

Grouping Notes In Bars - Grade 5 Theory | Amy Linington Music

Beaming Notes

Notes shorter than a crotchet, such as a quaver or semiquaver, have “tails” attached to them. Connecting several notes with tails is called “beaming.” Beaming notes together is important because it makes sheet music significantly easier to read:



There are general “grouping” rules which generally stay the same for both [simple and compound time signatures](#):

- **Do not beam across bar lines.**
 - All beaming takes place within the measure! If you have a stray quaver at the end of a bar, it should be written with the tail, rather than connected to the first beat of the next bar.
- **Do not beam across the centre of a bar. EVER.**
 - For example, in 4/4 time, the centre of the bar lies between beats two and three. These beats are almost always separated to ensure a clear rhythm for the reader.
- **Semi-quavers are grouped by beat.**
 - For example, in a bar where you are counting in crotchets, a maximum of **four** semiquavers should be grouped together. If a *dotted* crotchet gets a beat, say in 6/8 time,, a maximum of *six* semiquavers can be grouped together.
- **Demisemiquavers are grouped by beat.**
 - For example, in 4/4 time, a maximum of *eight* **Demisemiquavers** can be grouped together. But because the triple lines of **Demisemiquavers** beams can get a little messy, we connect groups of four with a single line.

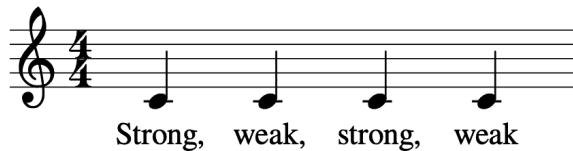
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Grouping Notes

Grouping Notes In 4/4 Time

Every time signature has “strong” and “weak” beats. In 4/4 time

- beat **one** is the strongest beat in the measure.
- beat **three** is the *secondary* strong beat
- Beats **two** and **four** are weak



Now it might be clear why it's important not to **beam over the centre of the bar**.

In 4/4, beats 2 and 3 should always be separated. However, beats one and two *can* be grouped together, as well as beats three and four:



Remember

- both **semiquaver and demisemiquavers should be grouped by beat**.
- In 4/4 time, this means that there will be a maximum of *four* semiquavers in a beat, and a maximum of *eight* demisemiquavers in a beat:



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Here are some examples of correct and incorrect beaming in 4/4 time.

The image shows three musical staves in 4/4 time, each with two measures. The first staff has four examples: 'YES' (correct beaming), 'NO' (incorrect beaming), 'YES' (correct beaming), and 'NO' (incorrect beaming). The second staff has two examples: 'YES' (correct beaming) and 'NOPE' (incorrect beaming). The third staff has two examples: 'YES' (correct beaming) and 'NO!' (incorrect beaming). A large watermark 'Amy Linington Music' is visible across the staves.

Note how the correct examples are much easier to read.

Grouping In 3/4 Time

In 3/4 time, beat **one** is the strongest, while beats **two** and **three** are both weak.

A musical staff in 3/4 time showing three quarter notes. Below the notes, the text reads "Strong, weak, weak". A large watermark 'Amy Linington Music' is visible across the staff.

Because there is an odd number of beats per bar, the “centre” of 3/4 is in the middle of beat two. As both beats two and three are weak, there is no need to separate them. Many choose to group quavers by beat in 3/4 time, both of the following groupings are correct:

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Quavers in 3/4 time should **not** be grouped like this. EVER!:



This is because 3/4 is a **simple** time signature and the the beat is divisible by **two**, not three. This grouping above is actually the correct grouping for 6/8 time.

semiquavers and demisemiquavers are the same in 3/4 time as they are in 4/4 time as a quaver is still the equivalent to one beat.

Grouping In 2/4 Time

In 2/4 time, beat **one** is strong and beat **two** is weak.



The centre of the bar is between beats 1 and 2 so again, don't beam over it. Again, the crotchet is equivalent to one beat, so we can have a maximum of four semiquavers per beat, and demisemiquavers per beat.

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YES NO YES NO



A musical staff in 2/4 time with a treble clef. It contains four measures. The first measure is labeled 'YES' and contains two groups of two eighth notes. The second measure is labeled 'NO' and contains one group of four eighth notes. The third measure is labeled 'YES' and contains two groups of two eighth notes. The fourth measure is labeled 'NO' and contains one group of four eighth notes.

Grouping In 6/8 Time

6/8 is a compound time signature. 9/8 and 12/8 will be pretty self-explanatory after this

- In [compound time signatures](#), the beat is divided into **three equal parts**
- in simple time signatures, the beat is divided into two equal parts.
- Because of this, 6/8 time, has six quavers per bar, but it often feels like there are only *two beats*.

Quaver **one** and **four** act as beats 1 and 2, with one being the strongest. Quavers **2,3 5+6** are all weak.

S W W S W W S S



A musical staff in 6/8 time with a treble clef. It contains two measures. The first measure is labeled with 'S' above the first quaver, 'W' above the second, 'W' above the third, 'S' above the fourth, 'W' above the fifth, and 'W' above the sixth. The second measure is labeled with 'S' above the first quaver and 'S' above the second. The notes are grouped as (1,2,3) and (4,5,6) in the first measure, and (1,2) and (3,4) in the second measure.

The centre of the bar in 6/8 is between quavers three and four, so we ALWAYS keep them separated as above.

In compound time, the beat has changed from a crotchet to a dotted crotchet. Instead of 4 semiquavers per beat, we now get 6, and instead of 8 demisemiquavers per beat, we now get 12. Demisemiquavers, however, will still be in subgroups of four, connected by a single line:



A musical staff in 6/8 time with a treble clef. It contains four measures. The first two measures each contain two groups of six demisemiquavers (three eighth notes). The third measure contains two groups of three eighth notes. The fourth measure contains two groups of six demisemiquavers (three eighth notes).

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Examples of correct and incorrect groupings in 6/8:

The image displays two staves of musical notation in 6/8 time, each with four measures. The first staff illustrates correct and incorrect phrasing with labels 'YES', 'NO', 'YES', and 'NO' above the measures. The second staff illustrates more complex phrasing with labels 'YES', 'NO', 'YES', and 'Just NO!!' above the measures. A large, light-colored watermark 'Amy Linington Music' is visible diagonally across the page.

The reason there are so many rules around grouping is to make reading sheet music easier, a bit like why we use grammar in literature.