

# Syncopation

[From Latin: **syn**= together **copare**= to cut]

In the music world, when composers add the **unexpected** to a predictable rhythmic pattern, it is called **syncopation**.

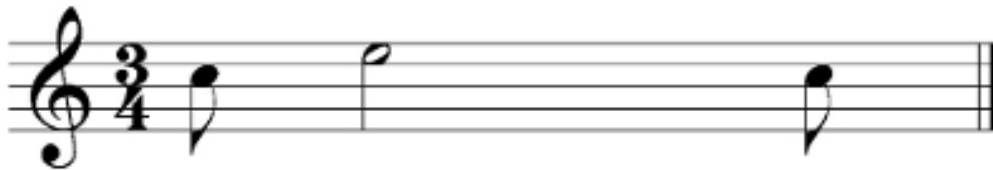
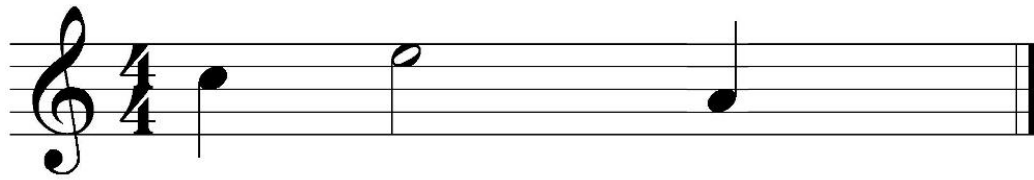
One of the most common forms of playing off the beat in piano music is a rhythmic concept called *syncopation*. To understand syncopation, you have to know about *downbeats* and *upbeats*. Start tapping your foot to a moderate 4/4 beat, and count eighth notes “1-and, 2-and, 3-and, 4-and.” Your foot goes *down* on the downbeats and *up* on the upbeats.

Downbeats are normally emphasized in a song. But through the miracles of syncopation, you emphasize some (or all) of the upbeats instead. So you play those notes a little bit harder, or louder, than the others. For example, the note normally played on beat 3 is played on the upbeat before, and this anticipation naturally emphasizes the upbeat and creates syncopation.

A two-measure melodic phrase written first to emphasize the downbeat on beat 3, and then transformed into a syncopated rhythm, with the arrows showing the point of emphasis on the upbeat, on “and” before beat 3:

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains two measures of music. The first measure has four eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5. The second measure has four eighth notes: B4, A4, G4, F4. Below the staff, the counting is "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" for the first measure and "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" for the second measure. Vertical arrows point down to the downbeats of the third and fourth notes in each measure. The second staff is identical to the first, but the arrows point down to the upbeats (the "and" before the 3rd and 4th notes) in each measure, illustrating syncopation.

Examples of Syncopation:



Syncopation may extend across several bars, as shown in the following example.



Missed beat syncopation is achieved by the alternation of rests on the strong beats of the bar with accented notes on the weak beats.



Music pattern (Meter) is determined by the regular patterns of strong and weak beats. c. Those repeating patterns establish a feeling of **rhythmic stability**. Syncopated rhythms interrupt that stability by creating surprise and tension.

How can you study and practice syncopated music by using the **metronome**. The answer is to **subdivide** the syncopated parts.

Example: The Entertainer

