Simple and Compound Time

Name Form

A **TIME SIGNATURE** shows the number of beats in a bar. A time signature is two numbers placed one above the other at the beginning of a piece of music. The **TOP NUMBER** tells us how many beats there are in each bar; the **BOTTOM NUMBER** tells us what sort of beat to count. A piece with crotchet beats has 4 on the bottom line of its time signature. Minim beats have 2 on the bottom. Quaver beats have 8 on the bottom.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Write out the meanings of the following time signatures in full. The first one has been done for you.



**Four crotchets beats in a bar**

In **SIMPLE TIME**, each beat is divisible into **HALVES**. In **COMPOUND TIME**, each beat (you can see that all the sets of three quavers below equal a dotted crotchet) divides into **THIRDS**. It is this dividing of the beat into three which gives music written in compound time a dancing rhythm – lilting if the speed is moderate or slow and skipping if the music moves swiftly.

 

**ACTIVITY 2**

Look back at the time signatures given in activity 1. Add them to the following table depending on whether they are **SIMPLE TIME** signatures or **COMPOUND TIME** signatures.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SIMPLE TIME SIGNATURES** | **COMPOUND TIME SIGNATURES** |
|  |  |

**ACTIVITY 3**



**ACTIVITY 4**

Add the missing bar lines at the appropriate places, noting the time signature carefully.



Simple and Compound Time

**ANSWERS**

**ACTIVITY 1**

Write out the meanings of the following time signatures in full. The first one has been done for you.



**Six quaver beats in a bar**

**Twelve quaver beats in a bar**

**Nine quaver beats in a bar**

**Two minim beats in a bar**

**Three quaver beats in a bar**

**Three crotchet beats in a bar**

**Two crotchet beats in a bar**

**Four crotchets beats in a bar**

**ACTIVITY 2**

Look back at the time signatures given in activity 1. Add them to the following table depending on whether they are **SIMPLE TIME** signatures or **COMPOUND TIME** signatures.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SIMPLE TIME SIGNATURES** | **COMPOUND TIME SIGNATURES** |
| **4 3 2 2 3****4 4 4 4 8** | **6 9 12****8 8 8** |

**ACTIVITY 3**



**ACTIVITY 4**

Add the missing bar lines at the appropriate places, noting the time signature carefully.

