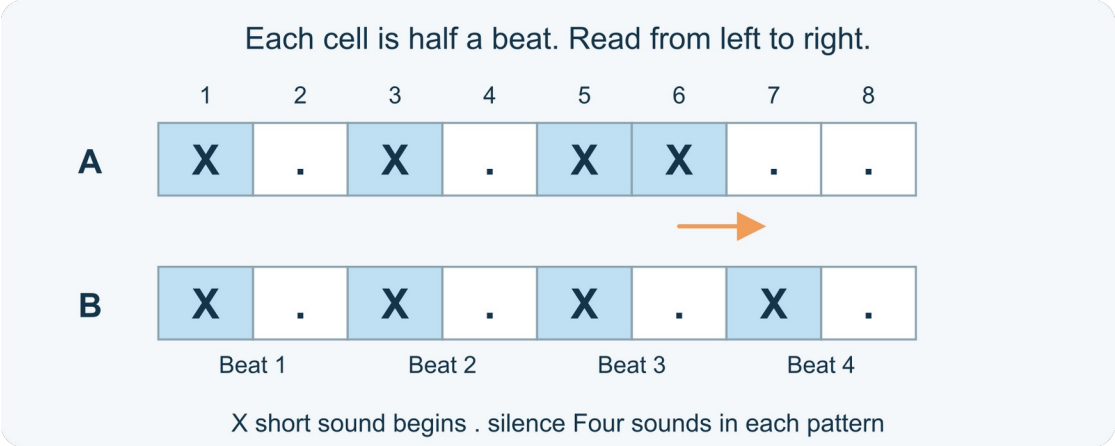
Remix an eight cell rhythm

Can two rhythms have the same length and number of sounds but different patterns?

Read an original visual rhythm, move one sound and explain the change. Sound-making is entirely optional.

Make | 10-20 minutes, or one silent comparison | Paper and a pen or pencil, A finger for silent tracing; no instrument or audio app needed

Start here Draw eight equal boxes in a row. Each box represents half a beat, so all eight fill four beats. Write A as X . X . X X . .



Four beats, four sounds, different timing

1 Set a clear legend

Read left to right. X means one short sound begins at the start of that half-beat cell; a dot means silence for that cell. There are no held notes in this little notation. You can simply point to each cell without making sound.

2 Read the first pattern

Number the cells 1 to 8. In A, sounds begin in cells 1, 3, 5 and 6. Count four sound beginnings across eight half-beat cells. The total duration is four beats.

3 Move one sound

Copy A as B, then move the X from cell 6 to cell 7. B is X . X . X . X . Keep the cell length and reading pace the same. Compare by tracing; gentle tapping is optional.

4 Explain what changed

Both patterns contain four sound beginnings and last four beats under this legend. The timing differs because one sound starts later. Keep, redraw or change the pattern; there is no performance test.

Original pattern comparison

These two short patterns were written for this activity. They do not reproduce a song or report a listener study. One cell is half a beat, and a dot is silence.

• A: X . X . X X . . - sound beginnings in cells 1, 3, 5 and 6.

• B: X . X . X . X . - sound beginnings in cells 1, 3, 5 and 7.

• Each has four sound beginnings and eight half-beat cells: four beats. Only the sound in cell 6 moved, to cell 7.

What this example can show Equal duration and equal sound count do not make the rhythms identical. No particular mood, listener preference or musical ability follows from this comparison.

A different way

Read the numbered cells silently, trace the example or dictate where an X should move. Keeping a steady performed beat is unnecessary.

If you want to go further

Write a new legend in which one larger box lasts a whole beat. Show how two half-beat cells fit inside it, without silently changing the original pattern's duration.

Something to notice

What stayed the same even though the rhythm changed?

Read or explore more

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The Open University, OpenLearn Repetition, contrast and variation

https://www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=139369&section=3.1

MIT OpenCourseWare Basic Musical Terms Definitions

https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/21m-011-introduction-to-western-music-fall-2024/pages/week-1-basic-musical-terms-definitions/