

# Playing the Rhythms in the Hymnal Supplement

by Jeannie Gagné

## Introduction

Rhythm is of course one of three primary components in music, along with harmony and melody. Music that comes from American popular culture often uses syncopation, swing feels, and spoken-language rhythms. Much popular music is learned by oral tradition and is not possible to “get” only by reading printed music. What we think of today as “contemporary” American popular music has rhythmic roots that originated partly from other cultures such as West Africa and Latin America. It’s important to “hear” –and feel-- the grooves as well as the harmonic and melodic interpretations. A significant number of hymns new Supplement have arrangements that are derived from contemporary popular music.

The Supplement also contains musical styles from around the world where rhythm is a central ingredient. This writing is intended to help you understand how to approach rhythmic playing, and hopefully will make the new hymns more accessible. As you get more comfortable playing syncopation and swing feels, for example, you will be able to interpret the arrangements more freely and include rhythmic variations in your “comping” of the chord changes provided.

At Berklee College of Music in Boston where I am on the Voice faculty, I teach a class called *Rhythm Section Grooves for Vocalists*. In this course students practice learning grooves with a live rhythm section – in this case electric bass guitar, piano, electric guitar, and drum set. Students learn how to recognize different grooves, direct the band, and internalize the rhythm of the songs they are singing including accurate count-offs. Ultimately they are creating a team with the ensemble. I have integrated some of the materials from that course for this writing, including a glossary of useful slang musical terms.

Rhythm can be a tricky thing to get. Most of the grooves here are from a tradition in which “being in the pocket” is essential. This means although the tempo is steady, it is never hurried nor tense for up-tempo grooves, and never draggy for slow grooves. One must be relaxed yet locked-in to the groove. This takes practice. Anyone who is providing percussion must have loose arms and wrists and practice feeling the rhythm in the gut. Oftentimes when we clap our hands and/or tap

our feet while playing, the pulse becomes either rushed or laborious. Instead it's better to practice keeping time without clapping or tapping feet. One way is to sit and clap your hands on your knees, and "relax into" the groove. Or, play on an instrument and focus on the sub-pulse. Then the pulse becomes like a heartbeat that you just feel, and it locks in.

There is a lot of information here that cannot be fully grasped without listening to these styles. There is no better teacher than your own ears. Borrow CDs in different styles, download songs in iTunes, borrow music from the library, borrow your child's CDs. Or buy some new ones! There is no getting around doing this homework.

### **What is Contemporary?**

First, for our purposes let's simplify "contemporary American popular music" and just call it "contemporary" music. This includes a staggering number of styles and artists, but to name a few we mean genres such as rock, jazz, pop, country, and R&B. Among the thousands of extremely popular contemporary artists are names you may recognize: Aretha Franklin (soul or rhythm and blues), The Beatles (rock), John Coltrane (jazz), James Taylor (originally pop, now folk/rock) and the Dixie Chicks (country). For the purposes of our conversation here this definition excludes any classical styles. Contemporary music is defined partly by the vocal style, which is usually speech-based rather than tone-oriented. Pretty is not important here; expression, emotion, and communication are.

Jazz is not rock is not pop is not gospel. However, modern "pop" styles overlap tremendously, often combining genres. Generally by "pop" we mean what's selling a lot of records, popular to the most number of people. Pop is *not* jazz. Don't confuse Celine Dion with Ella Fitzgerald. For a more in-depth discussion of this, see Jason Shelton's conversation elsewhere on the hymnal site.

### **The Rhythm Section**

This guide includes an overview of how to work with a standard rhythm section, which is somewhat different from conducting. You may not have a rhythm section at your disposal, but understanding the role of these instruments is crucial to understanding contemporary rhythm, and will help you to hear the implied notes in these arrangements. The new Supplement has many

arrangements which are piano-based representations of a full band and include chord changes, for featured styles such as reggae, gospel, latin-based grooves, and pop. Hopefully you will also learn to hear where you can “accessorize” what’s written on the page, stepping out of the box.

