CHAPTER 1

When a song first comes through your headphones or speakers, how do you respond? Without conscious thought, many people start tapping their feet or moving their head. This is not surprising. Of all the basic ingredients of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, etc.), none is more important than rhythm in pop & rock. A strong "beat" or "groove" is essential, providing an underlying foundation for all other musical elements and inviting the listener to move with the music. When songs are recorded in the studio, the process often starts with the beat, mixing multiple layers of percussion — perhaps a dozen different tracks for the drum sound alone — until the all-important rhythm part finally takes shape.

This opening chapter will review some basic elements of rhythm, starting with fundamentals like locating, counting, and notating the beat, then progressing further into time signatures, subdivisions of the beat, syncopation, and swing rhythm. Even if you are a fluent sight-reader or accomplished performer, it is recommended that you read through this rhythm review and listen to the chapter's song examples. This may fill in any gaps in your previous knowledge of rhythm. Hearing the numerous audio examples will also be a great tune-up for your ears as you selectively listen for various rhythmic elements and instrumental parts — an essential skill for would-be producers, sound engineers, and indeed all practicing musicians. If you have the appropriate software, you could even try programming some drum tracks based on the various rhythm patterns throughout the chapter.

Essential Concepts / Skills covered in chapter 1







- 12/8 and 6/8 meter, listening for the triplet 8th pulse
- Syncopation (both 8th and 16th note), listening for <u>up-beat</u> accents in pop songs
- Swing 8ths and swing 16ths



When you tap your foot to music you are probably tapping out the basic **beat** that holds everyone and everything together. During a concert, members of a live band must keep track of the beat at all times in order to stay together on stage. In fact, performing musicians quickly learn that the rhythm takes precedence over all other musical elements. Many times you can cover a mistake in pitch (wrong note) by simply playing through it and maintaining the rhythmic flow.

Try tapping along with the following song. If you are unsure of where the beat is, listen for the steady thumps of the **bass kick drum**, starting at **0:14** (14 seconds) — this is the basic beat.

"I'm Alive" - Michael Franti & Spearhead - 2014



For AUDIO, see the "Song Examples" playlist in the right sidebar, and click on track 1 song title. To navigate within the audio track, slide the progress bar to the desired starting point.



Although the thumping bass rhythm of "I'm Alive" may be fairly common (especially in the dance-pop hits of recent years), the basic beat may not always be tied specifically to the bass drum: you may hear the basic beat emerge on any instrument, depending on the song. Here's an example where the main beat is clearly carried by the steady **guitar strums** at the beginning. However, notice that later at the **1:30** time mark, the basic beat switches to the bass drum like the previous song.

"I Gotta Feeling" — The Black Eyed Peas — 2009



In the next example, the main beat is again heard in the bass drum, but the drum stops briefly when the trumpet enters (around **0:33**). When this happens, keep tapping! The basic beat does not stop, continuing on as an underlying feeling until the drum re-enters at **0:42** to reinforce it.



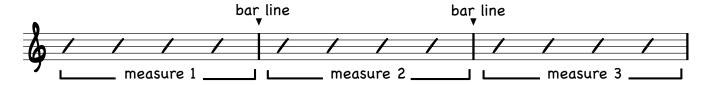
When you listen to different songs, you may not always hear the basic beat carried by a single instrument or any instrument. It may simply be an underlying pulse that you feel, holding all the layers of instruments and voices together (as in the brief section of "Safe and Sound"). Often the instruments are playing smaller divisions of the main beat — something we will discuss later in this chapter. For now, just remember that once you find the basic beat to a pop/rock song, you should be able to keep your foot tapping throughout, regardless of any changes in instruments or texture. Here is a short list of other songs with the main beat heard in the bass kick drum. Use these songs as ear training exercises for more practice locating the beat.

Additional songs with BASIC BEAT IN BASS DRUM

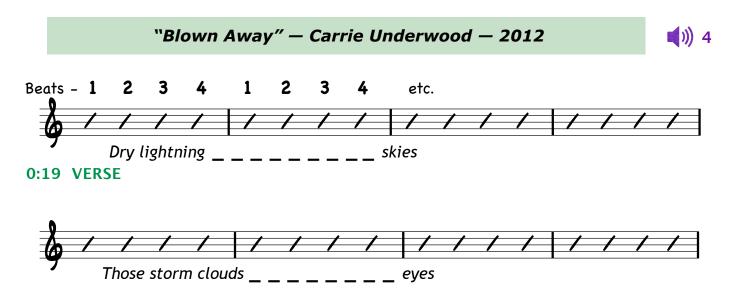
1979	Hot Stuff	Donna Summer
1993	Dreams	The Cranberries
2008	Shut Up and Let Me Go	The Ting Tings
2012	Good Time	Owl City & Carly Rae Jepsen
2013	The Other Side	Jason Derulo
2013	I Love It	Icona Pop feat. Charli XCX
2014	Moves Like Jagger	Maroon 5 ft. Christina Aguilera
2014	Break Free	Ariana Grande feat. Zedd
2015	Make Them Gold	Chvrches
2018	One Kiss	Calvin Harris, Dua Lipa
2020	Love Again	Dua Lipa

Measures and Barlines

As mentioned, performing musicians must stay on the beat at all times. Of course the traditional way to keep track of the beats is to count them. Now you probably know that musicians don't keep counting into the tens and hundreds. Instead, beats are grouped into units called **measures** or **bars**. The most common grouping in pop & rock is four beats per measure. When music is written in standard notation (on a staff of five horizontal lines), the measures are marked by vertical **bar lines** on the staff. Slash marks are often used to visually represent each beat:



The following song by Carrie Underwood is written with four beats per measure. See if you can **count along in groups of four** starting at the **0:19** time mark. Once again, the basic beat is heard in the bass kick drum.



If you weren't looking at the written example with lyrics above, how would you know which beat is "one" or where to start counting? Try to recognize the beats that have a little extra emphasis (ie. feel a little stronger). These should always be beat one. You may have noticed that when you first counted along while looking at the page, you were saying "one" a little louder than the other numbers for this reason. In "Blown Away" the first beat of every measure has a little extra "push" created by a chord strike in the background on piano/guitar.

If you want to test yourself, try listening to another spot in the song. Find the basic beat, but count every beat as "tick, tick, tick, tick, etc." After a few seconds you should begin to notice that you are periodically saying "tick" a little louder when the piano/guitar chord hits. These are the first beats of every measure.

This next song also has an extra chord hit on the first beat of every measure. As you try counting, listen for the <u>"wow" sound</u> in the background, created by a guitar running through a wah wah pedal.

For professional musicians, it is very important not only to keep track of the basic beat but also to know where "one" is. A player can get lost during a song, but if he or she recovers quickly and hits the next beat "one," most listeners won't notice any interruption.

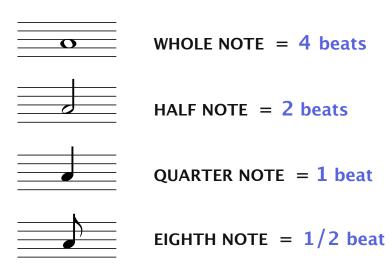
For beginning musicians, counting the beat is a critical learning tool and often done out loud when practicing. However, you can't count and sing the lyrics at the same time. Fortunately, the count eventually falls into the "back of your head," becoming as second-nature as walking or breathing. This allows a musician to consciously focus on other things like remembering the lyrics or entertaining the crowd.

Note & Rest Values

As mentioned in the Preface, this book is not meant to teach or develop a high level of sight reading skill using written scores. To become a fluent reader of music, you will have to put in many hours of additional practice using outside sources. However, we will cover in this chapter a basic knowledge of note and rest values, since this knowledge is essential to explaining and understanding various rhythm patterns as we move forward.

Shown below are some basic types of notes. In pop and rock music, a **whole note** typically lasts for four beats, **half notes** last for two beats, and **quarter notes** get one beat each. If you divide the beat in two, you get **8th notes** (each 8th note lasts for only half of a beat). The first half of the beat is called the **down beat** (when your tapping foot or hand goes down), and the second half is called the **up beat** (when your foot or hand goes up). These notes are shown below as they appear in standard notation. Notice that the whole note has no vertical stem like the half and quarter notes. Also notice that the stem on the 8th note has an extra "flag" attached.

Typical Note Values



Each type of note also has a symbol for the equivalent period of silence (called a **rest**). Notice below that the whole rest hangs below the second staff line, while the half rest sits on top of the middle line.



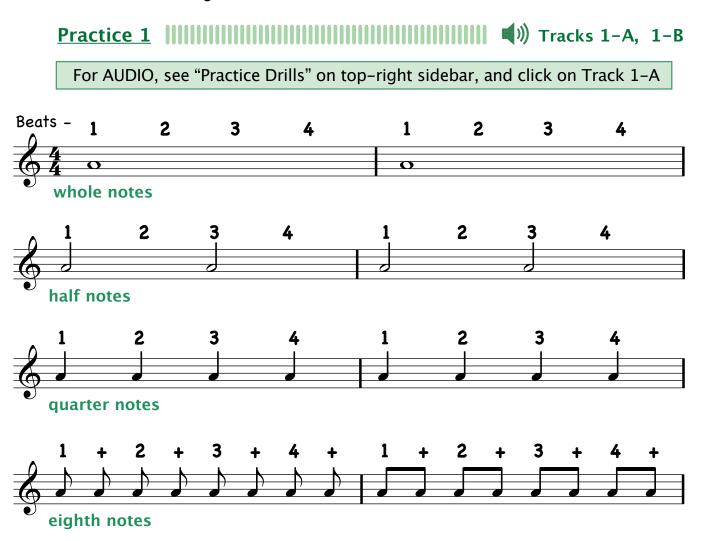
Time Signatures

COUNTING IN FOUR (4/4 meter)

In Practice Drill 1 below, you can see what the note types look like when placed into measures on the staff. Notice the symbol 4/4 at the very beginning. This is called the **time signature** or **meter** of the piece. In this case, the upper number tells you the beats per measure (four), and the lower number indicates the kind of note that gets one beat (a quarter note). The beat count is written above the staff.

