Grace Notes

tiny crushed notes that decorate the melody — ornaments with no beat of their own

A grace note is a decoration, not a beat-holder. It is printed tiny with a **slash** through its stem, and it **steals no time** from the measure: crush it quickly into the main note, like a doorbell's "ding" before the "dong". Below, the same little melody twice: plain, then with a grace note leaning into every main note.



Line 1: the plain melody. Line 2: identical — but dressed up. The main notes still land exactly on their beats.

Try it Play line 2 and check with a steady tap: the **main** notes must land on the beat, with the grace note squeezed in just before it — not on it. Think "**gr-DUM**", never "gr…dum". That is the usual way in music written after about 1830; in older music (Bach to Beethoven), and in Chopin's, a grace note usually goes on the beat, with the bass (Handout 389). Then decorate a song you know: add one grace note to the first note of Mary Had a Little Lamb — instantly fancier. Write them out: Exercise 79.

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