

I'm glad the link has brought you here.

If you don't already know about the lifelong contributions of David Newell, his gift (below) will inspire you to find out more. There are innumerable ways to approach each topic in Music Education, and *Compound Meter* just happens to be an issue eliciting many, many opinions and disagreements. What matters most is only this: "*what works efficiently*" in the best education for all students.

After many decades, music educators continue to seek a results-based method to help students succeed with their understanding, counting, and performance of music in *compound meter*. David Newell has dedicated 60+ years to the development and refinement of instructional strategies that meet the goal: his methods work. Some aspects of his material might require you to openly consider ideas that differ from your earlier training. But imagine the value of gathering *additional methods* to supplement your bag-of-tricks, especially if you've ever had difficulty with teaching compound meter (do you hear the little voice in your head?).

Let me be clear – the following nine pages are Mr. Newell's work alone. My total role in this post is limited to a few touch-ups to the document's formatting, and tidying up a few notation issues. I'm just pleased to provide a platform to deliver this material to music educators on a wide scale. David has generously offered this to everyone who will read it. Please read it, adapt it to your own style, and *try it* with students. Above all, *share it* with other educators.

Looking forward ...

David has promised me another set of materials soon and, similarly, he'll freely share his ideas with you. His tenet is that **the MOST IMPORTANT NOTE in all of music is the WHOLE NOTE**. With that, he will strongly encourage all of us to seriously consider changing the way we have tried to teach students to understand the meanings of the numbers in time signatures. His groundbreaking discovery will even have primary school students completely understanding time signatures. Simple!

I urge you, dear colleagues, to take a few minutes and thoroughly go through these pages. I feel sure you'll agree his ideas are not only revolutionary, but *simple* as well. Every page starts with something the students *know* and *can already do*. There is no confusion ever. For any students who think that rhythm is confusing, this is an outstanding solution.

And specifically in the words of Mr. Newell himself:

"No note in music comes with a set mathematical value attached to it. *'What is a half note? Half of a banana? No! It is a note that gets half the value of the whole note in that particular piece of music.* That's the only way the name Half Note makes any sense, and rhythmic notation always makes perfect sense. You can 'count on it!'"

These exact pages (in the attached PDF) were field-tested in a 6th grade band class taught by a former Methods Class student of David's at the University [Baldwin-Wallace]. But she had no knowledge at all of the materials you see in your PDF, because she had graduated several years before this material and his unique ideas ever existed anywhere. David told me:

"She reported to me that her students loved the material. Whenever she asked students a question about anything on the pages, the students always had the correct answers. She had many, many students come running into the class and asking her, 'Can Leah and Steve and I play numbers so and so on page (?) for the class?'" The students especially loved a very musically arranged and simple little trio. The soprano part (#1) is written in Compound 12/8, the alto part (#2) is in Compound 6/8, and the tenor part is written, of all things, in Simple 4/4—Common Time! The other students applauded them and the performers were so proud of themselves, especially when the teacher told them that they had just done something that older students couldn't do! And after the first day of trio performances, more groups of three had gotten together and wanted to play it for the class. The success spoke for itself."

Oh, if all of this sparks your pedagogical mind (and I know it will), I can also strongly endorse other masterworks of his, and I encourage you to consider these for your shelf: "Teaching Rhythm: New Strategies and Techniques for Success" ... "The Simple Rhythmician" ... "The Rehearsal" ... "Classroom Management in the Music Room: *'Pin-Drop Quiet'* Classes and Rehearsals" ... "Teaching Rhythm (New Strategies and Techniques for Success)"

Finally, after reading the following material, if you have questions, comments, or especially *success stories* to share with the author, please feel free to send them to me at r200lina@gmail.com and I will forward it right to David Newell; he would love to hear from you.

