

CONDUCTING PATTERNS

Music directors help people sing together. They do this by showing the beat of a hymn through arm movements that follow certain patterns. The patterns are based on the number of beats per measure as shown by the top number of the time signature. The four beat patterns that are the most common in conducting are the three-beat pattern, the four-beat pattern, the two-beat pattern, and the six-beat pattern.

Note: Every beat pattern illustration in this manual has small numbered circles that show where the beats actually occur in the pattern. Bounce your hand lightly at the circles to emphasize each beat. You will need to move slightly faster in some parts of the pattern than in others so that the beats keep a steady rhythm.

Time signature	Number of beats per measure	Beat pattern
$\frac{3}{4}$	3	
$\frac{4}{4}$	4	
$\frac{2}{4}$	2	
$\frac{6}{8}$	6	

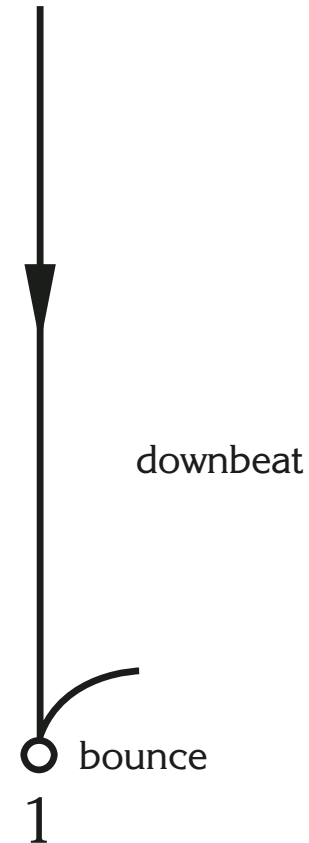
The Downbeat

Each beat pattern begins with a strong downward arm motion. This shows the downbeat. It occurs on the first beat of every measure, regardless of the time signature.

To practice the downbeat, stand with your feet slightly apart, extend your right arm forward from your shoulder, and bend your elbow. Keep your hand relaxed and turn your palm slightly down. Make a strong movement downward, ending in a little bounce at about waist level.



Practice this motion, saying “one” as you make the bounce at the bottom.

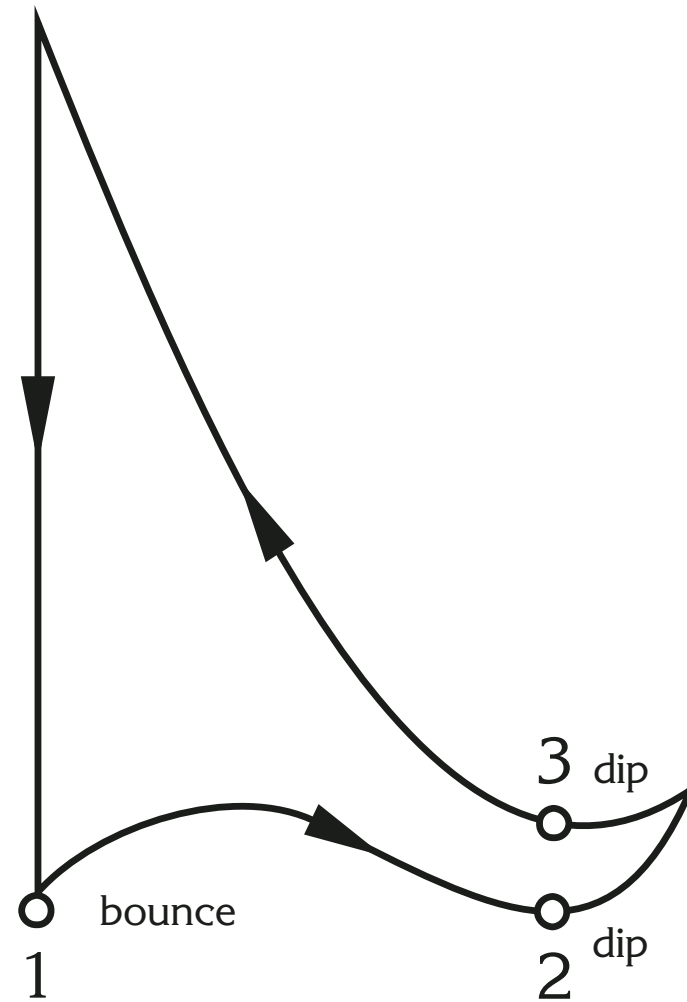


Listen to **11** on the audiocassette (“Sweet Is the Work” [*Hymns*, no. 147]). Count out loud with the voice on the tape. Practice the downbeats by bringing your arm down every time you say “one.”

