

# RHYTHM IS EASY

## Sequential Rhythm Learning System - 4/4

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**RHYTHM IS EASY** is a fun game for the student that teaches all aspects of rhythm. It makes learning to read, play and write rhythm simple for anyone, even the parents! This sequential rhythm system has built in reinforcement of rhythm symbols that leads to easy rhythm recognition and excellent performance. These cards are designed to be owned by the student, practiced at home by the student and parent during the week, and demonstrated and reviewed at lessons.

**RHYTHM IS EASY** begins with individual measures of 4/4 meter and progresses to 3/4 and 2/4 (groups 1-3). The secondary cards are 6/8 and 3/8 (groups 4-5). It is so easy, you can begin with Set 1 of the 4/4 cards at the very first lesson of individual student and/or group. The 4/4 cards begin with the easiest rhythm notation and progresses by gradually adding notation symbols.

The symbols used on these cards are symbols used in pre-reading. As in standard reading, left to right progression of symbols is used-enforced. These symbols are easy to read and understand for even very young children, including two year olds!

This is Kodaly method based of reading and writing rhythms. In these instructions, the syllables and/or words used are the same or similar in most Kodaly usage. You are encouraged to use these "words" for each type of note, but you can use your choice of numbers or note names with the cards.

***The cards in each set are numbered in the easiest order. Be sure the cards are right side up (with the meter, set and card number at the bottom) and in numerical order before introducing a new set.***

**LET'S BEGIN:**      4/4 - All cards equal one measure with 4 beats per card/measure.

Explain that standard notes have a round dark circle (note head) at either the top or bottom of each vertical line (the stem.) That circle denotes the pitch of the note which is different from the value or length of the note. Since we will only be dealing with the length of the notes and no specific pitch, the round note head part of the note has been left off.

**Set 1** - Introduces quarter note ("tah") and eighth notes ("tah-tay".)

- Quarter note "tah" can also called "walking note"
  - Eighth note pairs "tah-tay" can also called "running notes."
  - Two eighth together notes take the same amount of time as one quarter note.
1. Place the stack of cards in front of the student. Explain that the round black part of the note that tells the pitch or note has been left off. We will be selecting our own note or pitch.
  2. Begin with card 1, introduce the quarter notes. Pat (or clap) and say "tah" for each of the four notes. Invite the student to say and pat the words in rhythm with you. Begin by saying, "Ready, go!"
  3. Next introduce the final card by pulling it from the bottom of the stack and placing it above and on top of the whole stack. Point out that:
    - a. There are twice as many notes that go twice as fast and fit in same space of 4 beats.
    - b. "Tahs" line up vertically on the beats of card 1, and the new "tay" is between the "tahs."
    - c. The "tah" is holding hands with his partner "tay," and they are running together.

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4. Pat each note and say "tah-tay" for each eighth note pair. Invite the student to join in again.
5. Always say "Ready, go!" on the beat in an appropriate tempo for the student.
6. The remaining cards consist of all possible combinations of "tah" and "tah-tay."
7. Ask the student to identify the symbols on each card before patting the rhythm.
  - a. Point at each symbol and ask, "Is this "tah" or "tah-tay?"
  - b. If the student doesn't know, tell them.
  - c. When the student can tell you the "words" for each note on the card, they are ready to pat the rhythm.
  - d. Call the "Ready, go!" and pat rhythm. Always say names "tah" and "tah-tay."
8. When the student is good at patting the rhythms, choose a note on the piano or other instrument. Play the rhythm on the card while saying the words for the notation.
9. At first the teacher or parent will say the "Ready, go!" Then invite student to join in with you.
10. After student in comfortable patting and playing each card, shuffle cards for added challenge.
  - a. Next divide cards in half and do two cards at a time. Continue saying notation names while playing the rhythm.
  - b. The next level is to move each card from the center two stacks right and left to outside of the stack and do four cards at a time. Each card will now get practiced two turns in a row.
  - c. Now divide cards into four stacks and do four cards at a time creating a musical phrase. Shuffle the cards each day to provide new rhythm combinations and to keep it fun. Always encourage the student to keep it musical and to perform each phrase beautifully.
  - d. Always say notation names "tah" and "tah-tay" while playing. It is always easier to play the rhythms if you say the words.
  - e. Depending on the student, the above progression could take from one to several weeks. When students are very good at a phrase of four cards/measures, turn the cards up side down. Explain that notes really go both directions in standard musical notation, and that stems normally go the other direction half of the time. Point and ask, "Is this "tah" or "tah-tay?" When they know, pat and say the rhythms as before.
  - f. After they are comfortable with the cards turned the other direction, practice should include cards in both directions and four at a time, first patting and then playing the rhythm. Keep shuffling the cards!

