{2}$? _____

What does $\frac{4}{4}$ equal? _____

The bottom number tells us what kind of note gets 1 count.

Example:

In 4 meter, a quarter note gets one count. It takes 4 quarter notes to fill a measure.

4

In 3 meter, how many quarter notes are needed for a full measure? _____

4

In 2 meter, how many quarter notes are needed for a full measure? _____

4

In 6 meter an eighth note gets one count. It takes 6 eighth notes to fill a measure.

8

In 5 meter, how many eighth notes are needed to fill a measure? _____

8

In 2 meter a half note gets one beat.

2

In 2 meter, how many half notes are needed for a full measure? _____

2

**Choose a meter/time signature and write your own music in the staves below.
Once you have written your song, give it a name.**

