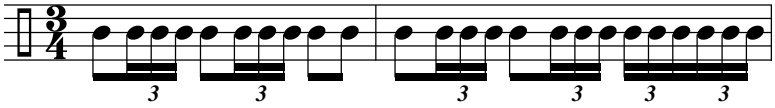
Rhythm Concepts

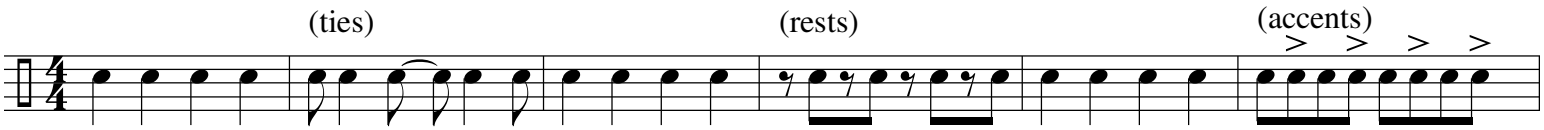
Ostinato — a brief musical pattern repeated throughout a composition

Ravel's Bolero, snare drum



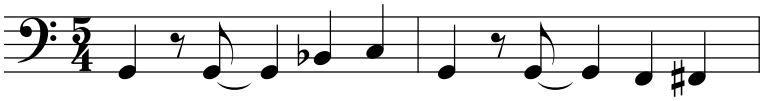
(These 2 bars are repeated well over a hundred times.)

Syncopation — stresses off-beats (First establish the beat.)



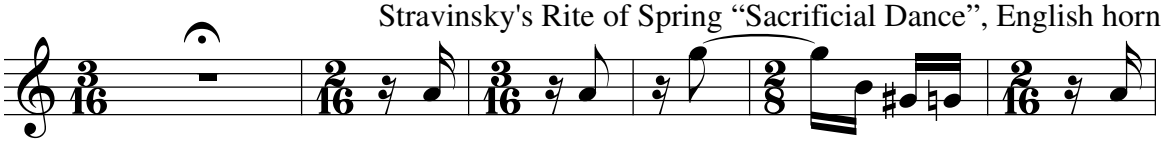
Asymmetrical Time Signatures — usually 5 or 7 (number of beats is not divisible by 2 or 3)

"Mission Impossible" Theme, bass line (— — • • is "M I" in Morse code!)



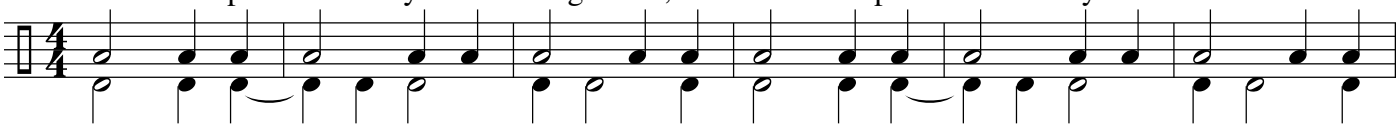
Changing Time Signatures (frequently)

Stravinsky's Rite of Spring "Sacrificial Dance", English horn



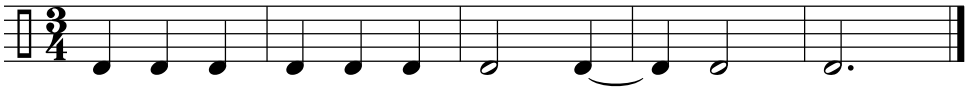
Polymeter — 2 or more simultaneous meters

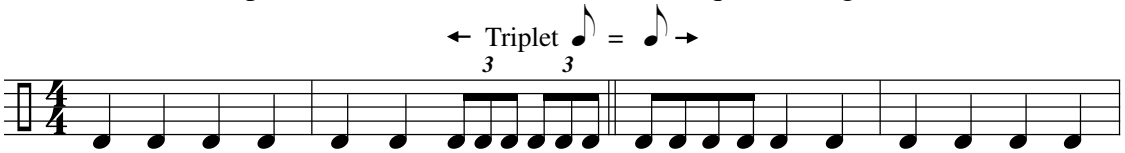
This example shows only one time signature, but the bottom part is effectively in 3/4.



Hemiola — a meter is temporarily replaced by a new meter

A hemiola is often duple meter just before a cadence in a triple meter composition.



Metric Modulation — a seemingly abrupt tempo change using subdivisions that are the same speed

Here, the triplet 8ths before the double bar are equal in length to the standard 8ths after the double bar.