

The Eastman System

The Eastman System is a counting system developed at the Eastman School of Music in New York; its simple rules systematically cover all possible rhythmic combinations.

1. All notes on a beat get the beat number.
2. Notes on the upbeat are “te.”
3. A note on the second third of a beat is “la” and a note on the third third of a beat is “le.” (In other words, triplets go “...la le.”)
4. A note on the second fourth of a beat is “ti.” (In other words, sixteenth notes are “...ti te ta.”)
5. All other notes are “ta.”

Examples

Rule #1.

1 2 4 2 3 4 2 4 1 1 3

Rule #2.

1 te 2 4 te te 2 3 te 4 2 4 te 1 1 3 te 4 te

Rule #3.

1 la le 2 4 la le 1 le 2 3 le 4 2 la 3 4 la 1 la le 2 la le 3 le la

Rule #4.

1 ti te ta 2 3 4 ti te ta 1 te ta 2 3 ti te 4 1 ta 2 ti te ta 3 ti ta 4 1 2 ti 3

Rule #5.

1 ti te ta 2 3 4 ta ta ta ta 1 te ta 2 ta ta ta ta ta 3 1 la le 2 ta la te le ta 1 te 2 te le