### **Helpful Hints**

1. Patting the thigh with both hands is easier for younger children than the much more difficult coordination skill of clapping hands together.
2. Patting the thighs with both hands helps to instill the feeling of the beat and the rhythm because
  - a. It is felt on two body parts, hands and thighs.
  - b. It is good for pianists especially, since the motion of patting is similar to the movement of playing the piano key.
3. Young children have shorter arms are more comfortable going faster than adults. Keep this in mind when setting the tempo.
4. Using a variety of rhythm instruments makes it more fun game and adds variety and challenge to the rhythm practice sessions. Advanced students can play intervals or chords.

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5. **“If you can say it, you can play it.”** The students should always say note names. They practically never miss when using words. If there is an error, you know exactly where the problem is.

### **Set 2** - Introduces the two beat half note (“tah-oh”)

1. Begin with card one containing two half notes. Ask as you point to the vertical line, "Do you see the "tah?" "Do you see the "O?" This is a two beat note and we say, "Tah-oh."
  - a. The second beat of the half note moves, swings or stays in place on beat two. When clapping, clasp hands together and swing hands downward for beat two.
  - b. At first, children often have difficulty keeping hands from patting or clapping on the second beat. For first few times, hold their hands inside yours until they get the idea and necessary control.
  - c. When patting, keep hands on the thighs or move hands along the thighs toward or away from the body for the feeling and length of time for the second beat and word “oh.”
2. Now proceed to the next cards. The student will easily recognize the quarter and/or eighth notes that come with the new half note on each card.
3. Now place sets 1 & 2 next to each other and do two cards at a time.
4. Follow the steps in 10 of **Set 1** until these are well learned.
5. **The most important next level of rhythm practice is to do rhythms with the metronome. You and the student need to have a metronome capable of consecutive numbers.**
  - a. It is essential for students to learn to say, “One, two, ready, go!” right on beat with the metronome. When the student says the words with the metronome, it helps to feel the beat and be ready to pat and play with the beat of the metronome. .
    - i. Listen carefully and find the tempo that the student is using.
    - ii. Set the metronome to that speed.
    - iii. Demonstrate how to say the words with the beat. Say the “Ready, go!” and pat and play several cards.
    - iv. Next, invite the student to “help” say the words with you and the metronome.
    - v. When the students can stay it with you and the metronome well, drop out and let the student take over saying the “One, two, ready, go!” with the metronome.
    - vi. If the student doesn’t say the words with the beat, don’t start to pat the rhythm. You may want to say, “I couldn’t tell when to start.” Help as needed. It won’t take long for the student to be able to stay with the beat of the metronome.
    - vii. Gradually move the tempo up one number at a time as the student gains proficiency and confidence at patting and playing..
  - b. Using the metronome will help to keep the beat steady so the rhythm doesn’t speed up through the easy part or slow down for rhythms that the student doesn’t know as well. .
  - c. Using the metronome will help insure the correct number of beats per notation symbol.
  - d. The skill of using the metronome is easier when the student is only concentrating on one thing at a time, such as the just rhythm on the cards.
  - e. The skill of using the metronome with the rhythm cards will carry over easily to standard musical literature.
  - f. The use of the metronome develops a sense of beat - that steady “heart beat.”
  - g. **Use the metronome every time from now on.**

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**Set 3** - Introduces the quarter rest - one beat of "silence in the music."

1. Place the new cards in front of the student. Ask, "Do you see anything new?"
  - a. You can tell what another student said, "It looks like a lightning bolt."
  - b. This "lightning bolt" is called a rest. The rest is one beat of silence in the music.
  - c. Often the silence is more important than the notes and other sounds!
  - d. Have the hands move out and away from each other, so not to pat on the rest.
  - e. Mouth the word "rest" silently or say, "Rest" very quietly.
2. Follow steps in 10 of Set 1, until the student is comfortable with these new cards.
3. Now add Set 3 to sets 1 & 2 as one of the 4 measures in the phrase of rhythm. Continue to use the metronome at a comfortable speed for the student.

**Set 4** - Reviews all previous notation in new combinations.

1. Practice this new set and add to Sets 1, 2 & 3 for a complete phrase of music.
2. Depending on the student and since this is a review set, you can retire sets 1 - 3 temporarily and introduce Set 5 with new notation at the same lesson.

