The pair of numbers at the start of a score tells you how beats are grouped. The top number is the number of beats in a bar; the bottom number free metronome shows which note gets one beat.

4/4 time

4/4 has four quarter-note beats per bar. It is used in almost all pop, rock and hip-hop. You count 1 2 3 4 with the strongest accent on beat one.

3/4 time

Three quarter notes make a bar of 3/4, with a strong first beat. Waltzes and many folk songs use it.

6/8 time

A bar of 6/8 holds six eighth notes, grouped into two sets of three. It has a lilting, rocking motion, heard in jigs and slow ballads.

Odd meters

5/4 and 7/8 mix groups of two and three, such as 3+2 or 2+2+3. A metronome that accents each group makes them much easier to learn.