The Three-beat Pattern

For songs that have three beats per measure, use the three-beat pattern. Bring your arm down for the first beat, move your arm to the right for the second beat, and bring it back up to where you started for the third beat. Emphasize the little bounce on beat one and the dips on beats two and three. Each bounce and dip, shown by a circle on the diagram, is called an **ictus**. The ictus shows clearly where the beat is and emphasizing them makes your conducting easy to follow.

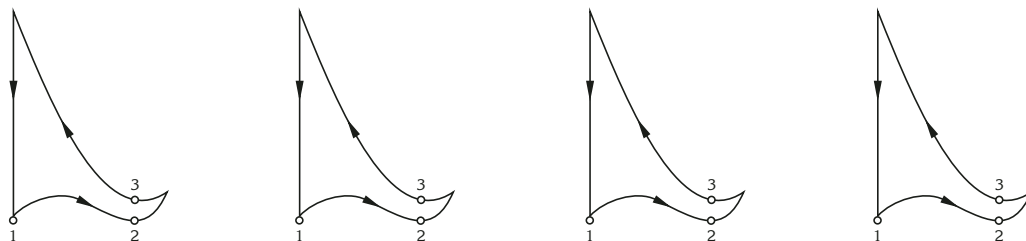
Practice the three-beat pattern a few times, making your movements smooth and even. Keep your shoulder and wrist still (the wrist bends only slightly to emphasize the beats) and let all the movement come from your elbow and forearm.



Sweet Is the Work

(Hymns, no. 147)

Practice the three-beat pattern to **12** ("Sweet Is the Work" [Hymns, no. 147]) on the audiocassette. Follow the notes on this page as you practice.



Continue practicing with the following hymns on the audiocassette. Concentrate on your conducting rather than on trying to read the music.

13 "Come, Follow Me" (Hymns, no. 116)

14 "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee" (Hymns, no. 141)

15 "In Humility, Our Savior" (Hymns, no. 172)

16 "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth" (Hymns, no. 196)

17 "Do What Is Right" (Hymns, no. 237)

18 "Teach Me to Walk in the Light" (Hymns, no. 304)

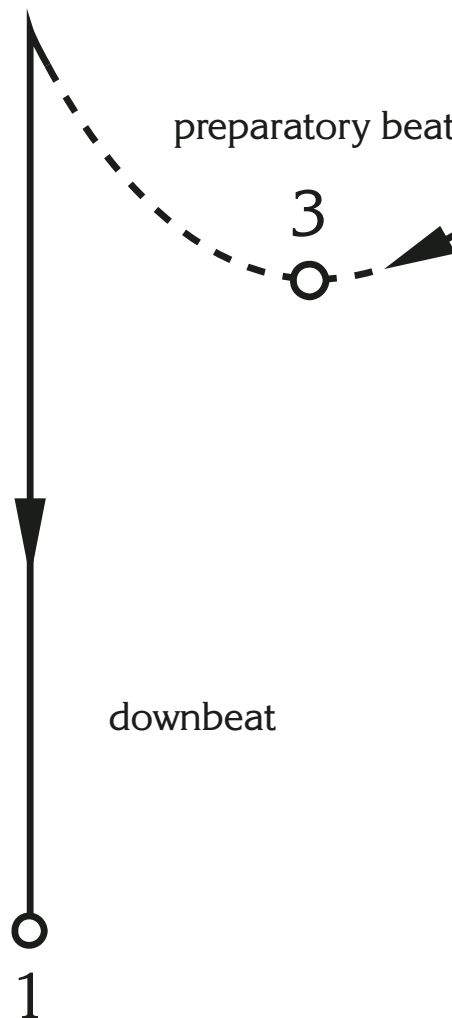
THE PREPARATORY BEAT

The **preparatory beat** is a small arm motion just before the first beat of a hymn. It tells the singers that the music is about to begin. It allows them to take a breath and begin singing all together.