MUST READ

There is a **HARD WAY** and there is an **EASY WAY** to learn what is known as **Compound Meter** in music. The *hard way* is a path that has been followed for a very long time, but it often leads to a great deal of unnecessary difficulty and confusion. The other path—*the easy one*—is very different from the old one. On this new path, most students experience no difficulty whatsoever. Those who start down this easy path and stay on it until the very end, quickly become **Masters of Compound Meter**. This book is dedicated to guiding you on your journey through this easy path to mastery—one simple step at a time—*provided you obey the rules*.

The rules are few and simple:

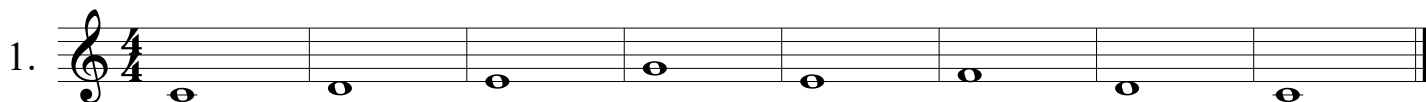
- 1) Start with Exercise No. 1, and do not skip ahead for any reason. Every exercise is important.
- 2) Do not move on to the next exercise if you do not understand the one you just did.
- 3) Read every printed word above the exercises, and do exactly what they say.

Have a good time!

What You Already Know: "Four-Count Notes"

In Simple 4/4, whole notes are four counts. You have known that for a long time.

Play Exercise No. 1 as a warm-up.



What You Will Learn Today: "SOUNDS THE SAME—LOOKS DIFFERENT"

Exercise No. 2 *SOUNDS THE SAME* as Exercise No. 1. It just *LOOKS DIFFERENT*.

The whole notes in No.2 all have dots after them!

The new time signature in No. 2 is what we call "**COMPOUND 12/8 METER.**"

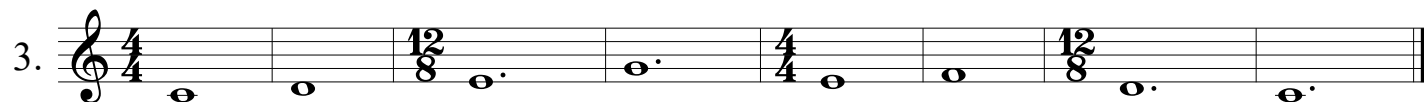
For now, do not even try to understand what the time signature numbers of 12 and 8 mean.

It will just confuse you, and that is no way to start a new book!

Just memorize this:

In Simple 4/4, **whole notes** are four counts. (Exercise No. 1)

In Compound 12/8, **DOTTED whole notes** are four counts. (Exercise No.2)



Question: What should you have learned by doing the first page in this new book?

The simple Answer is this:

The whole notes in No. 2 (12/8 time) are still four counts.

They just *look different*—they all have dots after them. They are officially known as ***Dotted Whole Notes***. That is all you were expected to learn.

We could explain how it is that in Compound 12/8 time there are only 4 counts in a measure, even though the top number of the time signature is a 12. It would probably take two or three pages of explanation, and chances are good that you would be very confused. That is because it is *not time yet* for you to understand it.

In this book, we will teach you:

HOW TO DO THINGS first, and then we will help you **TO UNDERSTAND THEM** later.

Be patient!

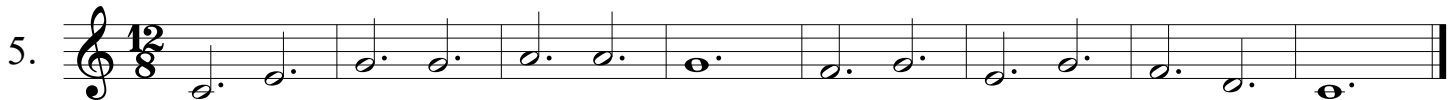
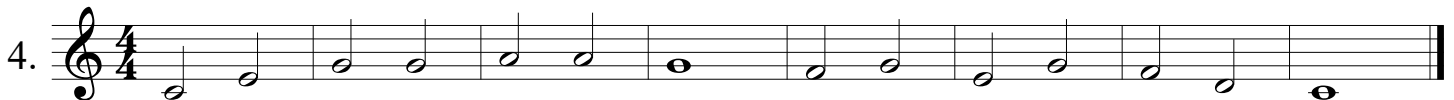
Two-Count Notes

"2-count notes" in Simple and Compound meters work the same way as 4-count notes. In *Simple meters*, for example, those with a 4 as the bottom number of the time signature, **half notes** are two counts. That is certainly not news to you.

