

## Musical Vocabulary

If the letters of the alphabet are the building blocks for understanding any language, words are what help us communicate.

Learning the **Vocabulary**, or descriptive words, for any specific area of interest is as important as learning what words mean in any language.

In this lesson we want to be certain we have common understandings of some basic music vocabulary.

In Lessons 4 & 5 we took a look at the **intervals** between the tones that are called “steps” and how to distinguish between whole and half-steps. In Lessons 6 & 7 we looked at the **musical staff**, what notes are and how the notes appear on the musical staff. We also worked at learning their **names**, which are based on which line or space is their home on the staff.

In this lesson, we explore the meanings of “**Note Values**” and their corresponding “**Rests.**”

What do I mean by **Note Value**?

Remember in Lesson 6 when we talked about music consisting of pitch-through-time? We observed that “whole notes”, “half notes” and “quarter notes” are ways in which we can tell “how long” a certain pitch will be “held” in a measure.

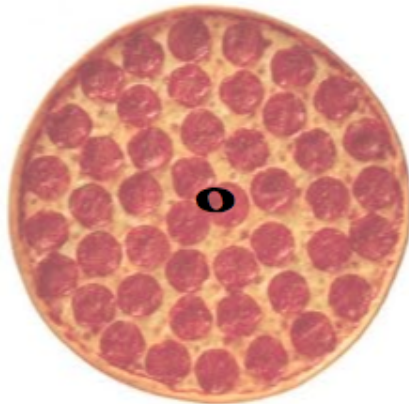
For review: a *whole* note consists of 4 beats;  
a *half* note consists of 2 beats (half of the whole)  
a *quarter* note consists of 1 beat (a quarter of the whole).

So far it sounds like fractions that make sense, doesn't it?

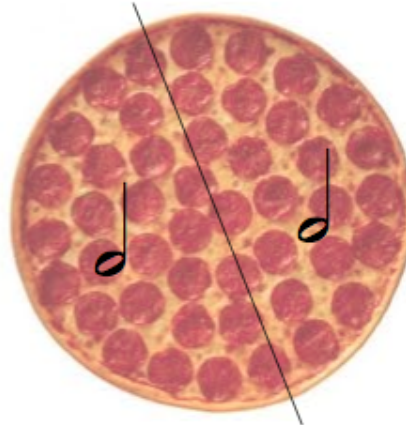


One way I like to demonstrate this is using a pizza. Sorry, as hungry as you may be, in our case it will have to be a virtual one.  
(See Pizza Note Diagram.)

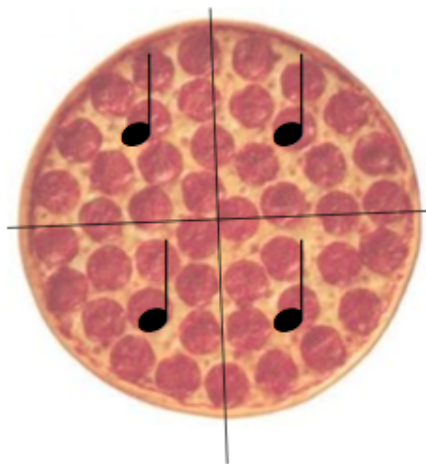
**Note Values Comparison to Pizza!**



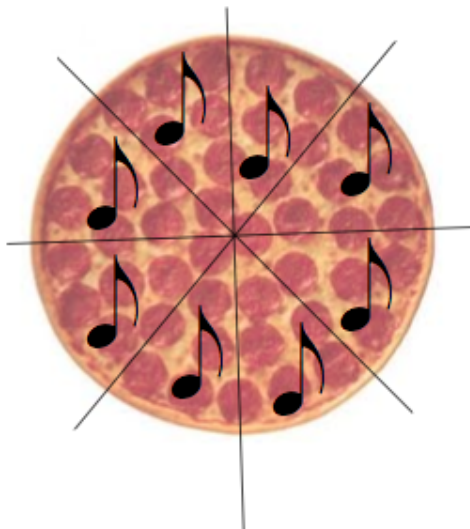
One person gets to eat the  
WHOLE pizza  
(whole note)



Two people: each gets to eat  
HALF of the pizza  
(half note)



Four people: each gets to eat  
a QUARTER of the pizza  
(quarter note)



Eight people: each gets to eat  
an EIGHTH of the pizza  
(eighth note)

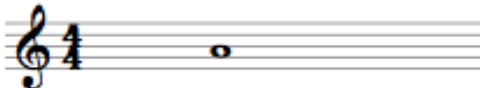

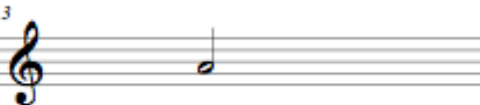



## Corresponding Rests

I like tell (and often need to remind!) my students that *silence is a piece of the sound*. We often forget that the spaces between the notes may be as important as the notes themselves. (And hammered dulcimers in particular, always seem to be ringing. ) From the beginning we need to pay attention to these spaces.

Musical notation has a name for such spaces: *rest*.

Now here is something that can actually make sense to you quickly: For each note value there is a corresponding rest that has the *same* value.

I will use the note “A” as an example. The corresponding rest is on the right side.

Note Values	Corresponding Rests
 whole note	 whole rest
 half note	 half rest
 quarter note	 quarter rest

The image shows three musical staves, each with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff, labeled '7', shows two eighth notes, two beamed eighth notes, and an eighth rest. The second staff, labeled '9', shows two sixteenth notes, two beamed sixteenth notes, and a sixteenth rest. The third staff, labeled '11', shows two thirty-second notes, two beamed thirty-second notes, and a thirty-second rest. Each staff has three measures, with the notes and rests in the first, second, and third measures respectively.

Each measure of music will include either notes, rests or a combination of the two. One of the hardest things that many learning musicians find to do is actually to “play” the rests. The mistake that is often made is to consider them to be “blank” and ignore them. When this happens, the rest of the music gets out of time and sounds jumpy or confusing.

A good discipline to develop is to “play” the rests by counting the silence that they represent.

A whole rest = 4 beats (count evenly out loud: “1 2 3 4” whenever you are given the chance to play one of these rests. Don’t speed up or slow down!

We’ll explore some counting strategies in filmed lessons on our site so go find them to take the next steps.