

Simple & Compound Metre

Music

Why 6/8 is not 3/4, and how to tell which one you are in.

Simple — beat splits in 2

- 2/4, 3/4, 4/4
- One beat = one quarter note
- Counted 1 and 2 and
- Top number = number of beats

Compound — beat splits in 3

- 6/8, 9/8, 12/8
- One beat = one dotted quarter
- Counted 1 2 3 4 5 6, stressed 1 and 4
- Top number $\div 3$ = number of beats

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

6/8 has two beats, not six. The six counts the subdivisions inside those two.

3/4 and 6/8 contain the same six eighth notes. They are grouped 2+2+2 and 3+3, and they feel nothing alike.