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A photograph of a Steinway & Sons piano. In the foreground, a black music folder is open, showing a sheet of music with the title "EXERCISE 1" written in a stylized font on a five-line staff. A fountain pen lies across the folder. In the background, a white sheet of music is placed on the piano's music stand, featuring two staves with the words "practical Rhythmic" and "sightreading:" written in a similar stylized font. The piano's keyboard and the brand name "Steinway & Sons" are visible in the lower right.

practical Rhythmic
sightreading:

EXERCISE 1

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Enos has established himself as one of Los Angeles' top bassists. His talents have been honed through extensive work with artists like Arturo Sandoval, Sergio Mendes, David Benoit, Bobby Caldwell, Frank Gambale, Nelson Rangel, Danilo Perez, Stan Getz, Alphonse Mouzon, and a host of others. He has been a staff columnist for “Bass Frontiers” magazine as well as the director of the Pasadena International Music Academy (PIMA). In addition, his basswork has been heard on Chevrolet and Honda commercials, Charlie Brown television specials, BET (Black Entertainment Television), and many other shows. He is currently on the faculty at Citrus College in Azusa, California.

David Enos exclusively uses BSX electric upright basses, Bossa electric basses, Polytone amplifiers, Slider Dual Shoulder straps, Labella strings, and Axsak guitar jackets.

THANK YOU -

Many thanks to:

- You, the reader, for buying this book
- The Creator for the wonder that surrounds us in this life
- My beautiful wife Marcia for her constant patience, support, and belief in me throughout this project
- Gil Cline, Frank Sumares and Smith Dobson for being my mentors
- My parents for teaching me the ways of the world, and
- Every musician I've ever had the pleasure to work with.

INTRODUCTION

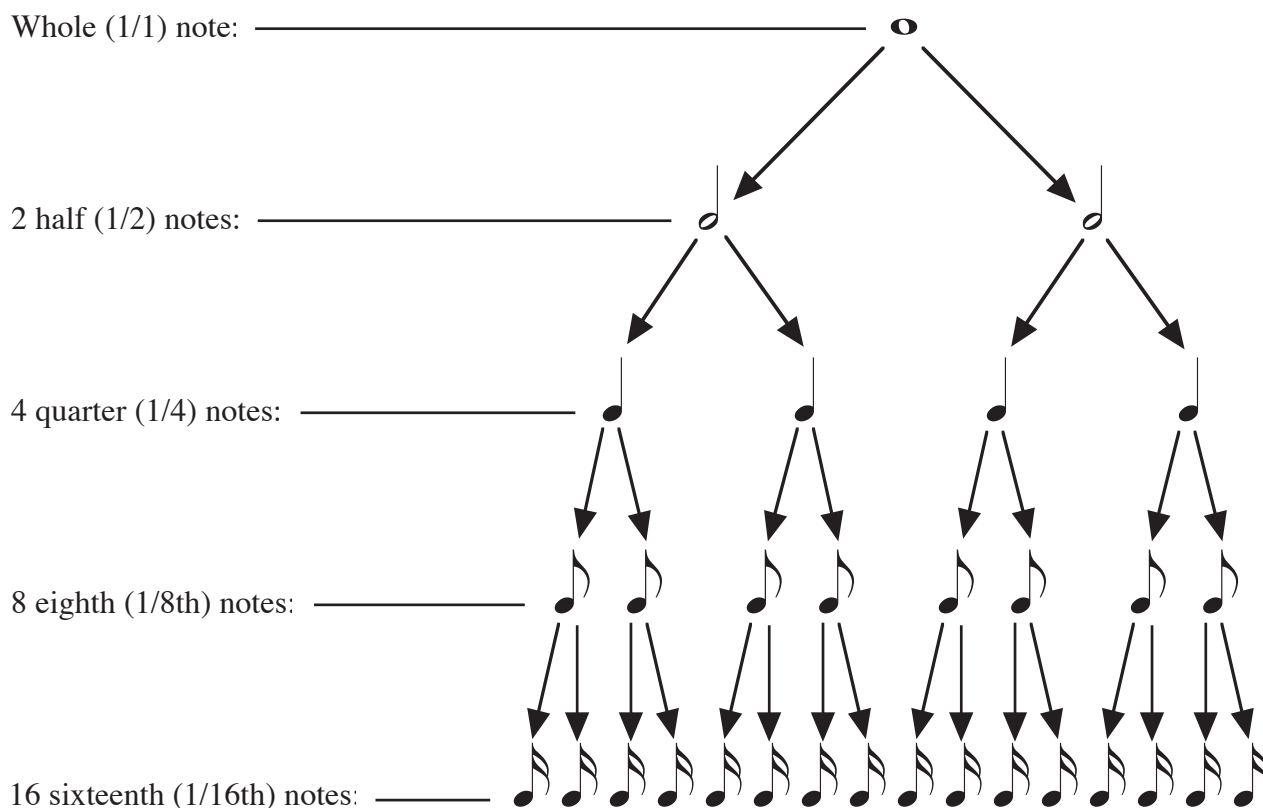
As a player and a teacher I searched for a book that would develop practical rhythmic sightreading skills. By practical, I mean one that employs typical rhythms and subdivisions in the most common time signature that a musician would be expected to sightread. I looked for a book to refine sightreading skills for instrumentalists of all levels. It needed logical organization to enable the reader to learn the rhythms faster using repetition and sequential structure. This would ensure that every conceivable rhythm would be presented to prepare the reader for any sightreading situation in common time. I created “PRACTICAL RHYTHMIC SIGHTREADING” to meet the criteria listed above. I sought to keep it logical and easy to understand. I sincerely hope it provides you with the tools to reach your sightreading goals.

