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THE PIPER'S HELPER

EXERCISES FOR THE HIGHLAND BAGPIPE

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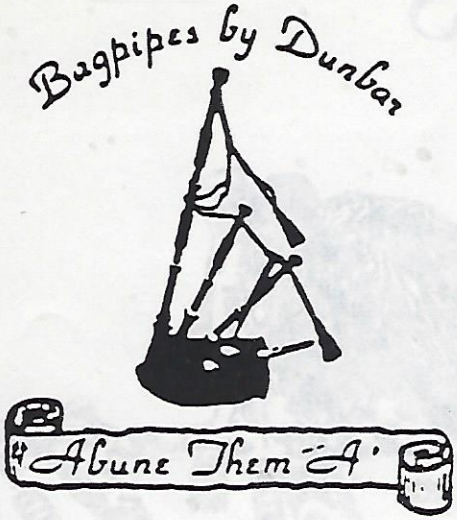

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THE PIPER'S HELPER

Exercises for the Highland Bagpipe

By John R. Recknagel

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Dedicated to my wife, Mary for being so helpful and encouraging with this project.

JR

Acknowlegedments

I need to thank the following for their help and time in creating this book; Len Wood, Norman Livermore, Mike Balfour and Ed Neigh.

Ed and I had the same basic idea of breaking down doublings. He wrote it out and distributed it at a clinic.

Also, to Ken Eller, Sandy Keith, Scott MacAulay and Jerry Finegan for their corrections and additions.

Thanks to my parents, especially my father who faithfully took me to my first lessons.

JR

September 1, 1990
Atlanta, Georgia

Foreword

This is not a tutor book but an exercise book for the Highland Bagpipe. There are numerous tutors on the market which will help any person to begin playing. There are also numerous books of new tunes. But what about a book of exercises for the aspiring and even advanced piper? That is the intent of this book. There are no new tunes, simply exercises. They are designed to correct specific problems that occur to pipers. They are applicable to all levels of players.

There were two reasons for putting this book together. One I thought it long overdue. Most other musical instruments have all sorts of methodology and exercise books, but not piping. Next, I've taught numerous aspiring pipers over the years. Many times I've had to create exercises to correct one problem or another. Why not a book of exercises? So here it is.

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To the Piper

This book is constructed to give pipers a method to overcome problems in fingering and improving their doublings. The 1st part is basic exercises up and down the scale with the various doublings written as normally seen. Also, the doublings have been broken down into their component parts of notes and gracenotes. Next the doublings are further broken down in the last lines. This further enables a piper to improve his technique and fingering, on any especially perplexing doublings.

In the 2nd part exercises have been written to emphasize a particular doubling or doublings. I've tried to keep them somewhat musical so as not to become totally boring. They progress in difficulty as well. When practicing keep in mind the time signatures involved in each exercise line.

I have not included some doublings, birls for instance must just be practiced. (The 4th part of *Crossing The Minch* is good for this). The bell note and bubbly note, are not as common as the others thus their omission. I have not done any basic Piobaireachd movements but the break down idea could be applied here. I have included some blank manuscript paper to write your own exercises if need be. Finally, to practice slowly and correctly is the way to improvement.

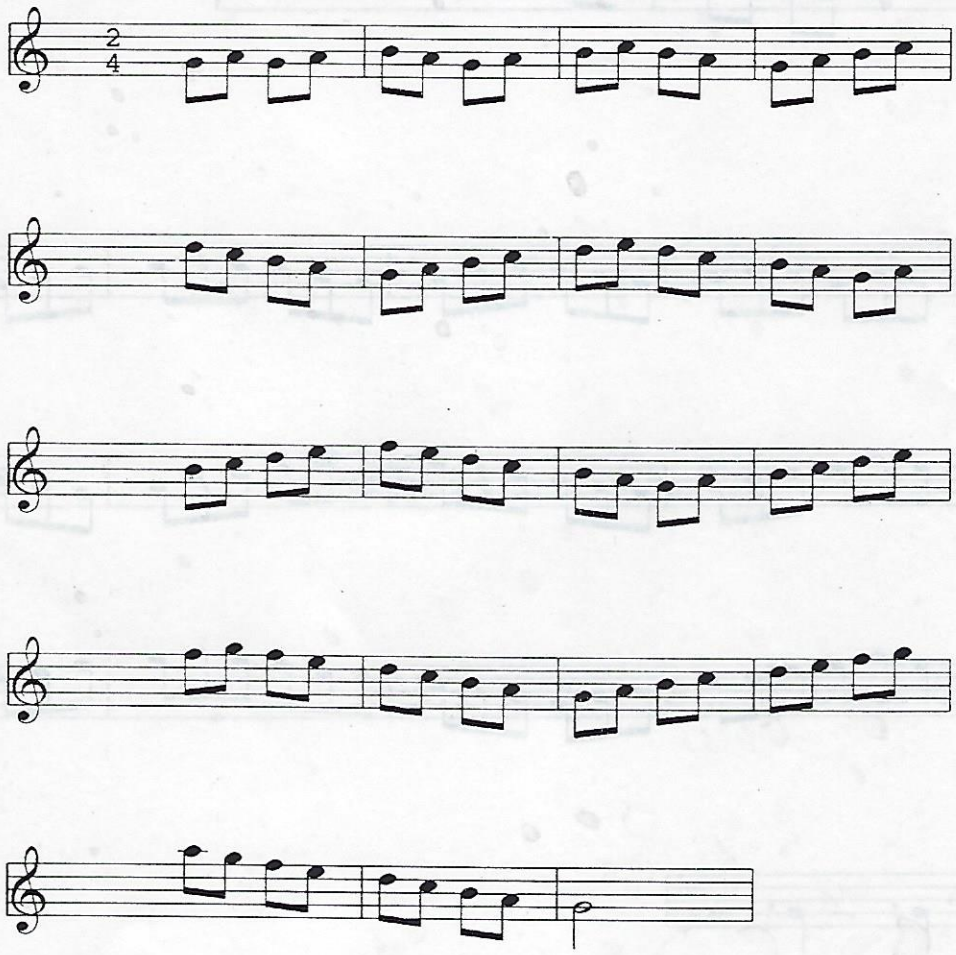
"Practice doesn't make perfect, Perfect practice makes perfect."

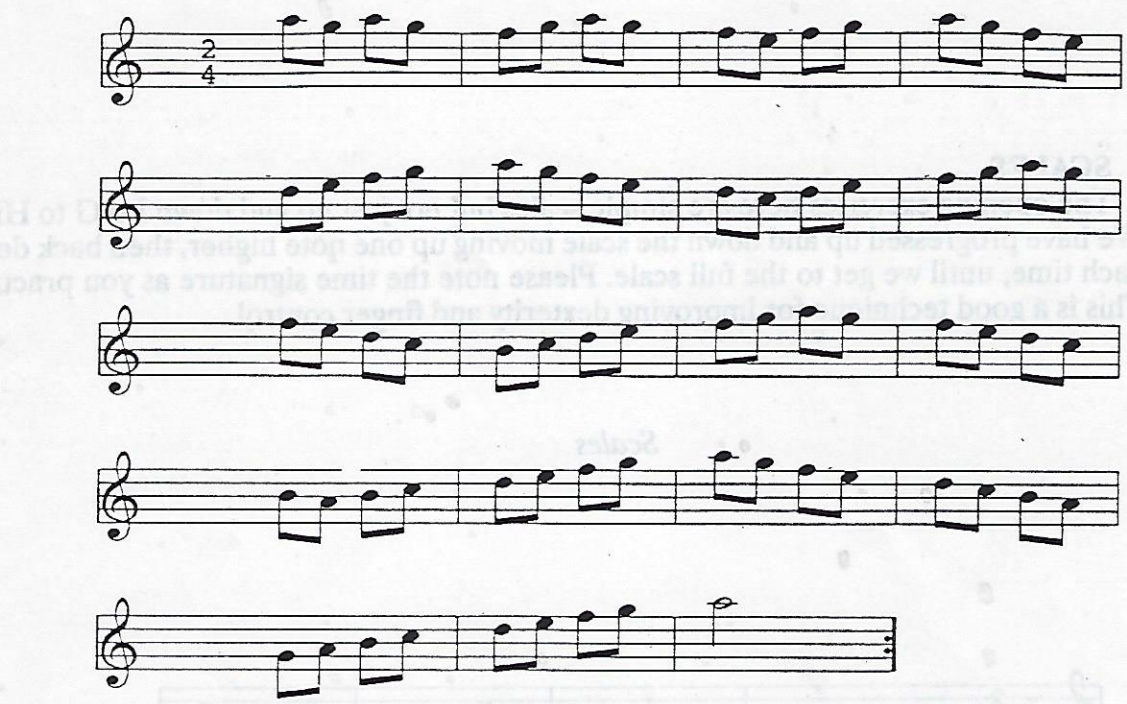
Consistency in playing doublings is what one wants and practicing correctly should get you there.