In *Compound meters* with an 8 as the bottom number, ***DOTTED* half notes** are two counts.

So far, *Compound Meter* is all about those dots.

Do not try to understand it. Just do it.



As you go through this book, you will see many different Compound Meter signatures besides 12/8. On the next page, for example, you will be introduced to Compound 6/8. By the way, ***Meter signatures*** are very often called ***Time Signatures***, which is very likely the term you have been taught. This is nothing to be concerned about. They essentially mean the same thing.

One-Count Notes

It will probably not surprise you to learn that "1-count" notes follow the same exact pattern we have seen with both 4-count and 2-count notes.


In *Simple Meters* such as 4/4 and 2/4, **quarter notes** are one count.


In *Compound Meters* such as 12/8 and 6/8, **DOTTED quarter notes** are one count.

For now in this book, if the bottom number of the time signature is an 8, the music is in *Compound Meter*, and there will be a lot of dotted notes!

We remind you once again to not try to figure out what the numbers in Compound 12/8 and 6/8 mean. You will learn that when you need to know it. Now is not the time.

Numbers 7 and 8 **SOUND** the same, but **LOOK** different.


7. 


8. 

Did you notice that even the 1-count *rests* in Compound Meter are dotted? This might be the first time you have ever seen a dotted quarter *rest*.

In Compound 6/8, dotted quarter notes and dotted quarter rests all get one count.

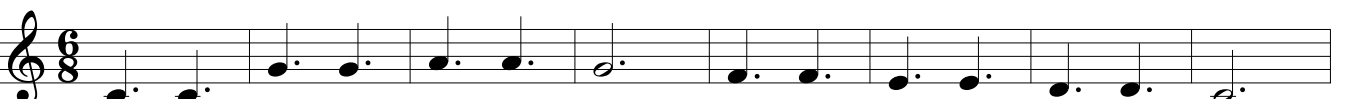
Do not try to compare them to other dotted quarters you have learned. Just do them. They are all one count.

9. 




Twinkle, Twinkle "Compound" Star

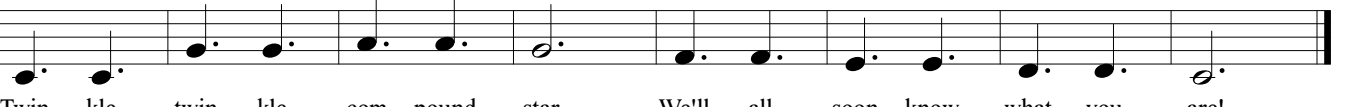
Sing first, then play.

10. 

Twin - kle twin - kle com - pound star, How I won - der what you are.



What's with all these dot - ted notes? One and two count dot - ted notes?



Twin - kle twin - kle com - pound star, We'll all soon know what you are!

Mixed Meter

When a single exercise or song uses a *combination* of both **Simple Meters** (for example 4/4, 2/4) and **Compound Meters** (such as 12/8, 6/8), the music has been written in what musicians call "**Mixed Meter.**"

Mary Had a "Mixed Up" Lamb

11. Musical notation for exercise 11, titled "Mary Had a 'Mixed Up' Lamb". It consists of two staves. The first staff starts in 4/4 time, then changes to 12/8 time, and ends in 2/4 time. The second staff starts in 2/4 time, then changes to 6/8 time, and ends with a fermata. The melody is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat.

When Day Is Done - (Melody) -- in Compound 12/8

12. Musical notation for exercise 12, titled "When Day Is Done - (Melody) -- in Compound 12/8". It consists of three staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The entire piece is in 12/8 time.