The accompanist usually plays an introduction to each song or hymn. During the last measure of the introduction, hold your arm out in the conducting stance. When the introduction ends, make the preparatory beat and begin the regular beat pattern.



In $\frac{3}{4}$ time, if *beat one* is the first beat of the hymn, then *beat three* is the preparatory beat.



To practice the preparatory beat, stand in the ready position (as illustrated). Think “one, two,” bring your arm up for the preparatory beat as you say “three,” and then down for “one.” Practice this pattern, counting out loud, until you are comfortable doing the preparatory beat.

Practice starting the hymn “Sweet Is the Work” (*Hymns*, no. 147) by getting in the ready position, then conducting the preparatory beat and the first line of music. Sing the words as you conduct.

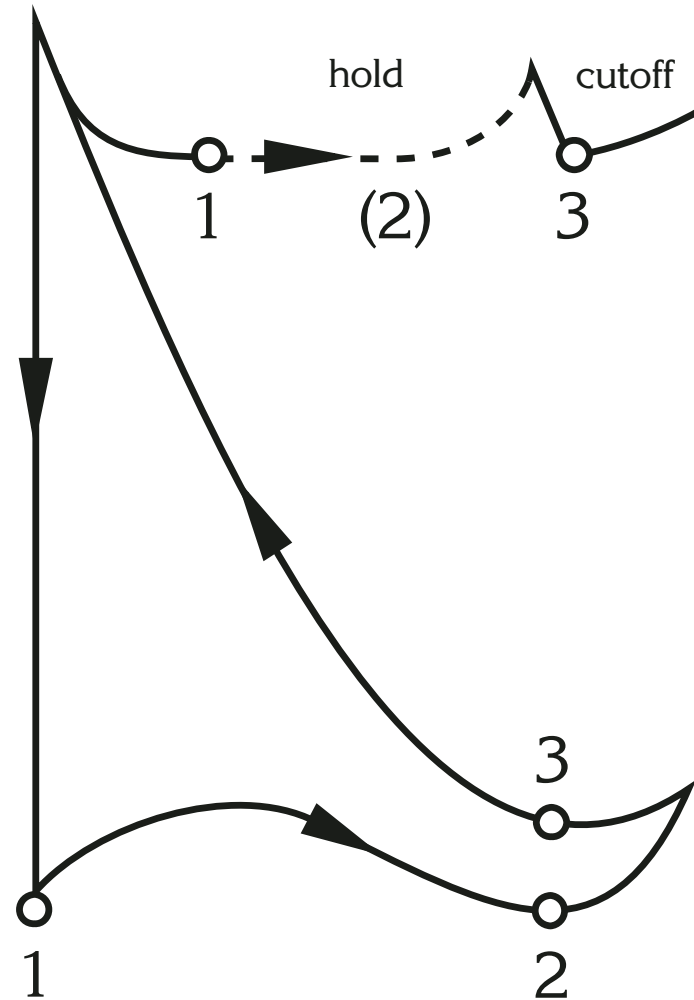
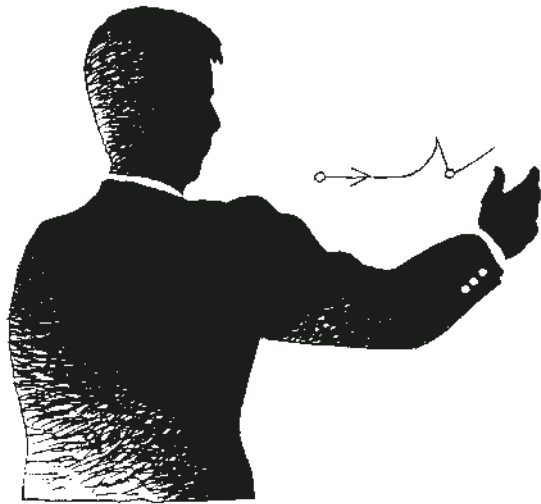
The image shows four diagrams of arm movement for a preparatory beat. Each diagram shows a vertical line with a downward arrow, a curved line with an upward arrow, and a dashed line with a downward arrow. The numbers 1, 2, and 3 are placed below the diagrams to indicate the count. Below the diagrams is a musical staff in 3/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F#4, and a half note G4. The lyrics "Sweet is the work, my God, my King," are written below the staff.