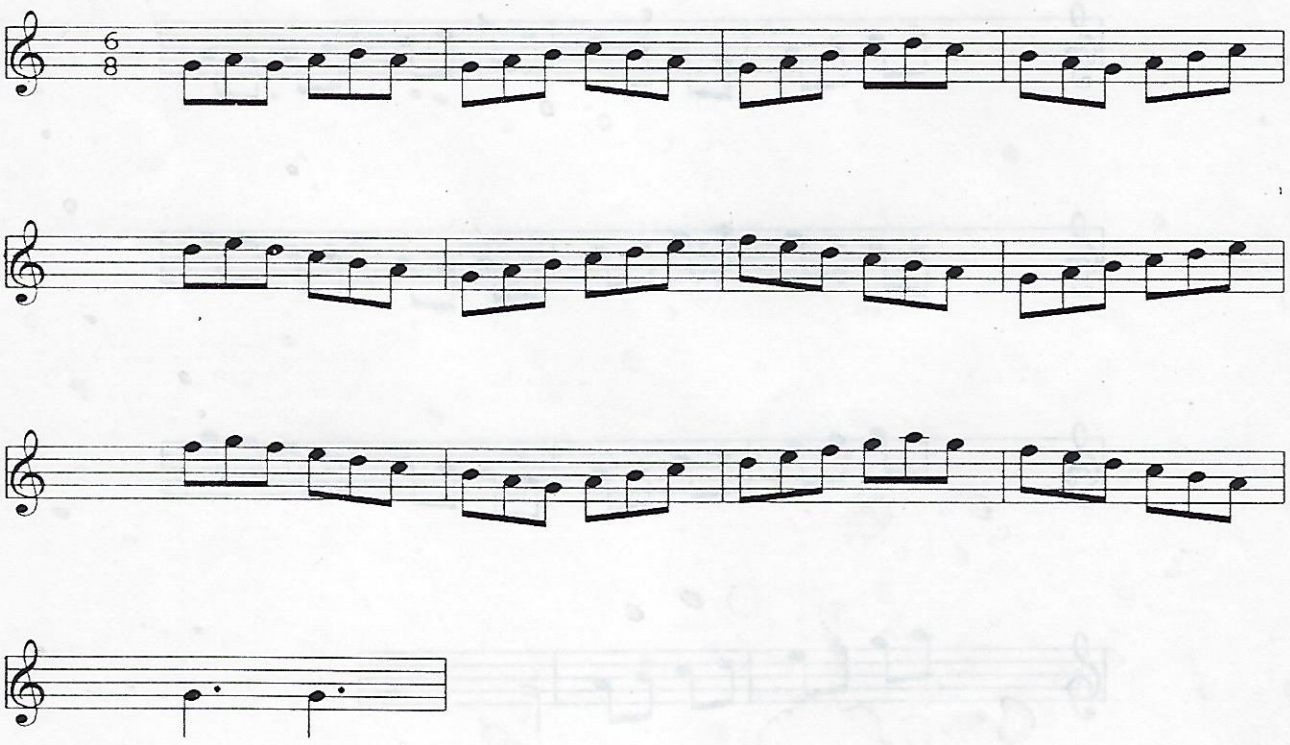
SCALES

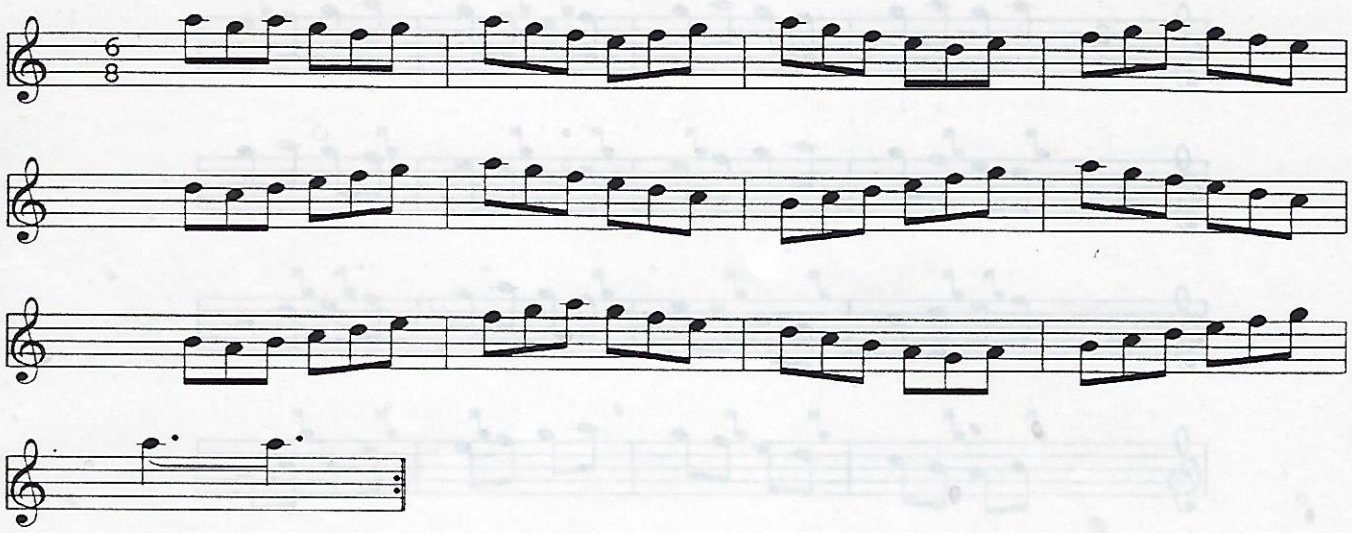
The opening exercises here are simple scales but not just up and down Lo G to Hi A. We have progressed up and down the scale moving up one note higher, then back down each time, until we get to the full scale. Please note the time signature as you practice. This is a good technique for improving dexterity and finger control.

Scales



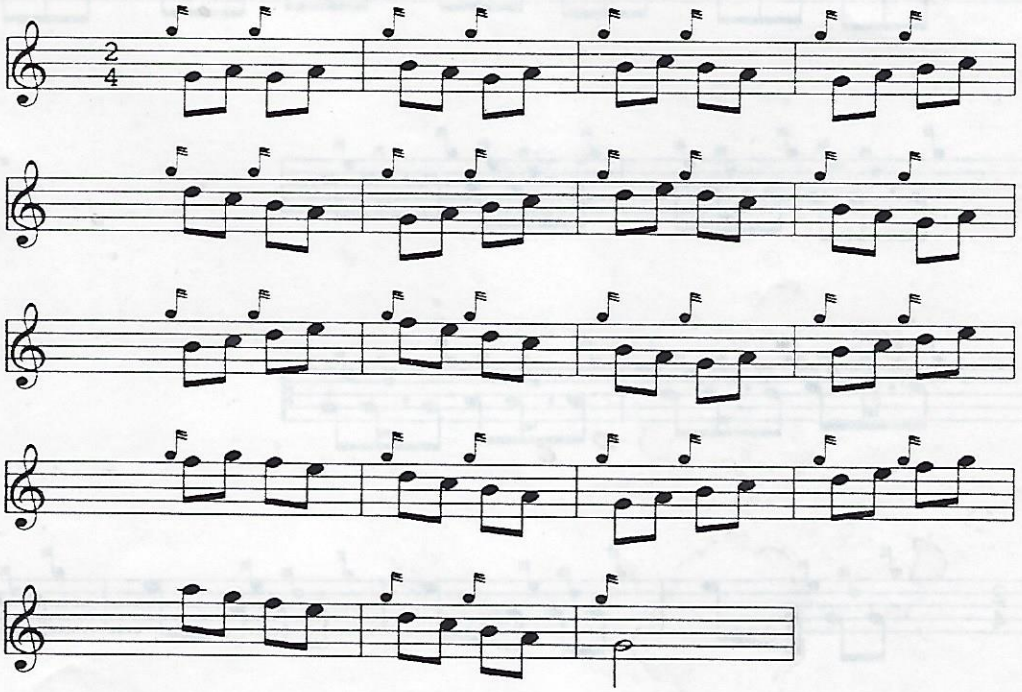


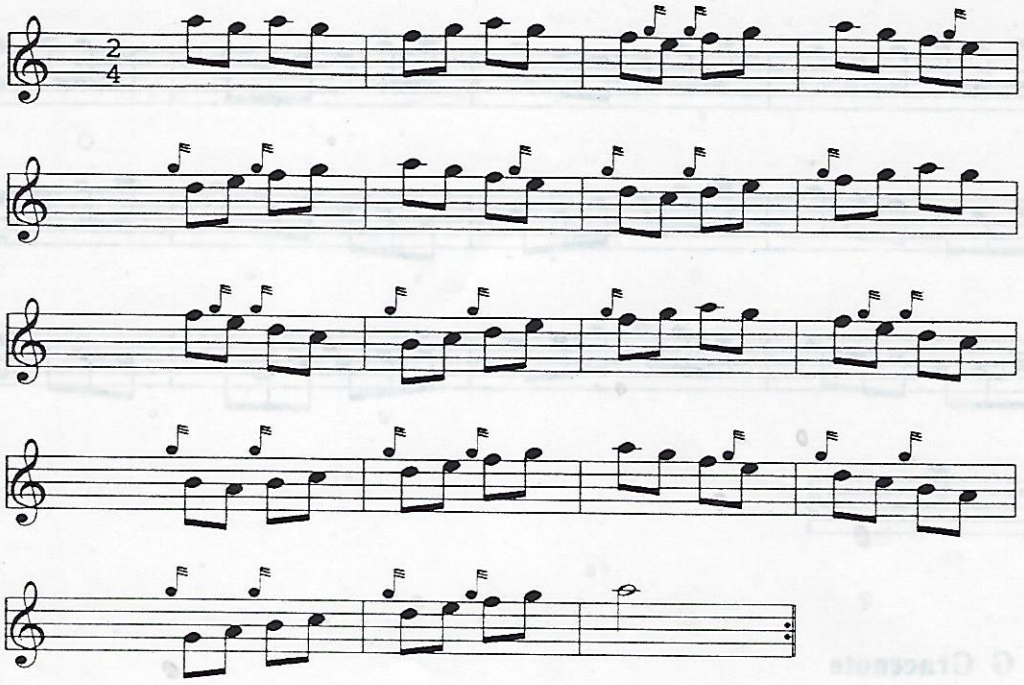




G Gracenote

The **G Gracenote** is the first learned and the first to become neglected. It is common gracing to almost all the doublings. Often, when a comment is made that a piper has "missed" a doubling, it is the G Gracenote that isn't sounded. The following exercises give practice with the G Gracenote, both on and off the beat note. Practice them carefully and concentrate on making a big gracenote.