When Day Is Done - (Duet Part) -- in Compound 6/8

13. Musical notation for exercise 13, titled "When Day Is Done - (Duet Part) -- in Compound 6/8". It consists of three staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The entire piece is in 6/8 time.

When Day Is Done - (Trio Part) -- in Simple 4/4

14. Musical notation for exercise 14, titled "When Day Is Done - (Trio Part) -- in Simple 4/4". It consists of three staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The entire piece is in 4/4 time.

A Short Review

So far in this book, when the bottom number of the time signature has been an 8, you have been reading music in **Compound Meter**.

○. = 4 counts

♩. = 2 counts

♪. = 1 count

But what about a Three-Count Note?

There is no single note symbol in Compound Meter that equals three counts. *It just doesn't exist!*

To write a sound that lasts for three counts in these new meters, two notes are required — a two-count note (♩.) **TIED** to a one-count note (♪.).

The top numbers of the time signatures in the exercises below will change. Once again, ignore the numbers for now.

The Westminster Chimes in 3-Count sounds. *A tie in music is like a + sign in math. (2+1=3 counts)*

15. 

16. 

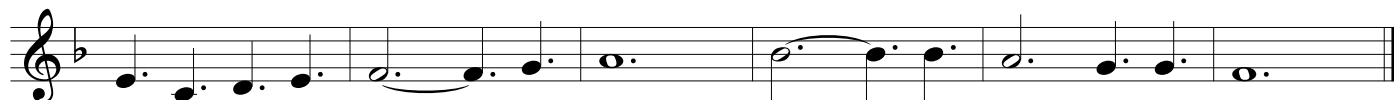


17. 



Final Review of 4, 3, 2, and 1-count notes in Compound Meter

18. 



Eighth Notes

By now you may be wondering why you need to learn Compound Meter. It is really easy to do, but it's kind of hard to understand why you have to do it at all. It actually seems kind of silly. All of the notes in compound meter that you have been introduced to so far have required that dots be written after them. But the music sounds exactly the same as it would sound if it had been written in simple 4/4, 3/4, or 2/4 ... and those are time signatures you already know and can do very well.

So you ask, "**Why do we have to learn this?**" That's a really good question, but there's a really good answer.

With eighth notes, everything changes, and the fun begins! The eighth notes will not only look slightly different, but they will definitely sound different, and **sound is always the most important thing in music.**

The sound of the eighth notes in No. 19 below is why we have Compound Meter, and you most likely already know what they sound like! You just don't know what they *look* like. That will change with this page.

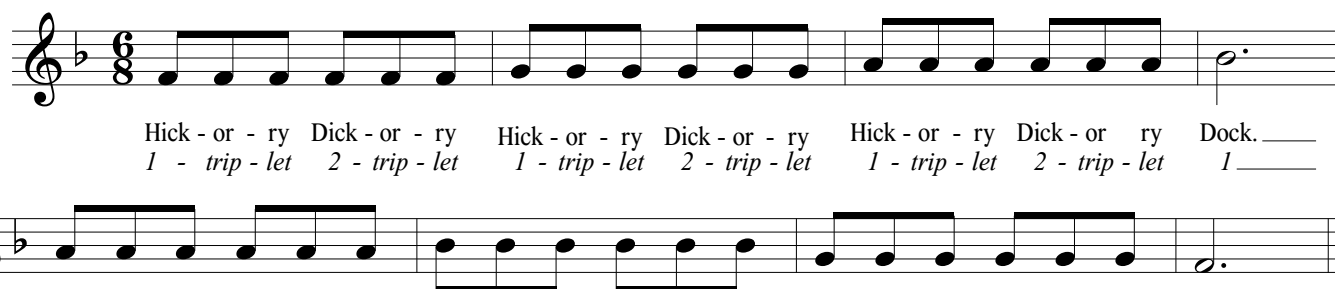
In your childhood you probably learned some old English Nursery Rhymes like this one:

**Hickory Dickory Dock—,
The mouse ran up the clock—.
The clock struck one, the mouse ran down—.
Hickory Dickory Dock—.**

If you are not familiar with this nursery rhyme, ask someone who knows it to recite it for you, so that you can **hear its rhythm.**

Let's see what the two words "Hickory Dickory" look like in Compound 6/8 Meter.