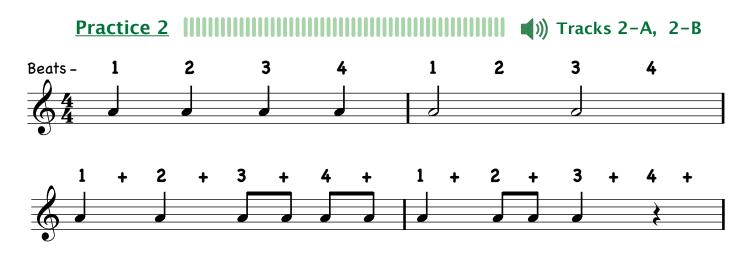
PRACTICE DRILLS

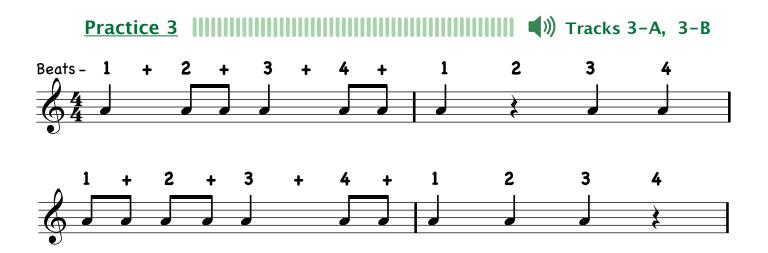
Listen to Practice 1 two times. The first time, <u>count the beats out loud</u> while listening to Audio Track 1-A (piano and metronome). On the last line, you will see that the eighth notes are counted "1 and, 2 and, etc." The second time try <u>tapping the rhythm</u> <u>with your hand</u> while listening to Audio Track 1-B (metronome only). You will tap every time a note enters. On all practice drills in this book, you will hear a 4 – BEAT COUNT-DOWN before the drill begins.



When two or more eighth notes occur back to back, the flags are usually connected together like a beam, as shown on the very last bar. As you can see, the notes are beamed together in pairs, rather than using one long beam across the entire measure. This visually highlights each beat grouping (two eighth notes), making the music easier to read.

The next two drills are more like actual pieces of music, since the measures have a mixture of different note values and rests. There are once again four beats per measure. As before, try **counting the beats** with Track A and **tapping the rhythm** with Track B on both drills.



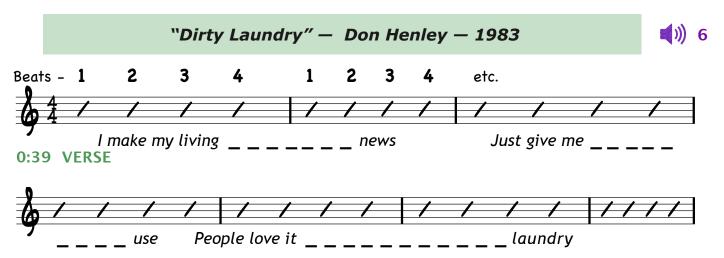


WRITTEN EXERCISES

To help clarify and review the mathematical values of the notes and rests, complete **Exercises 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3,** (see "Textbook Contents"/ "Volume 1" / "Written Exercises").

Regarding the opening song examples at the beginning of this chapter, we would have notated the thumping kick drum on pieces like "I'm Alive" and "Safe and Sound" with a steady stream of quarter notes (each quarter note representing one beat), and the time signature would have been 4/4. In fact, all of the previous song examples were in 4/4 meter.

Let's listen to one more example of this time signature — "Dirty Laundry" by Don Henley. This song has no unique sound or instrument on beat one to guide your counting - there is basically a steady organ part across the whole measure. However, the organ chord on beat one does have slightly more emphasis with a little extra volume. START LISTEN-ING AT **0:39.**



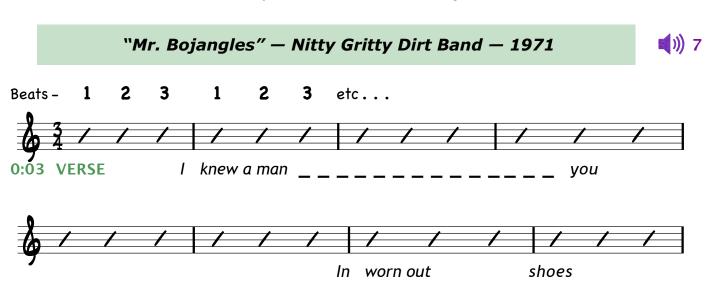
The following list has a few additional examples in 4/4. Once again, use these songs as ear training exercises for more practice counting the beat

Additional songs COUNTED IN FOUR

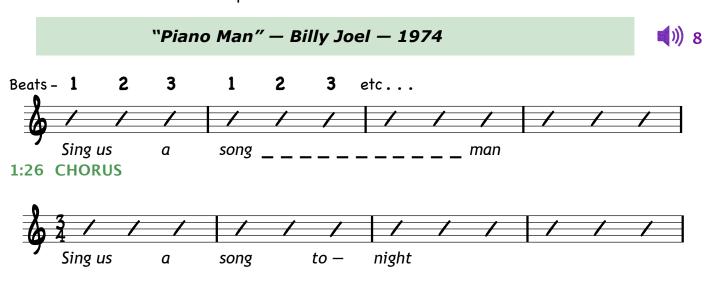
1965	Stop in the Name of Love	The Supremes
1966	Reach Out I'll Be There	The Four Tops
1973	Love Train	The O'Jays
1979	London Calling	The Clash
1980	Brass in Pocket	The Pretenders
1983	One Thing Leads to Another	The Fixx
2012	50 Ways to Say Goodbye	Train

COUNTING IN THREE (3/4 meter)

While 4/4 is by far the most common time signature in pop & rock, there are a fair number of songs that have three beats per measure (3/4 meter). Our next example, "Mr. Bojangles," is one of these. If you try to count in four, you will find that the strong beat doesn't always occur when you say "one." By accurately finding the strong beats, you will recognize that the count is grouped in three instead. If you need help, listen closely to the drummer between 0:05 and 0:22 — he plays an "oom - pah - pah" pattern, thumping his bass drum on beat one and his cymbal on beat two and again on beat three.



Here's one more example in 3/4 meter. START LISTENING AT 1:26.

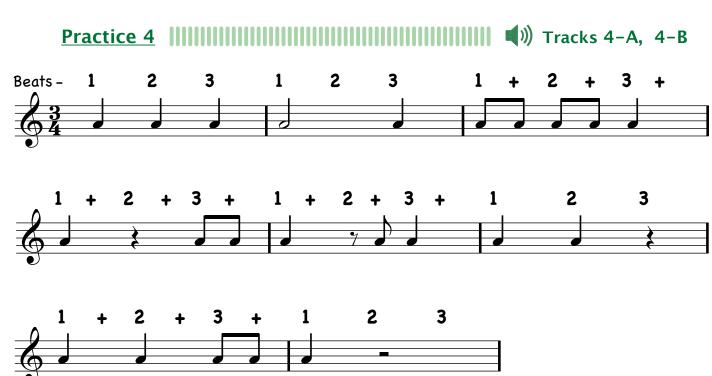


Additional songs COUNTED IN THREE

1959	The Chipmunk Song	David Seville
1960	Are You Lonesome Tonight?	Elvis Presley
1960	He'll Have to Go	Jim Reeves
1961	Moon River	Henry Mancini
1963	Stewball	Peter, Paul, & Mary
1973	Time in a Bottle	Jim Croce
2004	Daughters	John Mayer
2010	Everything to Me	Monica

PRACTICE DRILLS

The following drill is written in 3/4 meter. Use the same two practice steps as in previous drills (**counting the beats** with Track A and **tapping the rhythm** with Track B).

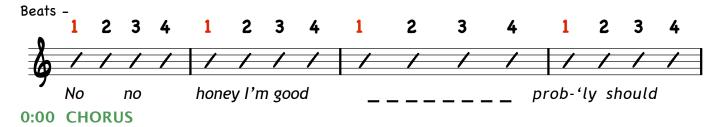


COUNTING IN TWO (2/4 meter)

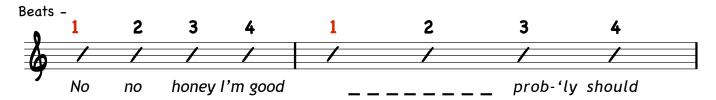
Listen to this Andy Grammer hit from 2014 and try to count along with the beat by tapping your foot.



If you heard the beat as fast and in groups of four, the count would look like this:



However, your foot probably couldn't keep up with the quick tempo. If you heard the beat only half as fast, but still counted in four, the count would look like this:

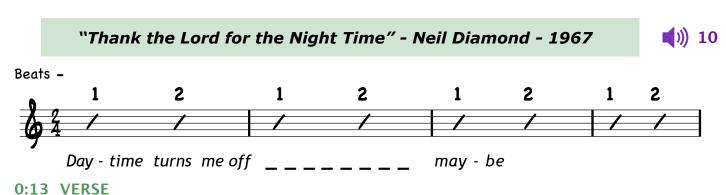


This slower tempo is preferred, but you will eventually notice that the third beat always seems too strong — like it was equal in importance with the "one." In fact, these type of songs are usually written and counted in **groups of two**, not four. This means that instead of counting on to "three," we should be resetting to "one" and starting a new measure.