A few guidelines must be established before we begin:

- The rhythms should be the sole focus of each exercise; it is for this reason that one pitch - “C” - will be used for the entirety of the book. Trying to determine correct pitches as well as rhythms simultaneously can often be overwhelming and frustrating. Isolating rhythms from pitches can help the reader focus and internalize them faster.
- We must determine what “common rhythms and time signatures” are. This book is a study of the various subdivisions available over one beat down to 1/16th notes. Since subdivisions smaller than a sixteenth note are uncommon in the majority of published music, the rhythms covered in this book will be whole notes, half notes, half note triplets, quarter notes, quarter note triplets, eighth notes, eighth note triplets, sixteenth notes, and their corresponding rests. Dotted notes, double dotted notes, and ties will also be covered. As far as time signatures are concerned, all exercises will be in 4/4 as it is the most common time signature (it is actually called “common time”).
- Eighth note, sixteenth note, and eighth note triplet flags will be beamed together wherever possible in this book (flags will not be beamed across rests, however, as this is considered bad writing form). This is done for four reasons. One, to save book space. The students may re-write the examples with the flags unbeamed if desired (the examples will sound the same). Two, to present the rhythms in the most typical format. Most composers and copyists lean towards ways of notating rhythms that require less pen strokes or do not require lifting the pen from the paper. Therefore, beamed flags are the composer’s rhythmic notation method of choice. Three, most computer music notation programs will automatically beam flags together. Four, with the exception of instances where music is written to outline the beat for ease of reading, beamed flags ensure less clutter and a page that’s easily read. It should be mentioned here, however, that you should be able to identify rhythmic subdivisions whether the flags are beamed together or not.
- Be sure to practice these exercises with the included CD. If you have a CD player, insert the CD and press play. There are three tempos that you can practice along with and each exercise is identified by an announcement of the exercise number followed by a countoff. If you have a computer with sequencing, notation, or MIDI software, insert the CD into your CD Rom drive. Open the file from within the application by opening the application first, go to the “File” menu, and drag down to “Open”. Navigate to the CD on your desktop, locate the appropriate “MIDI type 1” file in the “MIDI files” folder, select it, and press the Return button on your computer keyboard. The files are in general midi format so they should be ready to play immediately. Your computer should be set to use it’s internal speakers if you don’t have any external sound modules. Consult the manuals that came with your software to find out how to do this. When using sound modules, be sure that your speakers, power amp, and midi interface are correctly set up and turned on and your sound module is turned on and set to General Midi. Be sure to activate the click track in your software by consulting your software manual. A cowbell is usually a good sound for a click track. Press play and listen to the speed of the midi track. Choose a tempo that is slow enough for you to play along with the exercises accurately. You might try taping yourself playing along with your sequencer or notation program to check your accuracy and timing. As your ability to read accurately increases you can increase the tempo accordingly. **Do not increase the tempo until you are able to play the exercise accurately at the previous tempo.** The computer will “read” all the rhythms accurately with perfect time; it is an excellent tool to check and develop your sightreading and should be thought of as the “standard” to try to attain.

Now let's begin with a little theory first.

The basic breakdown of a 4/4 measure from the longest note to the smallest possible subdivisions of a measure (given our previous guidelines), is as follows:





One half note has exactly half the time duration as one whole note, one quarter note has exactly half the time duration as one half note, one eighth note has exactly half the time duration as one quarter note, and one sixteenth note has exactly half the time duration as one eighth note. Another way to look at it is that two quarter notes take up the same amount of space in time as one half note, two eighth notes take up the same amount of space in time as one quarter note, etc.