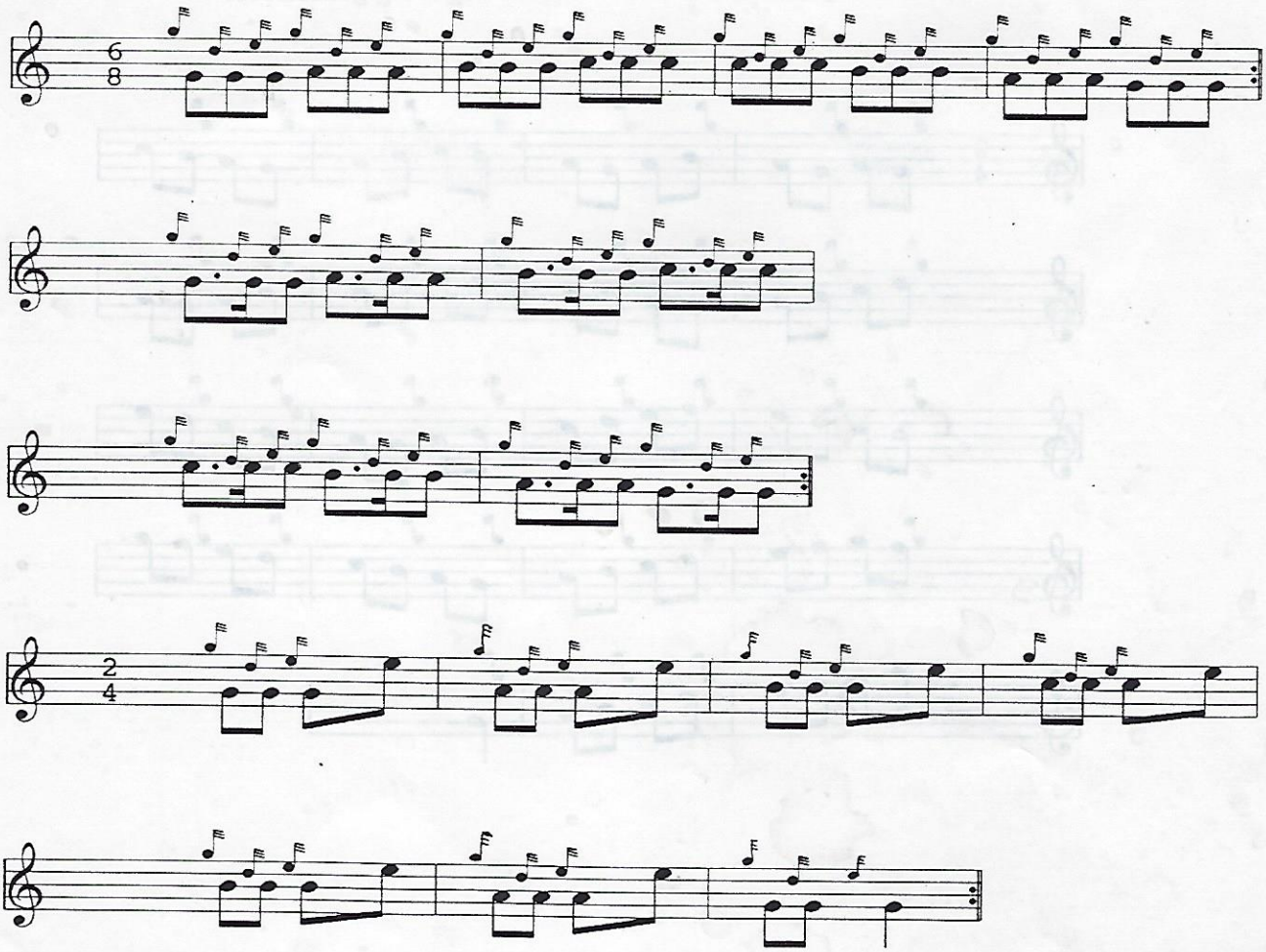




GDE

These 3 important gracenotes must be under the piper's control. Many beginners have problems placing the gracenotes in the proper sequence and rhythm as written.

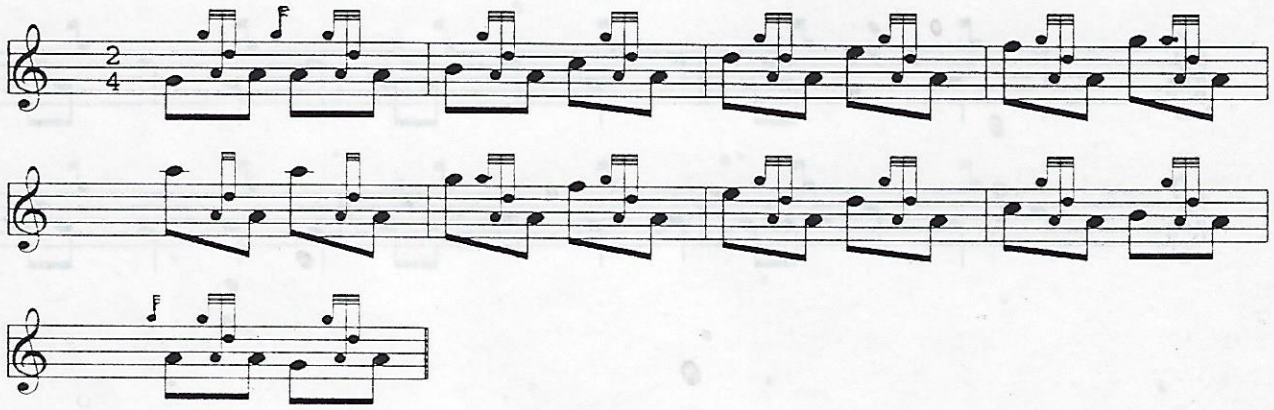
G, D & E's



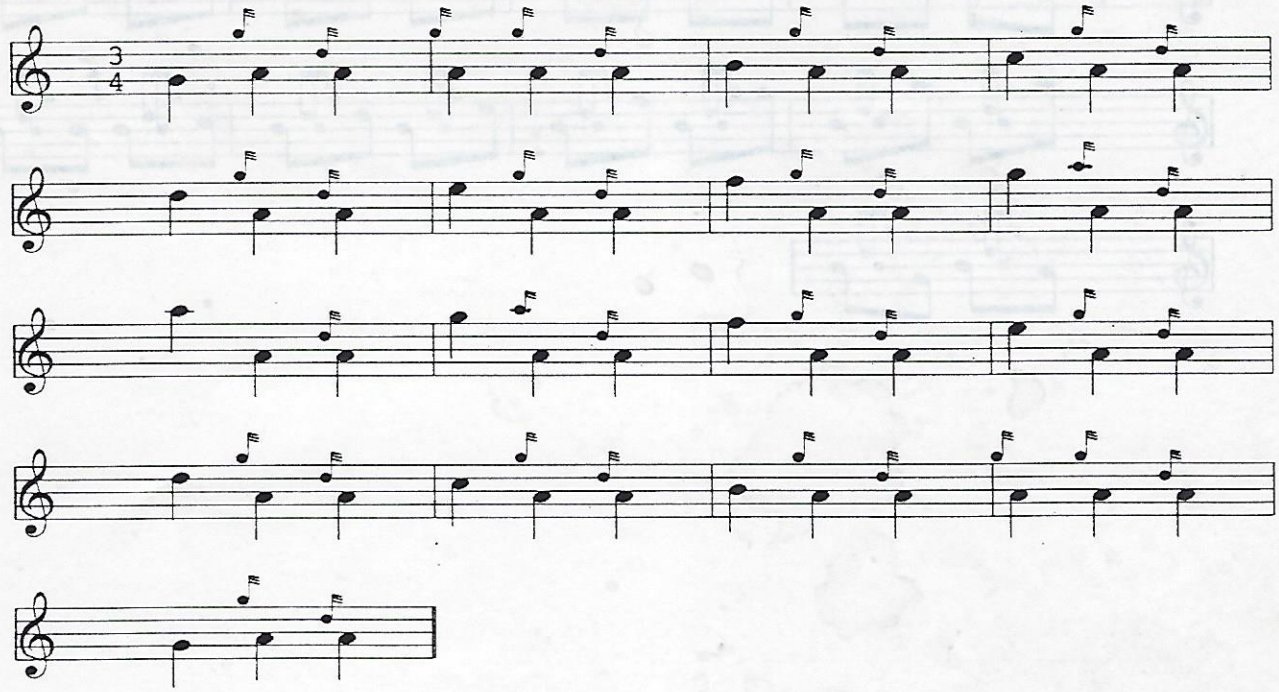
DOUBLINGS

All the doubling exercises are straight forward. I have used thumb gracenotes and half doublings where necessary. The 1st lines are written as normally seen. The 2nd set is a break down of doublings, a technique to help a piper see what he is playing as it might look Slowed down. The last lines make the piper break down a doubling even further by practicing getting the first gracenote in then finishing up with the doubling. This helps to get the gracenoting precise and in the proper rhythm.