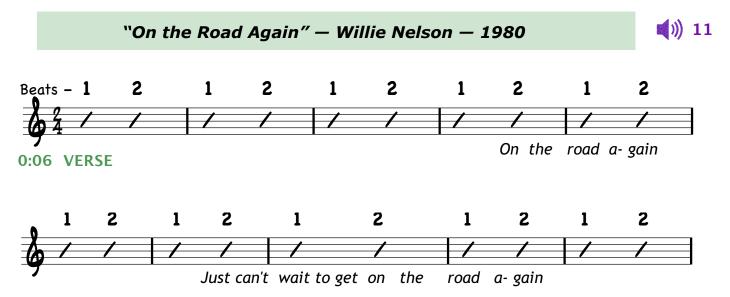
Here's what the count would look like in two:



Another example of a song counted in two comes from Neil Diamond.



2/4 meter is especially common in country music, as heard on this next classic by Willie Nelson.



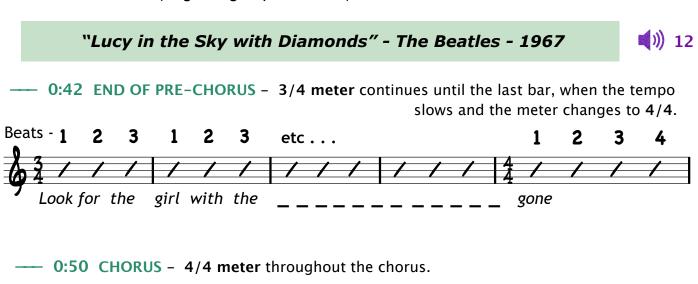
The following list will offer more practice listening to songs with a two-beat feel:

Beats - 1

Additional songs COUNTED IN TWO

1970	Lookin' Out My Back Door	Creedence Clearwater Rev.
1978	You're the One that I Want	Olivia Newton-John & John Travolta
1979	The Gambler	Kenny Rogers
1988	Rattled	Traveling Wilburys
2002	Tortured, Tangled Hearts	Dixie Chicks
2007	Between the River and Me	Tim McGraw
2010	Little White Church	Little Big Town
2012	Mountain Sound	Of Monsters and Men

Although most pop & rock hits keep the same meter from beginning to end, it is possible for the meter to change from section to section within the same song. During the late 60s, The Beatles recorded several songs like this, particularly on their ground-breaking LP "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." Let's listen to a cut from that album, "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds." This song features a light, gentle verse and pre-chorus in 3/4 meter, but then changes to a slower, more forceful 4/4 rhythm for the chorus. START LISTENING AT **0:31** (beginning of pre-chorus).



etc. . .

Lucy in the sky with

The Backbeat

As mentioned, the vast majority of pop & rock music is written with four beats per measure. Almost all of these 4/4 songs feature something called a "backbeat" — a strong emphasis on beats 2 and 4 (considered weaker beats in the European classical tradition). These beats are usually marked by a strong snare drum hit or hand clap sound. Listen again to "Get the Party Started" or "Dirty Laundry" and you will immediately hear the backbeat on 2 and 4. This is sometimes called a "rock backbeat," but it is heard on all styles of pop & rock, including softer ballads, which often substitute a rim shot, wood block, or even a guitar dead-strum for the louder snare. The backbeat is so common that most audience members raised after 1955 (the dawn of rock) will clap on 2 and 4, while older folks raised before rock & roll clap on 1 and 3...

Let's start with a classic backbeat example from 1962. Count along as before, starting at **0:07**. Beat one should be easy to find — listen for the short, twangy guitar strum. Once you've established your count, notice that the **snare drum** always hits on beats 2 and 4.

"Green Onions" — Booker T. & The MG's — 1962



Booker T. & The MG's served as the house band at Stax studio in Memphis during the 1960s, and the strong backbeat of MG's drummer Al Jackson became a signature of the Stax sound, heard on classic hits like Wilson Pickett's "In the Midnight Hour" or Sam and Dave's "Soul Man."

While the snare drum may be the most common instrument to carry the backbeat, not all snare drums sound alike. Notice how different the snare sounds in the next example (tight, hollow, and higher-pitched):

Sometimes on softer songs the drummer will hit the metal rim instead of the full drum skin for a more subdued sound called a "rim shot:"



Compare the snare or percussion sounds on these additional examples:

Additional songs with SNARE/PERCUSSION BACKBEAT

1957	All Shook Up	Elvis Presley
1981	Super Freak	Rick James
1988	Hysteria	Def Leppard
1989	Deadbeat Club	B-52's
1989	She Drives Me Crazy	Fine Young Cannibals
1994	Down on the Farm	Tim McGraw
1999	Someday	Sugar Ray
2011	As Bad as It Gets	Thompson Square
2018	On the Loose	Niall Horan

Of course not all backbeats come from a drum sound. Check out the following song with **hand claps** on the backbeat:

Here's another song with a hand clap backbeat, but the "clap" sound is created with an <u>electronic synthesizer</u>. Start listening at **0:42.**



Additional songs with HAND CLAP BACKBEAT

1957	I'm Walkin	Fats Domino
1966	Cherry Cherry	Neil Diamond
1966	Cool Jerk	The Capitols
1988	Crazy Little Thing Called Love	Queen

In 1984, Billy Joel recorded a tribute to street-corner doowop. The song was done a-cappella style (vocals only — no instruments), so a **finger snap** backbeat replaces the usual snare:



The use of a backbeat is so common in pop & rock that even softer or slower ballads have one. Here's an example from Paul Young.



Hard rock bands in the 80s began to show their softer side with "power ballads" like the next song by Def Leppard. Notice that the back beat starts on the bass drum at 15 seconds, but later changes at 1:22 to a snare drum.

Additional songs with BACKBEAT IN SLOW BALLADS

1984	Purple Rain	Prince
1989	Rock Witcha	Bobby Brown
1999	Spend My Life with You	Eric Benet & Tamia
2000	I Knew I Loved You	Savage Garden
2009	Only You Can Love Me This Way	Keith Urban
2010	If I Die Young	The Band Perry
2023	Die for You	The Weeknd, Arianna Grande

Sometimes the backbeat is not constant over an entire song — the chorus is likely to have one, but the verse may not. In this 2010 hit by Jerrod Niemann, notice the contrast between the verse and chorus.

"Lover, Lover" - Jerrod Niemann - 2010

- **(**))) 21
- 0:01 (verse) No backbeat. Bass kick drum hits on beats 1 & 3.
- 0:42 (chorus) <u>Hand clap</u> starts **BACKBEAT** on 2 & 4.
- 0:59 (verse) Backbeat disappears. Bass drum hits on 1 & 3 (like previous verse)

On the next example by The Doobie Brothers, a shifting, disjointed pattern in the verse creates tension, giving way to a smoother, steady backbeat on the chorus. As with "Lover Lover," the change in rhythm helps highlight the chorus and give it more power.



- 0:00 (verse) Drums play a "disjointed" pattern with no backbeat, creating a slightly uneasy feeling (tension).
- 0:53 (chorus) Drums start playing a **STEADY BACKBEAT** on 2 & 4. This creates a much smoother, more solid feeling, resolving the tension
- 1:06 (verse) Drums resume the more <u>disjointed pattern</u> (backbeat disappears).

Here's one final example that's easier to count (without the disorienting feeling of the "Takin' It to the Streets" verse). Cover the time indicators below the title and see if you can hear exactly when the backbeat changes.

"Day Tripper" - Beatles - 1966

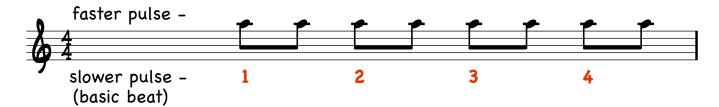


- 0:09 Tambourine enters playing BACKBEAT on beats 2 & 4.
- 0:15 Drums enter, snare drum reinforces BACKBEAT
- 0:32 Tambourine & drum now play on every beat (backbeat disappears).
- 0:49 BACKBEAT returns (tambourine & drum resume hits on 2 & 4 only).

Sub-Dividing the Beat

8th-NOTE PULSE (dividing the beat into 2 parts)

As mentioned earlier, 8th notes divide the basic beat into two parts. This faster 8th-note pulse is very common in pop & rock. Often there is one instrumental part that functions as a "time keeper" playing a constant stream of 8th notes that are layered over the basic quarter-note beat. In the drums, this is usually heard as a steady ticking sound on the small https://doi.org/10.11/. Although the faster 8th-note pulse can be quite prominent, the music is still counted in the slower pulse of the basic beat (in this case, four beats per measure).



(If you have software that will allow programming of drum patterns, try programing the rhythm above using a kick drum on the basic beat and hi-hat cymbal on the 8th pulse. Then try adding a snare backbeat on beats 2 and 4.)

You may have noticed that our last listening example, "Day Tripper" featured a steady 8th-note pulse on the cymbal. Here's an even clearer example from 2004:

- Notice the steady 8TH-NOTE PULSE on the <u>high hat cymbal</u>. (To hear the cymbals better in your recordings, try boosting the treble and/or cutting the bass.)
- Also note the BACKBEAT on 2 & 4, supplied by the <u>electronic handclap</u>.

Here's one more example with the cymbal carrying the 8th-note pulse:

- 0:26 <u>High hat cymbal</u> enters playing steady 8TH-NOTE PULSE.
- 0:38 Notice the unusual sound like a ringing "foghorn" on the BACKBEAT. Also note the high piano/gtr chords carrying the steady QUARTER-NOTE PULSE.