Repeat this several times. You could also practice with audiocassette examples **14** and **15**, “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” (*Hymns*, no. 141) and “In Humility, Our Savior” (*Hymns*, no. 172).

THE FINAL CUTOFF

The final cutoff is the gesture you make during the last beat of a hymn and tells the singers when to stop singing.

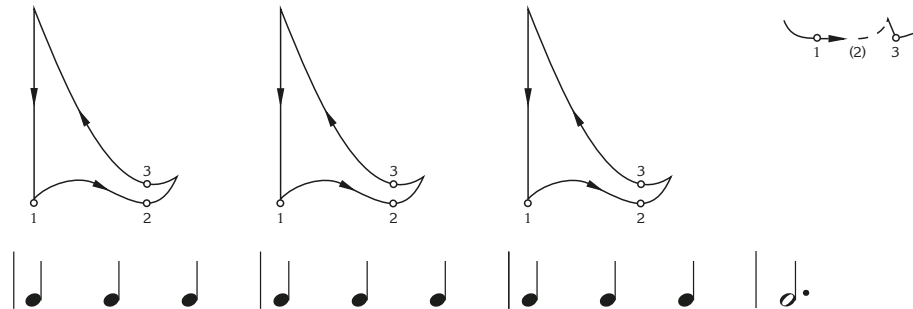
To prepare for the cutoff, stop the beat pattern at the last syllable of the text whether it comes at the beginning of the measure or in the middle. Hold your arm out from your body and a little to the right. Hold this position to the end of the last measure, raise your arm, and do the cutoff by making the gesture as illustrated.



To practice the final cutoff, stand in the ready position, raise your arm slightly, and make the cutoff by bringing your arm down and bouncing it to the right. This need not be a large gesture, but it should be a definite one (the bounce is where the music ends).

The cutoff motion should come from the elbow and shoulder, not the wrist. When the movement is completed, lower your arm to your side. Practice the final cutoff a few times, making your motions smooth.

Now suppose that you are conducting the last four measures of a hymn. Count “one, two, three” as you conduct three measures and as you hold your arm in the ready position during the last measure. To conclude the hymn, do a cutoff as you say “three” on the last measure.



Repeat this until you are comfortable with it. Count evenly until the final measure when you may slow the beat slightly. Do this exercise with “Sweet Is the Work,” shown on page 21. You could also practice the final cutoff on “Come, Follow Me” (*Hymns*, no. 116), “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth” (*Hymns*, no. 196), and “Do What Is Right” (*Hymns*, no. 237).

And talk of all thy truths at night.

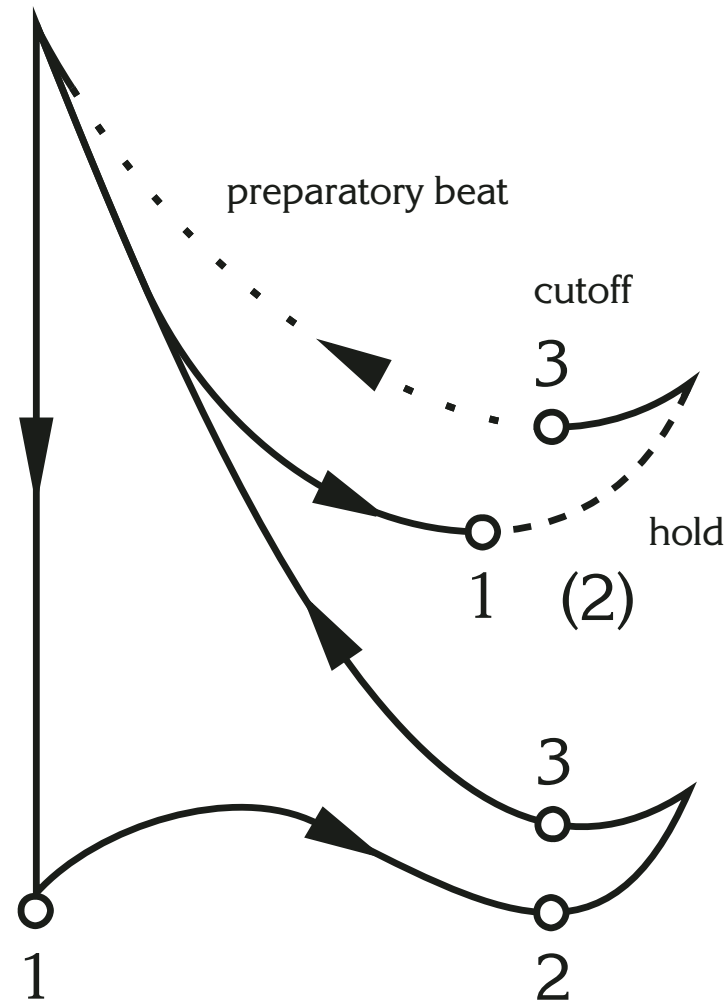
1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