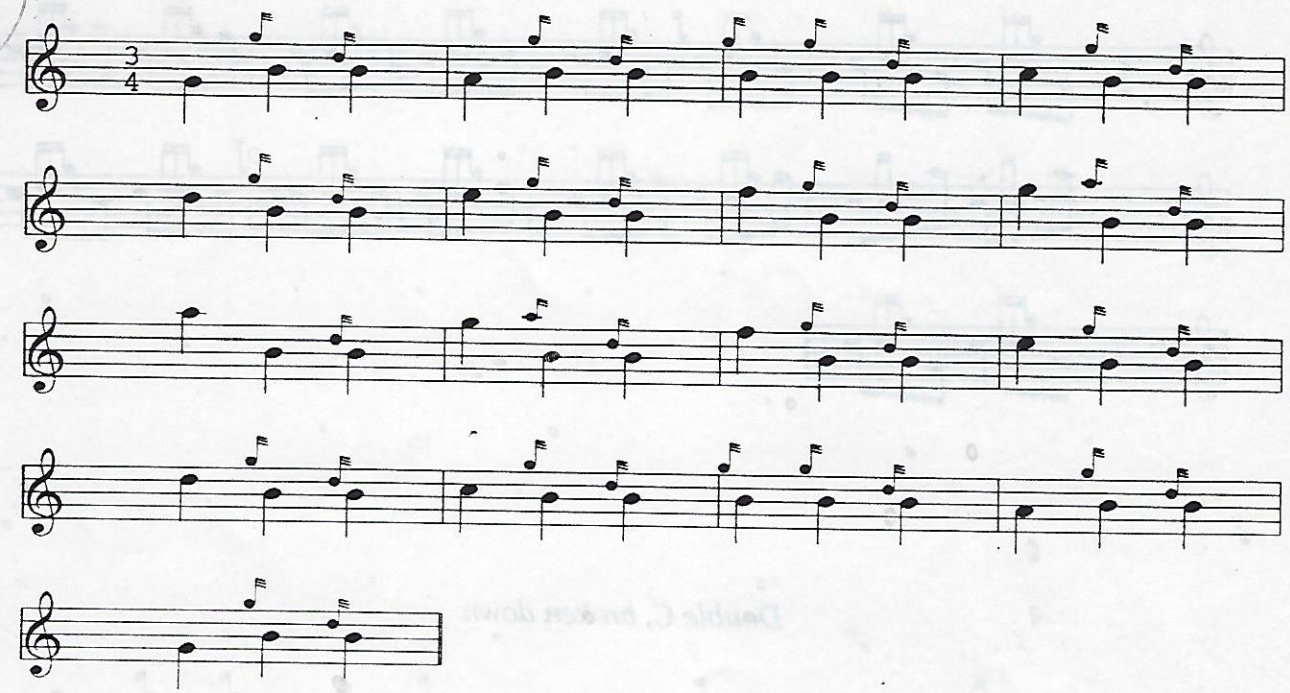
Double A



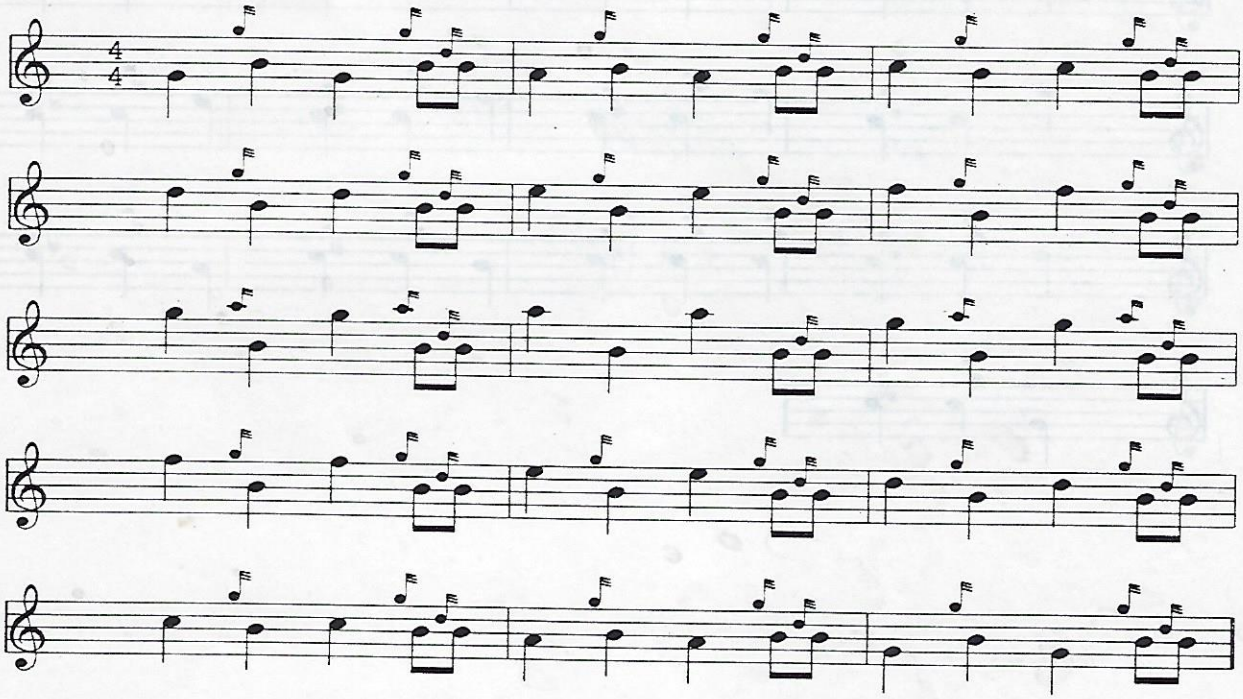
Double A, broken down



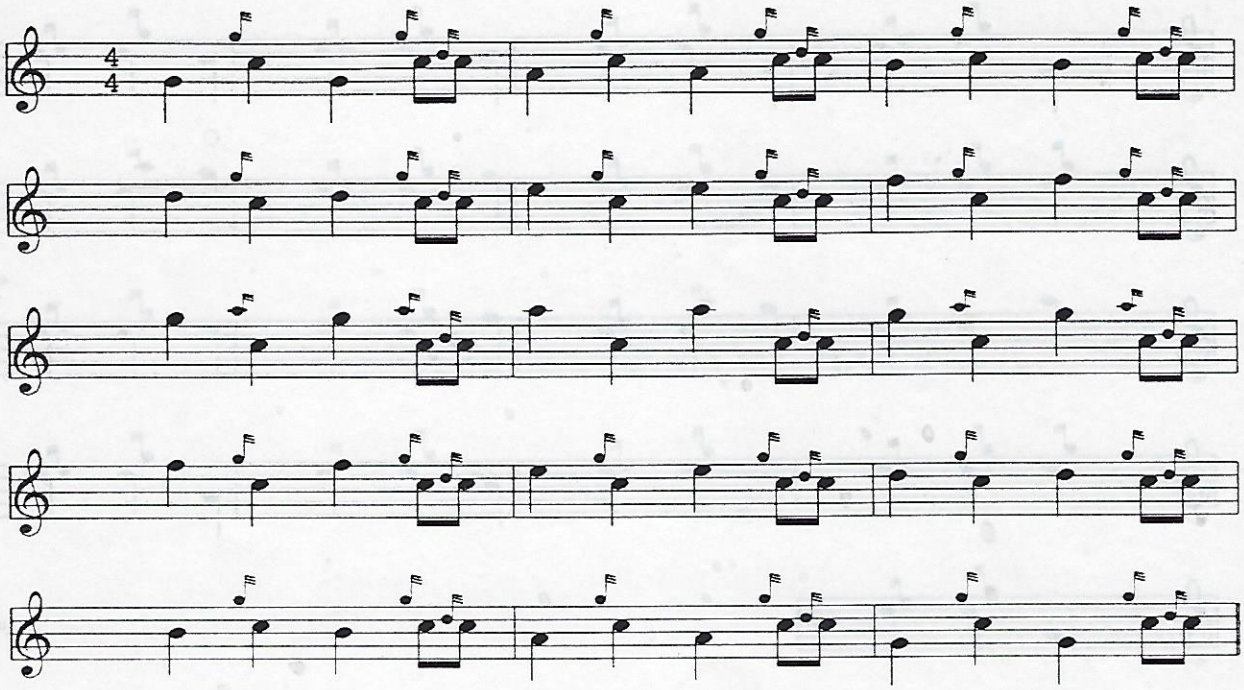
Double B, broken down



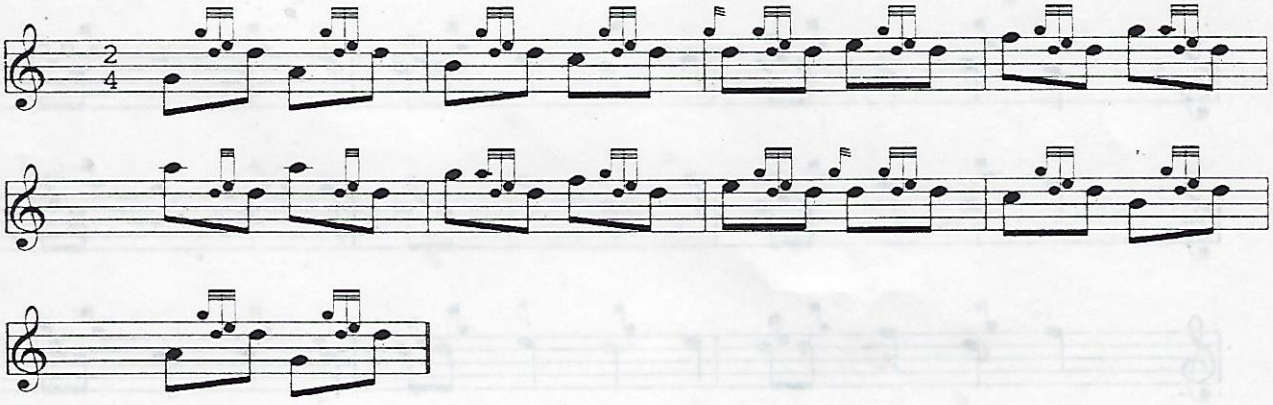
Double B for improvement



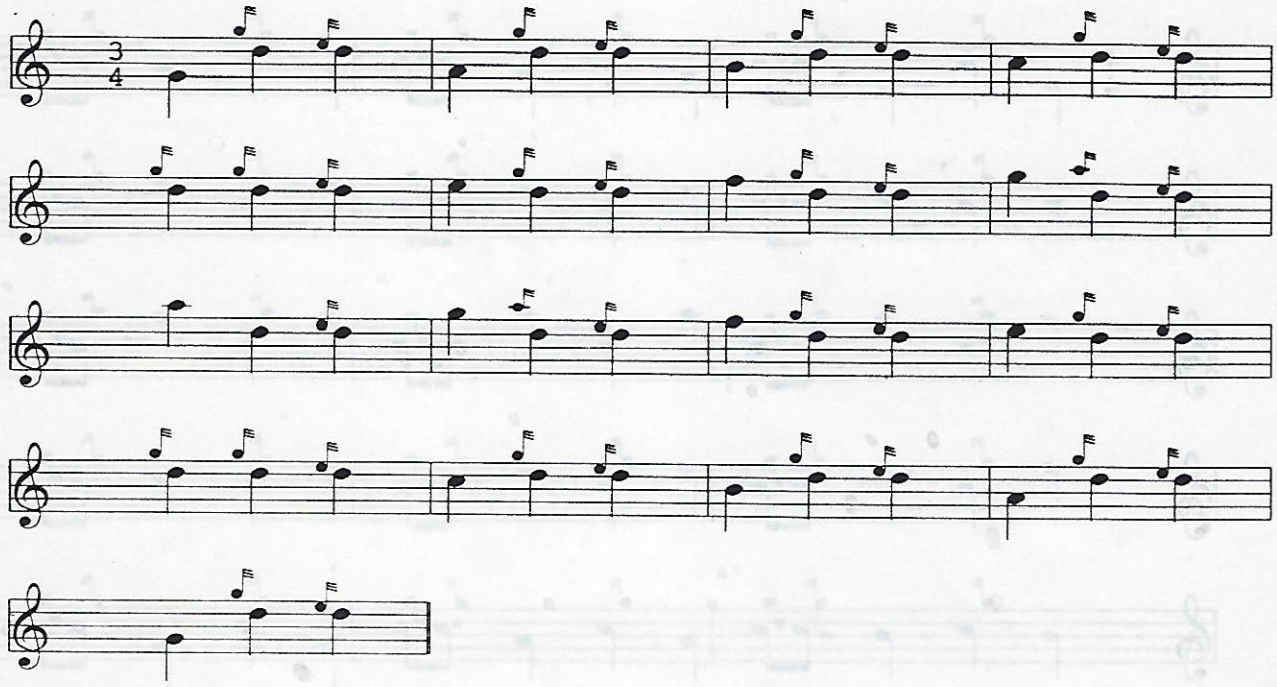
