

hey, it's
kids!

SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!



Q: Dear Sparky:

I understand that we're supposed to beam rhythms to show the organization of beats in the measure, but is there an easy way to beam complex rhythms?

--A.Y., Owatonna, MN

A: **WOOF!***

***TRANSLATION:** NOTES SHOULD BE BEAMED IN GROUPS THAT *ILLUSTRATE THE METER*. FOR SIMPLE RHYTHMS, THIS IS PRETTY EASY TO DO; SIMPLY GROUP ANY NOTES THAT CAN BE BEAMED (EIGHTH NOTES AND SMALLER) INTO GROUPS THAT ARE *EQUAL TO THE BEAT UNIT OF THE CURRENT METER*.



FOR *COMPLEX RHYTHMS*, HOWEVER, THINGS CAN GET COMPLICATED... WHEN A RHYTHM INCLUDES THINGS LIKE *SYNCOPIATIONS* OR OTHER *OFF-BEAT FIGURES*, ILLUSTRATING THE METER MAY INVOLVE *DIVIDING NOTES* ACROSS BEAT UNITS WITH *TIES*. FORTUNATELY, THERE IS A *STEP-BY-STEP SYSTEM* FOR CORRECTLY BEAMING THESE COMPLICATED RHYTHMS!

FOR EXAMPLE, LET'S TAKE THIS RHYTHM, WHICH IS WRITTEN WITHOUT BEAMING.

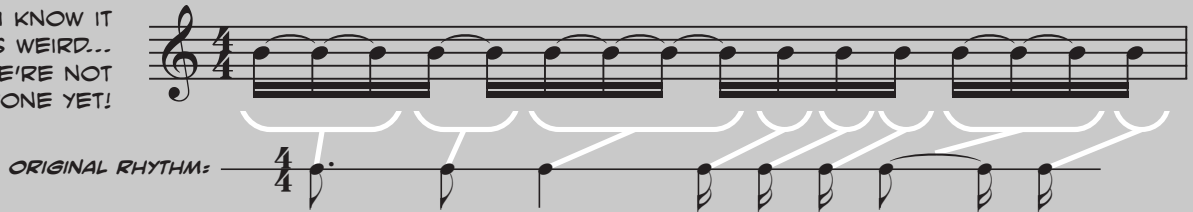


STEP 1: FIND THE SMALLEST NOTE VALUE USED, AND FILL A COMPLETE MEASURE WITH THIS TYPE OF NOTE, BEAMED IN GROUPS THAT ARE EQUAL TO A BEAT UNIT IN THE CURRENT METER.



STEP 2: ADD TIES BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL NOTES TO RECREATE THE ORIGINAL RHYTHM. MAKE SURE THAT EACH TIED GROUP CORRESPONDS TO A NOTE IN THE RHYTHM YOU STARTED WITH!

YES, I KNOW IT LOOKS WEIRD... BUT WE'RE NOT DONE YET!



STEP 3: FIND EVERY GROUP OF TWO OR MORE NOTES THAT ARE BOTH TIED TOGETHER AND BEAMED TOGETHER, AND REPLACE THEM WITH A SINGLE NOTE OF EQUIVALENT VALUE.

IF YOU HAVE NOTES THAT ARE TIED OR BEAMED, BUT NOT BOTH, THEN LEAVE THEM ALONE!



A *CORRECTLY BEAMED RHYTHM* MAY INCLUDE *TIES*, BUT IT WILL *VERY CLEARLY SHOW THE BEATS* IN THE MEASURE... WHICH, IN TURN, MAKES IT *EASIER FOR THE PERFORMER TO READ!*

DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!