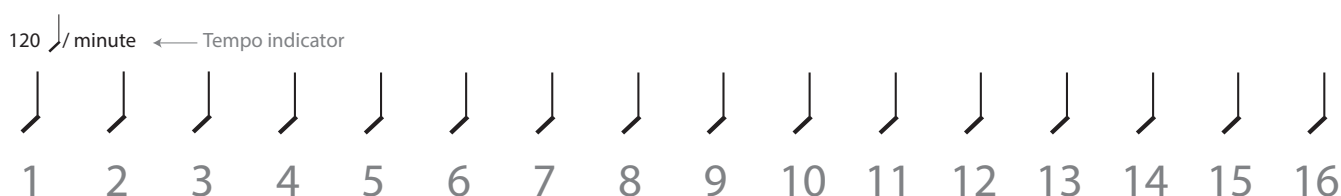


# Finding the beat

The beat is probably the most important element of any song. It is usually defined as the repeated pulse that all the instruments in the band play in time to.

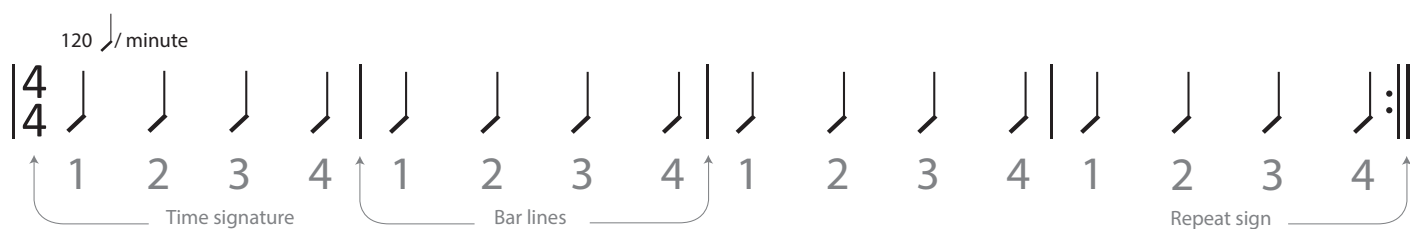
A beat can be fast or slow depending on the needs of the song and is measured in 'beats per minute'. This system of measurement is very helpful in explaining the most important characteristic of a beat. A beat with a speed of sixty beats per minute would be the same speed as the second hand on a clock, and each of these beats should be a consistent measure of time apart from one another. In other words a beat should not slow down or speed up, unless special instructions are given to do so.

Below you can see the symbol that is most commonly used to indicate a beat. In this illustration I've used numbers to keep track of how many beats are to be played. Try clapping this beat in time with your teacher.



To make counting beats easier we group them using bar lines. In the example below you can see we've used bar lines to put our beats into groups of four. There are a number of different ways that beats can be grouped, we use 'time signatures' to indicate how our beats should be grouped. This example is written in  $\frac{4}{4}$ , but a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  would indicate that our beats should be grouped in threes.

This example also includes a 'repeat sign' which tells us to play the line twice. Try clapping this example through using the system for counting.



## ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Try listening to a piece of music you like while beating along in time. You can clap, drum on the back of your guitar, or even strum muted strings in time with the music.
2. Try this exercise again, but this time with two different songs that are played at different speeds.
3. Lastly try beating along in time with a metronome at different speeds, see if you can find what speeds are the most difficult to work with, and give a reason why you think this is.