

Syncopation

Music

Stressing the weak part of the beat, and the patterns that come from it.

Any accent placed where the metre does not expect one — on an off-beat, on a weak beat, or by tying across a strong one. It is the main source of rhythmic interest in almost all popular music.

BACKBEAT
2 and 4

OFF-BEAT
the 'and'

PUSH
½ beat early

- On-beat: 1 2 3 4. Off-beat: the 'ands' between them.
- Backbeat: stress on 2 and 4 — the foundation of rock and pop.
- Anticipation: playing a chord an eighth before the beat it belongs to.
- Tying over a barline hides the downbeat entirely.
- Rests on strong beats syncopate as effectively as accents on weak ones.
- Too much syncopation with no reference pulse just sounds lost.

LOOK FOR IT

Reggae puts the chord stab on the off-beat and leaves the downbeat empty.

Syncopation only works against a pulse the listener can still feel. Remove that and it is just noise.