

# Tutorial 4B: Double-Time and Half-Time



Welcome! In this tutorial you'll learn how to:

1. Transition in and out of double-time
2. Create your own double-time material
3. Use half-time and triple-time effectively

Enjoy the learning, and see you at the landmark!

Other Tutorials

- 4A: Soundscapes
- 4D: More Development
- 4F: Chord Substitutions
- 4G: Variations on ii-V-I's
- 4J: Group Interaction

- 
- ▶ Double-time is a powerful tool, but too often it's used without stability or ingenuity. A few suggestions go a long ways towards developing strong double-time skills. Add half-time and triple-time skills - your solos are off and running.

## Part 1 ~ Double-Time Transitions

### A) What are double-time and double-time feel?

\*Technically, double-time and double-time feel are two different things. *Double-time feel* is when you start playing twice-as-fast rhythms, as if the tempo were going twice as fast, even though the measures and chords go by at the same speed. In contrast, true double-time makes the chord progression go by twice as fast, but this shrinks the actual form of the tune. To avoid changing the form, double-time *feel* is used more often than true double-time in jazz improvisation.

**Important:** When this chapter discusses “double time,” it means double-time feel, not true double-time.

\*Also, “triple-time” means triple-time feel, and “half-time” means half-time feel.

### B) What are double-time and double-time feel?

\*Perhaps no other jazz improvisation technique can be as exciting or disappointing as double-time. On the positive side, double-time has many possibilities and challenges.

\*A good double-time passage at the right time can energize and lift a solo, and leave the audience wanting more. On the other hand, bad double-time can pretty much ruin a solo. A common misconception is that faster must be better, so double-time is better than single-time. That notion can lead to overcrowding of notes in solos and lack of intelligent development.

\*Here are some common pitfalls to avoid in double-time playing:

- Jumping headlong into and out of double-time, without graceful transitions
- Using predictable and uninteresting contours
- Repeating the same double-time material in each solo
- Playing double-time passages with a shaky rhythmic feel or stiff articulations
- Ending double-time passages awkwardly or abruptly

\*As you keep working with flexible scales, you can increase the tempo until you are playing at pretty good double-time speed. (See *Increasing Speed* later in this tutorial.) The topics in this chapter help you gain control of double-time and explore some of its many possibilities.

## (Part 1 – Double-Time Transitions)

### C) How do I get into double-time?

\*To go smoothly from the original tempo into double-time, follow these steps:

**1** Make sure you feel the quarter-note pulses in the original tempo securely. (You don't have to play quarter-notes, but you must be able to find them.)

**2** Quickly imagine straight eighth-notes at the same tempo. In a swing tune, it takes some practice to imagine straight eighth-notes.

**3** These straight eighth-notes become the quarter-notes of the new double-time.

**4** In the new double-time, work for active rhythms. Many players try only eighth-notes in the new tempo, missing a lot of rhythmic possibilities.

\*Steps 2 and 3 help you solidify the transition into double-time. With practice, you'll get the double-time feel quickly without worrying about the steps. You can drift in and out of double-time during a solo, as long as it's smooth and not overused.

► **TRY IT – Basic:** Using a metronome of quarter-note = 100, play swing eighth-notes for 4 bars, then shift to double-time feel for 4 bars. Use any scale notes; ascending, descending, or mixed contours. **Medium:** Quarter-note = 120; then 140. Practice Pages

### D) How do return from double-time?

\*To return from double-time to the original tempo, follow these steps.

**1** Quickly imagine your current double-time quarter-notes as 8th-notes of the original tempo. If the style is swing, stretch out the eighth-notes so they become swing 8ths.


**2** In the new tempo, work for active rhythms to re-establish the original feel. If the tune is swing, be sure to play accurate swing rhythms with the correct triplet subdivisions.

\*With practice, you can move in and out of double-time whenever it feels right.


► **TRY IT – Basic:** Using a metronome setting of quarter-note = 120, play swing eighth-notes for two bars. Shift to double-time feel for two bars, then shift back to single-time for the next two bars. \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2 – Double-Time Material

### A) What are ways to create double-time material?

- 1) Use the suggestions in *Using Flexible Scales* in Chapter 1A: *The Virtual Practice Method* to generate double-time ideas.
- 2) Avoid predictable scale contours & repetitive ideas.
- 3) Begin on (or emphasize) active rhythms or tones.
- 4) Use contour patterns of 3 eighth-notes in 4/4 time.
- 5) Mix some chromatic notes with the scale tones to slow down the contours. 
- 6) Mix in one or more riffs (see Chapter 4D).