Additional songs with 8th-NOTE PULSE ON CYMBAL/SHAKER/PERCUSSION

1964	Last Kiss	J. Frank Wilson
1968	Birthday	The Beatles
1973	Daniel	Elton John
1978	Deacon Blues	Steely Dan
1978	Take Me to the River	Talking Heads
1994	All I Wanna Do	Sheryl Crow
2007	Hate It Here	Wilco
2011	Doors Unlocked and Opened	Death Cab for Cutie
2012	Leavin' in Your Eyes	Little Big Town
2017	Feel It Still	Portugal. The Man
2019	Sucker	Jonas Brothers

Occasionally the drummer will put the 8th-note pulse on the tom toms or in rare cases even the bass kick drum.

"We Got the Beat" — The Go Go's — 1982



- Notice the 8TH-NOTE PULSE from the bass kick drum
- Also note the BACKBEAT on the snare drum

A steady 8th-note pulse is probably heard most often in guitar chord strumming — either as full, jangly six-string chords or as tight, muted "power chords," chugging on the bass strings. In the late 70s, rapid-fire power chords became a defining trait of punk rock, pioneered by groups like The Ramones.

(1)) 27

Steady muted power chords were also featured in 80s new wave songs like this hit by The Cars:

(1)) 28

8th-note power chords helped define the sound of hard rock/heavy metal in the 80s & 90s as well. In this example by Metallica, the muted power chords start at **0:24**.

(1)) 29

Today steady 8th-note power chords continue to be a staple of alternative rock, pop, and country, including this 2002 modern rock hit:

())) 30

Often a contrast is set up between muted strums in the verse and full, open strums in the chorus. This gives the chorus extra volume and power, as heard on this 1999 hit by Blink 182:



- --- 0:14 (verse) 8TH-NOTE PULSE on tight, <u>muted</u> power chords.
- --- 0:45 (chorus) The sound opens up with **full strums** on **8TH-NOTE PULSE**.

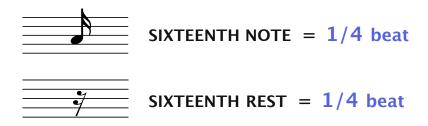
Additional songs with 8th-NOTE PULSE ON MUTED POWER CHORDS

1970	Paranoid	Black Sabbath
1981	Fire and Ice	Pat Benatar
1982	Eye in the Sky	Alan Parsons Project
1982	State Trooper	Bruce Springsteen
1985	Voices Carry	`Til Tuesday
1994	Basket Case	Green Day
2002	The Middle	Jimmy Eat World
2003	Beautiful Disaster	Kelly Clarkson
2008	You Belong With Me	Taylor Swift
2008	Won't Go Home Without You	Maroon 5
2014	I Just Might	Ryan Adams
2016	Keeper of the Flame	Miranda Lambert

16th-NOTE PULSE (dividing the beat into 4 parts)

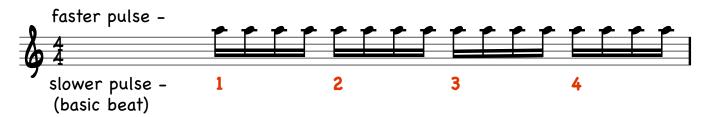
If you can divide the beat into two parts, why not four? This is called a **16th note pulse**, and it turns out that this division is more common than 8th notes in modern pop and rock. The basic beat can be fairly slow, but four 16th notes are then played over each beat, creating extra energy and excitement.

As shown below, 16th notes have a **double** "flag," compared to the single flag on an 8th note. Since four 16th notes = one beat, each individual 16th note represents 1/4 beat.



The 16th-note pulse was a hallmark of 70s funk and disco music, and eventually it became common across all genres of pop music — including dance, techno, EDM, hip-hop, modern r&b, rock, and even country. (Of the 4,000 total songs analyzed for this book, roughly 2,500 had at least one instrumental or vocal part based on the 16th-note pulse.)

To get the feel of a 16th note pulse, start with a slow quarter-note beat, and then quickly say "1, ee, and, ah," "2, ee, and, ah," etc. for each beat. If you want to know what it feels like to be a drummer, tap the basic beat with your foot and the 16th notes with your hand.

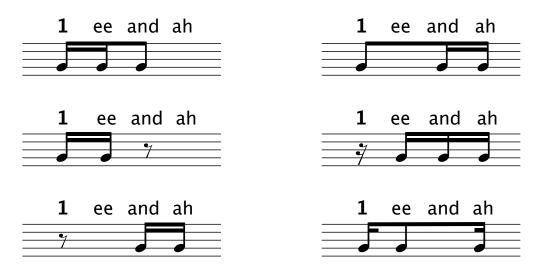


(Once again, if you have drum software, try programming a rhythm like the one above with a steady 16th pulse.)

You will notice in the score above that consecutive 16th notes are beamed together to visually highlight each beat grouping (four 16th notes), just like 8th notes in previous examples. Since 16th notes have a double flag, the beams now have two lines instead of

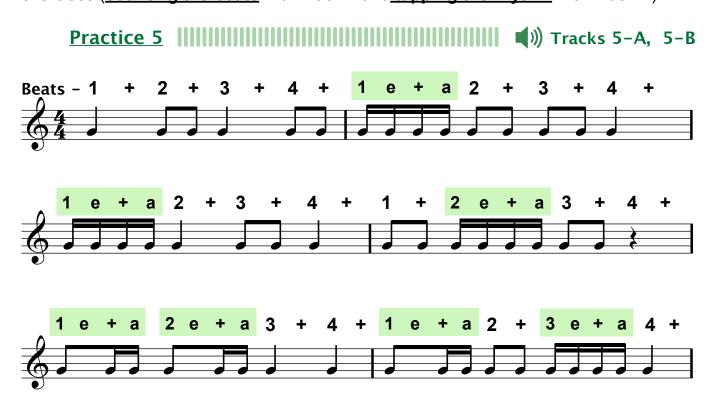
one. When beat groupings have a mixture of 8ths and 16ths, the 8ths and 16ths are often beamed together, and you must pay close attention to which part of the beam has a single line (8th note), and which has a double line (16th note). Shown below are some possible combinations of notes or rests that all equal one beat in 4/4 meter.

Beat Groupings with Beams (all = 1 beat)



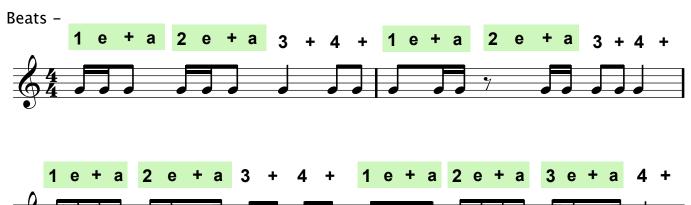
PRACTICE DRILLS

The following drill includes 16th notes. Use the same two practice steps as in previous exercises (**counting the beats** with Track A and **tapping the rhythm** with Track B).



Here's one more example to try:









The next song example has a prominent 16th pulse, starting at **0:37**. The basic beat is carried by the bass kick drum, with the 16th pulse in the muted guitar. If you can count fast enough you will notice four 16ths for each bass thump.

"I Love You Always Forever" — Donna Lewis — 1995

0:38 <u>Bass kick drum</u> plays a slow, steady QUARTER-NOTE PULSE.
 <u>Muted guitar</u> chugs along with a constant stream of rapid 16th-NOTE

James Brown is sometimes credited with starting the trend towards the 16th pulse in mainstream pop. As the godfather of the funk style in the late 60s, Brown's music featured this high-energy 16th rhythm, distributed in a disjointed, "popcorn" texture among all the instruments in his band (drums, bass, guitar, etc.). Even the horns in Brown's band were used primarily as rhythm instruments, instead of their traditional role providing melody or harmony. Here's an example from 1968:

"Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)" - James Brown - 1968



 All instruments (including the horns) play in short, staccato bursts, tapping into the underlying **16th-NOTE PULSE**. Notice that no one instrument plays continuous, steady 16th notes. The 16th pulse is best defined by the overall sound and feeling. (The 16th pulse is very fast — almost too fast to count or tap)

In the next example from the 70s, the disjointed, "popcorn" texture of funk is again apparent. However, listen closely to the **bass** — it is the one instrument that maintains a steady 16th pulse throughout. This allows the other instruments like the horns, drums and lead guitar to play off the steady pulse with sporadic punctuations.

"What Is Hip?" - Tower of Power - 1973



Disco and later dance, techno and pop styles also routinely featured at least one instrument keeping a steady 16th pulse. On this 1971 hit from Isaac Hayes, the steady 16th pulse starts in the **high-hat cymbal**, followed by a choppy **wah wah guitar** strum that reinforces the pulse.

Additional songs with 16th PULSE IN HIGH PERCUSSION (cymbal, shaker, etc.)

1978	Baby Come Back	Player
1985	Broken Wings	Mr. Mister
1991	Gonna Make You Sweat	C & C Music Factory
1992	Go Away	Gloria Estefan
2001	Opera Singer	Cake
2013	Weight of Living, Pt. 2	Bastille
2018	Graffiti	Chvrches
2023	Rush	Troye Sivan

The 16th pulse is also often carried by <u>rolling tom toms</u>. Here's an early example from 1957 by Buddy Holly & The Crickets.

()) 36

Almost 50 years later, Beck shows that the rolling toms never go out of style.

(1)) 3

This time the 16th pulse is carried by a unique **electronic drum** sound.