THE CUTOFF BETWEEN VERSES

The cutoff between verses is different from the final cutoff because it includes a preparatory beat that leads into a new verse.

Prepare for this cutoff just as you do for the final cutoff, stopping the beat pattern and holding your arm still as you come to the last syllable of the text. Hold this position to the end of the last measure; then do the cutoff and the preparatory beat as shown.

To practice the cutoff and preparatory beat, stand in the ready position as if holding the final syllable. Make the cutoff by raising your arm slightly and then bringing it down to the left in the cutoff gesture. The arm comes up after the bounce to start the preparatory beat, then straight down for the downbeat of the new verse. Practice this cutoff, preparatory beat, and downbeat a few times. Let your motions flow smoothly from one movement to the next.



Now practice counting while doing the cutoff, preparatory beat, and downbeat. Say “one, two, three” while conducting a measure. Then hold for the last measure, counting “one, two,” raise your arm, and on “three” make the cutoff and the preparatory beat. Continue on to the downbeat and count through two new measures.

Slow the beat at the end of one verse and hesitate slightly before the preparatory beat of the next to give singers time to move their eyes to the top of the page and catch a breath between verses.

Repeat this exercise until you are comfortable with these skills. Once you learn them, you can direct a hymn from beginning to end. Using the skills you have learned, conduct all the verses of **19** “Sweet Is the Work” (*Hymns*, no. 147). You could direct your class or teacher or sing to yourself.

Other hymns you could direct are—

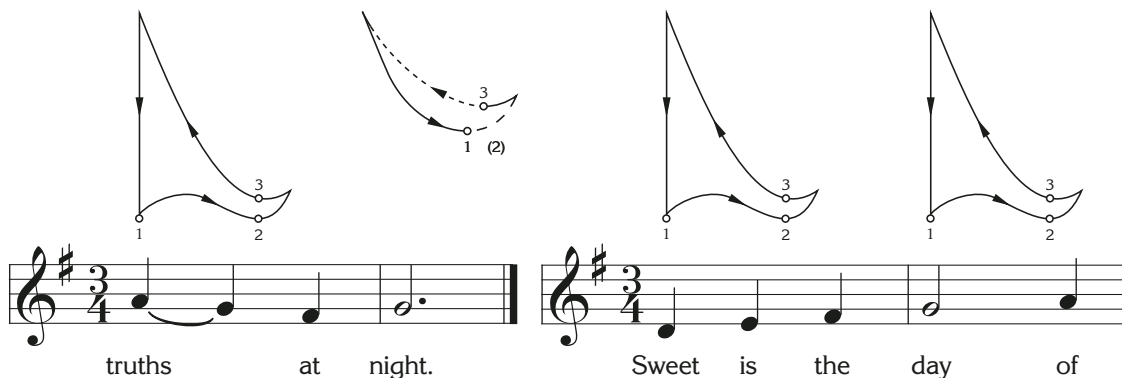
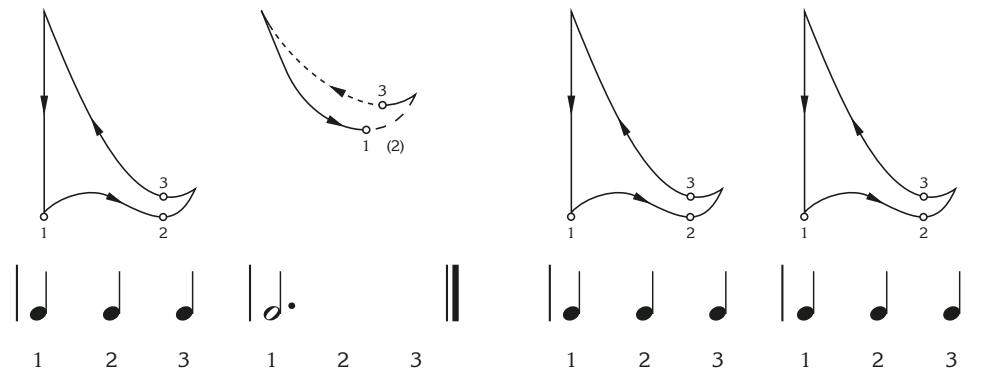
“Come, Follow Me” (*Hymns*, no. 116)

“Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” (*Hymns*, no. 141)

“In Humility, Our Savior” (*Hymns*, no. 172)

“Jesus, Once of Humble Birth” (*Hymns*, no. 196)

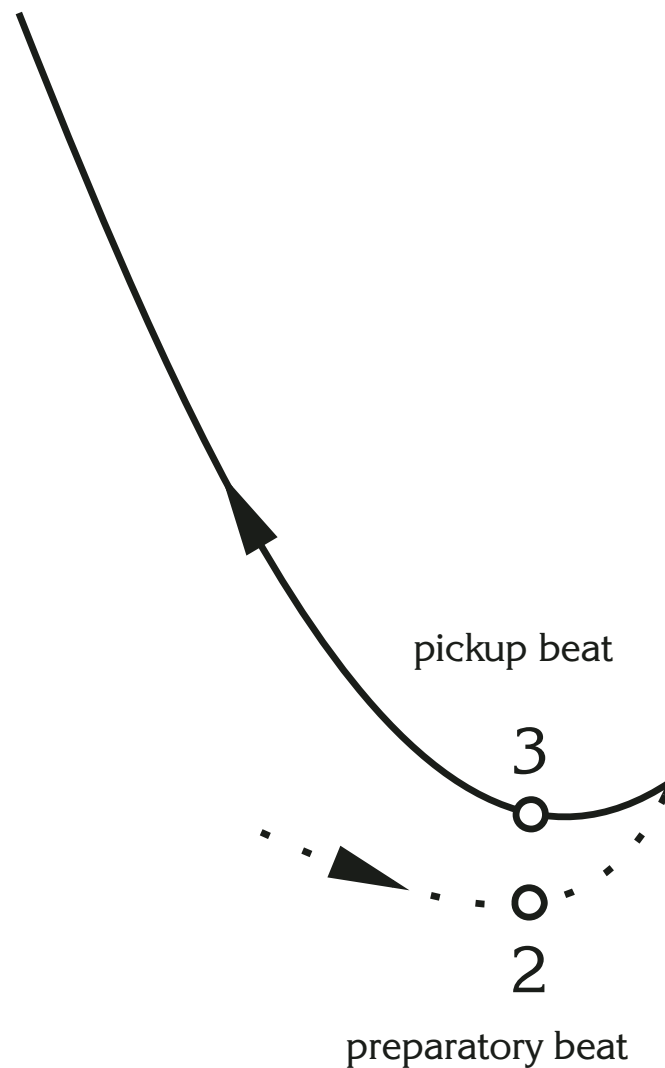
“Do What Is Right” (*Hymns*, no. 237)



PICKUP BEATS

Look at “How Gentle God’s Commands” (*Hymns*, no. 125). The first note of the hymn (the note to start singing on) is beat three of the measure. (The first two beats are in the last measure of the hymn.) Beginning notes in partial measures are called *pickup beats*. Pickup beats are common in hymns. They allow the meter of the music to match the natural meter of the hymn text.

When a $\frac{3}{4}$ time hymn begins with a pickup on beat three, the preparatory beat is on beat two. Practice by holding your arm in ready position, then moving your arm to the right for beat two (the preparatory beat) and then up for beat three (the pickup beat). Follow through with the pattern a few times. Repeat this exercise until you feel comfortable with it.