"Hickory Dickory" Rhythm Exercise — (Recite it, then Sing it, then Play it to a steady beat).

19. 

Hick - or - ry Dick - or - ry Hick - or - ry Dick - or - ry Hick - or - ry Dick - or - ry Dock. ____
1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 ____

Hick - or - ry Dick - or - ry Hick - or - ry Dick - or - ry Hick - or - ry Dick - or - ry Dock. ____
1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 ____

As we said before, the eighth notes look slightly different in Compound Meter. They are written in **groups of three notes** rather than the more familiar groups of two. And if you have looked at the counting words written underneath the *Hickory Dickory* words, you see that the eighth notes are called **triplets**. You also notice by looking at the counting words that there are **2 counts in a measure**. There is a triplet on count 1 and a triplet on count 2 in the measures that have eighth notes. (*1-trip-let 2-trip-let*).

Let's do some more triplets. If you are patting your lap or tapping your foot as you sing or play, make certain that you are patting or tapping only twice in each measure, on the numbers 1 and 2—never on the word *trip-let*.

Triplets

Your teacher may prefer to use a different set of *counting words* for triplets. By all means, learn the words your teacher uses. This book will continue to use *1-trip-let 2-trip-let*, just to remind you that **triplets are the main reason we have Compound Meter!**

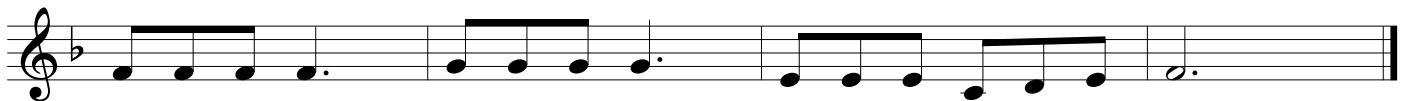
20. 

Old Moth - er Hub - bard, she went to the cup - board to get her poor dog - gie a bone. But
1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 2



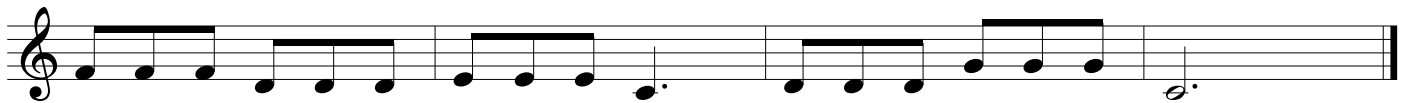
when she got there the old cup - board was bare, so her poor hun - gry dog - gie got none!
1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 - trip - let 2 - trip - let 1 _____

21. 



22. 





23. 







Triplets Can Also SOUND THE SAME—but LOOK DIFFERENT

Notice three important differences between 24a and 24b below.

After studying both exercises to find the differences, play them both. They sound exactly the same.

24a. 

1 2-trip-let 1-trip-let 2 1 2-trip-let 1__ 1 2-trip-let 1-trip-let 2 1 2-trip-let 1__

24b. 

The Three Differences

- 1). 24a is written in Compound 6/8 Meter, and 24b is written in Simple 2/4 Meter.
- 2). Because of that, the 1-count and 2-count notes in 24a are all dotted; those in 24b are not.
- 3). The triplets in both look the same, except that those in 24b come with a small 3 attached to them.

The Explanation

Music notation's **Basic Notes**—whole, half, and quarter notes, for instance—**naturally divide in half**.

The whole note splits into two half notes.

Each half note splits into two quarter notes.

Each quarter note splits into two eighth notes.

