

Note Grouping & Beaming

Music Theory Foundations — Quick Reference

Beams (the thick lines joining quavers and shorter notes) should make the beat structure of a bar easy to see at a glance. Good beaming groups notes by beat — it should never hide where the beats fall.

Avoid: Beaming That Crosses the Beat



Here the beaming groups notes awkwardly across beat 2, making the rhythm harder to read at a glance.

Better: Beaming That Shows the Beat



The same rhythm, now beamed in clear beat-sized groups — two quavers for beat 1, a crotchet for beat 2, and four semiquavers for beat 3.

Key Rules to Remember

- In simple time (2/4, 3/4, 4/4), beam notes in groups that add up to one full beat at a time.
- Never let a beam obscure the beat — a reader should be able to see where each beat starts just from the beaming.
- A single note on its own beat (like a crotchet) is not beamed to anything either side.
- This becomes especially important in compound time (Grade 3), where notes are grouped in 3s rather than 2s or 4s.