

## (Book 2) Lesson 35.

**Syncopation** = a temporary displacement of the normal accent.

(This page is a review of something that was already introduced in Book 1. It is for the benefit of those students who may have got to this point without first having gone through Book 1.)

The normal accents in music are generally on the down beat. If notes are always struck on the down beats, no syncopation occurs. Up to this point, virtually all of the material in this book has been of that variety. When nothing is struck on the down beat, syncopation occurs naturally. There are usually several methods for writing the same rhythmic phrase. Observe the following examples.

The two eighth notes tied together become the quarter note in the third measure.

**EX.1.** Down Up Down Up Down  
Beat Beat Beat Beat Beat

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &      1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &      1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

There is no syncopation in this measure.      The second Down Beat is not struck so the normal accent is displaced.      This measure is identical to the previous one.

The dotted quarter followed by a single eighth note is probably the most commonly used form of syncopation.

The quarter and eighth notes tied together become the dotted quarter note.

**EX.2.** Down Up Down Up Down      Down Up Down Up Down      Down Up Down Up Down

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &      1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &      1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

No syncopation in this measure.      The second down beat is not struck, resulting in a displacement of the accent on the second beat.      The rhythm in this measure is identical to the previous bar.

Syncopation adds an element of surprise to the rhythm. When you hear someone say: "That song has a catchy beat" they are most likely being entertained by some element of syncopation.

Syncopation is probably one of the most common reading weaknesses for many players. Careful and methodical study will usually prevail. When a rhythmic problem occurs, here are some steps to take to alleviate the mystery.

1. Don't play but count out loud; tap foot on the beat; drum the rhythm of the notes with your hand.
2. Don't play but count silently; tap foot on the beat; drum the rhythm of the notes and read the notes out loud and in rhythm.
3. Count silently; tap foot on the beat; read notes out loud and play.
4. Count silently; tap foot on the beat; read notes silently and play; listen to the music.

When you have learned a particular rhythmic phrase, try to catalogue the sound of that phrase in your brain so it becomes a part of your rhythmic vocabulary. There are some books on the market that deal with rhythmic reading. The one that comes to mind is a book called "Rhythms Complete" by Charles Collin and Bugs Bower. This book is particularly well organized for practicing syncopated rhythms.