Double C for improvement



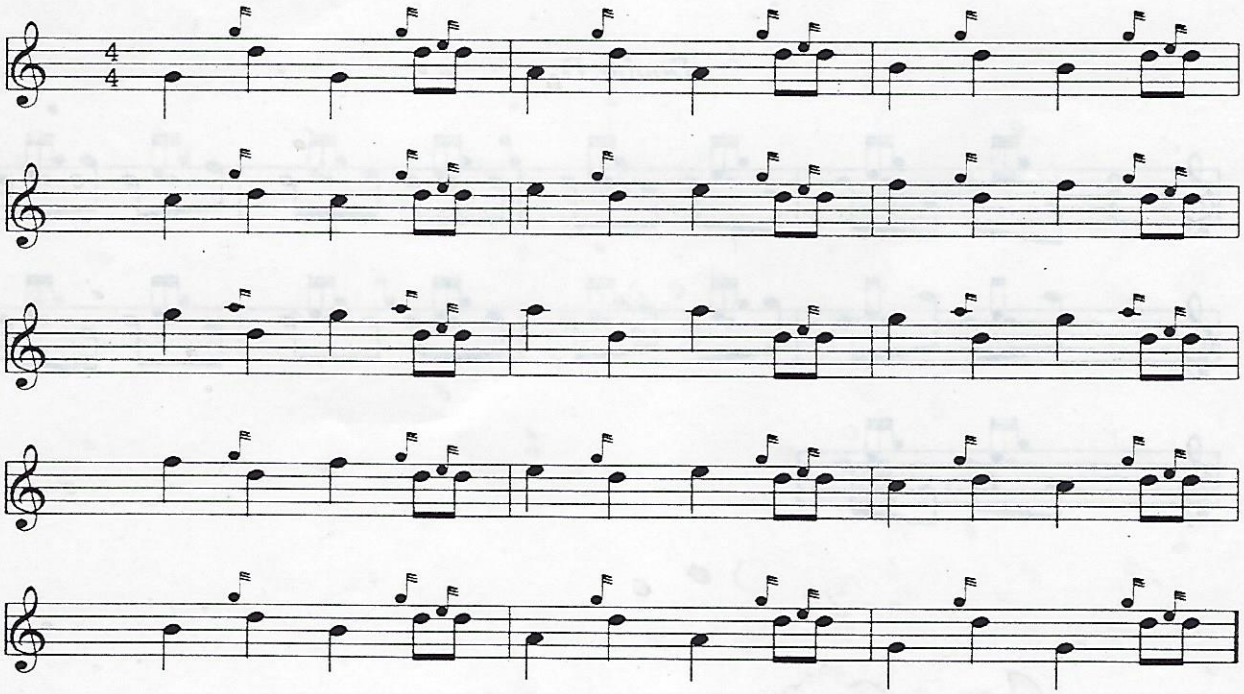
Double D



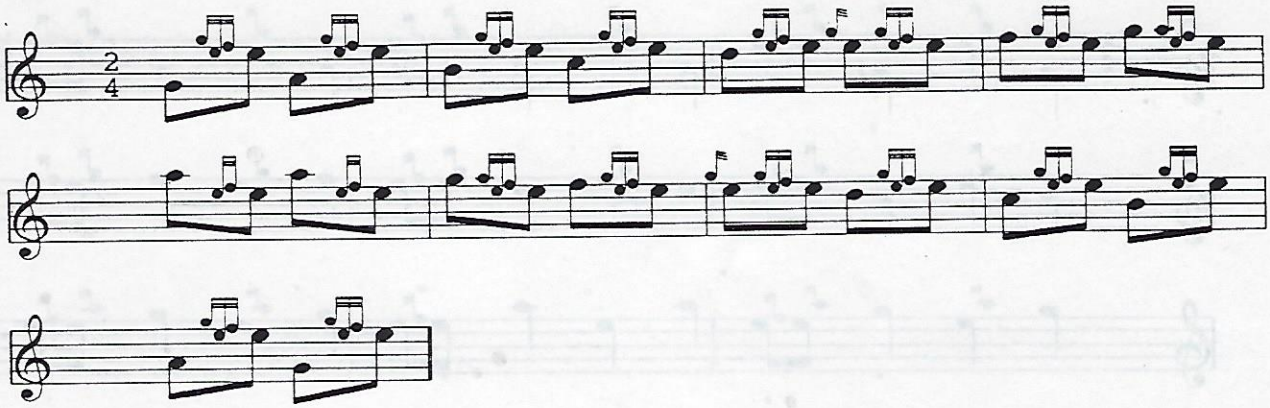
Double D, broken down



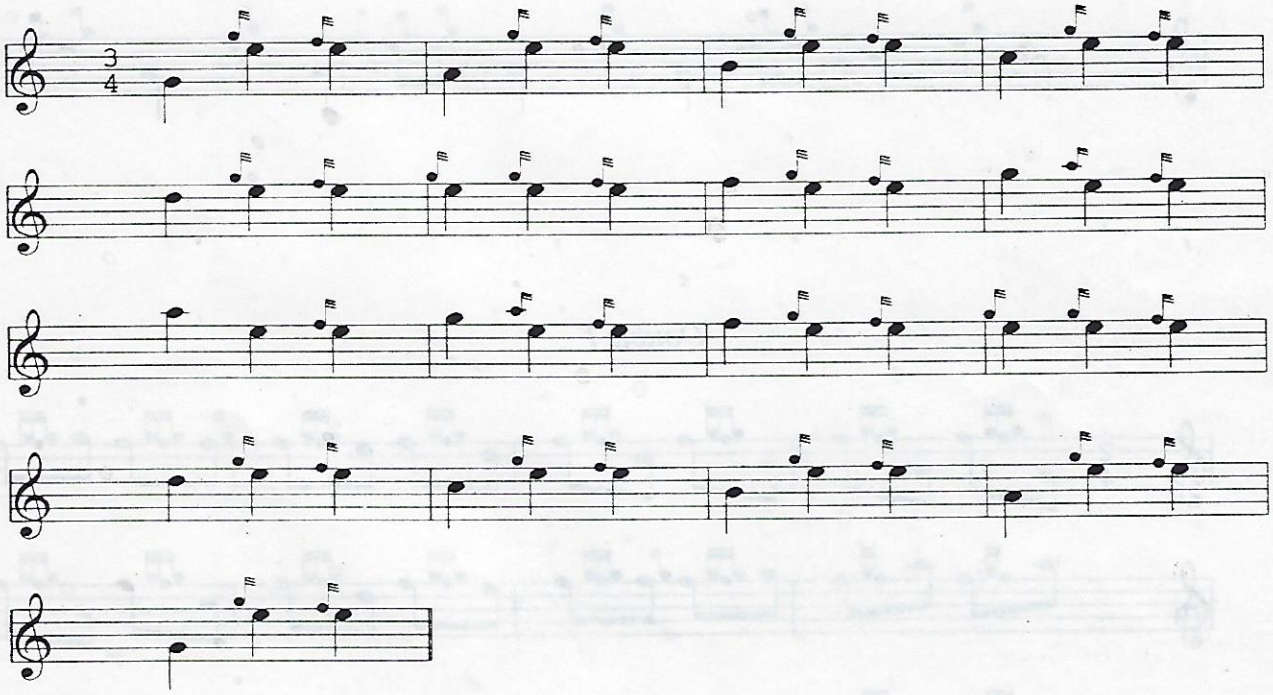
Double D for improvement



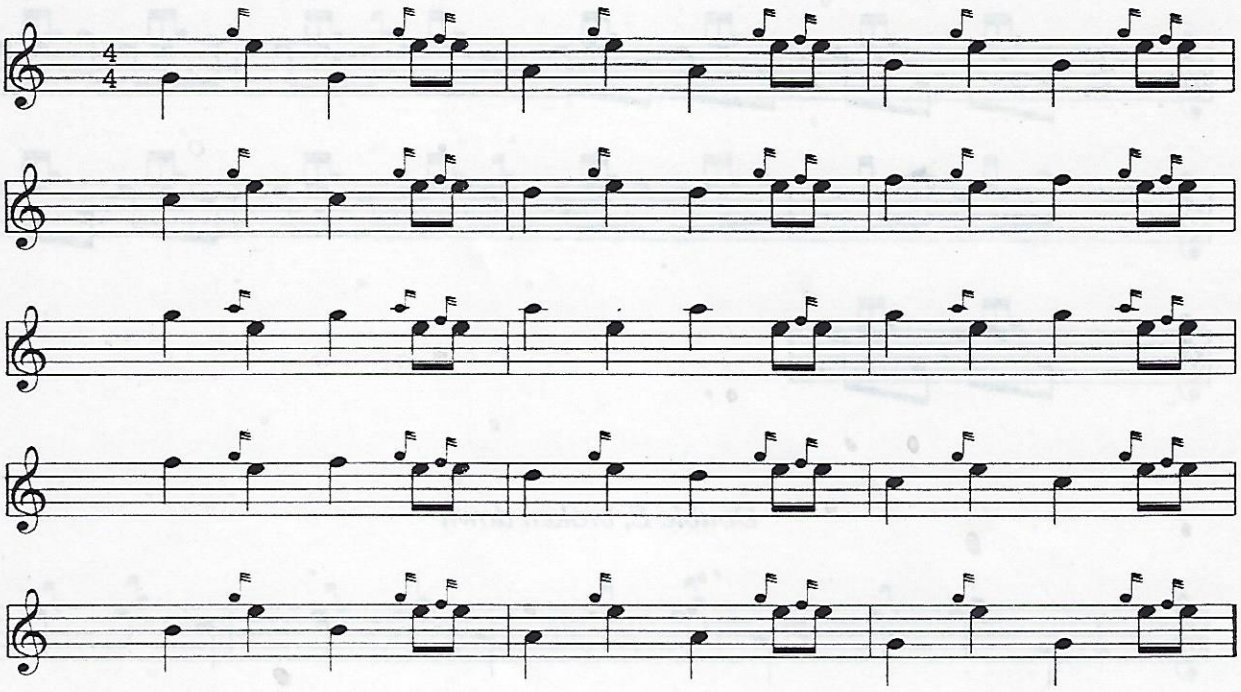
Double E



