

Playing On The Beat - Left Hand

You have to learn how to play on the beat before you can play syncopation in the left hand. Syncopation is what you want to strive for because it adds a lot of color, and flair to your piano playing. The previous lesson you played this song ON THE BEAT. Now try it with syncopation.

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Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-3. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody starting on A4, moving to F4, E4, and D4 in the first measure, then A4, A4, A4, and G4 in the second measure. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line starting on B3, moving to A3, G3, and F3 in the first measure, then B3, A3, G3, and F3 in the second measure, and B3, A3, G3, and F3 in the third measure. The chord 'D m' is indicated in the first measure.

Musical notation for the second system, measures 4-6. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody starting on A4, moving to A4, G4, E4, and D4 in the first measure, then G4, E4, and D4 in the second measure, and G4 in the third measure. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line starting on B3, moving to A3, G3, and F3 in the first measure, then G3, F3, E3, and D3 in the second measure, and G3, F3, E3, and D3 in the third measure. The chord 'C' is indicated in the second measure.

Musical notation for the third system, measures 7-9. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody starting on G4, moving to G4, G4, F4, and G4 in the first measure, then G4, C5, and G4 in the second measure, and A4, F4, and E4 in the third measure. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line starting on G3, moving to F3, E3, and D3 in the first measure, then G3, F3, E3, and D3 in the second measure, and B3, A3, G3, and F3 in the third measure. The chord 'D m' is indicated in the third measure.

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You can rewrite syncopating so that it looks like it is ON THE BEAT, and this makes it easier to understand syncopation. I did this below. Below is a copy of measure 11. Play the top note in your right hand and the bottom notes in your left hand. This is ON THE BEAT, but it is really syncopated. After you try this look at the next example.

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The musical notation shows two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains four quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains four measures. The first measure has a chord of F2 and A2. The second measure has a single note G2. The third measure has a chord of F2 and A2. The fourth measure has a single note G2. A thick black bar is drawn under the first two measures of the left hand.

The above example, gives you the look of playing on the beat, but it is really syncopated. Syncopation involves having a "back beat". The second combination of F and A is the "back beat".