

The most basic unit of time in music is a beat or pulse. Imagine a ticking clock.

<listening example>

These beats can be played at different speeds. This is called tempo. For example, here is a faster tempo.

<listening example>

Here is a slower tempo.

<listening example>

Beats can be grouped to form a time signature or meter. Here are a few example meters. First we have a meter of 4 beats.

<listening example>

Next we have a meter of 3 beats.

<listening example>

Now we have a meter of 2 beats.

<listening example>

Finally we have a meter of 6 beats.

<listening example>

These are just a few examples of the infinite possible meters in music.

A meter can then be broken up in many different rhythms. A rhythm is defined by a set of notes placed in time with specific accents or intensities. Here are a few examples of rhythms in a meter of 4 beats.

This first example is one of the simplest rhythms possible. It goes loud soft soft soft.

<listening example>

This next rhythm demonstrates what some pop musicians call a backbeat. The accents are on beats 2 and 4.

<listening example>

Another rhythmic technique is called swing feel. It can be heard in jazz, blues, and other styles of music. It is best explained through comparison with an example that is not in swing feel.

Here are 2 measures in which the beats are evenly subdivided.

<listening example>

Now here are 4 measures in which the beats are not evenly subdivided, creating what jazz musicians call a swing feel.

<listening example>

Another rhythmic technique we will talk about is called syncopation. This is achieved by accenting

**offbeats** and creating rhythms that pull against the main pulse of the music. One example syncopated rhythm is called 3 on 4.

Here it is in half time and preceded by a regular pulse.

<listening example>

Now here it is at full speed.

<listening example>

A similar rhythm has its roots in African music, but is now most commonly found in latin rhythms. It is called The Clave. This clave, specifically, is called a 3 2 clave. We conclude this track with 4 measures of a 3 2 Clave, which will be preceded by a regular pulse.

<listening example>