First, let’s understand how a rhythm section works together. One word used a lot to describe this is establishing a “groove.” A groove is the style of playing including genre, tempo, rhythmic subdivisions, and instrumentation. A rhythm section is a team, playing together interactively in a kind of call-response manner that requires active listening. The leader calls the tune, tempo, key, and style for how the song is played. (The leader is usually whoever got the gig.) Individual players interpret those directions based on their knowledge of styles and their own skill on their instruments. Usually the notes they play are not literally specified in the music, except for details here and there. It’s important for the leader to establish the groove using spoken directions, vocal rhythmic articulation to simulate bass and drums, or any method that is clear. Therefore, first and foremost, the leader must have these rhythms clearly internalized before he or she can communicate them. This means hearing the groove, not just the tempo, and understanding the interplay of bass and drums. This gets back to doing your homework first: listen, listen, listen. Also, I recommend practicing directing with a metronome. Practice finding where beats Two and Four fall, the most common back-beat.

The rhythm section often follows a chart, which is a short, simplified format of a song to provide a specific arrangement. Unlike lead sheets, charts include introductions and endings, groove indications, rhythmic figures as needed, as well as chord “changes,” meter and tempo, key signature, style, and instrumentation. Sometimes the melody and lyrics are indicated, though not always, especially for well-known songs such as jazz standards. Meter-based time slashes are then used in lieu of the melody to show where changes occur in each measure, plus rhythmic notation to indicate any “hits” that the rhythm section should play. All the hymns in the supplement include chord notations over the written arrangements, which can be always be used in place of the arrangements, on any accompanying harmonic instrument.

**Piano and/or Guitar:** Piano and guitar provide the primary harmonic support (“comping”) in contemporary styles, with rhythmic impetus, melodic support, contrapuntal interplay with the soloist, as well as intros, endings, interludes and solos (improvising).

**Bass:** The bass plays very closely with the drums, especially with the drummer's bass drum (or kick drum, played by foot). In pop styles the bass often creates a steady repeating pattern (ostinato) which shifts harmonically according to the chord changes. In Jazz styles the bass improvises measure-to-measure to connect the chord changes harmonically, often emphasizing the bottom figure of the meter.

**Drums:** Drummers create a steady pattern of beats, using subdivisions and accents which help to identify both the style and time of the groove. They are the primary rhythm keepers along with the bass. It's worthwhile to note that some drummers tend to play a bit "ahead" of the beat, others a bit behind, which significantly affects our perception of rushing or dragging tempos. This is normal and depends on the stylistic tendency of the drummer. Rock-based styles "push" the back beat to create more "edge," whereas mellow jazz styles "lay back" with a back beat that is more relaxed. It's ok to ask your drummer or percussionist to make an alteration here, either "pushing" the back beat or "laying back" to help the groove feel either more excited or relaxed.

#### **The Basic Drum Set, or "Kit":**

- **Bass drum (kick drum).** The use of this drum varies depending on the style of music. In pop styles it's the "heartbeat," accenting downbeats (or primary beats), with additional subdivisions for syncopation and push. It supports the bass line by synchronizing with the bass player's pattern. In Jazz the kick drum is used freely for spontaneous accents, which are often played simultaneously with crash cymbal accents; or, it simply plays each downbeat. Playing every downbeat on the kick is also what we mean by "four on the floor" in disco or dance.
- **Snare.** This is the drum that sits by the drummer's lap. It has a metal strap beneath it that rattles when it's hit, creating the snare sound. In most contemporary styles the snare accents the secondary or consequent beat (the "back beat"). In jazz it is played freely, with brushes, mallets, sticks or even hands, thus not articulating a back beat. Dramatic articulations in any style include rolls, rim shots (loud hits), and rim taps or clicks (played across the rim, softer and stick-sounding).

