

Time Signatures

Time signatures appear at the beginning of a song to indicate how many beats are in each measure, and the value of each of those beats. Until now, all of the songs in this book have been in 4/4 time:

4 The top number indicates the number of beats in each measure.

4 The bottom number indicates the time value of each beat
(2 = half note, 4 = quarter note, 8 = eighth note).

Further examples:

4/4 = four quarter-note beats per measure



3/4 = three quarter-note beats per measure



2/4 = two quarter-note beats per measure



6/8 = six eighth-note beats per measure



A Closer Look at 6/8

In 6/8 time, each measure has six eighth notes or the equivalent. The most distinct feature of 6/8 time is that, while it is organized as six eighth note beats, the pulse or beat we feel is two beats, each equal to three eighth notes or one dotted quarter note. This can be heard by placing an accent on the first and fourth eighth note in each measure.

To get used to feeling a pulse in 6/8, clap and count, and then play the following rhythm on an open string, accenting beats one and four:

