

Lesson 4

The Metronome

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Course	Read & Play Music
Book 3	Read and Play Tunes with Fascinating Rhythms
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PART 1:

PRECISION AND SPEED

You are starting **Book 3** of the course 'Read & Play Music'.

As we saw in **Book 1**, music is made of pitch and time.

In this book, **Book 3**, we are focused on *time*.

But, you say, didn't we learn about time in **Book 1**?

Yes. However in **Book 1**, I kept it pretty simple because you were a beginner taking your first baby steps.

No more baby steps now! You're going to be learning how to read and play complex timing.

That makes it important that you're playing with great precision. And that is a hallmark of a professional musician: he plays with very precise timing.

Once we've worked on your precision, I'm going to show you how to speed up your playing. And that's another mark of a professional: he can play fast.

So here's our strategy for Part 1:

- First precision
- Then speed.

I think you'll enjoy feeling your skill increase as you do this.

Chat with David

Keeping your skill alive

For the next lessons, I'll be having you play only with one hand. This is to keep things simple while you focus on learning to play with accurate timing.

It would be a great idea to keep playing the tunes from the **Book 2** Tune Album. That will keep alive your skill in playing with two hands while you do this work on **Book 3**. ■



LESSON 4: THE METRONOME

MUSIC THEORY BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

There is a tool that helps musicians greatly in developing precision: the metronome. We're going to be using it extensively throughout **Book 3**.

Recap: a **metronome** is a device that makes a regular ticking sound. The metronome can be adjusted to various speeds, measured as beats per minute (BPM). Musicians use a metronome to help control the speed and regularity of their playing.

You may have heard that a dog is man's best friend. Well, the metronome is one of a musician's best friends.

You need a metronome in order to study this book of the course.

Important features

A great many metronomes are available. Before I show you the different types and give you my recommendations, let me explain what we're looking for.

Metronomes vary widely in their features. Here are the features that are relevant for doing this course:

- *Slow speeds, down to 30 BPM (Beats Per Minute).*
Traditional metronomes only go down to 40 BPM. That will work for many of the exercises in this course, but some exercises need the metronome to go down to 30 BPM.
- *Change BPM by steps of 1.*
Traditional metronomes allow you to select speeds of 40, 42, 44, and so on. They don't allow you to select 41 or 43. You need a metronome that can be adjusted in steps of 1.
- *Instantly enter a specific BPM.*
You need to be able to change the BPM instantly from 80 to 40, for example. If a metronome makes you scroll the BPM figure in steps of 1 (80-79-78-76 etc.), that is not workable.
- *Enough volume.*
The ticks need to be loud enough so you can hear them easily while you're playing. Some metronomes have an earphone, and some have a volume control, and those can both be useful.

Electronic metronomes often have other fancy features, but we don't need them for this course. You can ignore them. If they are obtrusive and distracting, find a simpler metronome.

Types of metronomes

Now let's look at the types of metronomes available. (The images are just examples, not recommendations.)

In the past, metronomes were mechanical. Nowadays we often use electronic metronomes.

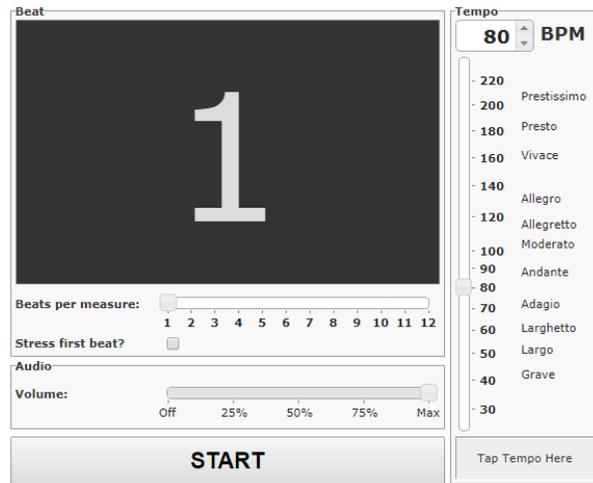
You can use any of these types provided you find one that has the important features noted above.

<p>A metronome app on your cellphone or tablet computer.</p> <p>Many are available and some are free. Try one or two and find one you like.</p> <p>^ I couldn't get Kathy's to work</p>	
<p>A metronome built into your electronic keyboard.</p> <p>If you have trouble understanding how to use it, consult your User's Manual if you have one, or find a User's Manual online.</p>	
<p>An online metronome.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RECOMMENDATION</p>

Many are available and some are free. Try one or two and find one you like.

This one worked well at the time I'm writing this:

<https://www.flutetunes.com/metronome/>



Tips:

1. Set 'Beats Per Measure' to 1 to eliminate destructive flashing numbers.
2. Set the Tempo by entering a BPM number or by using the up/down arrows.
3. You can check or uncheck 'Stress first beat?' to get a choice of two sounds.
4. Adjust 'Audio Volume'. If it's still too quiet at maximum volume, try using an earphone plugged into your computer.

An electronic metronome.

(purchase online or from your local music store)



A mechanical metronome.

(purchase online or from your local music store)



Tempo

Definition: **tempo** means how fast a piece of music is played, or the speed a metronome is set to.

The tempo (speed) markings on your metronome indicate the number of tick sounds per minute (measured as ‘BPM’ or ‘Beats Per Minute’). So if you set it to 60, you’ll get 60 ticks per minute, or 1 tick per second.

Tempo markings

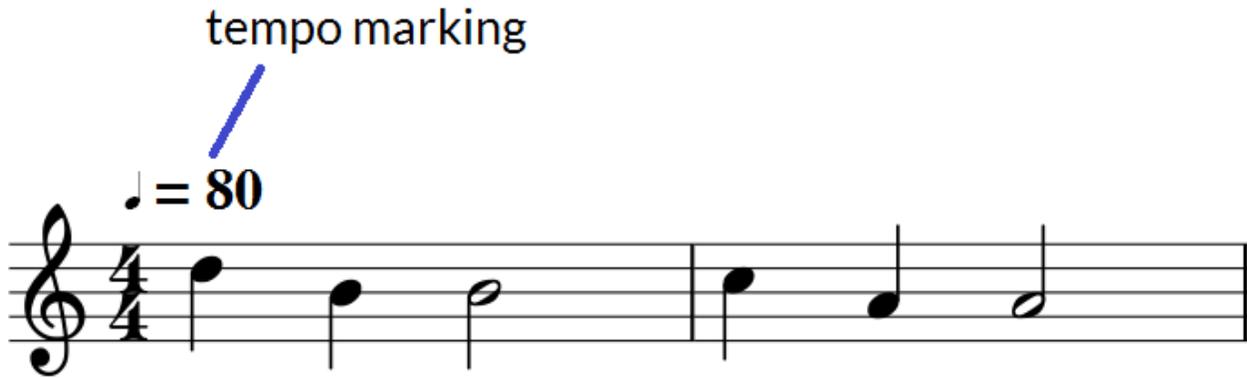
At the top of a piece of music, you will sometimes find something like this:

♩ = 80

That is called a ‘tempo marking’:

Definition: a **tempo marking** is a symbol indicating that a particular note type is to be played at a specific speed. It is usually used in conjunction with a metronome.

Here is how it looks at the start of a piece of music:



That means, 'Set your metronome to a speed of 80, and play a quarter note for each tick.' Of course a half note would get 2 ticks, and so on.

No lights please!

Some metronomes have a series of flashing lights that appear to swing back and forth with each beat. I imagine the idea is to give you a visual clue as to when the next tick sound is going to happen.

If you have lights like that, please cover them up by sticking some paper over them. The skill you're developing is being able to play in time with a regular ticking sound. Watching lights is not part of this process.

No bells please!

Some metronomes can make the sound of a bell every few ticks. We're not going to use that feature, so if your metronome does that, please turn off the bell.

Got metronome?

If you don't yet have a metronome, please get one now. You can use the above information as a guide.

Got your metronome? Good. The exercises below will help you get familiar with it.

PRACTICAL

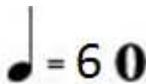
BUILD YOUR SKILL

Exercise 1:

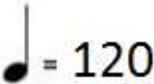
Get to know your metronome

This exercise is just to get you familiar with the metronome, your new tool.

Look at the instruction manual for your metronome if needed as you do this exercise.

METRONOME 

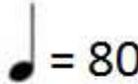
1. **Turn on and set speed.** The above means you turn on your metronome and set its speed to 60. You may need to put batteries in it or connect it to a power supply, depending on the type. Do that now.
2. **Check against the clock.** Look at a clock or watch, and verify that the metronome is ticking once every second (60 times per minute).

METRONOME  = 120

3. **Change speed.** The above means change the speed of your metronome to 120.
4. **Check against the clock.** Look at a clock or watch, and verify that the metronome is ticking twice every second (120 times per minute).
5. **Lowest speed.** Set the speed to the slowest setting. Listen to the speed of the ticks.
6. **Highest speed.** Set the speed to the fastest setting. Listen to the speed of the ticks.
7. **Different speeds.** Set the speed to a few more settings. At each setting, listen to the speed of the ticks.
8. **Turn off.** Turn off the metronome.

Exercise 2:

Tap in time with the metronome

METRONOME  = 80

1. **Turn on and set speed.** The above means turn on your metronome and set it to a speed of 80. It is now ticking 80 times per minute.

Tip: Many of the exercises and tunes in Book 3 will begin by setting a metronome speed. If the tempo I've given you (80 in this case) is too fast, meaning you can't play accurately at that speed, choose a speed that works for you.

2. **Tap.** Tap your finger on a table, in time with the metronome. That means you tap at the same time as each of the ticks made by the metronome. Do that now. Like this:

- tick & tap (at the same time)
- tick & tap (at the same time), etc.

3. **Continue.** Continue until you are consistently tapping in time with the metronome.

Exercise 3:

Count aloud in time with the metronome

This is similar to the previous exercise, but counting aloud instead of tapping.

METRONOME  = 80

1. **Count aloud.** Count aloud '1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4' at the same time as the ticks. Do that now. Like this:

- tick & say '1' (at the same time)
- tick & say '2' (at the same time), etc.

2. **Continue.** Continue until you are constantly counting in time with the metronome.

Exercise 4:

Play in time with the metronome

This is similar to the previous exercises, but playing middle C instead of tapping or counting aloud.

METRONOME  = 80

1. **Play.** Play middle C at the same time as the ticks. Like this:
 - tick & play middle C (at the same time)
 - tick & play middle C (at the same time), etc.
2. **Continue.** Continue until you are consistently playing in time with the metronome.