In the hit "Starboy" the 16th pulse comes from a combination of electronic hi-hat cymbal & congas

"Starboy" - The Weeknd feat. Daft Punk - 2016



39

Additional songs with 16th PULSE IN DRUMS (snare, toms, conga, etc.)

1962	Sheila	Tommy Roe
1965	I Want Candy	Strangeloves
1968	Bend Me Shape Me	American Breed
1974	Motherless Children	Eric Clapton
1986	Higher Love	Steve Winwood
1987	One More Chance	Pet Shop Boys
1987	Big Love	Fleetwood Mac
2002	Everyday	Dave Matthews
2006	Belief	John Mayer
2010	Wide Eyes	Local Natives
2013	Blurred Lines	Robin Thicke, feat. T.I. & Pharrell
2017	Strangers	Halsey

In the 1970s Stevie Wonder helped pioneer the use of the **keyboard synthesizer** to carry the steady 16th pulse.

"Boogie on Reggae Woman" — Stevie Wonder — 1974



Of course during the 80s and 90s, the **pulsing synth** was everywhere, becoming a cliche for the dance pop and techno music of the era.

"Obsession" - Animotion - 1985



Additional songs with 16th PULSE IN SYNTHESIZER

1981	Don't You Want Me	Human League
1982	New Frontier	Donald Fagen
1986	Freedom Overspill	Steve Winwood
1987	Bad	Michael Jackson
1998	Ray of Light	Madonna
1999	That's the Way It Is	Celine Dion
2000	Bye Bye Bye	NSYNC
2010	E.T.	Katy Perry
2014	It Was Always You	Maroon 5
2014	Style	Taylor Swift
2015	Leave a Trace	Chvrches
2016	Wasted Time	Keith Urban
2023	Weightless	Arlo Parks

<u>Guitar strums</u> have a very percussive quality, so it is not surprising that the 16th pulse is often carried by the rhythm guitar part, as in this next example.

(1)) 42

Here's a quieter example that still retains a 16th-note guitar strum in the background.



Additional songs with 16th PULSE IN GUITAR STRUM

1969	I Want You Back	The Jackson 5
1973	Long Train Runnin'	The Doobie Brothers
1975	Jive Talkin'	The Bee Gees
1978	Back in Love Again	LTD
1980	Giving It Up for Your Love	Delbert McClinton
1981	Rapture	Blondie
1995	Only Wanna Be with You	Hootie & The Blowfish
1997	Semi-Charmed Life	Third Eye Blind
1998	Torn	Natalie Imbruglia
2007	Broken	Lifehouse
2014	Sing (at 0:40)	Ed Sheeran
2017	Gettin' in the Way	Keith Urban
2024	Liar	Jelly Roll

The 16th note is also the main rhythmic foundation for <u>rap vocals</u> as illustrated by our next two examples. Start listening to "O.P.P." at **0:49.**

— 0:49 (verse) - Steady **16TH-NOTE PULSE** is found in the <u>vocals</u> starting with the words "You ever had a girl . . . "

For this Nelly song, start listening to the verse at **0:46**.

— 0:46 (verse) - Steady **16TH-NOTE PULSE** starts with the <u>vocal phrase</u> "I met this chick and she just . . . "

Since pop music from the 80s to the present has been heavily influenced by rap and hip hop, **vocal melodies** have started carrying the 16th note pulse more prominently in a variety of styles. Here's a good pop example from 2003. Start listening at **0:30**.

— 0:30 (mid-verse) - Steady 16TH-NOTE PULSE is prominent in the <u>vocals</u>, starting with the words "Something on the surface well it . . . "

The verse of Dua Lipa's recent hit "Levitating" provides another good example of 16th pulse in the vocals.

— 0:09 (verse) - <u>Vocals</u> carry a **16TH-NOTE PULSE**, starting with the words "If you wanna run away with me . . . "

Additional songs with 16th PULSE IN VOCAL

1991	Give It Away	Red Hot Chili Peppers
1996	How Do You Want It	2Pac & K-C & JoJo
1997	If U Can't Dance	Spice Girls
1998	One Week	Barenaked Ladies
2001	It Wasn't Me	Shaggy
2001	Ride Wit Me	Nelly / City Spud
2004	Gigolo	Nick Cannon
2006	Give It Up to Me	Sean Paul
2007	Everywhere I Go	Katharine McPhee
2010	Get Back Up	tobyMac
2014	Hey Mama	David Guetta, N. Minaj & Afrojack
2017	Despacito	Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee, feat. Justin Bieber
2017	Starboy	The Weeknd
2020	Lil Bit	Nelly & Florida Georgia Line

As we saw with the earlier Spice Girls' example, not all songs with a 16th pulse are loud & hard-driving. Many soft pop & rock ballads also have a subtle, under-stated 16th pulse that gives an otherwise slow beat some extra energy. Here's two examples from the late 80s:

"I Want You" — Third Eye Blind — 1988



- O:00 The song starts with a <u>shaker</u> carrying the steady 16th-NOTE PULSE. Notice the soft BACKBEAT (a <u>rim shot</u> or <u>woodblock</u>).
- --- 0:05 A gentle guitar strum enters, reinforcing the 16th-NOTE PULSE.



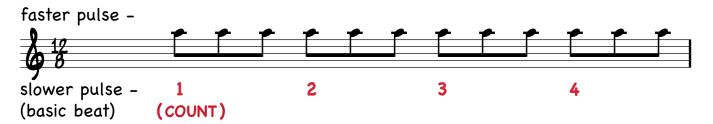
- 0:00 (int & verse) This time the steady 16th-NOTE PULSE is created by a combination of several high percussion instruments (cymbal, castanets, block or rim hits).
- 1:02 (chorus) Note the addition of the high repeated synth riff in the background. This riff reinforces the 16th-NOTE PULSE.

Additional songs with 16th PULSE IN SLOW BALLADS

1985	Crazy For You	Madonna
1986	These Dreams	Heart
1988	Make It Real	The Jets
1989	Rock Witcha	Bobby Brown
1992	I Will Remember You	Amy Grant
1997	2 Become 1	Spice Girls
1998	Left of the Middle	Natalie Imbruglia
2002	Tomorrow	Avril Lavigne

TRIPLET 8th-NOTE PULSE (dividing the beat into 3 parts)

Sometimes the basic beat is divided into three equal parts called **8th-note triplets**. If the 8th-note triplets are relatively constant on some instrument (such as the piano, guitar, or cymbal), then the triplet pulse is strongly felt, just like the faster 8th or 16th pulses heard in the previous two sections. Once again, this provides extra energy, especially when the basic beat is fairly slow. To get the feel of this rhythm, try tapping out a slow basic beat with your foot, and then start tapping a faster "1, 2, 3" with your hand for each foot tap (see the following score).



12/8 meter

Songs with this triplet pulse and four basic beats per measure are usually written with a **time signature of 12/8**. The top number indicates the total number of divisions in each measure (3 divisions for each beat x 4 beats). The bottom number indicates what type of note (8th note) represents each division. As with the 8th-note and 16th-note rhythms discussed earlier, the music is not counted in the faster pulse (8th-note triplets), but rather in the slower pulse of the basic beat.

Many early rock and pop hits from the 50s and 60s were written in 12/8 meter, featuring a strong triplet pulse on **acoustic piano**. Especially prominent were songs from the New Orleans R&B tradition, including artists like Fats Domino and his 1960 hit "Walking to New Orleans":

"Walking to New Orleans" — Fats Domino — 1960

- 0:00 The song begins with a high "<u>tick tock</u>" sound that establishes the SLOW, DOTTED QUARTER-NOTE PULSE like a metronome.
- O:06 After two measures, Domino's signature <u>piano chords</u> enter on the FASTER TRIPLET 8th PULSE.

Additional 12/8 songs with TRIPLET 8ths ON PIANO

1956	Blueberry Hill	Fats Domino
1956	The Great Pretender	The Platters
1957	Blue Monday	Fats Domino
1958	Who's Sorry Now	Connie Francis
1960	Devil or Angel	Bobby Vee
1963	You Really Got a Hold on Me	Miracles

Although triplets may be one of the defining features of 50s and early 60s rock & pop, not all songs with triplets come from this era. Here's a later example from the 80s with the triplet layer played on **cymbal**:

"The Trouble With Love Is" — Kelly Clarkson — 2003



Additional 12/8 songs with TRIPLET 8ths ON CYMBAL / PERCUSSION

1961	Emotions	Brenda Lee
1961	Can't Help Falling in Love	Elvis Presley
1971	Colour My World	Chicago
1985	Everybody Wants to Rule the World	Tears for Fears
1988	The Way You Make Me Feel	Michael Jackson
2000	Brand New Day	Sting

Check out the unusual triplet sound on this next song by Stevie Wonder — the triplet 8th pulse is carried by the "wah wah" synthesizer notes.

(1)) 52

Many blues-rock songs also feature a steady triplet pulse, as in the following recording by Eric Clapton. On this piece, the triplet 8th pulse is most prominent in the **piano chords**. Imagine how much this song would drag if it were reduced to its underlying quarter-note pulse, which is a slow 70 beats per minute. If you have a hard time finding the slow pulse, listen for the snare backbeat — the snare crashes on beats two and four.

