

TIME FOR A REST

Counting Rests and Pauses

It would be exhausting to play every single beat, in every bar of a piece of music, both for the player and for the listener. Rests in musical passages are exactly what they sound like: they give players a chance to take a breather, both literally and figuratively. Wind players use rests to refill their lung capacity, while string players get to rest their bow arms and recharge their brains.

Rests also help create musical interest for an audience. Think of how boring it would be if everyone played all the notes in a score, all the time. Rests allow a composer or songwriter to vary the musical texture, changing the sound to, for example, allow a single instrument or singer to highlight a musical idea while other players in the group lay out.

A musical rest is simply a pause in your playing (or singing). Rests are easily notated in music. In common time rests are written as shown in Figure 1.

Multiple-measure rests are drawn as a single heavy horizontal line, centered on the third line of the staff and capped off by short vertical lines at both ends. The number of measures contained in the rest is indicated above the bar by a bold numeral, centered over the line, as in Figure 2.

In a musical score, every full bar of rest is represented, but in individual parts, all rests lasting two or more measures can be consolidated into the multiple-measure rest. Multiple-measure rests should never obscure changes of key, meter, tempo, repeat markings, or any other important musical components, as they do in the first example of Figure 3.

Remember, when counting rests, that the beat goes on. You should always be looking ahead to see what comes next. Get your fingers ready for the next set of notes in your part—and don't get caught with your hands in your lap!



Figure 1

ITEM	NOTE	REST	VALUE
Whole note/rest	○	---	4
Half note/rest	○	-	2
Quarter note/rest	●	♪	1
Eighth note/rest	♪	˘	1/2
Sixteenth note/rest	˘	˘˘	1/4

Figure 2

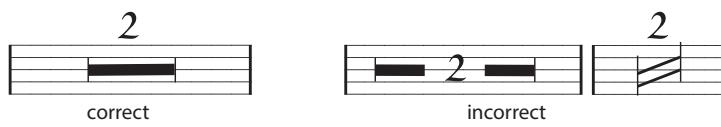


Figure 3