- **Hi hat:** These are the two smaller cymbals positioned on a controller stand located to the side/front of the drummer's throne (seat). The hi hat is operated by foot, causing the cymbals to open and close. The cymbals are played in both open and closed position to create articulation. These cymbals are sometimes hit in half-open position and then quickly closed to produce the sound "tss-it." In jazz, the hi hat may provide the back beat. In pop, the closed hi hat is articulated with sticks to subdivide the beat into pulses. In Latin and Fusion feels, the hi hat is often used to play steady beats while the kick drum plays accented pulses.
- **Ride cymbal:** The large cymbal above the drum set, which plays a repeated pattern (except with "broken" or "free" time feels). This is usually done to indicate a particular rhythmic subdivision for a given style. Sometimes beats are played on the bell (top center) of the ride using the back end of the drumstick for a very bright sound, however it is most often played with the front tip of the stick in the middle of this cymbal. In jazz styles it is also used often to keep time (a swing would be something like "DA-dika-DA-dika-DA-dika-DA..).
- **Crash cymbal:** Usually smaller than the ride and also above the drum set, it is used to accent important beats. It is most commonly played simultaneously with kick drum, and will often indicate the downbeat of a measure especially at beginning or ending of a phrase. For dramatic moments it is used to create a big splash, or a "fill." There may also be a splash cymbal which serves a similar function with a different tone.
- **Toms:** These are the two or three drums placed alongside the snare, above the bass drum, pitched "hi" "mid" and "low." They are used primarily for colorful "fills," especially when starting or ending phrases. For some styles they may be used to create a heavy pulse pattern, such as Jungle."

### **Beat or Pulse**

Let's move on now to understand how the basic beat or pulse of contemporary music is articulated.

As with any music, the meter indicates beats per measure and the note value of each of those beats. The count-off corresponds to the meter as in any conducting, though it is articulated differently. The beat is the strongest rhythm we clap hands, snap fingers, bob heads, tap or dance to. The subdivision of the beat or pulse provides details that help define a style.

The **back beat** is the secondary rhythmic emphasis which is very often quite strong. It's what is snapped in swing styles, clapped in rock. In 4/4 time, the back beat is on 2 and 4. In  $\frac{3}{4}$  time the back beat is either on 2 or 3. In 6/8 time the back beat is on 4. In 12/8 time the back beat is on 4 and 10.

**Subdivisions** are the smaller metric increments of each beat and are central to create a groove or feel. A clearly-written chart will indicate the subdivision in the top left corner (eg. swing or straight 8th feel, swing or straight 16th feel, 12/8 feel). When listening to a rhythm section to determine a groove's subdivisions, tune-in to the ride cymbal and/or hi hat patterns, bass line, and keyboard or guitar comping patterns. Listen to the snare to find the back beat.

**Half-time** and **double-time** may occur during a song, or half time- or double-time *feels*. There is a big difference here. Half- or double- compared to what? That's the important question. Using these terms assumes the starting tempo or groove changes during the song. *Half-time* means the groove is literally slowed down and the measures, melody and changes go by half as quickly. *Double-time* means, conversely, the groove is literally sped up so the measures go by twice as fast. *Half-time feel* means the measures, melody and changes remain at the same tempo, but the *subdivision* becomes half the rate from where you started, creating the illusion of a slower groove. *Double-time feel* means the measures, melody and changes remain at the same tempo, but the beat subdivision is twice as fast and the back beat doubles up, so the groove appears to be twice as fast. The best way to tell the difference is to listen to the rate of the melody and chord changes.

### **Beat Subdivision Types:**

It may seem hard to believe, but the rhythmic subdivisions of all contemporary music fit pretty neatly into five main categories. These are:

- 1) **Straight eights**, with two even 8<sup>th</sup> notes heard for every quarter note. Styles that may use straight eights include pop, rock, R&B (rhythm and blues), country, and bossa-nova.

(Note: traditional Rhythm and Blues is not to be confused with current R&B. It is confusing!)

