

Sixteenth Notes

Being quick can take some time.

You can fit 4 quarter notes in a measure – or you can fit 8 eighth notes in a measure. Can you guess how many sixteenth notes fit in a measure? Would you be surprised to find out the answer is 16? Sixteenth notes are half the duration of eighth notes, and go by twice as quickly. They look essentially the same as eighth notes, but are **double beamed**. Here is a measure of sixteenth notes:



Notice that this measure takes up considerably more space on the page than a measure of quarter notes. Here's one of music notation's great ironies. While in the Olympics, the faster a runner runs from point A to point B, the shorter the time it takes him to get there, with music, the faster the music sounds, the more space on the page it takes to notate it. Two minutes of really fast-sounding music might take 10 pages to transcribe, while two minutes of really slow-sounding music would probably only take 1 page to transcribe. This is, of course, due to the fact that music that sounds fast is really not any faster, but rather busier!

The "dot" portion of a sixteenth note looks just the same as that of an eighth note or quarter note. It's the beam that changes. Also, if a single sixteenth note is by itself, it will be written with a double flag.

Notice the double flag on this single sixteenth note.

