

Information Sheet

Time Signatures, 4/4 and 2/4:

The time signature of a piece of music determines the rhythm of the piece and refers to the two numbers that follow a cleft:

The number on the top (the numerator) determines how many beats (counting units) there are in each measure.

The number below (denominator) determines the note value for each beat (counting unit).

- 4/4 time:
 - Four beats (counting units) in each measure (bar); the quarter note is the value of each beat.
 - The 4/4 measure has the value of four quarter notes.
- 2/4 time:
 - Two beats (counting units) in each measure; the quarter note is the value of each beat.
 - The 2/4 measure has the value of two quarter notes.

Finding the First Beat:

To get acquainted with the 4/4 and the 2/4 measure and the difference between the two, play a game with the children where they have to listen carefully. Sing or play a piece in 4/4 time and emphasize the first beat (prepare a piece or improvise). Explain that this is a 4/4 measure. Now play it again and the children clap or jump on the first beat (jumping up early enough so they land on beat one). Now play something in a 2/4 measure, emphasizing the first beat again. The children can clap and jump on beat one. It is recommended to play an intro before the children start.

Variation: On the first beat of the first measure the children stand up, on the first beat of the second measure they sit down.

Measure Trains:

In the information sheet you will see a train with 4/4 measures and one with 2/4 measures. Underneath, the same measures are written down in standard musical notation. The teacher can clap the rhythm with the children or play it on drums or other instruments, they can say "choo choo" or the syllables "da," "da-a," and "da-a-a-a" in the written rhythm.

The teacher should try to point out the difference between these measures by emphasizing every first beat of the measures.

March:

Something typical for a two-beat measure is a march (marches are always written in 2/4 time).

First everyone can march in quarter notes, possibly accompanying the steps by saying "right, left, right, left, etc.". The teacher can also clap or drum the beat (or count "1, 2, 1, 2"), to keep the tempo. Then the teacher shows the march from the information sheet; the teacher recites it

and marches along. At the end the teacher should jump by jumping up at "a" with one leg and landing on two legs at "jump" (assemblé = jumping off of one leg, landing on two).

The children join in, talking as well as marching.

With older children the march can be done as a round. Split the children into two groups. The second group starts one measure later. As a variation the second group can start two or four measures later. With a more trained group, there can be up to eight groups doing the march as a round, with each group starting after one measure.

Exercise Sheet **wm7a, wm7b**

Rhythm Cards:

The children can cut out the rhythm cards and write their own rhythm on each, being sure to write in the correct times signature. The pages can be copied several times per child, so that they can write several different rhythms.

The children can then put the cards into an order they like. Unless they are used to changes in time signature, they shouldn't mix 2/4 time measures with 4/4 time measures. Make sure they put the correct value of counting units in a measure according to the time signature. Then the children can clap the rhythm or sing it with the syllables "da", "da-a," and "da-a-a-a" or make other sounds along to the rhythm.

Exercise / game for small groups of students:

The children can pair up. One child, in their mind, puts the cards into an order and then sings or speaks the rhythm with the syllables "da", "da-a," and "da-a-a-a". The other child should listen closely and put the cards into the right order. Allow the first child to repeat as often as needed, so that the other child can fulfill the task. When the order is correct, the pair can sing the rhythm together. At first practice this exercise with the entire class and only with one card; then move on to two or more cards.

Exercise Sheet **wm7c**

What Measure is it?

Each kite is connected to a measure. The children should count the value of the measure and write the correct time signature into the kite connected to it.

One example is given already.

Answer: upper-right kite: 2/4, lower-left kite: 4/4

Another example for exercises to hear and understand the difference between 4/4 and 2/4 time:

The teacher plays a short piece in a 4/4 or a 2/4 time, emphasizing the first beat. The children have to guess if it is a 4/4 beat or a 2/4 beat. You can use a variety of scales and keys. Improvise, find songs in 2/4 and 4/4 time, or use the following examples.

