

SYNCOPATION

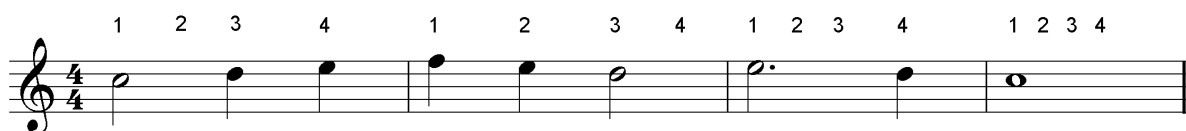
Usually, when a composer writes a rhythm, they fit it to a time signature so that the notes which fall on the strong beats of the bar are given a little emphasis, or slight accent, when they are played. This little "push" on the strong beat helps us to feel the beat and to understand how many beats per bar there are, as we listen or play.

In all time signatures the beat which is strongest (or has the most accent) is beat 1.

In 4/4 time, the 3rd beat of the bar is also quite strong, but not as strong as beat 1. Beats 2 and 4 are called the weak beats.

In time signatures with two or three beats per bar, only beat 1 is strong.

Most rhythms are **not** syncopated. This means they are written so that notes that are worth more than one beat fall on the strong beats, and not on the weak beats. Here is an example:



The notes which are worth more than one beat are the minim (half note), dotted minim (dotted half note) and semibreve (whole note). They fall either on beat 1 or beat 3, which are the strong beats in 4/4. Remember: "long=strong".

In syncopated music, the long notes are moved onto the weak beat of the bar. In 4/4 this means the long note is pushed onto beat 2. (It can also be pushed onto beat 4 and tied over the bar line, but you don't need to understand this type of rhythm for grade 2). Syncopated music is "long=weak".



Rhythms can also be syncopated if a note which is worth one (or more) beats is placed **between** the beats of the bar (rather than on a weak beat).

Look at this un-syncopated rhythm in 2/4 - the crotchets (quarter notes) fall squarely on the beat.



SYNCOPIATION EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

Circle the syncopated bars in each of these melodies.

a.

b.

EXERCISE 2

Copy out these syncopated rhythms. Pay attention to the spacing between the notes.

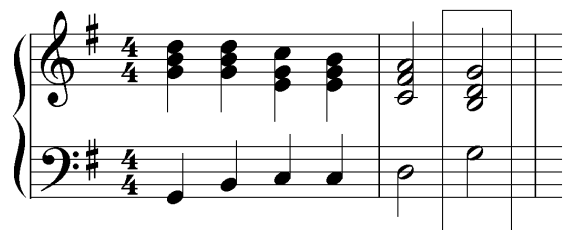
a.

b.

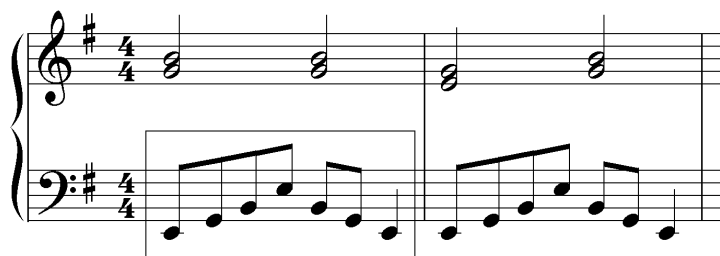
BROKEN CHORDS AND ARPEGGIOS

In music, chords (or triads) can appear with all the notes sounding at the **same time**, or with the notes played **one after another** in a pattern, to make an accompaniment.

Here is an example of a chord played at the same time. It's a tonic chord in G major (notes G, B and D). This is also known as a **block chord**.



When a chord is played straight up or down with one note at a time, it's called an **arpeggio**. This time, each note of the E minor tonic triad is played one after another, starting and finishing on the tonic note E.



A **broken chord** is a triad played in a pattern of three or four notes, starting on a different chord note each time.

In a pattern of **three** notes, the broken chord is built on the three notes of the triad. For example, here is a broken chord in A minor:



Each group of three notes contains the three notes of the tonic triad (A, C and E). Notice how each group begins on the next available note from the triad, (the first notes in each bar are A, then C, then E then A again). The three notes in each group are played in strict order – don't jumble them around!

In a pattern of **four** notes, the broken chord is built from the tonic triad, plus another tonic note to "top off" the chord. Here is a four-note pattern in E minor. This time the pattern is moving downwards. The first note in each bar is each note of triad, in order, starting from the tonic note.