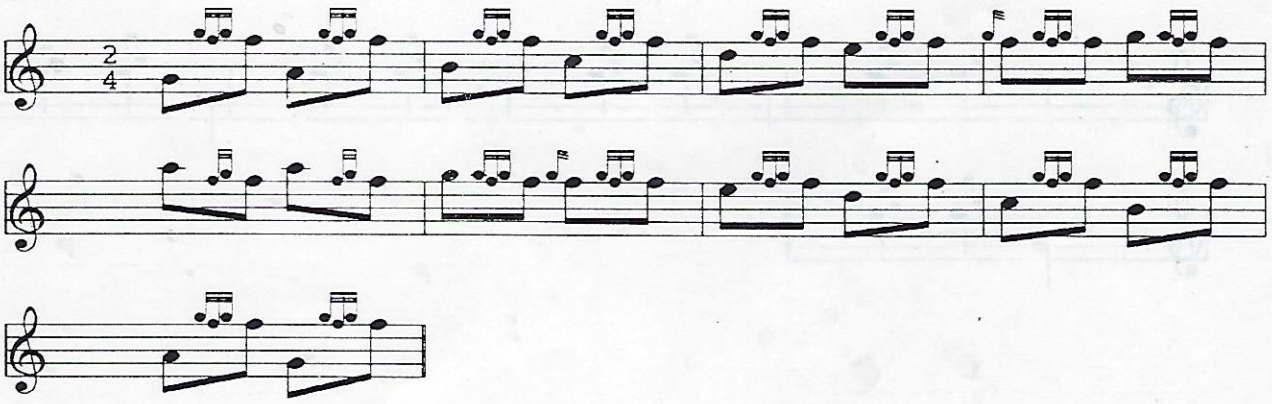
Double E, broken down



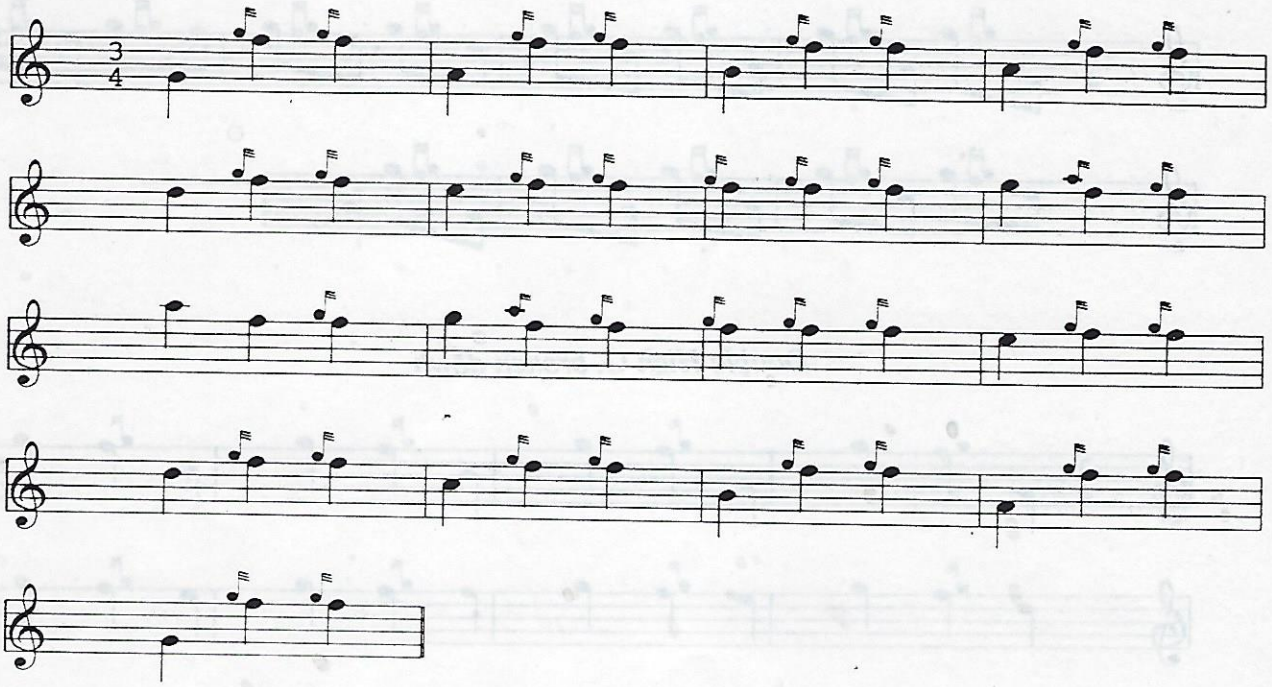
Double E for improvement



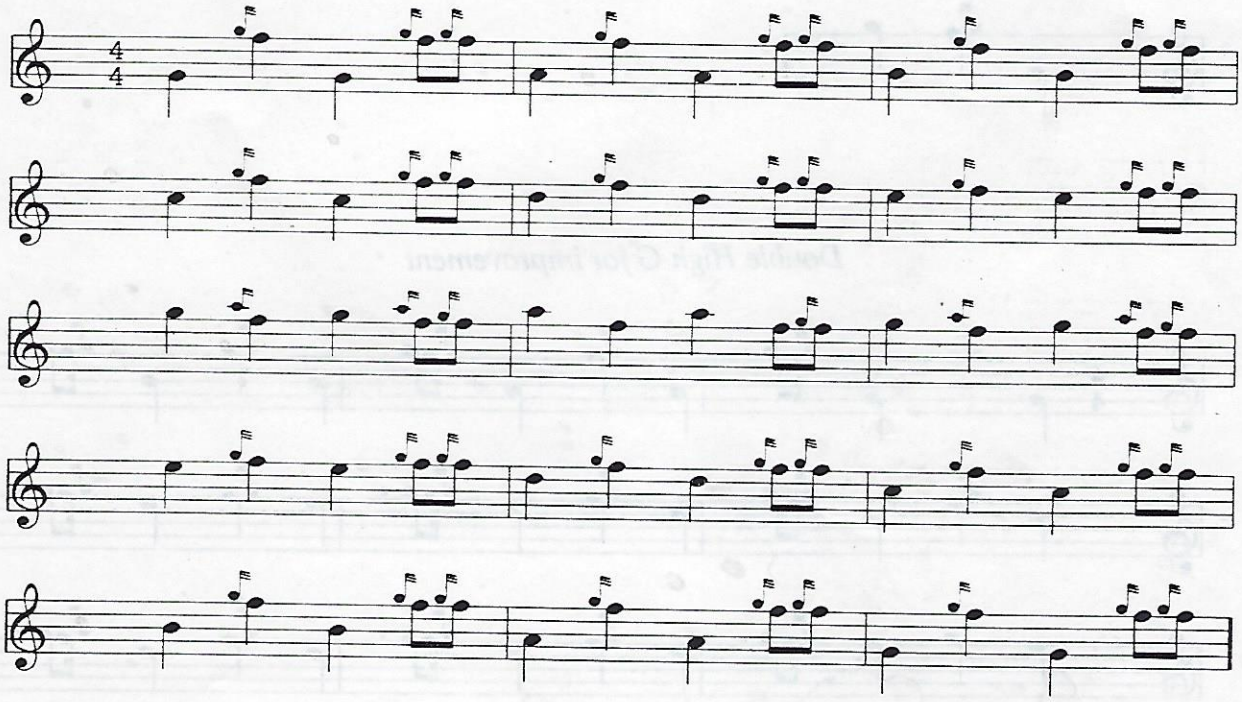
Double F



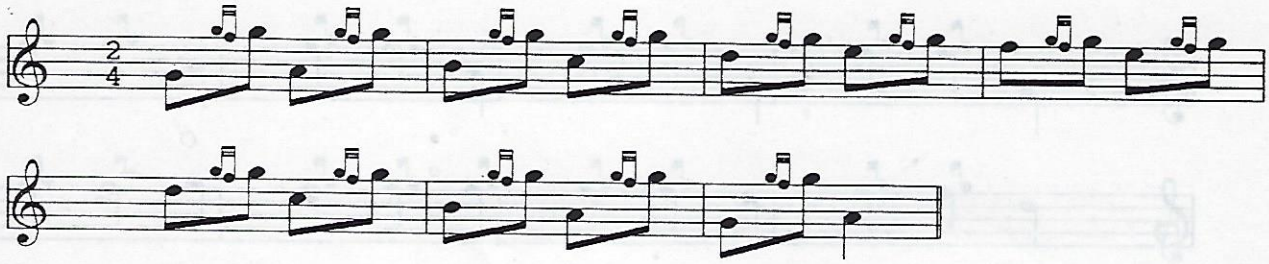
Double F, broken down



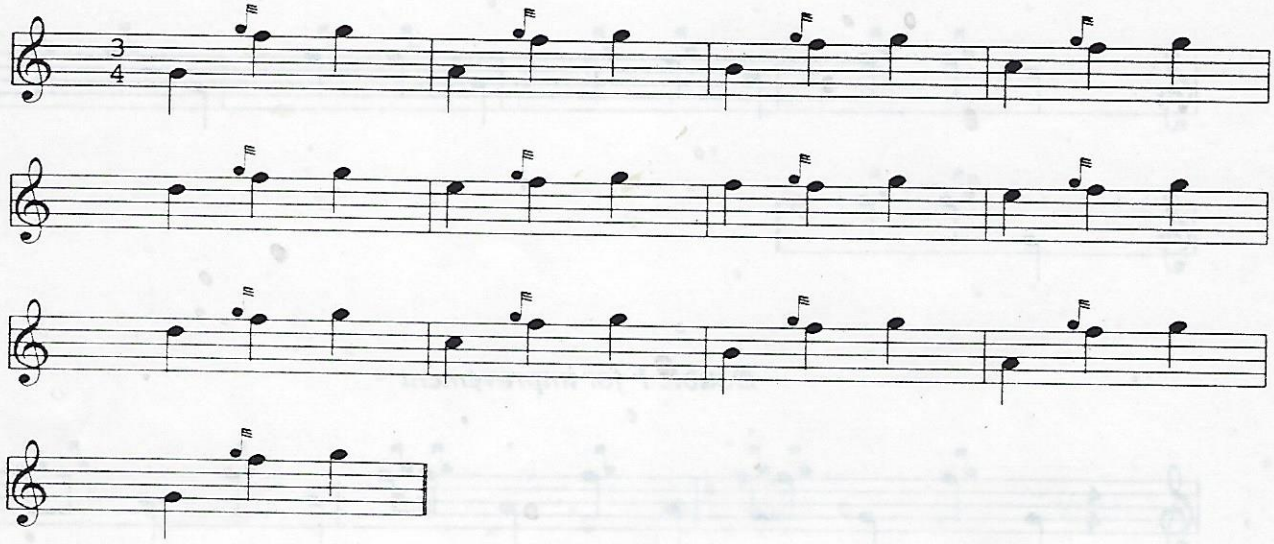
