



C = common time = 4  
 ♩ = cut time = 2  
 (alla breve)

time signatures & rhythm primer

how many beats in a measure  
 which note receives a beat  
 2 = half, 4 = quarter, 8 = eighth, ...

time signatures are like fractions. they tell you how much can fit in any given measure.

$3 \times \frac{1}{4} = \frac{3}{4}$

$(3 \times \frac{1}{4}) = (\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}) = (\frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{16})$

dotted notes: each dot adds half the value of whatever precedes it.

triplets: pretend it's only two notes

whole + half  
 quarter + eighth + sixteenth  
 $2 \times \text{eighth} = 1 \times \text{quarter}$

counting

1 2 3 4    1 & 2 3 4    1 e & a 2 3 4    1 (e &) a 2 3 4 [1 &] 2 3 4

"fill in the one note that completes the rhythm"

approach 1: add fractions (recommended)    approach 2: count in a linear way

approach 1:

1. count what you have.  
 2. subtract that from what you need.  
 3. simplify the result until you have a numerator of 1 or 1.5 (or, rarely, 1.75)

(1.)  $\frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{8} = \frac{3}{8} = \frac{1.5}{4}$     1.5 quarter notes = a dotted quarter note

(2.)  $\frac{3}{4} - \frac{3}{8} = \frac{3}{8}$     (3.)  $\frac{3}{8} = \frac{1.5}{4}$

$\frac{2}{16} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} = \frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{3}{4} - \frac{2}{4} = \frac{1}{4}$     one quarter note

approach 2:

1. count what you have  
 2. what do you need to fill?  
 3. what note fills that?

(1.) 1 e & a 2 &    (2.) 3 2 4 &    (3.) half note

1 & 2 3 &    need "4"    quarter note