- 2) **Swing eights**, with two swung 8<sup>th</sup> notes heard for every quarter note. A swing is a triplet with the middle note silent, sometimes confused with a dotted eighth/sixteenth-note figure. Styles using swing eights include jazz, blues or country shuffle, country-swing, blues, and reggae. (Note that not all jazz is swung. Also, “Swing” is a specific style of jazz music, not to be confused with the manner of creating a swung pulse.)
- 3) **Straight sixteenths** divides each quarter into four even pulses. Styles that may use this subdivision include R&B, funk, fusion, latin-samba, House, techno, and disco. Some popular song examples are “*Rhythm is Gonna Get Ya*” (Gloria Estefan) and “*You’re Still the One*” (Shania Twain).
- 4) **Swing sixteenths** has two swings per downbeat. Stylistic examples include Hip Hop, modern R&B, Swing, Reggae. Some popular song examples are “*Roseanna*” (Toto) and “*Have A Heart*” (Bonnie Raitt).
- 5) **12/8 feel**, a triplet-based pulse with three clear subdivisions per beat. (6/8 is a two-feel with three pulses per downbeat.) Styles that may use a 12/8 feel include rock, blues, R&B, Gospel, and Afro-Cuban). Some popular song examples are “*Unchained Melody*” (Righteous Brothers) and “*Vision of Love*” (Mariah Carey).

Here are some more examples.

**Rock** is almost always straight eights and 4/4 or C (common time). For every down beat the heard subdivision is two even beats. Rock has a clear back beat on Two and Four.

**Jazz** often uses, but not always, a swing eights subdivision. A good way to count off jazz is “a-ONE... a-TWO... a-ONE TWO THREE FOUR” (see below)

**R&B and Gospel** often use straight sixteenths. For every beat there are four heard pulses. “ONE e and a TWO e and a THREE e and a FOUR e and a...” (see below)

**Reggae** often uses swing sixteenths. There are two heard swings per beat. “dugga-dugga...”

**Blues and R&B** often use a 12/8 feel. 12/8 is a 4/4 meter with three distinct, even pulses per beat. Jazz and folk often use a 6/8 feel. 6/8 is a two-feel with three distinct, even pulses per beat.

## Counting Off

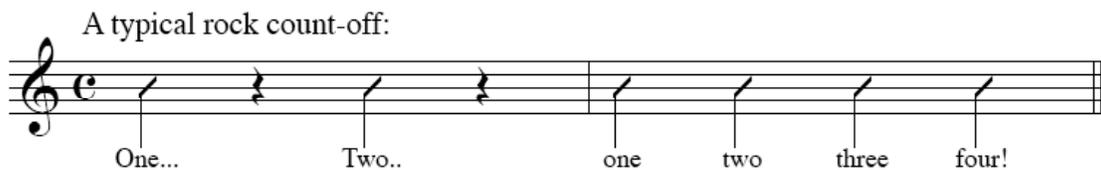
Counting off contemporary grooves is different from conducting. First, let the players know how you're counting off before you start; there are variations and interpretations. Usually use two measures for the initial count; once you've established the groove, one is sufficient. An exception is a slow tempo that needs only one measure.

Commonly accepted guidelines:

- 1) The downbeat is the first beat in the measure, but also refers to each beat in the meter. Therefore the primary downbeat is "One." It's really important that all players know where One is. (Sometimes in jazz when everyone is playing interpretatively, we lose One and no one can agree on where it is. Berklee teachers often giggle about this predicament.) For counting-off, the pickup occurs in the previous measure and serves as the lead-in to One.
- 2) Reminder, the back beat is on Two and Four in 4/4 time, NEVER on beats One and Three. Some contemporary music doesn't have a back beat, such as some country styles or polkas which stress One and Three.

Here are some standard, basic count-offs for different meters and subdivisions.

- 1) For straight eights a two-bar count is preferred, unless the tempo is very slow, in which case one measure is sufficient.



- 2) Swing is a feel, and is written simply as eighth notes. The music will usually indicate that the music is to be swung, sometimes with a sample triplet figure on the top left corner such as a quarter plus eighth note.



5) A 12/8 feel is really 4/4 time with even triplets for each downbeat in a measure. It has a strong back beat on beats Four and Ten. This feel is sometimes written as a 12/8 meter, which you would also interpret as 4/4.