Double F for improvement



Double High G



Double High G, broken down



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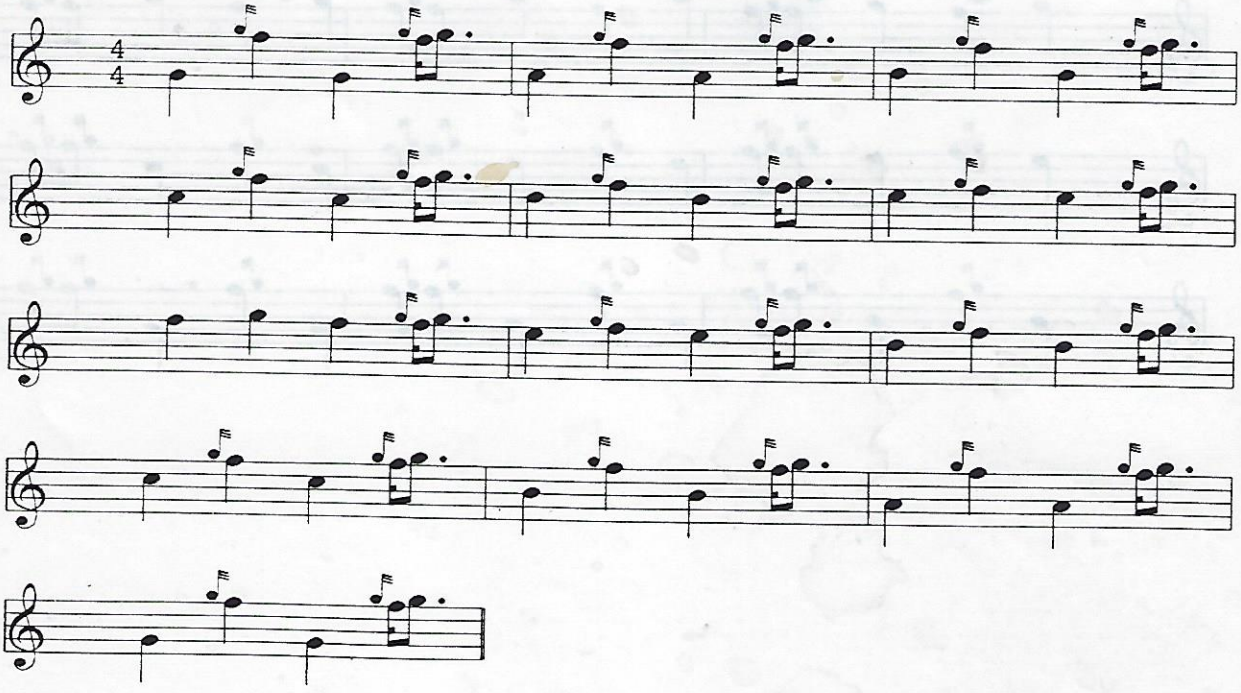

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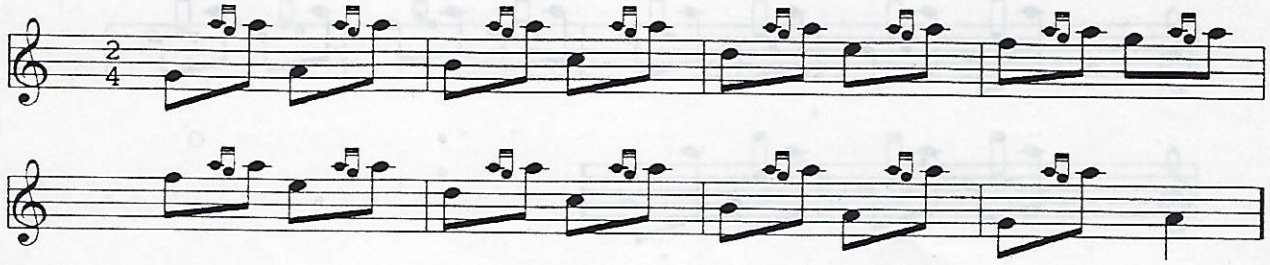

