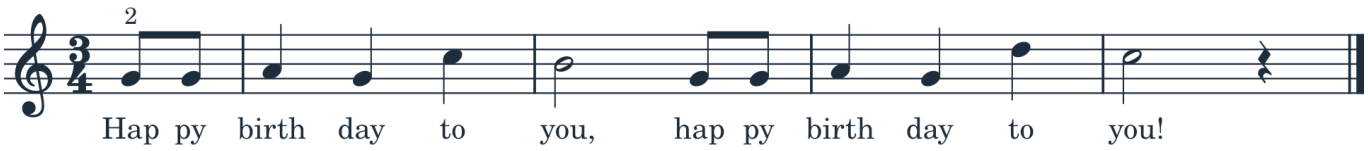Pickup Notes

the anacrusis — when a song starts before beat 1

Not every song starts on the downbeat. Many begin with one or two notes that **lead INTO** the first full measure — a running start called a **pickup** (fancy name: *anacrusis*). You already sing pickups every year: "Hap-py" in Happy Birthday, "Oh *say*" in the anthem, "A-*maz*-ing" grace. On paper it looks like a tiny incomplete first measure.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY — THE MOST FAMOUS PICKUP IN THE WORLD



"Hap-py" happens BEFORE beat 1 — the short first measure holds only beat 3's worth. "Birth-" lands on the downbeat.

Count into it

Count a silent "1 - 2" and come in on **"3-&"**: "1, 2, **hap-py** | BIRTH…". The pickup leans forward onto the downbeat like a step before a jump.

The borrowed beats

The pickup measure is **incomplete on purpose** — its missing beats are often "paid back" by a short **final** measure, so the whole song adds up. (This excerpt stops after two lines and simply fills its last measure with a rest.)

Try it Sing any pickup song and **clap only the downbeats** — feel how the pickup notes fall between your claps and launch you onto them. Then play the example: count "1, 2" out loud, breathe on the empty beats, and let "hap-py" carry you onto "BIRTH". A pickup is never timid: it knows exactly where it is going. Practice: Exercise 83 (draw the barlines) and Exercise 84, line I (count a pickup).

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