**Note:** These cards and the cards that follow should not be turned up the other directions, since the notes have been flipped on half the cards. From now on, keep the meter, set and card number printing at the bottom of the cards.

**Set 5** - Introduces four beat whole note ("tah-oh-whole-note") and three beat dotted half note ("tah-oh-ah").

1. The whole note takes up the whole card and gets all four beats. (This is the hardest note in all of music because of the difficulty of getting exactly four beats, no more or less.)
  - a. If patting, slide the hand back and forth on the thigh for each beat.
  - b. If clapping, be sure to show all four beats and demonstrate the length of the four beat note by holding the hands together and having hands swing up and down on each beat.
  - c. Then play and listen carefully for exactly four beats by holding the note until "off."
2. The dotted half note gets three beats with the words "tah-oh-ah."
  - a. The dot gets the "ah" of the "tah" for beat three.
  - b. The dot always gets half the value of the note or rest it is next to.
3. Practice these carefully at the lesson. The student practices each set separately at home and then combines them in a four measure phrase as before.

**Set 6** - Introduces the half rest ("rest now"), two beats of silence.

1. Move hands apart and demonstrate two separate beats clearly with a movement on each beat.
2. Now is a great time to emphasize the correct "official names," half rest and half note. Cards number one and six makes it easy to see why they have these names. The half rest and half note each receives two beats and gets half of the card. It is easy to remember the names when explained this way, knowing what they do and how long they last..
3. The student should practice this set separately. Then divide this large set in half and combine with Sets 4 & 5 as in step 10 of Set 1. Keep the metronome going with all of these cards.
4. Next, Set 1, 2, and/or 3 can be added back in for more rhythm fun!

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**Set 7** - Introduces the whole rest. ("rest now whole rest") with four beats of silence. This set also has the quarter and half rest on the each of the other cards. Retire Set 6 at this time.

1. Place the Set 7 next to Set 5 with the whole note card on top.
2. It is easy to see that whole rest is only one symbol and that it receives all four beats on the card, just like the whole note.
3. Say, "Rest now whole rest" very softly or silently with hands apart and moving on each beat. Demonstrate clearly with movements for all four separate beats of silence.
4. Explain that the whole rest is so heavy with all four beats of silence, it always hangs down from the fourth line. The half rest with only two beats is light enough to sit on top of the third line.
5. Because of so much silence on each Set 7 card, do any of Sets 1 – 6, especially Sets 4 and 5 with Set 7. Having more notes to pat and play makes it easier and more fun. This provides a good review of all of the notation learned thus far.

**Set 8** – discontinued.

**Set 9** - Introduces the two beat of combination dotted quarter and eighth note ("tah-ah-tay".)

**WARNING: Everything that the student has done up to this set has been easy. Be sure that the student is a "super expert" on Sets 1 - 7 before introducing this final 4/4 set. Be sure to have enough time to explain and practice this set well before leaving the lesson. Retire all other sets.**

1. Place the new cards in front of the student. Pull card 9 from the pile and place it directly above the stack. Compare beats one and two on each card and explain to the student that:
  - a. The first "tah" is the same on both cards.
  - b. The second "tah" turned into a dot and joined up with the first "tah."
  - c. Since this "tah" joined up with the first "tah," we take the "t" off of the "tah" and say, "ah" for the dot like the other dots in Set 5.
  - d. Since the "tay" doesn't have a partner, it has to put out its "spinnaker sail-like" flag so that you can tell that it is an eight note. We still call it, "tay."
  - e. Pat on the "tah" and move the hands on the thigh or keep your hands on the thigh for the "ah" of the "tah-ah" before the "tay." If you clap, clap on the "tah" and dip your hands on the "ah" of the "tah-ah" before the "tay." Replace card 9 back in numerical order.
2. Practice the dotted quarter and eighth note combination "tah-ah-tay" rhythm carefully first. If the student accidentally pats on "ah," place your hands over theirs and help guide their hands until this rhythm can be done correctly and independently.
3. Now practice the "tah-ah-tay" rhythm with the "tah-oh" and other rhythms on each card.
4. **Be sure rhythms can done correctly for all cards before the student leaves the lesson.**
5. Add the metronome right away with the student calling, "One, two, ready, go!"
6. Follow steps in 10 of Set 1 until the student is very comfortable with these new cards.
7. Add any of Sets 1 – 7 back in only after all of Set 9 is very well learned and the student is excellent at patting and playing these rhythms independently.
8. Now do the cards in all possible combinations four at a time as before with the metronome.
9. Be sure that all 4/4 sets are well learned and very comfortable before moving to the sets in 3/4.