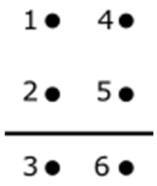
Chapter 1

Formation of the Braille Note
Time Signatures
Bar Lines

1.1 Formation of the Braille Note

The braille cell consists of six dots, compactly arranged so that the braille reader's finger can easily encompass the entire cell. From the top down, the dots on the left-hand side of the cell are numbered 123; the dots on the right-hand side are numbered 456.

In braille music, a single braille cell shows both the name and the time value of the note. The dots in the upper two-thirds of the cell (dots 1245) show the name of the note. The dots in the bottom third of the cell (dots 36) show the time value of the note. In looking at a printed note, the braillist first considers the name of the note and then the time value.



Name is shown here (dots 1245)

Time value is shown here (dots 36)

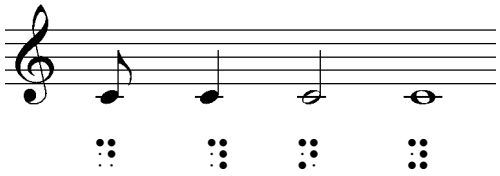
Representing each of the seven notes in the music scale, the upper dots remain constant, regardless of the time value. For example, the note C is always represented by dots 145. Dots 36 change according to the time value of the C.

Four things may be done with the lower dots 36 to show time value.

1. Both may be omitted
2. Dot 6 alone may be used
3. Dot 3 alone may be used
4. Both dots may be used

Each procedure shows a different time value according to the following table:

Upper Dots		Lower Dots		Time Value
Note name	+	None	=	Eighth note
Note name	+	6	=	Quarter note
Note name	+	3	=	Half note
Note name	+	3 and 6	=	Whole note



Chapters 2-5 will introduce these four basic note values. Transcription of smaller value notes—16th, 32nd, 64th, and 128th—will be explained in a later chapter. Throughout this book and in MBC-2015, the British equivalents for note values are as follows:

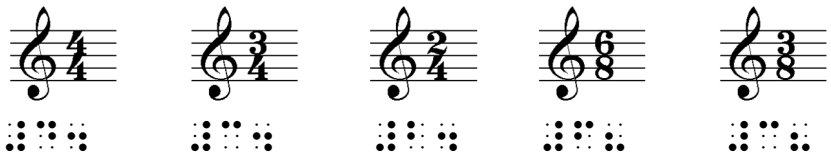
Whole note = semibreve
Half note = minim
Quarter note = crotchet
Eighth note = quaver
Sixteenth note = semiquaver
Thirty-second note = demisemiquaver
Sixty-fourth note = hemidemisemiquaver

1.2 Time Signatures

The following symbols and procedures will enable you to transcribe the most common time signatures encountered in the drills and exercises in the opening chapters of this textbook. Later chapters will explain how to transcribe changes in time signature that occur during a composition or exercise. MBC-2015, Table 7 and Section 7, discuss the transcription of unusual time signatures.

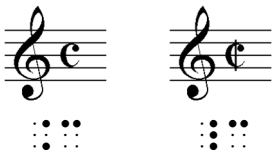
In braille music, the upper number of a typical time signature is represented by the numeric indicator and an upper number (a number formed in the upper two-thirds of the braille cell). The lower number of the time signature is represented by a lower number (a number formed in the lower two-thirds of the braille cell). A numeric indicator is not used for this lower number. The upper and lower numbers are brailled consecutively, without an intervening space.

Example 1.2.1



In braille, as in print, special symbols are used for common time (four-four time) and cut time (two-two time).

Example 1.2.2



The time signature, in braille, is centered on the line above the first line of music at the beginning of a composition and will be shown in all braille examples.

1.3 Bar Lines

Music notation is divided into measures by the single bar line. This is represented in braille by a single blank cell between measures.

New sections of music are usually indicated in print by a Sectional Double Bar. The end of a composition is shown with the Final Double Bar. These bar lines are brailled immediately after the music in the measure before the bar line, without an intervening space.

Single Bar Line  single blank cell

Sectional Double Bar 

Final Double Bar 

1.4 Braille Music

The next step is to learn the names of the notes and begin transcribing music. Braille examples will show you the proper way to transcribe the music as each new notation is introduced. You are encouraged to read and transcribe each example. Drills are presented at the end of each chapter as a practice tool to reinforce your skills before you submit the exercises to your instructor.