Practice the preparatory beat and pickup beat while conducting and singing the first line of "How Gentle God's Commands" (*Hymns*, no. 125). You could also practice the preparatory beat and pickup beat for the following hymns:

"I Need Thee Every Hour" (*Hymns*, no. 98)

"Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide"
(*Hymns*, no. 165)

"I Stand All Amazed" (*Hymns*, no. 193)

"How Great the Wisdom and the Love"
(*Hymns*, no. 195)

"Away in a Manger" (*Hymns*, no. 206)

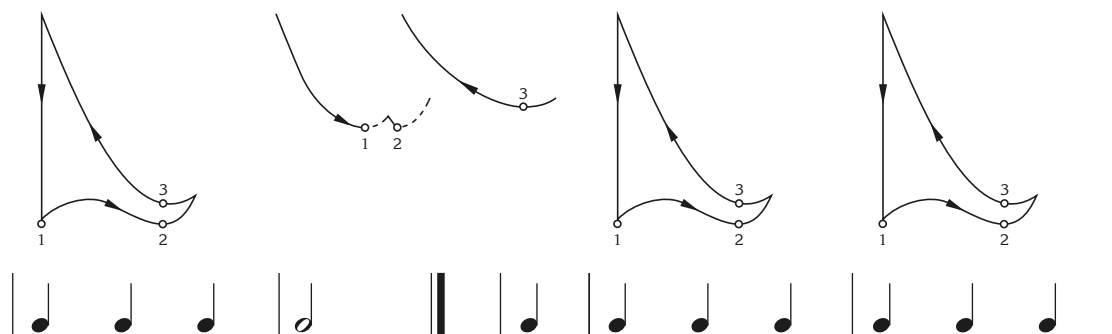
The image shows a musical score for the first line of the hymn "How Gentle God's Commands". The score is written in 3/4 time and features a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is a simple, flowing line of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, there are six conducting cues, each consisting of a downward arrow followed by a curved line that rises and then falls, with a small circle at the peak. Below the staff, the lyrics are written: "How gen - tle God's com-mands! How kind his pre - cepts".

THE CUTOFF BETWEEN VERSES IN HYMNS WITH PICKUP BEATS

In hymns with pickup beats, the cutoff between verses resembles the final cutoff except that the motion continues to the right to form a preparatory beat.

To practice this motion, stand in the ready position as if holding the final syllable of a verse. Make the regular cutoff motion but bounce your arm to the right. Continue the motion to the right as a preparatory beat, then to the left and up for the pickup beat, then straight down for a downbeat. Practice this cutoff, preparatory beat, pickup beat, and downbeat a few times.

Continue practicing these actions by conducting and counting two measures as if you were ending one verse and two measures as if starting a new one. Conduct a measure, then hold on “one,” raise your arm, and on “two” make the cutoff and the preparatory beat. Hesitate slightly and on “three” bring your arm up to the left, then down on “one.” Follow through by conducting two measures.



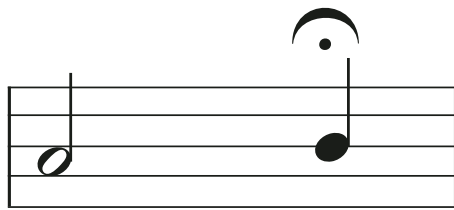
As you have already learned, you should slow the beat slightly at the end of one verse and hesitate before the pickup of the next to let the singers find the top of the page and take a breath. The hesitation should not interrupt the flow of the rhythm.

Using these skills from verse to verse, practice directing entire hymns that start with pickup beats. Practice conducting all verses of **20** “How Gentle God’s Commands” (*Hymns*, no. 125). Choose other hymns to practice from the list on page 29.

THE FERMATA

A **fermata** (\frown) placed above a note tells you to hold that note for an extra beat or two.

In the hymn “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” (*Hymns*, no. 19), there is a fermata over the last syllable of the second line: “We thank thee for sending the gospel.” The note above the syllable *pel* is a quarter note with a fermata. The quarter note usually gets one beat, but the fermata tells us to hold the note longer than usual.



gos - pel

While conducting, treat the fermata like a cutoff. When you come to the fermata, hold your arm still in the ready position. At the end of the fermata do a cutoff followed by a preparatory beat, then continue the beat pattern for the notes after the fermata. Do not pause between the cutoff and the preparatory beat; the “tail” of the cutoff actually becomes the preparatory beat.

Practice directing these four measures until you can direct the fermata with ease.

Sav - ior from a - bove To suf - fer,

21 Direct “How Great the Wisdom and the Love” (*Hymns*, no. 195) in its entirety.

Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing

(Hymns, no. 163)

Say the rhythmic names of the notes below.

24 Sing them while clapping a steady beat.