### B) Does multiplying by 2 help?

\*You can get started with double-time practice by creating an interesting one- or two-bar idea at an easy tempo. For example, try a flexible scale with a few skips and maybe a slight rhythm variation. Then play the same idea exactly twice as fast to turn it into double-time. 

\*Once that idea is comfortable, transpose it to other keys – first at the original tempo and then at the double-time tempo. As you progress through new ideas, gradually introduce wider skips, non-harmonic tones, and different rhythms to add spice to your double-time ideas.

### C) How do return from double-time?

When you end a double-time passage, keep these things in mind: 1) make sure you end with secure pitches and rhythms (use SHAPE to guide you), and 2) generally end on a resting tone instead of a color tone to give the passage better closure.

### D) How do practice double-time fills? MORE

One way to begin working with double-time is to play a short double-time fill during a one- or two-bar rest.

\*For example, start at a slower tempo, rest for two beats, and play eight 16th-notes (two beats) and a downbeat note.

\*At first, you should work on short phrases of 8th-notes with smaller contours. After you're comfortable with basic fills, try these ideas:

- Rest a bar and play a bar of 16th-notes
- Rest two bars and play two bars of 16ths.

## (Part 2 – Double-Time Material)

- Vary the rhythms, mixing eighths and 16ths.

\*Work for pitch and rhythm accuracy as you go; then gradually boost the tempo each time until you can handle reasonably fast double-time passages.

### D) How do get to the next level?

One way to begin working with double-time is to play a short double-time fill during a one- or two-bar rest.

When you can play phrases accurately and confidently at faster tempos, expand the length and contour of each double-time phrase.

\*You can also transcribe and play double-time material from CDs, but don't rely too much on imitation. You'll be amazed at how much mileage you can get just from flexible scales and chromatic notes.

Here are some additional points to keep in mind with double-time playing:

- You'll need split-second timing and quick reflexes.
- Be securely locked into the tempo. The rhythm section must play steady time, and you must be able to hear them clearly and work with them.

- Use melodic and rhythmic development in your double-time material and remember SHAPE.

- Use sequences and patterns in your double-time material.

As you play long double-time passages, the soundscape becomes very detailed and low-level, something like flying a spacecraft at high speeds along a planet's surface. You get very involved in shapes, contours, colors, and changes of direction as you create fast double-time material.

- ▶ **TRY IT – Basic:** Create four bars of steady double-time 8th-notes (two bars in the original, slower tempo). **Medium:** Create 8 bars of double-time 8th-notes. **Challenge:** Play the longest stream of 8th-notes at the fastest tempo you can, with no breaks or errors. Practice Pages

### D) How do I use triplets with double-time?

Instead of simply converting quarter-notes to eighth-notes for double-time, you can emphasize eighth-note triplets in the double-time feel. This sounds like the basic pulse is going three times as fast (from four quarter-notes to 12 eighth-note triplets). You can mix eighth-notes and eighth-note triplets in the double-time passages for variety.

You can also use constant eighth-note triplets in the original feel to provide a bridge between original eighth-notes and the new 16th-notes (8th-notes in double-time).

## (Part 2 – Double-Time Material)

### E) How do I increase speed with double-time passages?

As you work on double-time ideas and material, playing fast and clean becomes increasingly important. One effective way to build speed and technique is by honing your skills with flexible scales.

These principles can also be used in single-time playing at faster tempos.

1. Choose a starting note in a flexible scale; go up and come back down (stepwise) to that same note.

Repeat that small piece of the flexible scale over and over, gradually increasing the tempo until you can play it very fast. This is similar to “riffing” (see Chapter 4D: *More Development*).

2. Try idea #1 with different starting points, different scales, and changes in direction.

3. Try idea #1 with a higher difficulty level (see Chapter 1E: *Practice Levels for Flexible Scales*).

4. Identify difficult spots in the flexible scale piece. Work on the awkward intervals or fingerings until they become more comfortable.

5. Gradually expand the piece so you can play longer at a fast tempo.

6. Sharpen your musical vision (SHAPE) – train yourself to change directions or use wider intervals *where they are not comfortable*. Each time you successfully navigate unfamiliar territory, you create double-time ideas more quickly and accurately.

