



Lesson Twenty Seven

Introducing Triplets

Lesson Objectives

- Understand how triplet eighth notes divide the beat.
- Learn how to count eighth note triplets.
- Play eighth notes triplets.
- Develop playing eighth note triplets.

Understanding triplets

So far on the course you have learned how to subdivide one beat into quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes.

This lesson introduces **triplets** which can be defined as where a rhythm would normally have two notes there are three instead.

The best way to understand triplets is to develop some exercises containing triplets. To do this though we need to know how to count in groups of three. Triplets can be counted like this:

1-trip-let 2-trip-let 3-trip-let 4-trip-let

You will see that we abbreviate the triplet count throughout these lessons to:

1t 2t 3t 4t.

Introducing eighth note triplets

In the following exercise you will see that there is one bar of quarter notes, one bar of eighth notes and one bar of triplet eighth notes.

Watch and listen to the media files for this first exercise - they will help you to understand the sound and feel of triplets. This means that each beat changes. The count for the rhythm in the first bar is 1 2 3 4. The next bar is 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +. The count for the triplet bar is,

1-trip-let 2-trip-let 3-trip-let 4-trip-let

When you try to play them yourself, make a note of the fact that eighth note triplets have three notes per beat.

Exercise 1
lesson027.iksit.01



The musical notation for Exercise 1 consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) in common time (C). The first bar contains four quarter notes with counts 1, 2, 3, 4 below them. The second bar contains eighth notes with counts 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + below them. The third bar contains eighth note triplets with counts 1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1 below them.

Loop bar 3 and get used to the feel of the triplets first. Then go through the entire exercise, developing your ability to understand the feel of triplet eighth notes in relation to straight eighth notes.

Developing the feel of triplets

As triplets are brand new to you, let's spend a little time getting used to how they feel. Use exactly the same rhythmic exercise, but this time play the notes of an A minor triad. As always start slowly and only increase the tempo in small steps when you are completely comfortable and at ease with triplets.

Exercise 2 lesson027.iksit.02



Try this once again, this time playing the A minor chord on each beat.

Exercise 3 lesson027.iksit.03



Use the left hand to support the right hand by adding the notes of the A minor chord played low down in the bass clef. Only the right hand is playing triplets – the left hand is playing half notes and quarter notes. This means that the right hand is playing compound time and the left hand is playing simple time – at the same time!

Exercise 4 lesson027.iksit.04



Playing different chords

We have played these exercises so far on Am. Now we are going to play the same exercise, but this time on the chord of G.

Exercise 5 lesson027.iksit.05



1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1 | 1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1

Changing Chords

You also need to be able to change between different chords. The next exercise moves from Am to G, playing two bars on each chord.

Exercise 6 lesson027.iksit.06



1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1 | 1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1

1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1 | 1 t 1 2 t 1 3 t 1 4 t 1

Try that again, this time changing chord every bar.

Exercise 7
lesson027.iksit.07



Triplet arpeggios

The next exercise features right hand eighth note triplet arpeggios supported by a triad played in the left hand. Again it's Am to G, one bar of each.

Exercise 8
lesson027.iksit.08



As a keyboard player you must be able to play arpeggios fluently, so let's change the chord every two beats.

Exercise 9
lesson027.iksit.09



Incorporating triplet eighth notes into your playing

As you can see, playing triplets has a different feel about it.

In the next exercise an A minor triplet is played in root position with the right hand in the treble clef.

Exercise 10 lesson027.iksit.10



Try this approach again, this time changing from Am to G.

Exercise 11 lesson027.iksit.11



As an accompanist, a keyboard player might open out the chord voicing by playing the notes of the chord in a different order. Instead of A, C, E, A you could try A, E, A, C for example. All the notes of the chord are present and played they are just in a different order. Exercise 12 illustrates this. Notice again how both hands are involved this time.

Exercise 12
lesson027.iksit.12



The last exercise in this lesson develops open voicing by moving between Am and G.

Exercise 13
lesson027.iksit.13