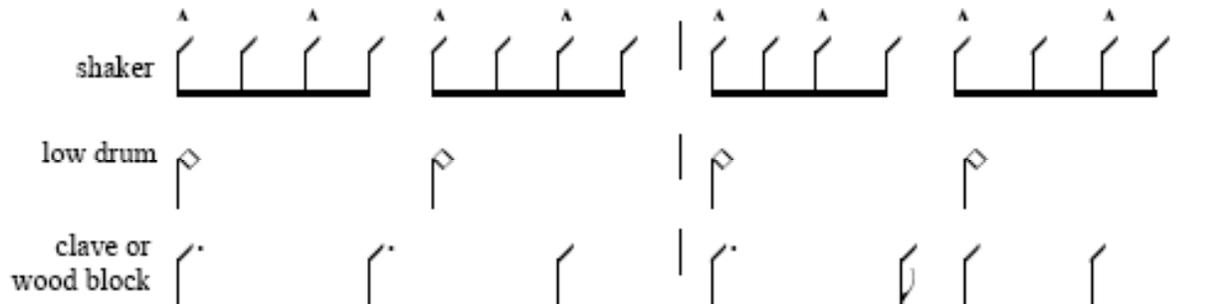
A typical 12/8 feel count-off:

### Application

So, how do you apply these basic rhythms to the new hymnal supplement? Let's take a couple of examples.

1) Hymn 1022 "*Open the Window*" uses a calypso groove. There are of course variations on how calypso is played. When I wrote this arrangement I had a rhythmic figure in mind, as well as a bass line, which became the piano left-hand part. It uses a straight-eights subdivision.

The clave is the metronome/tempo leader in this style, and needs to be played with very steady time. It is synchronized with the shaker, which maintains steady straight-eights. The low drum accents beats One and Three, and this groove does *not* have a back beat. We kept the clave to a one-bar phrase in the hymnal, but you can also do a variation with a two-bar phrase, like this:



2) Hymns 1021 “*Lean On Me*” and 1035 “O Freedom!” also use straight eights, but they *do* have a back beat. “O Freedom!” is an example of eights and sixteenths together, where the underlying pulse is eights, but the melody uses sixteenths. A drummer would play both figures to accompany this. A steady eighth pulse is essential for this song to be “tight.”

3) Hymn 1020 “*Woyaya*” is in a 6/8 meter, even triplets in a “two feel.” The left hand in the piano is also syncopated, creating a two-against-three rhythm. Take the time to find the “pocket” where this rhythm settles in, rather than being strict in your playing of the LH sixteenths. When you’ve found the pocket this song flows easily and settles in, emphasizing beat four for the back-beat.

4) Hymn 1074 “*Turn the World Around*” is in a 5/4 meter. It is three plus two with underlying straight eights. It is important not to rush this groove. Again, find the “pocket” so you have a relaxed, though exciting, tempo. The syncopation in the melody sits right with the straight eights sub-pulse. Therefore, if you hear the underlying straight eights clearly and the tempo is steady, the melody will lock in.

5) Hymn 1050 “*Jazz Alleluia*” specifies “*With a light swing—not too fast.*” It is swing eights in a 5/8 meter. Again, this is three plus two. (ONE-two-three ONE-two) As in “*Turn the World Around*,” providing a steady sub-pulse will help establish the pocket.

6) Hymn 1015 “*I Know I Can*” is written in a gospel style. It has a heavy LH part that needs to lock-in to the 12/8 meter. Think of this as a four-beat groove with even triplets for each beat. There is emphasis on each downbeat, and the back beat falls on beats four and ten, as in our written

example above. Be mindful not to play this too quickly, nor let it drag and become a dirge. Let the sense of inspiration and hope dictate the rhythm. Hymn 1026 “*If Every Woman*” is also gospel. It’s in  $\frac{3}{4}$  with a straight-eights swing waltz, the back beat falling on three. You’ll see the indication at the top left of the music to play two eights as a quarter/eighth triplet figure.