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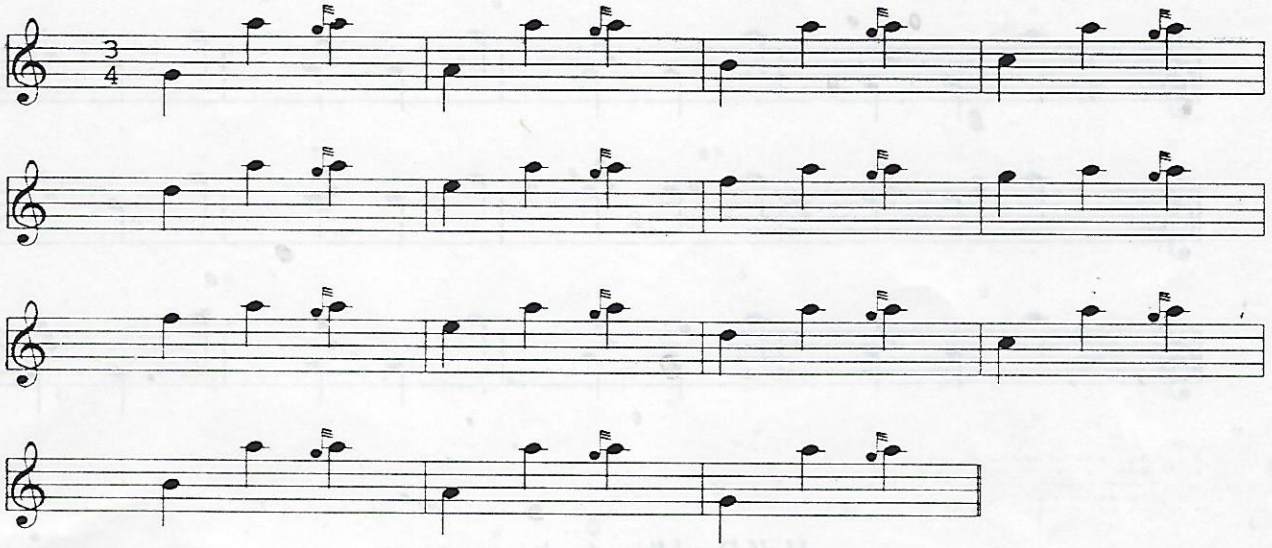

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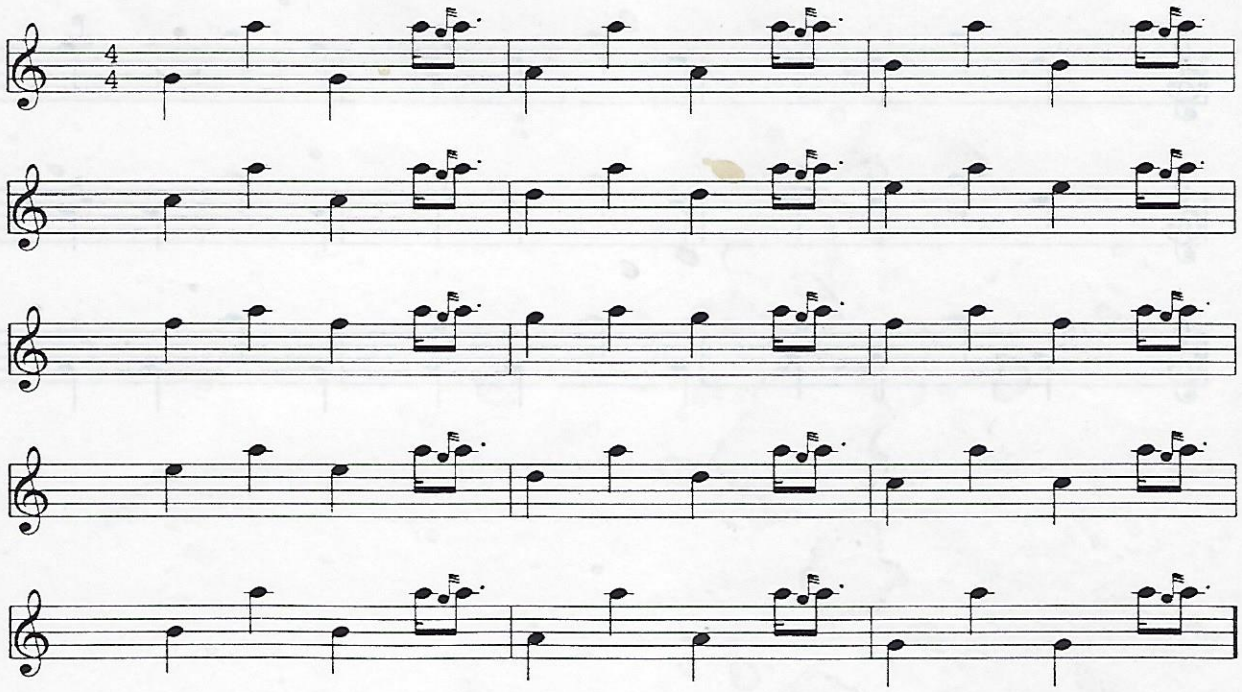
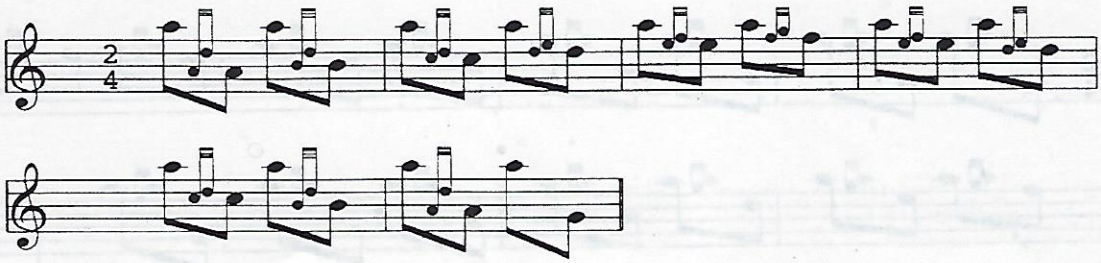
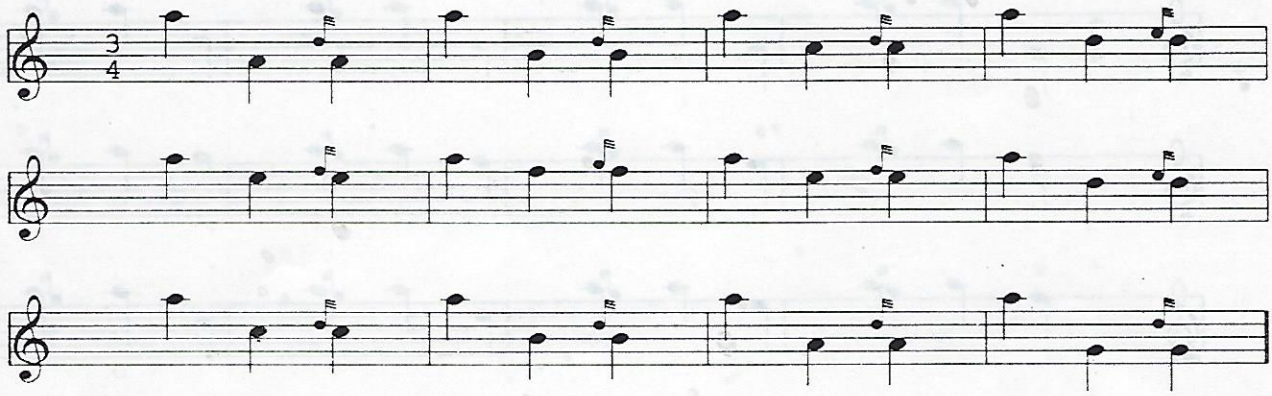
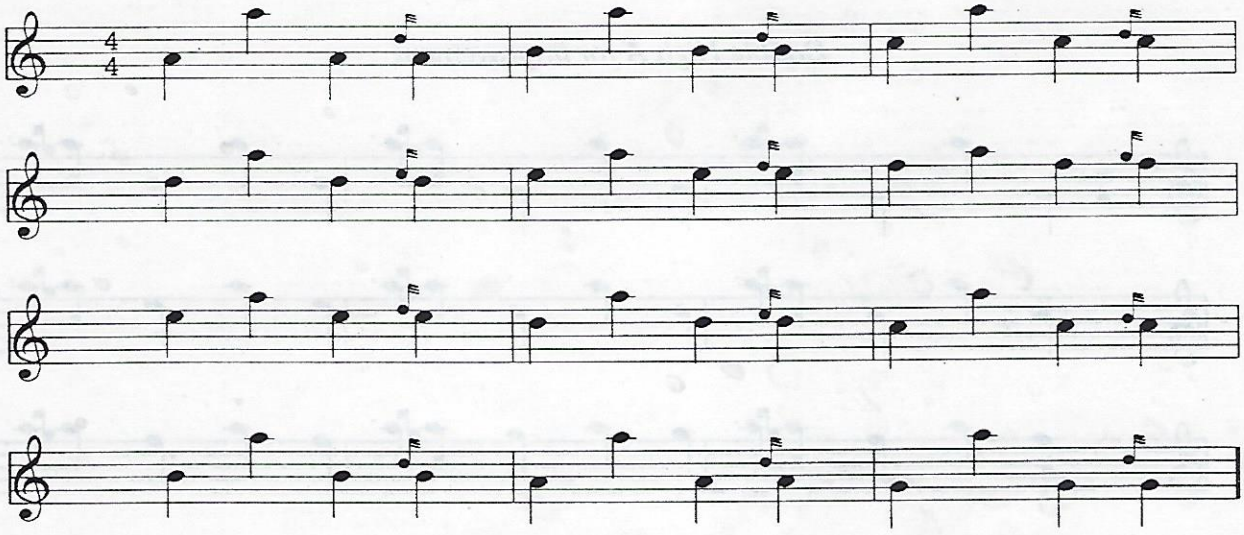


Half Doublings



Half Doublings, broken down



Half Doublings for improvement