- **TRY IT – Basic:** Follow guidelines #1 and #2 above for a set of flexible scales. **Medium:** Follow guidelines #3 and #4 above for a set of flexible scales. **Challenge:** Follow guidelines #5 and #6 above for a set of flexible scales.

## Part 4 – Triple-Time & Half-Time

### A) What is triple-time feel?

\*Triple-time feel is *not* three times as fast as the original feel; it’s twice as fast as double-time, which makes it *four* times as fast as the original feel.

\*For example, if the original tempo is 60, double-time is 120, and triple-time is 240.

## 6

Triple-time works best in ballads or slow blues, after you're into double-time. If the tempo of the triple-time is very fast, play easier ideas; consider patterns, sequences, and riffs.

Once you establish triple-time, you can switch among triple-, double-, and single-time feels as you like. The switching process is similar to going in and out of double-time, as described earlier in this chapter.

Another way to give the feeling of triple-time is to repeat eighth-note triplets and then establish a new pulse of quarter-notes based on the speed of those triplets. For details on how to do this, see Tutorial 5E.

- ▶ **TRY IT – Basic:** Write several simple motifs and convert them to triple-time. **Medium:** Play a two-bar motif in slow single-time (quarter-note about 60); convert it to double-time (one bar), then triple-time (half a bar).

### B) What is half-time feel?

Half-time feel is less common than double-time, but it can be very effective. You can go in and out of halftime, and your group can follow you or stay in the old tempo.

In half-time feel, the chords go by at the same rate, but it feels like half as many bars are played.

Half-time feel is also used quite often in the rhythm section to introduce a tune or at the start of a solo.

### C) How do I go into half-time feel?

- 1 Concentrate on half-notes in the original tempo.
- 2 Imagine them as quarter-notes of the new tempo.
- 3 In the new tempo, play varied rhythms to get the new tempo.

### D) How do I return from half-time feel to normal?

- 1 Concentrate on 8th-notes in half-time tempo.
- 2 Imagine those 8th-notes as the new quarter-notes of the original fast tempo.
- 3 In the new tempo, use active rhythms to re-establish the original feel. In a swing tune, be sure to play accurate swing rhythms with the correct triplet subdivisions.

- ▶ **TRY IT –** At quarter-note = 200, play swing eighth-notes for two bars. Then go to half-time feel for one long bar (two original bars) and back to single-time for the next two bars. Then do the same at quarter-note = 240. Practice Pages

That's all for Tutorial 4B!

Next is the Quiz –to get started, go to the next page.

## QUIZ - 4B: Double-Time and Half-Time

Click on the letter for the best answer for each question. You'll hear a C Major arpeggio if you're right. If you miss 2 or less, you pass the Tutorial!

Or, click  to review the Tutorial before taking the Quiz.

- 1) Triple-time is
  - A) 1/3 the original tempo
  - B) 3 times the original tempo
  - C) 1/4 the tempo
  - D) 4 times the tempo
- 2) To go from 1/2-time to normal time, first think of
  - A) 8ths in half-time
  - B) quarters in normal time
  - C) 8ths in normal time
  - D) quarters in half-time
- 3) To go from normal time into double-time, first concentrate on
  - A) 8ths in normal time
  - B) quarters in normal time
  - C) 8ths in double-time
  - D) quarters in double-time
- 4) An important tool for increasing your speed in double-time material is
  - A) learning chord progressions
  - B) getting solid with half-time
  - C) practicing wide intervals
  - D) flexible scales
- 5) Which notes are the fastest?
  - A) 8ths in original tempo
  - B) quarter-note triplets in double-time
  - C) 8th-note triplets in double-time
  - D) half-notes in triple time
- 6) True double-time
  - A) is the same as double-time feel
  - B) changes the form of the tune
  - C) is much easier than double-time feel
  - D) is used more often than double-time feel
- 7) Which is a double-time pitfall to avoid?
  - A) transitions
  - B) relying on flexible scales
  - C) starting in different places in the bar
  - D) predictable contours
- 8) In double-time, SHAPE helps you
  - A) change directions
  - B) play wider intervals
  - C) get out of your comfort zone with notes
  - D) all of these





4 Corners Area, U.S.  
© 2003 Visual Jazz Publications