"It Hurts Me Too" — Eric Clapton — 1994 (originally Tampa Red - 1940)

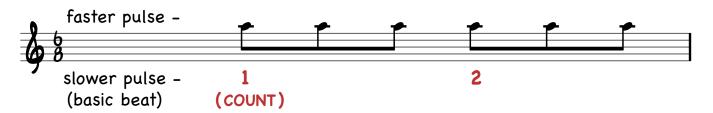


Additional BLUES SONGS in 12/8

1960	Drown in My Own Tears	Ray Charles (orig. Sonny Thompson '51)
1965	Little Red Rooster	Rolling Stones (orig. Howlin' Wolf '61)
1979	Need Your Love So Bad	Allman Brothers (orig. Little Willie John '56)
1980	Worried Life Blues	Eric Clapton (orig. Big Maceo '41)
1989	Leave My Girl Alone	Stevie Ray Vaughan (orig. Buddy Guy '65)

6/8 meter

Songs with the two-beat feel of 2/4 meter can also have a faster triplet-8th pulse. In this case the time signature would be 6/8. It is tempting to count these songs in six, especially if the tempo is slow, but technically they should be counted in two (the basic beat).



Teddy Swims' 2023 hit "Lose Control" is a great 6/8 example, with <u>organ chords</u> outlining the steady triplet-8th pulse. The tempo is extremely slow, but the heavy accent on the first 8th note of each triplet makes it easy to feel the slower count in two.

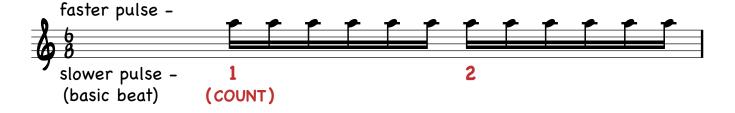
(1) 54

In this classic early 60s instrumental hit, the triplet 8th pulse is carried by an **orchestral flute sound**.

On Queen's rock anthem "We Are the Champions" the triplet pulse is heard occasionally in the **vocal melody** and the **piano** part.

6/8 meter with 16th-note pulse

Some songs in 6/8 meter also have a strong 16th pulse. To get the feel of this rhythm, start with the slow basic beat and quickly say "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6" for each beat.

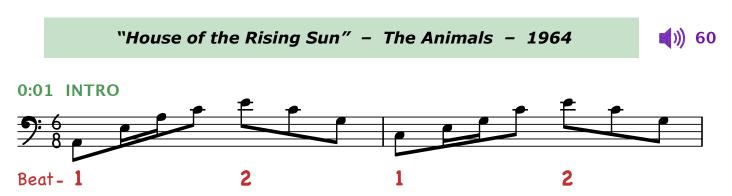


Shinedown's 2012 hit "Amaryllis" is an example of 6/8 meter with a fast 16th pulse. The 16th notes are heard mainly in the <u>acoustic guitar strum</u> and the <u>pulsing orchestral</u> <u>sound</u>.

Try tapping the slow basic beat with your foot on the next 6/8 example. Notice the contrast in energy between the deliberate foot taps and the fast 16ths in the **vocal melody** and **acoustic guitar strum**.

On this Bryan Adams song the 16th pulse is carried mainly in the <u>acoustic guitar</u> strum and the faint <u>hand clapping percussion</u> in the background, starting at **0:41**.

Our last example of 6/8 meter comes from The Animals' 1964 recording "House of the Rising Sun." The song opens with an 8-bar guitar intro, featuring a repeating one-bar rhythmic pattern of mostly 8th notes, with <u>two 16ths</u> adding an extra burst of energy midway through beat one. The first two bars are shown below.



Additional songs in 6/8 METER

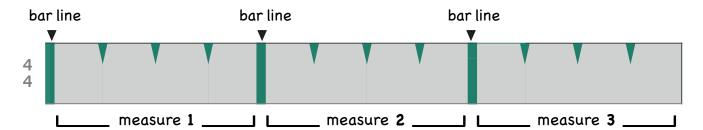
1959	Sleepwalk	Santo & Johnny
1972	Nights in White Satin	Moody Blues
1993	Pineapple Head	Crowded House
2002	Hero	Chad Kroeger & Josey Scott
2003	I'm with You	Avril Lavigne
2005	You and Me	Lifehouse
2009	Trouble	Ray LaMontagne
2019	Remember You Young	Thomas Rhett
2024	Die With a Smile	Lady Gaga & Bruno Mars

A Word About Music Notation

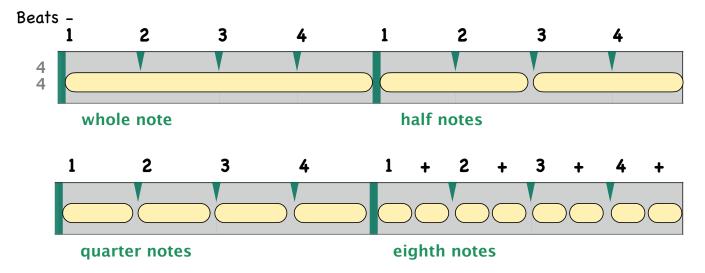
Moving forward through the rest of this and subsequent chapters, there will be frequent song examples that feature signature riffs or melodies. As mentioned in the Preface, using copyrighted standard notation (5-line staff) to illustrate these song elements would quickly become cost-prohibitive. In order to keep this textbook available at a reasonable price without sacrificing significant content, <u>Spinning Gold</u> will present these song excerpts using an alternative <u>graphic notation</u> system. This new system will be very intuitive, and fluent readers of standard notation will be able to adjust with minimal effort. (If you need to see the standard notation for any song in this book, visit one of the many websites offering sheet music online, such as Sheet Music Plus or Sheet Music Direct.)

The new notation system will not feature a five-line staff. Instead, there will be a single horizontal banner (shown in gray below). Barlines are written as thick green lines that extend from top to bottom, and each bar line represents the beginning of beat one. Moving left to right, beats 2, 3, and 4 are marked along the top with short green arrows.

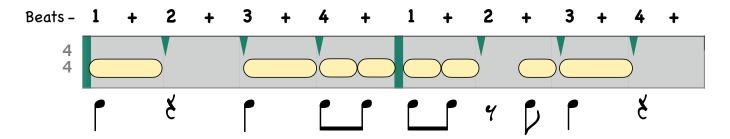




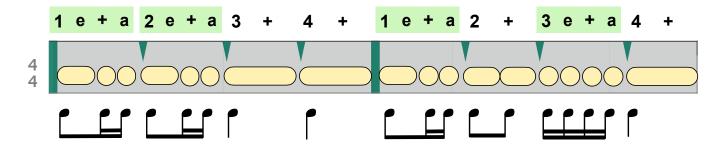
Individual notes appear as yellow horizontal shapes with rounded corners. The **horizontal length** of the shape will be proportionate to the number of beats for each note, defining the difference between whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes (shown below).



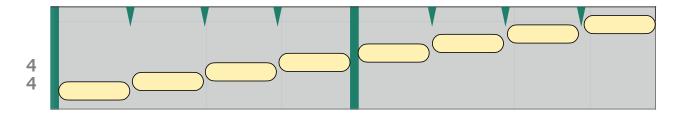
Rests do not need individual symbols, since periods of silence are simply indicated by the amount of horizontal space between the yellow notes. Here is an example with a mixture of notes and rests:



To illustrate 16th notes, here is what the last line of Practice 5 (done earlier), would look like in the new graphic notation.



As with standard notation, changes in pitch will be reflected in the vertical dimension, so an ascending step-wise scale would look like this:



Chords will be shown as notes in a vertical stack, also like standard notation. (The next song, "Billie Jean," is an example.) Note names will not be necessary for this chapter on rhythm, but starting with Chapter Two, individual note names will be written inside each yellow box. Even without the note names, we can still see things in this chapter like melodic contour and phrase length.

We now move on in our discussion of rhythm to one of the most important characteristics of pop and rock - the frequent use of syncopation.

Syncopation

8th NOTE SYNCOPATION

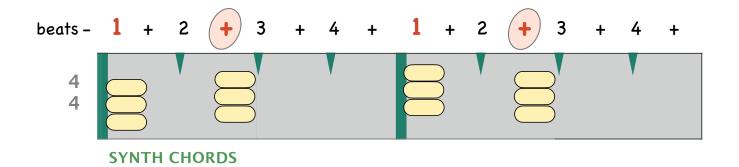
Listen very closely to a typical pop or rock song and count the beats "1 and 2 and, etc." You will notice that many phrases and rhythmic accents start on the "and" of a beat (the upbeat), rather than the stronger downbeat. This is not your imagination or error.

When rhythmic accents fall on the upbeat instead of the downbeat, it is called **syncopation**. This type of rhythm is a hallmark of the pop & rock style, as we will hear in the following examples.

Let's start with an iconic example of 80s dance pop. "Billie Jean" opens with just drums, then the bass line enters with a chugging 8th-note pulse. Listen for the entrance of the **treble synthesizer chords** at **0:20**. As you can see in the graphic notation below, the synth chords join the 8th-note pulse at two places every measure — on the downbeat of "one" and the syncopated upbeat of "two".

"Billie Jean" — Michael Jackson — 1983

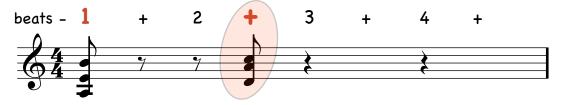
- **(1)**) 61
- O:00 Alternating <u>kick drum and snare</u> create the steady QUARTER-NOTE PULSE. (Kick drum on beats 1 & 3, snare BACKBEAT on 2 & 4.)
 High hat cymbal plays the faster 8th-NOTE PULSE.
- --- 0:04 <u>Chugging bass line</u> joins on 8th-NOTE PULSE with a steady stream of 8th notes. (Count along with the 8th-note pulse "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and.")
- 0:20 <u>Treble synthesizer chords</u> punctuate the 8th-note pulse as follows:



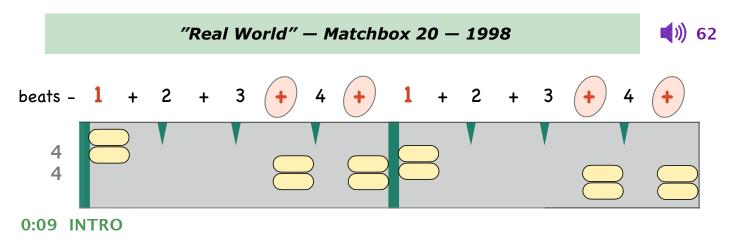
This type of syncopation is extremely common in pop & rock — two chords per measure in 4/4 time, but they don't divide the measure exactly in half. Many times the second chord comes in a half beat "early," giving the rhythm an extra push. When you count along with the 8th-note pulse, you probably say the "and" of beat 2 much louder.



