

# Fundamentals of Swing 8<sup>th</sup> Notes in Jazz

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One of the main distinguishing elements of jazz is swing feel. Swing is a feeling more than anything, and it is actually fairly useless to even try to put it into words. However, we can work on a couple of things to help us get close and rely on our ears to do the rest. To that end, I want to strongly emphasize that we listen intently and frequently to master jazz musicians, and imitate what we hear. Authentic swing feel cannot be exclusively learned from a book or a set of exercises. In this handout, I am trying to provide a practical starting point for students and teachers, but there are many, many exceptions to what I illustrate here.

## Basic Rhythmic Feel

When writing swing 8<sup>th</sup> notes, composers and arrangers typically write 8<sup>th</sup> notes as they normally appear:



However, jazz musicians will interpret them as uneven triplets, like this:



## 8<sup>th</sup> Note Articulation

The first objective is to get accustomed to seeing one rhythm and playing it as a different rhythm. Rhythm alone doesn't necessarily make the music swing, however. In most cases, again with numerous notable exceptions, instrumentalists will articulate swing 8<sup>th</sup> note passages using an every-other-note articulation pattern, like this one:



