

Triplets

Three times the charm.

Triplets and other tuplets are unique compared to the rhythms we’ve studied so far because they divide the beat into a quantity that isn’t a factor of two. Eighth notes divide a beat (a quarter note) into two parts. Sixteenth notes divide a beat into four parts. The other rhythms we’ve learned were built by dividing the beat up into various combinations of eighth notes and sixteenth notes. Triplets, which divide a beat into three even notes, create an entirely new feel.



We’ll count triplets by saying the number of the beat it starts on, and then count remaining two triplets as “trip” and “let” respectively. Look at the example above.

Triplets can be written two different ways. Usually, you’ll see them beamed together as you see above, with a cursive numeral 3 written above the beam.

You also see them written with a bracket around the numeral 3.



This is usually how they’re written if there are rests instead of notes for any of the triplets (see example below). This is because, when you put a rest in, you have to break the beam. When the beam is broken, the bracket makes it clear that the three notes are still grouped together – and therefore still triplets.