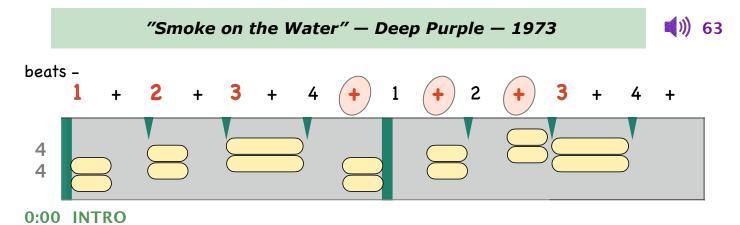
SYNCOPATED RHYTHM (extra energy)



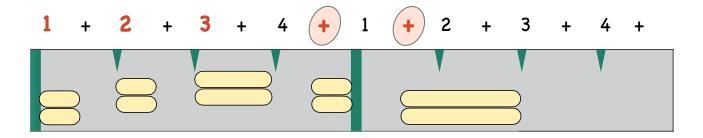
Syncopation can occur on any beat. Here's another example with syncopated chord hits, but the accents are on the upbeats of "three" and "four."



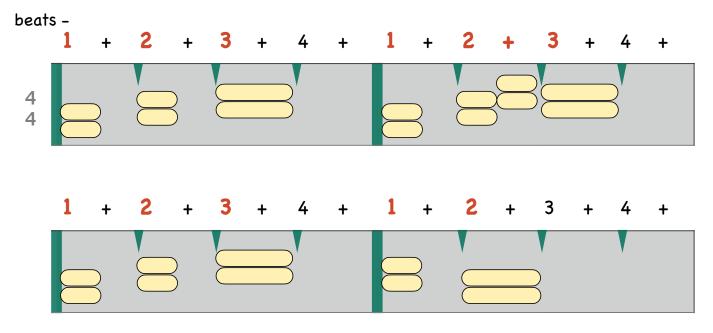
Notice the strong syncopation in the next classic rock riff from Deep Purple:



p.46

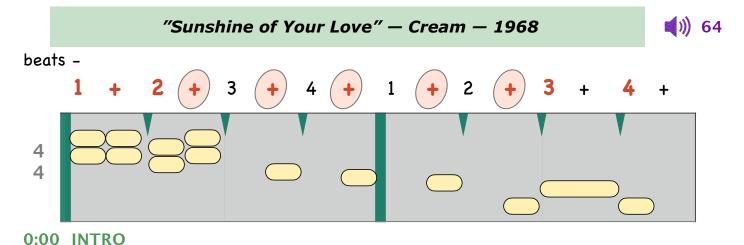


Now try to imagine a "squared-off" version of "Smoke On The Water" with <u>no</u> syncopation — tap along if you dare.

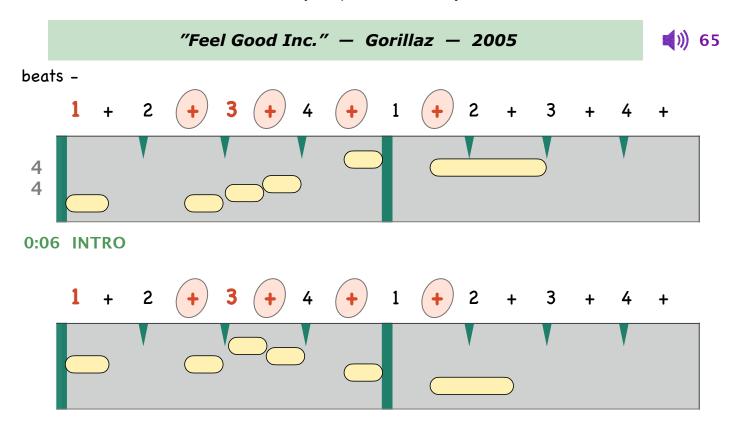


OUCH!! Completely devoid of rock energy and attitude . . . let's not try that again!

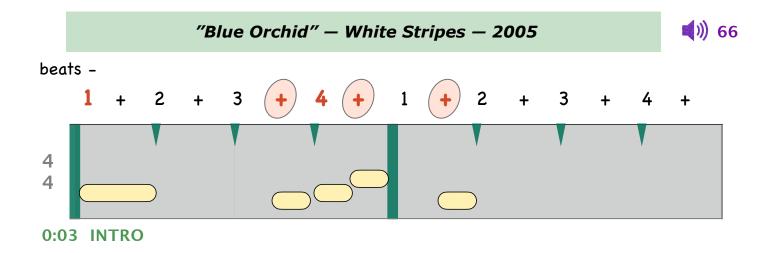
Here's another classic rock riff — this time with several up-beat accents in a row.

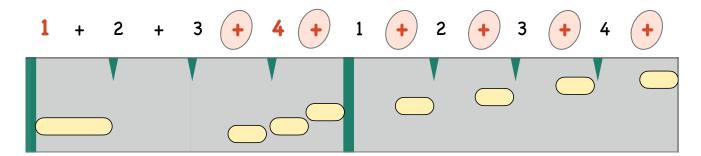


Here's a more recent riff with syncopation, courtesy of the Gorillaz.



Notice the last bar of the following White Stripes riff — every note is on the upbeat, with nothing on the downbeats. The four-bar guitar pattern repeats back-to-back on the recording, but there is a slight difference in bar two the second time around:





Our next example is deliberately deceiving.

"It's a Mistake" - Men At Work - 1983

- (i)) 67
- O:00 When the choppy <u>guitar chords</u> come in at the beginning, it sounds like they are all quarter notes on the **DOWNBEAT**. (Try counting along in groups of four.)
- --- 0:08 As the <u>bass</u> starts bubbling underneath, there seems to be something odd about the rhythm. You may have trouble counting.
- O:18 By the time the <u>drums</u> kick in, we realize we have been fooled. The beginning guitar chords now seem to have shifted to the **UPBEATS!** (If you are still counting, the chords should now fall on the "add" of each beat for the rest of the song.)

Here's another example of the same type of deception:

"Stolen Dance" — Milky Chance — 2014



- 0:00 The song starts with <u>cymbal hits</u> that seem to be steady quarter notes outlining the **DOWNBEAT**.
- 0:08 As the <u>bass</u> and <u>guitar chords</u> enter, we realize that the cymbal hits were actually on the **UPBEATS**. Like the previous song by Men At Work, the guitar chords are hitting on every upbeat.

As mentioned earlier, syncopated rhythms are a hallmark of pop music, and they seem to elicit physical movement beyond the polite toe tap. Perhaps when accented notes fall on the weak half of the beat and nothing happens on the stronger down beat, the listener feels compelled to fill in the "missing" sound. Just try listening to some highly syncopated funk or dance pop without moving your neck or head ever so slightly. It's no wonder that otherwise reserved people get up and dance at rock concerts (even the sober ones!).

Way back in the 1890s, the power of syncopation caused quite a scandal in American popular culture. Previous mainstream music had been primarily from the European tradition, where sustained syncopation was a rarity. When America's newest popular music craze — piano ragtime — swept the country, many listeners were not ready for its highly syncopated African-American rhythms. These rhythms had been an important part of black folk styles like banjo tunes, worksongs, spirituals, and country blues, but seemed foreign and even dangerous to white listeners. Dozens of articles appeared in popular magazines, written by respected doctors and preachers, warning of serious risks to moral and physical health if one listened too long to ragtime music. The syncopation was even thought to cause seizures or brain damage!

Although not quite as extreme, this reaction was destined to be repeated 60 years later when rock and roll burst on the scene, and Elvis's hips had to be censored on national TV. For better or worse, we have seem to have come to terms with syncopated dance rhythms today, although radically new musical styles still provoke strong opinions.

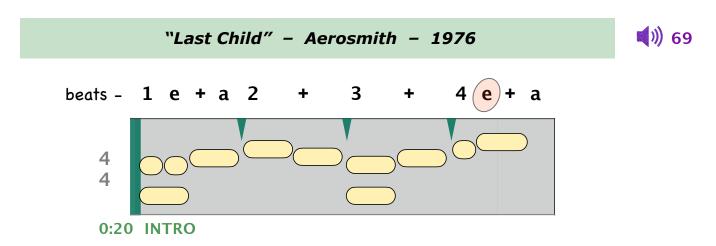
For some additional examples of 8th-note syncopation that are fairly easy to hear, check out the list below. If you have problems counting or following the 8th-note pulse, try using a simple computer program or phone app that will slow down the tempo on digital song files.