## Useful Terms

**back beat:** accented down beats 2 and 4 in 4/4 time, down beat 2 (or more commonly beat 3) in 3/4 time, down beat 4 in 6/8 time, down beats 4 and 10 in 12/8 time, down beat 3 in 4/4 time with half-time feel or cut time.

**break:** a solo; or, stop-time indication (see below)

**bridge:** a musical passage that links the verses of a song; the B section of the song form in jazz; the C section of the song form in pop.

**broken time:** A groove with a steady tempo but rhythm patterns are loosely improvised. Often used in jazz.

**busy:** active or more syncopated

**chart:** simplified version of song arrangement including chords, the beginning and ending, any concerted rhythmic figures, melody or time slashes. In band terminology a chart is a reduction of an individual part from the score.

**chorus:** the refrain in pop styles; in jazz, sometimes the bridge. In jazz “chorus” is also used to describe the entire form when solos are played.

**coda:** a special ending, indicated by  $\Phi$ . Normally once you’re in the coda there’s no going back to any earlier part of the music.

**concerted rhythmic figures:** (also called “stop-time figures”): rhythmic figures added to an arrangement which are played unanimously by all the players in the rhythm section. Also referred to as “stop-time” figures because the patterns of the groove are interrupted while these figures are played. The harmonic rhythm and tempo are not affected by concerted rhythmic figures. Concerted rhythmic figures should be indicated inside the measure with standard rhythmic notation. If written above the measure the groove patterns are played with the figures (see “kicks over time” and “stop time figures”)

**count-off:** meter, tempo and beat subdivision which rhythmically sets up tune 1 or 2 measures “outside” the tune (before the actual form of the song begins)

**D.C.:** da cappo, from the beginning

**D.C. al fine:** go back to the beginning of the song until the end (indicated by “fine”)

**down-beat:** usually the first beat of a song but can also be any dominant beat (i.e., beats 1, 2, 3 or 4 in 4/4 time; eighth note beats 1,2,3,4,5,6 in 6/8 ). Must be equal to the value of the bottom number in any time signature.

**D.S:** dal segno, go back to the sign **𝄋** (wherever indicated in the score)

**D.S. al coda:** go back to the sign **𝄋** and then jump ahead the coda **𝄌** where indicated

**drag:** play too slow

**figure:** a short piece of a rhythmic or melodic phrase

**fill:** a short improvisation

**first ending:** one or more measures within a repeat that are only played the first time through. The second time you jump ahead to the **second ending**, skipping the measure(s) in the first, and continue.

**head:** melody of tune. Also means the beginning of a song form (excluding any arranged introduction).

**hit:** stop time figure or concerted rhythmic figure. Any accented rhythmic figure.

**hook:** a catchy bit in a song. Popular songs usually have more than one hook. Often contained in the refrain or repeated part of the melody which contains the song's title.

**in the pocket:** a perfectly synchronized groove

**kick:** accented stop time figure, concerted rhythmic figure or improvised rhythm on bass drum and/or snare. Also short for bass drum in the drum set.

**kicks over time:** rhythmic figures added to the groove. Rhythm players integrate these figures with their groove patterns without stopping the time. Often indicated above time slashes in measure(s).

**laid-back:** with a very relaxed time feel, can feel slightly behind the beat.

**on top:** with a slightly pushed time feel, can feel ahead of the beat.

**pick-up note:** note(s) or beat(s) of time preceding an important downbeat. Can be either an up-beat or down-beat in the measure.

**play with edge:** play time with a more excited feel, slightly ahead of the beat

**rehearsal form (arrangement form):** an arrangement of the original published song including any changes in the order or duration of sections, rehearsal letters, key change, measure numbers and relevant terminology describing how the music should be interpreted

**repeat and fade:** same as "vamp and fade" (keep repeating section while gradually getting softer). Difficult to do well live, yet often included in piano/vocal scores of popular music that fades out on the recording.

**settle-in:** time feels are synchronized and remain stable

**solo:** improvising over the changes, as in “take a solo.” Also refers to when a single instrument plays alone as indicated, as in “solo piano until chorus”

**song form:** original order of the sections of a published song including introduction, ending, verse, chorus, etc., such as information contained on a lead sheet.

