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Developing Rhythms – Introducing Half Notes and Quarter Notes

Understanding and playing Half Notes

We introduced in *Lesson 1* the concept that a whole note lasts for the whole of the bar. Hence the note being called a whole note.

In common time this means that a whole note is worth 4 beats and we used power chords in *Lesson 1* to get used to playing whole notes.

Obviously, there are many more notes than just whole notes and we will steadily introduce the many notes that are available to us, so as to develop a wide rhythmic variety into our playing.

It is logical now to look at the next note, which is called a **half note**.

Unsurprisingly, this is because it is worth half of a bar of common time and is therefore worth two beats.

You will see that a half note differs from the appearance of a whole note as it has a **stem**. The stem can face upwards or downwards.

As with all our lessons, the best way to understand is to play, so we have in our first exercise below four bars of music to play. In each bar you will see that there are two half notes. You therefore need to play two chords per bar.

Now the first two bars use the chord of A5 and the second use G5. This way we can practise the chords we are already familiar with whilst getting used to these new half notes.

When playing remember to count, so that you will hit the first note on beat 1 and the second on beat 3 of each bar. Watch the video and then play along with the media files to develop your timekeeping and fluency.

Exercise 1: lesson002.igsahaqn.01



Lesson Objectives

- Understand and be able to count **half notes**.
- Understand and be able to count **quarter notes**.
- Develop our understanding of the chords A5 and G5, by using combinations of all notes learned.
- Develop greater awareness and ability to play in time with music.
- Introduce the concept of **subdividing**, to create **rhythm**.

A Half Note

Worth 2 beats



1 2 3 4
Count

Introducing the concept of Subdivisions to Develop Rhythm (playing Whole Notes and Half Notes)

So now you can play A5 and G5 using both whole notes and half notes. We should now mix up these two notes so as to create *rhythm*. There is a lot of rhythmic work to be done on the guitar and we develop rhythm by using different *subdivisions*.

Subdivisions are the different ways we break up the bar with notes. In other words, we have divided the bar into one note (whole note) and we have also divided the bar into two notes (using half notes)... subdividing!

So let's now look at our next example which requires you to play both whole and half notes. If you look at the exercise below you play two bars of half notes with an A5 chord, followed by two bars of G5. Now the first bar of G5 has two half notes and the second has a long power chord played for the whole bar using a whole note. Repeat the exercise over and over to develop your ability to change from playing half notes to whole notes.

Ensure you do this accurately by counting very carefully and using the multimedia files as always.

Exercise 2: lesson002.igsihagn.02

The musical notation shows a sequence of four measures in common time (C). The first two measures are for an A5 chord, each containing two half notes. The first measure is counted 1 2 3 4 and the second is counted 1 2 3 4. The last two measures are for a G5 chord. The third measure contains two half notes and is counted 1 2 3 4. The fourth measure contains a whole note and is counted 1 2 3 4.

Understanding and Playing Quarter Notes

So let's quickly revise to enable us to develop our understanding of how notes develop their values and names:

1. A whole note is worth a whole bar and is worth 4 beats.
2. A half note is worth half of a bar and is accordingly worth 2 beats.
3. Therefore it follows that a **quarter note** is worth a quarter of a bar and is worth 1 beat.

So where you have one whole note in a bar, you have two half notes and four quarter notes.

A quarter note has a stem like the half note, but you will see that its note head is completely filled in, defining it as a quarter note. Look at our example below and compare to the appearance of whole notes and half notes.

A bar of common time consisting only of quarter notes will look like this:



A Quarter Note

Worth one beat

Playing Quarter Notes

In a bar of common time containing only quarter notes the guitar will be struck four times.

Practise playing quarter notes using the example below. The exercise uses a bar of A5 and a bar of G5. Count out loud and consistently and use the multimedia files as always to support you.

Exercise 3: lesson002.igsihagn.03



Developing rhythmic rock guitar playing (using whole notes, half notes and quarter notes)

Now that we understand whole notes, half notes and quarter notes, let's put them all together in a series of exercises that helps us develop our ability to play rhythmically and also enables us to practise changing chords smoothly.

Now try the following examples combining all the note lengths we've learned so far with both chords.

It may be useful to tap or clap the rhythms prior to attempting the chord changes which accompany the various rhythms. The first two examples have the count written underneath to help at the beginning. Thereafter, you need to be able to read the music yourself.

Listen and play along to each of the following examples. This series of exercises will help you become comfortable with your chords and increase the fluency with which you play them. Use the multimedia files as always.

Exercise 4: lesson002.igsihagn.04

COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Exercise 5: lesson002.igsihagn.05

COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Exercise 6: lesson002.igsihagn.06

COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Exercise 7: lesson002.igsihagn.07

Musical notation for Exercise 7: A5 G5 A5 G5. The notation shows four measures in 4/4 time. The first measure has a half note A5, the second has a half note G5, the third has a half note A5, and the fourth has a half note G5. Below the staff, the counts are: COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.

Exercise 8: lesson002.igsihagn.08

Musical notation for Exercise 8: A5 G5 A5 A5. The notation shows four measures in 4/4 time. The first measure has a half note A5, the second has a half note G5, the third has a half note A5, and the fourth has a half note A5. Below the staff, the counts are: COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.

Exercise 9: lesson002.igsihagn.09

Musical notation for Exercise 9: A5 G5 A5 G5. The notation shows four measures in 4/4 time. The first measure has a half note A5, the second has a half note G5, the third has a half note A5, and the fourth has a half note G5. Below the staff, the counts are: COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.

Exercise 10: lesson002.igsihagn.10

Musical notation for Exercise 10: A5 G5 A5 G5. The notation shows four measures in 4/4 time. The first measure has a half note A5, the second has a half note G5, the third has a half note A5, and the fourth has a half note G5. Below the staff, the counts are: COUNT 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.

Practising

As with all exercises throughout the course, you need to play them round and round concentrating on playing in time and moving as fluidly as you can between chords. The more you practise, the better you will get.

Make sure that you start slowly and take the time to watch the videos and listen to the play along files before playing along.