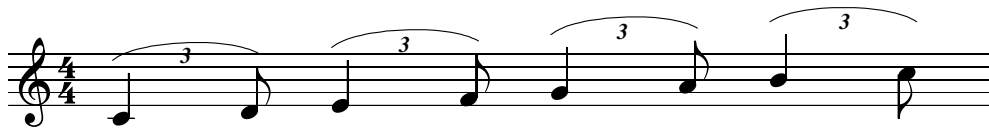


SWING

There are 2 "feels" in jazz and pop music:

- 1. the straight 8s feel.** In this, the quavers are played evenly as they appear on written music. This feel is used a lot in pop music, Latin American music, folk and modern (1960s onwards) jazz. It is also the way in which classical music is played.
- 2. the swing feel.** In this, the quavers are played with an underlying triplet feel. This feel is found in almost all jazz up to the 1960s and in much of present-day jazz. It is also encountered in some pop music. Most standard tunes, for instance those sung by people like Frank Sinatra have a swing feel.

The triplet feel in swing works like this:



The notes on the beat are twice the length of the notes off the beat, so count **1 2 3 2 2 3 3 2 3 4 2 3** for the bar.

The first number in each group refers to the beat in the bar, whereas the next two numbers refers to the triplet subdivision of each beat.

This triplet feel also applies where there is syncopation:

written

played

1 2 3 2 2 3 3 4 1 2 3 2 2 3 3 4

written

played

1 2 3 2 3 4 2 3 1 2 3 2 2 3 3 2 3 4 2 3

written

played

1 2 2 3 3 2 3 4 2 3 1 2 3 2 2 3 3 4

This looks complicated but all you need to remember is that each beat is treated like a triplet and when a note falls off the beat it is played as the third note of a triplet. This type of playing applies to **slow to medium tempos**. When you get faster than that, the triplet feel gets less until at fast tempos the quavers become about the same length.

The swing feel could be written in 12/8 (4 triplet quavers to a bar) but this would look very daunting so no-one ever does write it that way. Instead, a line of quavers is written either as straight quavers with the words *Swing Feel* used, or it is written as a dotted quaver followed by a semiquaver. You will see this in the notation for older (1900 - 1950) standard tunes. However, it is incorrect and should never be played as it appears as it would be very jerky. Here is what you might encounter:

Where syncopation occurs, straight quavers are used as in the last two notes and in the earlier examples given. Do not play this as written.

There are two other points to bear in mind if you want to make it swing. Firstly, make sure that lines are played smoothly. Do NOT play the note off the beat in a staccato

way but play it smoothly.

Secondly, accent notes which are syncopated. At slow tempos many of the notes on the off beat are also accented. If a phrase starts on an offbeat, accent that note.

Practice playing things slowly with a swing feel and then try it faster.

LISTEN to players who can swing - Oscar Peterson, is a prime example.

You might also try playing behind the beat. Dexter Gordon did this. A lot of other good players and singers do too. But be careful that the drummer and bass player keep in time, otherwise the tempo will slow down.

Do not stint on practicing playing with a swing feel. . It's a great compliment if people say that your playing swings. You will also feel good in yourself - playing will become effortless and you feel you can play all day or all night or at least until you can get to the bar. But you don't get these rewards unless you put some hard work into it to begin with.