The eighth note triplet's duration falls between an eighth note and a sixteenth note. Eighth note triplets are three evenly - spaced notes that are performed in the space of two eighth notes, or in place of one quarter note. The key thing to remember is that they are three notes that are evenly spaced in thirds over one beat in 4/4. They are shown below:

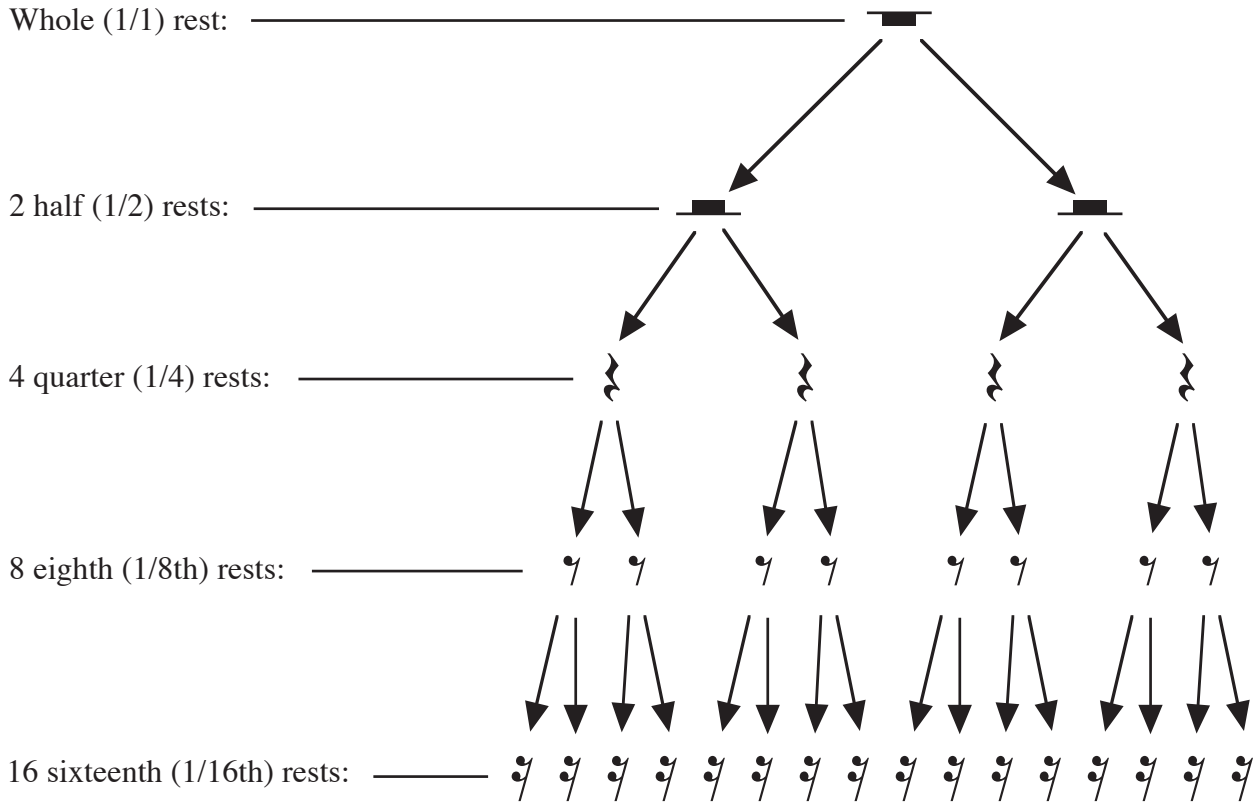


Flags are the little “tails” that are added to eighth or sixteenth notes to identify them from quarter, half or whole notes. One flag identifies an eighth note while two flags identifies a sixteenth note (see below):


 eighth note (one flag)



 sixteenth note (two flags)


Music is not just notes and sound. Silence has a duration, too, and rests are a way of notating the duration of silence in music. The rests below correspond to the equivalent length of time (time duration) as the notes listed above:



A whole rest has the same duration as a whole note, a half rest has the same duration as a half note, a quarter rest has the same duration as a quarter note, an eighth rest has the same duration as an eighth note, and a sixteenth rest has the same duration as a sixteenth note. Also, as stated above for the notes, one half rest has exactly half the time duration as one whole rest, and so forth. You can also correctly assume that two quarter rests take up the same amount of space in time as one half rest, two eighth rests take up the same amount of space in time as one quarter rest, etc.

