

Lesson 5: Beats and Measures

Basic Music Theory for Guitar

What you will learn: how music is divided into small groups of beats, called measures.

What is a measure?

Music is easier to read when the beats are put into **small groups**. Each group is called a **measure** (another name is a **bar**).

In most songs, each measure has **4 beats**. You count "1, 2, 3, 4", then start again at "1" in the next measure.

Bar lines

A **bar line** is a straight line across the staff. It shows where one measure ends and the next one starts. A **double bar line** (one thin line and one thick line) shows the **end** of the music.



Look at the counts under the notes: every measure adds up to **4 beats**, but the notes inside are different.

Many ways to fill one measure

Any mix of notes and rests is fine, as long as they add up to **4 beats**:

Whole note	1
2 half notes	1 3
Half + 2 quarters	1 3 4
4 quarter notes	1 2 3 4

8 eighth notes



Beat 1 is the strong beat

The **first beat** of every measure is the strongest. Musicians call it the **downbeat**. When you count, say "**ONE**, two, three, four" a little louder on 1. This helps you always know where you are in the music.

Practice

Turn on the metronome at a slow speed:

1. Count out loud "**ONE**, 2, 3, 4" for 4 measures. Say "ONE" a little louder.
2. Play the open string 6 (E) as quarter notes for 4 measures. Play beat 1 a little stronger.
3. Play the 4 measures in the picture under "Bar lines" on the open string 5 (A).
4. Make your own measure: choose notes that add up to 4 beats, then play it.

Next lesson: Time Signatures