Syncopated rhythms are funky and a little harder to play than simple rhythms. But if you like rock, funk, blues, rap, hip-hop, salsa, reggae, country or any other music whatsoever, you will understand how cool syncopation sounds. Try counting out syncopated rhythms as follows:

Notice that the rhythm above has two up-strokes in a row. Also notice that we didn’t say “4” when we were counting. Instead, we rested or “skipped” that down-beat. A syncopated rhythm is simply a rhythm that skips one or more downbeats and has two or more upbeats in a row.

On the next page, rhythms L through S are examples of syncopated rhythms. To say and play them, you simply leave out the gray numbers, resting on those beats.

**TIPS FOR TRYING SYNCOPATED RHYTHMS:**
1) Try to “feel” the beat. The missing downbeat is still there, you just don’t play it.

2) Playing a syncopated rhythm is like singing the kids’ song “Bingo.” Even when you don’t sing the letters, you know they’re there and you give them their space in the song. Remember: if you can SAY it, you can PLAY it!

3) Another way to practice is to say the word “rest” on any gray number. For example on rhythm L: “One, two and rest and four. One, two and rest and four…”

4) Yet another way to practice is to say the word “skip” on any gray number. For example on rhythm L: “One, two and skip and four. One, two and skip and four…”
Syncopated Rhythms

L) 1 down 2 down (up) 3 (up) 4 down
M) 1 down 2 down (up) 3 (up) (up)
N) 1 down 2 down (up) down (up) (up)
O) 1 down (up) 2 (up) 3 (up) 4 (up)
P) 1 down (up) 2 (up) 3 (up) 4 (up)
Q) 1 down (up) 2 (up) 3 (up) 4 down (up)
R) 1 down 2 down 3 (up) 4 (up)
S) 1 (up) 2 (up) 3 (up) 4 (up)