

Rests in Music

Understanding and counting silence

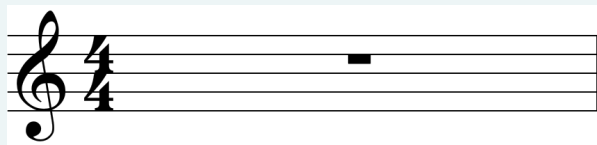
A rest is a symbol for a measured period of silence. Stop the sound for its full value while keeping the pulse steady. Every note value has a matching rest value.

1. Recognise the five basic rests

Each example below is one complete bar of 4/4. The rest is first; any following notes fill the remaining time. A quarter note equals one beat.

Whole / semibreve

Entire bar here (4 beats)



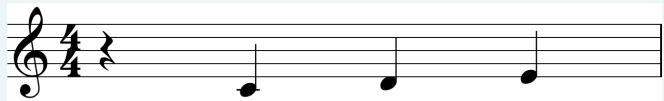
Half / minim

2 quarter-note beats



Quarter / crotchet

1 quarter-note beat



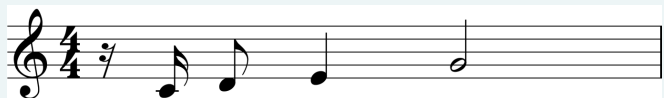
Eighth / quaver

1/2 quarter-note beat



Sixteenth / semiquaver

1/4 quarter-note beat



2. Place rests correctly on the staff

Count lines from the bottom. The **whole rest hangs below line 4**; the **half rest sits above line 3**. Quarter, eighth and sixteenth rests sit around the middle of the staff. Eighth rests have one hook; sixteenth rests have two.

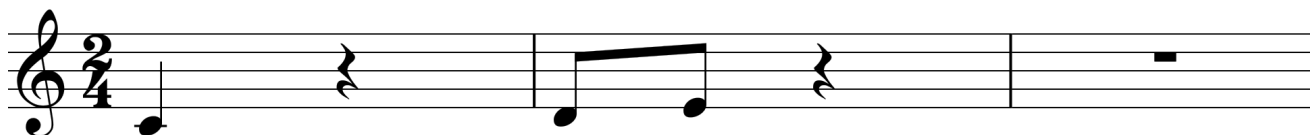
The standard rest positions are the same in treble and bass clefs in a single voice. Rests specify duration, not pitch. In the examples, the treble clef curls around line 2 (G), and the time signature follows the clef.

Rests in Action

Short motifs in four time signatures

Play or clap the notes, then stay silent during each rest. Keep counting. All motifs use C major in treble clef; every bar contains the correct total duration.

2/4 - two quarter-note beats



Bar 1: play on 1; rest on 2. Bar 2: play on 1-and; rest on 2.

Count: 1-and, 2-and. The final bar is silent for 2 beats.

3/4 - three quarter-note beats



Bar 1: play on 1 and 3; rest on 2. Bar 2: hold for 1-2; rest on 3.

Count: 1, 2, 3. The final bar is silent for 3 beats.

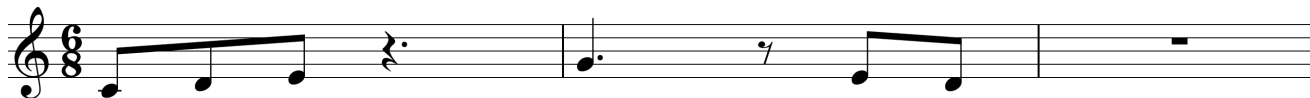
4/4 - four quarter-note beats



Bar 1: play on 1, 3 and 4; rest on 2 and the "and" of 3.

Bar 2: rest for 1-2; hold C for 3-4. Final bar: 4 silent beats.

6/8 - two dotted-quarter beats



Bar 1: play three eighth notes on beat 1; rest for all of beat 2.

Bar 2: hold G on 1-la-li, 2-la-li. Final bar: all silent.

Whole-bar rest: The centred whole-rest symbol in each final bar means silence for that entire measure: 2 beats in 2/4, 3 in 3/4, 4 in 4/4, or two dotted-quarter beats in 6/8.

In 6/8: Count "1-la-li, 2-la-li". A dotted quarter rest lasts three eighth-note units, equal to one main beat. The dot adds half the original value.