Additional songs with 8TH-NOTE SYNCOPATION

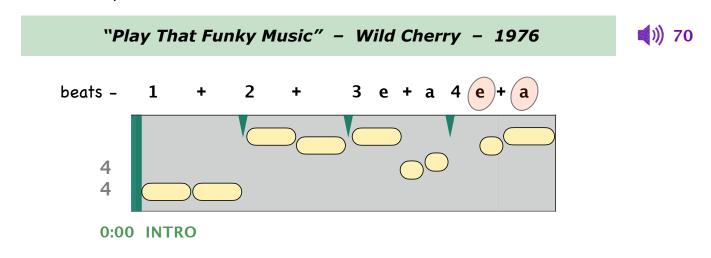
1963	On Broadway	The Drifters
1968	Jumpin' Jack Flash	The Rolling Stones
1968	In a Gadda Da Vida	Iron Butterfly
1971	Undun	Guess Who
1972	I'll Be Around	Spinners
1972	Space Truckin'	Deep Purple
1979	Sure Know Something	Kiss
1980	Shoot to Thrill	AC/DC
1981	Who's Crying Now	Journey
1984	Jump	Van Halen
2011	Second Chance	Peter, Bjorn, & John
2014	Hey Y'all	Cole Swindell
2015	Where the Sky Hangs	Passion Pit
2015	Killer Whales	Smallpools
2017	Little of Your Love	HAIM
2019	Look What God Gave Her	Thomas Rhett
2023	I Can See You	Taylor Swift

16th NOTE SYNCOPATION

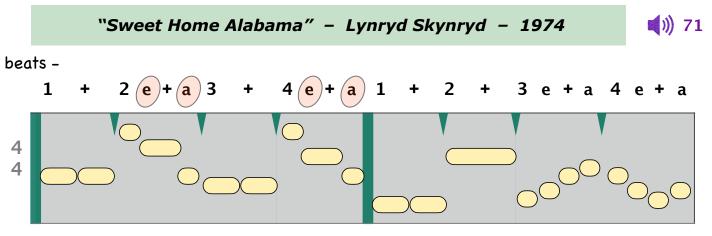
Syncopation can also occur on the faster <u>16th pulse</u>, although it is sometimes a little harder to hear and notate, thanks to the increased speed. On the next Aerosmith song, 16th-note syncopation occurs in the repeating guitar riff, shown below. On beat four of the riff, the last note (circled) occurs just before the upbeat.



The riff on "Play That Funky Music" features accents just before the downbeat of "four" and the upbeat of "four".



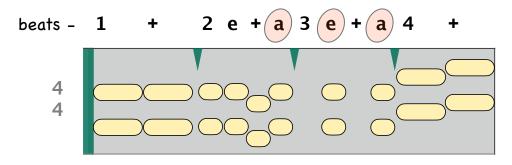
The next iconic rock riff from Lynyrd Skynyrd also has 16th-note syncopation:



Here's an example with three syncopated accents in a row:

"Cheap Sunglasses" - ZZTop - 1979





0:01 INTRO bass & guitar

Additional songs with 16TH-NOTE SYNCOPATION

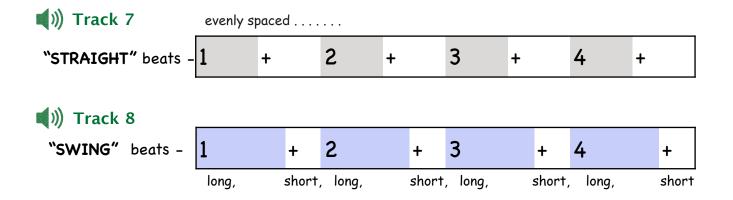
1967	Cold Sweat	James Brown
1973	What Is Hip	Tower of Power
1975	Cut the Cake	Average White Band
1976	Kid Charlemagne	Steely Dan
1985	Conga	Gloria Estefan
1991	Unbelievable	EMF
2001	Love You Madly	Cake
2001	Neon	John Mayer
2001	Ride Wit Me	Nelly, City Spud
2003	Intuition	Jewel
2014	Coming Back for You	Maroon 5

Swing Rhythm

SWING 8ths

Our last topic on rhythm is familiar to many in name only. In the 1930s and 40s people talked about the "swingin" rhythm of the big bands, and an entire category of jazz and dance came to be known as simply "Swing." For those fans of the music, the great bandleader Duke Ellington said it best in one of his biggest hits: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Swing rhythm is not only a hallmark of jazz, but also an important part of blues. While not quite as common in rock and pop, it has been featured on hundreds of pop hits over the last 60 years.

What exactly does the word "swing" mean when describing music? Most listeners might be satisfied with the casual dictionary definition, but readers of this book will want a more musical explanation. Traditionally, swing is found most often in the 8th-note pulse. As we have seen, each beat (quarter note) can be divided into two equal parts (two 8th notes). But in a rhythm with a swing feeling, the 8th notes are not spaced equally apart — the 8th note on the upbeat is pushed closer to the next downbeat. In a steady 8th-note pulse, this creates a series of notes best described as "long, short, long, short, etc." as seen in the following diagram:



When comparing the two rhythms, notice that the <u>downbeats stay lined up together</u> only the upbeats are shifted. Therefore, the act of changing a straight rhythm to swing does not change the tempo, even though the swing version may <u>seem</u> faster due to the extra energy. This energy helps drive the rhythm forward like syncopation, creating the same urge to tap your feet or move your body.

Here's three listening examples of swing rhythm. Notice that the swing-8ths pulse is carried by different instruments in each song:

— 0:16 (verse) - Bass & muted guitar create the steady SWING-8THs PULSE.

"It's Gonna Be" — Norah Jones — 2009

--- 0:18 (verse) - Tom tom drums create the steady SWING-8THs PULSE.

"Gonna Get over You" — Sara Bareilles — 2010

O:06 (verse) - Piano creates the steady SWING-8THs PULSE with alternating high and low notes. Notice that the shorter upbeat is always on the high note, the the longer downbeat is always on the lower note.

If you are still having trouble hearing how swing rhythm is different from straight rhythm, here are two final examples that actually change from straight 8ths to swing 8ths in the same song. This should make it easier to compare the two styles.

"Running Bear - Johnny Preston - 1960

(1) 76

(1) 73

(1) 75

- 0:00 (verse) STRAIGHT 8TH-NOTE PULSE is established by the <u>bass guitar</u> and <u>bass voice</u> "war chant."
- 0:37 (chorus) Bass guitar line changes to SWING 8THs ("war chant" gone)
- 0:54 (verse 2) Bass guitar line and vocal "war chant" back to STRAIGHT 8THs



- --- 0:17 STRAIGHT 8TH-NOTE PULSE is established by the bass guitar line.
- --- 1:25 Bass guitar and piano line change to SWING 8THs.

Additional songs with SWING 8th NOTES

1956	Honky Tonk	Bill Doggett
1957	Too Much	Elvis Presley
1958	Queen of the Hop	Bobby Darin
1972	Needle and the Damage Done	Neil Young
1973	Bad, Bad Leroy Brown	Jim Croce
1977	Don't Stop	Fleetwood Mac
1983	Shame on the Moon	Bob Seger
1990	Black Velvet	Alannah Myles
1991	Boot Scootin' Boogie	Brooks and Dunn
1994	Forty Days and Forty Nights	Tim McGraw
2010	Howlin' for You	The Black Keys
2014	American Kids	Kenny Chesney

SWING 16ths

While the swing feeling is traditionally created with 8th notes, it can also be found in the 16th-note pulse. In fact, in the late 1980s, a new hip-hop style called "New Jack Swing" emerged on the charts, featuring very prominent swing 16ths on dozens of hits.

The swing feeling for 16ths is created in the same manner as previously described for 8th notes — ie. the 16th notes are not spaced equally apart, but shifted into a series of "long, short, long, short" segments for each beat. However, because a 16th pulse generally moves faster than an 8th pulse, the sense of swing may be a little harder to hear.

Recalling our earlier discussion of how to find a 16th pulse, start tapping a slow basic beat and then quickly say "1, 2, 3, 4" for each beat. Now shift your count so that the numbers are not equally spaced. "1" should be longer than "2," "3" should be longer than "4," etc. Hopefully you will sense the same "galloping" feeling of long, short, long, short that was heard in earlier 8th-note swing examples, but at a faster pace.

Our first song example comes from Paula Abdul, and her 1989 hit "Straight Up." This song features the swing 16th pulse mainly in the **drums**.



On the next example, the swing 16ths are heard mainly in the **vocal melody** and the **snare drum**. Start listening at **1:06.**



Here's another example of prominent swing 16ths in the **drums**, but at a faster tempo.

Not all songs with swing 16ths are from hip-hop artists. Here's a jazzy alternative pop song from Edie Brickell that has the 16th pulse mainly in the **electric guitar** part.

(1)) 81

Jack Johnson's "Good People" is another guitar-based song, but this time the swing 16ths are heard from a combination of both **acoustic** and **electric** instruments.

(1) 82

Swing 16ths can even be heard from hard rock bands, as on this 1989 song from Motley Crue. Once again the swing feeling comes mainly from the **electric guitar** part.

()) 83

The following list is a bit lengthy, but it is included to show how common swing 16ths are in modern pop among a variety of artists:

Additional songs with SWING 16th NOTES

1990	Lil Jack Horny	Extreme
1990	Poison	Bel Biv Devoe
1991	Around the Way Girl	LL Cool J
1992	I Love Your Smile	Shanice
1993	That's the Way Love Goes	Janet Jackson
1995	Thank You	Boyz II Men
1997	Last Time Lover	Spice Girls
1997	Sunny Came Home	Shawn Colvin
1997	Tearin' Up My Heart	NSYNC
2002	Complicated	Avril Lavigne
2003	Leave the Lights On	Jewel
2004	Heaven	Los Lonely Boys
2004	Pieces of Me	Ashlee Simpson
2005	Sunday Morning	Maroon 5
2007	Many the Miles	Sara Bareilles
2017	Miss Me More	Kelsea Ballerini
2020	Break My Baby	KALEO