

## Lesson 8: The Beat of the Music

Most music has a natural, evenly-spaced pulse, called the “**beat**”, which causes you to want to tap your foot with the music. The beat is the smallest unit of time in music.

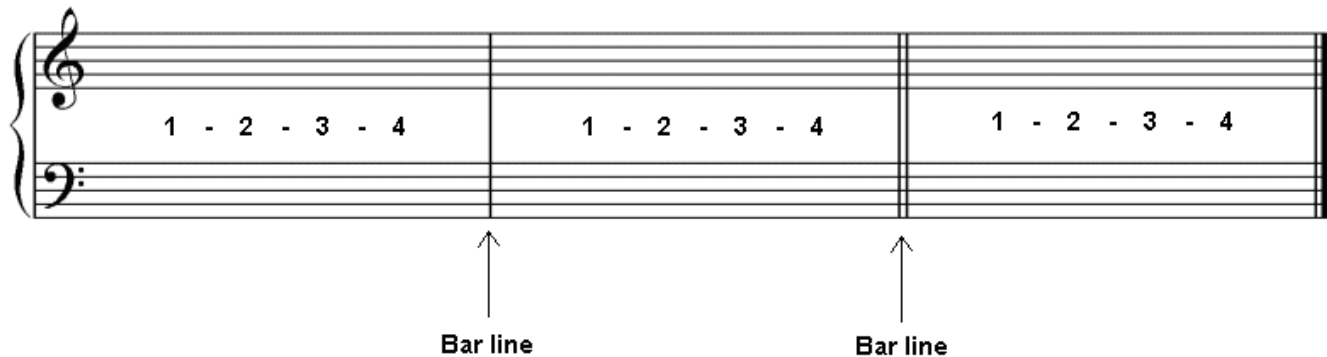
In most cases, when you tap your foot to the beat while listening to a song, you will find the beats fall naturally into groups of 2, 3 or 4, with the strongest beats signaling the start of each group. That strongest beat is called the “**natural accent**”:

X x   X x   X x   X x   X x   X x  
X x x   X x x   X x x   X x x   X x x   X x x  
X x x x   X x x x   X x x x   X x x x   X x x x   X x x x

The combination of the beats into a pattern is called “**rhythm**”.

In written music, each group of beats is contained within a “**measure**” (also called a “**bar**”). The measure is the second smallest measure of time in music – multiple beats fit within a measure.

The division between measures is indicated on the Grand Staff by “**bar lines**” (also called “**measure lines**”). **Double bar lines** are used to mark the end of a song or the end of a section within a song – two thin lines are used at the end of a section and a combination of a thin line and a thick line are used at the end of a song.



The most common grouping of beats is where each measure has four beats, which is called **4/4 time** (verbalized as “four-four time”). For the remainder of this lesson and the next (Lesson 9), all discussion will assume we are operating within the context of 4/4 time. (You will learn later why noting that assumption is important.)

When you are playing music, it is important to keep track of where you are inside a measure – in other words, which beat you are currently playing, such as the first beat, the second beat, the third beat or the last beat. This is most easily done by counting out-loud using sequential numbers: “one”, “two”, “three”, “four” (then repeat).

There should be no break in the steady flow of beats between the beat #4 of one measure and beat #1 of the next. There should be equal amounts of time in between each and every beat.

### For the Younger Student

New vocabulary: **beat, accent, measure, bar line, double bar line**

"Music has rhythm, music has a beat"

- 1) Play a piece of recorded music that has a very strong beat – march or dance with your child while listening, making sure to clap on the beats. Count the beats out-loud, keeping the beat steady, and always assign the strongest beats the count of "one". Clap/stomp harder on the strongest beat. Does the song have two beats per measure, three beats per measure or four beats per measure? (You may need to practice this before doing it with your child.)
- 2) Have your child look through his/her lesson book and find the bar lines and double bar lines. Have him count the number of measures in several different songs.