Notice the corresponding equivalent of flags for eighth and sixteenth rests:


 eighth rest (one flag)


 sixteenth rest (two flags)

Notice also that a whole rest hangs from the second line down from the top of the staff while a half rest sits on top of the middle line on the staff (see the examples below):



Time signatures tell you how many times you should tap your foot to complete a measure and what type of note represents one beat. A 4/4 time signature gives you this information:

$$\frac{4}{4} = \text{the number of beats per measure}$$

$$\frac{4}{4} = \text{what type of note is assigned one beat}$$

In other words, the number above the line in a time signature tells you how many beats (or how many times you tap your foot) must go by before a measure has ended. The number below the line identifies the type of note that is assigned to the beat (or your tapping foot). In the above example, a quarter note is assigned to each beat. To more easily illustrate this, look at the example below:

the number of beats per measure; in this case, it's 4/1 (or four beats)

$$\frac{4}{1}$$

x

$$\frac{1}{4}$$

=

$$\frac{4}{4}$$

four beats per measure where quarter notes represent the pulse (or the tapping of your foot)

what type of note is assigned one beat; in this case, it's quarter notes

Any amount of beats per measure is possible - you could have a time signature of 7/4 or even 63/4 if you wanted to. It just identifies how many beats or pulses are required before one measure ends. But note that while 7/4 is a valid time signature, a time signature of 4/7 is not possible - there is no such thing as a 1/7th note, therefore a 1/7th note cannot be assigned to each beat and the 4/7 time signature cannot exist. The example below demonstrates how 2/2 - or "cut - time" - is created:

the number of beats per measure; in this case, it's 2/1 (or two beats)

$$\frac{2}{1}$$

x

$$\frac{1}{2}$$

=

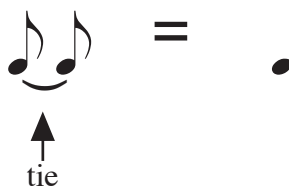
$$\frac{2}{2}$$

two beats per measure where half notes represent the pulse (or the tapping of your foot)

what type of note is assigned one beat; in this case, it's half notes



There are other things to be considered that apply to the sightreading of rhythms. These include **ties**, **dots** and **beamed flags**. We will begin with ties first. **TIES** are a way of connecting two notes so that there is only one attack but the duration of the notes remain the same. To quickly illustrate, see the example below:

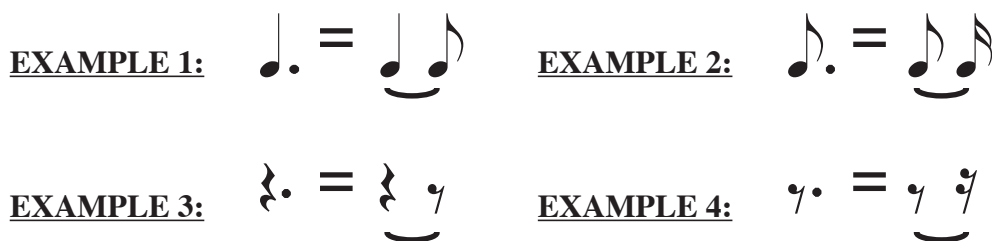


One eighth note has exactly half the time duration as one quarter note; two eighth notes will take up the same amount of time / space as one quarter note. Two untied eighth notes, however, will each have a separate attack - the first eighth note will have its attack on the beginning of the beat while the second eighth note will have its attack at the halfway point of the beat, evenly dividing the beat. Tying the two eighth notes together nullifies the attack of the second eighth note while retaining the second eighth note's duration. Therefore, tying two eighth notes together is exactly the same as a quarter note - it's just a different way of writing the same rhythm. Some other examples are shown below:



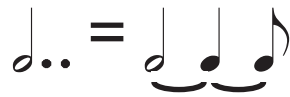
Four tied quarter notes are the same as one whole note, a half note and two quarter notes tied together are the same as one whole note, and two sixteenth notes and an eighth note tied together are the same as a quarter note. They sound the same but are written differently. When using ties, remember that only the first note's attack is played; the note that is tied to it is simply sustained from the original attack. The rest of the notes that are tied to the first note do not have an attack.

