

Discover the Pulse

“Music Is Alive!”

Introduction: Every choir member ought to have at least a rudimentary understanding of how to read and sing on sight an unfamiliar piece of music. Singers should not be dependent upon hearing their note played on the piano or sung by another person. We will begin sight singing by introducing the concept of the pulse, learning to subdivide the pulse, and learning note names.

Notes:

1. **Music has a pulse**

- a. **The pulse is a regular, repeating series of beats.** Every song has a pulse. The musician must understand, be able to identify, and be able to perform a steady pulse. When listening to music, the pulse can be found by simply clapping along.

$\frac{4}{4}$ | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | ||

clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap

- b. **The pulse can be subdivided** into shorter beats. Try clapping two beats in the space of one beat, or twice as fast. Can you clap four even beats in each pulse?

$\frac{4}{4}$ | x x | x x | x x | x x | | x x | x x | x x | x x | ||





clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap

- c. **The pulse can also be elongated** to encompass more than one beat. Try clapping only every other beat, or hold the clap for two beats. Try holding out four beats.

$\frac{4}{4}$ | x — (x) | x — (x) | | x — (x) | x — (x) | ||

clap (hold) clap (hold) clap (hold) clap (hold)

2. **The note used indicates its time value relative to the other notes.** A half note is held out half as long as a whole note. A quarter note is half as long as a half note, and a fourth as long as a whole note (hence the name “quarter” note). An eighth note is half as long as a quarter note, a fourth as long as a half note, and an eighth as long as a whole note, etc.

Whole note	
Half note	
Quarter note	
Eighth note	
Sixteenth note	