

Dotted notes & ties

Two ways of making a note longer than its plain value. A dot adds half again to the note it follows. A tie joins two written notes into one held sound.

THE RULE

A dot adds **half the value of the note again**. A dotted minim is a minim plus a crotchet. A second dot adds half of the first dot — a quarter of the original.

Minim	2 beats		
Dotted minim	2 beats	+ 1	
Double-dotted minim	2 beats	+ 1	+ 1/2

EVERY DOTTED VALUE, COUNTED IN CROTCHETS

DOTTED NOTE	PLAIN VALUE	DOT ADDS	TOTAL	HEARD AS
Dotted semibreve	4	2	6	A whole bar and a half of 4/4
Dotted minim	2	1	3	A full bar of 3/4
Dotted crotchet	1	1/2	1 1/2	One beat of 6/8
Dotted quaver	1/2	1/4	3/4	The long half of a skipping rhythm
Dotted semiquaver	1/4	1/8	3/8	Fast dotted figures, fanfares

Rests take dots in exactly the same way: a dotted crotchet rest is one and a half beats of silence.

COUNTING THE TWO COMMON DOTTED RHYTHMS

DOTTED CROTCHET + QUAVER

1 2 &

a

Two beats in total. Hold through beat two and move on the second half of it.

DOTTED QUAVER + SEMIQUAVER

1 e &

a

One beat in total — the springy long-short of a march.

TIE, SLUR OR DOT?

TIE

A curve between *two notes of the same pitch*. Play the first, hold for both. The only way to carry a note across a barline.

SLUR

The same curve over *different pitches*. Not a length mark at all — it asks for smooth, joined playing.

DOT

Lengthens one note within a bar. A staccato dot sits *above or below* the notehead and means the opposite: short.

When you must tie: a dot cannot cross a barline, and it cannot make lengths like five quavers. Tie instead — and inside a bar, tie so the beats stay visible to the eye: in 4/4 never hide the start of beat three.