

Bass Fundamentals

Column #8 – Learning To Read Notation, Pt. 3

This column will cover note values, which includes the value of "rests", periods of silence, where no playing occurs. Silence is equally as important as the sounds produced in music. The silence is what helps to define a given rhythm, style of music, as well as other elements that help the tone or atmosphere of a given piece of music.

The note values are listed in the most likely configuration you'll encounter, for simplicity. Things can get pretty weird in some music idioms, but in most cases the values listed here will apply across the board. With that said, let's start with the **whole note**, which is four beats long. Next to it is the **whole rest** which is also four beats long, but "played" in silence - no sound should occur during any rest duration.



The next note is the **half note**, which is two beats long. In the second measure is the **half rest**, also two beats long - of silence; no sound played.



Next is the **quarter note**, which is one beat long. In the second measure we have the **quarter rest**, which looks like a bird in flight, along with a half rest, for three beats of silence.



Now comes the **eighth note**, which is one-half beat long. In the second measure is the **eighth rest**, which looks like a fish hook, a quarter rest, and a half rest, for a total of three and a half beats of silence.



Finally, the **sixteenth note**, which is one-quarter beat long. In the second measure is the **sixteenth rest**, which looks like a pretty vicious fish hook, an eighth rest, a quarter rest and a half rest.



We'll wrap it up here for now. Commit this to memory, along with all you are learning in this series on reading notation. It will serve you well if you don't have to stumble over what you should know intuitively, once you begin to understand what all the symbols mean and how they apply. That is what reading music is, symbol recognition. It isn't unlike learning to read in general. Words use symbols we call letters. When arranged in a certain grouping and in a specific order within that grouping, it's a word and it has a clear meaning. String them together, you get a sentence; put a few sentences together and you have a paragraph.

The musical equivalent would be put some notes together in a specific order, you have a riff. If you play them all at once, it's a chord (the musical equivalent of a word). String the riffs together and you have a phrase (the musical equivalent to a sentence). Put multiple phrases together, you have a section (a musical statement, like a paragraph). Put the paragraphs together and you have an arrangement, a complete topical composition.

For now, go back to the previous lesson and review the examples given, playing each in proper time. Use a metronome to keep you in time and flowing, even if you have to play slowly. It's important to play things correctly, not fast. Start slow, at about 60 beats per minute (bpm).

Next time, we'll throw some more reading at you. It will be easy, I promise.