**stop-time:** concerted rhythmic figures which interrupt the groove while the harmonic rhythm continues. Rhythm players suspend their patterns when playing stop-time figures (see “concerted rhythmic figures”).

**straight ahead:** pure and simple, less syncopation, more traditional to the style

**tag:** a repeating section, usually a short ending phrase

**take it out:** play outside the chord changes with interpretation. Also means go to the end of the tune.

**tight:** a groove that is “locked in” between the players, or well-rehearsed

**time slashes:** inside the measure they represent beats of time according to the time signature. 4/4 time has four slashes with each having a value of a quarter note; 3/4 time has three slashes; 2/2 has two slashes; 12/8 has four slashes, each representing a dotted quarter; while 6/8 has six slashes each representing eight notes.

**time:** groove, or tempo

**top:** beginning of a song; or, when meaning the same as “head” the introduction is excluded

**vamp:** keep repeating until directed to change. Indication varies including “vamp til cue,” “vamp til ready,” “open vamp,” “solo vamp” and “vamp and fade.” Can occur anywhere in a song.

**walking bass:** used mostly in jazz and other swing styles, the bass steps through the chord changes to melodically “spell out” and support the harmonic structure, following the bottom figure of the meter, while staying tightly synchronized with the drummer.

### **Slang adjectives to describe time or groove**

tight: synchronized almost to perfection; rhythmic patterns are maintained

loose: poor synchronization; or, patterns are open/flexible

edge: time is pushed slightly ahead of the beat

laid-back: time is very relaxed, almost slightly behind the beat

push: played with an edge

rush: played with too much edge; tense; too far ahead of the beat

drag: too relaxed; too far behind the beat; time slows down

lock-in: synchronize

in the pocket: groove feels good and hangs together well; stylistically correct; well-synchronized

## FAQ

1) What is cut time?

☛ Cut time is written as common time with a slash through it. It means 2/2. This is perhaps one of the most confusing meters. Popular songs with this meter are notated four quarters per measure, yet often times are not actually performed in cut time. Counting off “one-two-three-four” in cut time would cross two measures. Therefore, the clearest way of counting this off is in two: “one-two.” Cut time is a “two-feel.” If the back beat on two and four occurs in one measure, it is not cut time, no matter what the meter says.

2) What is a two feel?

A two-feel is a groove that stresses two downbeats per measure. In 4/4 time there is only one back beat per measure in a two-feel. Besides cut time, examples of this include Bossa Nova, and 6/8.

3) What is jazz?

This is a difficult question to answer! Jazz is a broad category that includes many styles. It is a distinctly American genre that was developed in the last century by leaders such as Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. Jazz is an ever-evolving art form that is never stagnant. As new artists make their mark with cutting-edge playing, new ways of playing jazz emerge and become a new standard (eg John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Keith Jarrett, and Nancy Wilson to name just a few). There are some characteristics common to much of what is considered to be jazz, however. Improvisation is one hallmark of jazz, taking the original melody and composing on the spot; or, ignoring the melody all together and just playing whatever comes to you over the changes. Another example is playing a “standard” (old popular song) in a new way, changing the key to suit the singer’s range and tone, reharmonizing the chord changes, and changing the meter or groove. Certain harmonic additions such as augmented notes, or adding the 9 or 11 are common. Rhythm is essential. In a rhythm section, the guitar plays in a softer, mellower tone; the drummer improvises and plays less of a back-beat; the piano provides chord support and fills; the bass player, depending on the style, uses a walking style or is more improvisational. A useful tool for understanding jazz is picking up a “real book” which contains lead sheets for hundreds of standards, plus chord spellings for dozens of common jazz harms. At Berklee we include latin-based styles in our broad category to describe jazz, such as bossa nova, merengue and samba.

4) What about my question?

If I didn't answer your question, email me, and I'll try to add it here. [igagne@berklee.edu](mailto:igagne@berklee.edu). This is a big topic!