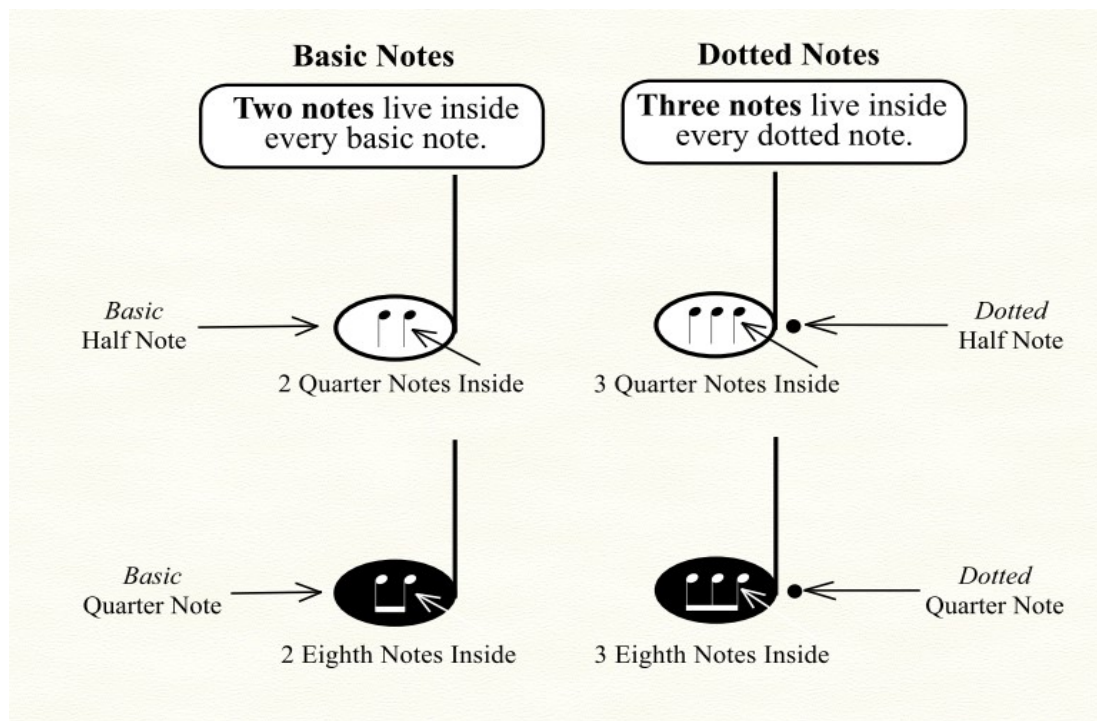
This is always true in any time signature. Memorize it.

This is new!

Music notation's **Dotted Notes**—*dotted* whole, *dotted* half, and *dotted* quarter—**naturally divide into thirds**.

This is always true in any time signature. Memorize it.

Here is a picture of the natural divisions of **Basic Notes** and **Dotted Notes**:



Why do the triplets in 24b have the number 3 attached to them? Because the natural division of the basic quarter note in Simple Meters like 2/4 is into only TWO eighth notes. A composer, who wants the occasional sound of a triplet in a piece that he or she has written in simple 2/4, has to warn performers that "These are not your normal number of eighth notes in this time signature. Instead of only two, there are three of them on one count, and they will have to be sung or played faster in order for all three of them to fit on one count."

Three eighth notes is NOT the natural division of the simple quarter note.

The three eighth notes in measure 3 below are **an exception to the rule** and must be marked as such.



1 2 - & 1 - & 2 1 2-trip-let 1—

Turn-Around is Fair Play.

Composers who choose to write a piece in Compound Meter know that the dotted quarter notes naturally split into three eighth notes, but they can have their performers play only two eighth notes on a count at any time. They also have to let performers know that the two eighth notes on one count are an exception to the natural splitting of the dotted quarter note. They do this by writing a small number 2 above or below the two notes, which will be counted like 1-& 2-&. These two eighth notes on one count in Compound Meter are called **Duplets**, pronounced *doop-lets*. Duplets are not seen as often as triplets in music.

As you study the exercises below, make sure you understand why some eighth notes have to be marked, and others don't..

