TIME SIGNATURES

A **time signature** tells you how music is organized in time—how many beats are in each measure and which note value gets one beat. It is expressed in a fraction, where the **top number** shows how many beats are in a measure, and the **bottom number** shows what kind of note gets the beat (for example, 4 = quarter note, 8 = eighth note). In **4/4 time**, there are four beats per measure and you count "1-2-3-4." In **3/4 time**, there are three beats per measure and you count "1-2-3." In **6/8 time**, there are six eighth-note beats, often felt as two main pulses with added subdivisions, counted "**1**-2-3-**4**-5-6" or "**1**-la-li **2**-la-li." Counting time signatures helps musicians stay together and feel the rhythm consistently.

Our chord charts will often notate beats using slashes. Here are some examples:

(4/4) | G / / / | / / C / | G / / / | / / / / |

You'll notice that the chord replaces a slash or beat in the measure, meaning that you would change chords on that beat and include it in your counting. In the second measure of the example above, you play the C chord on beat 3.

(3/4) | D / A | G / / | Bm / A | G / / |

The ¾ time signature is less common in our library, but it is often found in hymns and other traditional songs we use. In this example, the A chord is played on beat 3 of the measure, while the G chord gets the entire next measure of 3 beats.

(6/8) | D / | Bm / | G A | D / | / / |

In 6/8, the slashes represent the two main pulses, 1 and 4, rather than notating each eighth note with a slash. In measure 3, the G chord is played for 3 eighth notes ("1 la li"), and the A chord is played for the last 3 eighth notes ("2 la li").