DOTS: Adding a **dot** to a note or rest adds half the value of the note or rest to it. A dotted quarter note, for example, has the time value of one quarter note **plus** half of its value. In this case, half the value of a quarter note is an eighth note, so a dotted quarter note is the equivalent of a quarter note with an eighth note tied to it. The examples below demonstrate this:



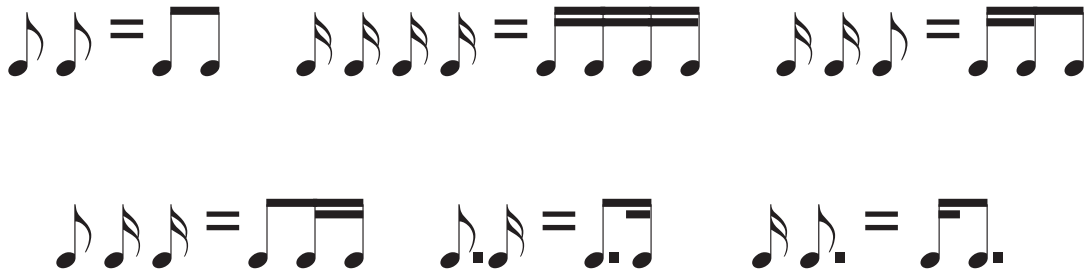
A dotted quarter note is the same as a quarter note with an eighth note tied to it (see example 1). A dotted eighth note is the same as an eighth note with a sixteenth note tied to it (see example 2). Examples 3 and 4 are simply the equivalents of examples 1 and 2 but with rests instead of notes. Dots are added for ease of notation purposes as well as for clarity in written music. Dots require less pen strokes than writing the rhythm with ties and prevents a cluttered look on the written page.

Adding a **double dot** to a note adds half the value of the note to it plus **half of that half's value** or **half plus one quarter of the original note's** value. Take a look at the double-dotted half note in the example below:



Half of a half note is a quarter note; half of a quarter note is an eighth note. So a double-dotted half note is the same as tying together a half note with a quarter note and an eighth note.

BEAMS: Eighth and sixteenth note flags can be **beamed** together to reduce the number of pen strokes. A few examples are shown below:



Again, the rhythms that have “equal” signs between them are exactly the same - they are just written differently.

There are no equivalents of beamed notes for rests. Rests are not beamed.

DURATION COMPARISON

EXERCISE 1:

A shows how the duration of the various rhythms compare to each other. It is important that you practice tapping your foot to these rhythms. Each measure has icons of a foot above it showing how your foot should look while you are counting. The proper way of counting the rhythms is also written above each measure. The triplets are added last. The reason for this is simple: while all of the other rhythms divide the measure or the beat into even segments (into divisions of 2 or 4), triplets divide the measure, beat, or beats into odd segments (into evenly spaced divisions of 3). Extra attention should be devoted to the practice of switching from 16th notes to triplets or vice-versa as it is difficult to play and feel.

B demonstrates how rests and notes compare to each other.

C demonstrates how the eighth, sixteenth, and triplets are written without beamed flags. Note the lines I have added to each of these measures to show where beats 1,2,3, and 4 fall.

D demonstrates how half and quarter note triplets and half and quarter rest triplets are counted.

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT LESSON UNTIL YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THIS LESSON.

EXERCISE 1:

B 1 2 3 4 (1 2 3 4) 1 2 3 4 1 2 (3 4)



1 2 3 4 1 (2) 3 (4) 1 an 2 an 3 an 4 an 1 (an) 2 (an) 3 (an) 4 (an)



1 e an uh 2 e an uh 3 e an uh 4 e an uh 1 (e) an (uh) 2 (e) an (uh) 3 (e) an (uh) 4 (e) an (uh)



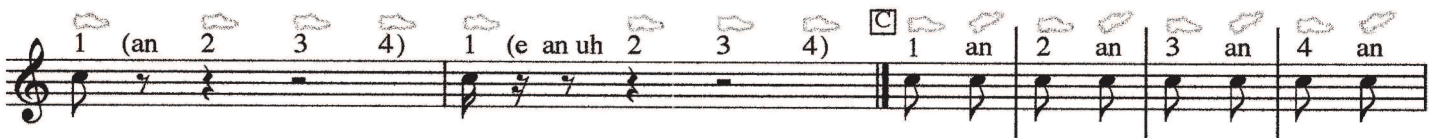
1 trip let 2 trip let 3 trip let 4 trip let 1 trip (let) 2 trip (let) 3 trip (let) 4 trip (let)



1 2 3 4 (1 2 3 4) 1 2 (3 4) 1 (2 3 4)



1 (an 2 3 4) 1 (e an uh 2 3 4) **C** 1 an | 2 an | 3 an | 4 an



1 e an uh | 2 e an uh | 3 e an uh | 4 e an uh | 1 trip let | 2 trip let | 3 trip let | 4 trip let



D 1 2 3 4 tri pl let 1 2 3 4 (tri) pl let



1 2 3 4 tri (pl) let 1 2 3 4 tri pl (let)



tri pl let 3 4 (tri) pl let 3 4 tri (pl) let 3 4 tri pl (let) 3 4

