

Tutorial 2D: Three and Four



Welcome! In this tutorial you'll learn:

1. 3 Against 4
2. Triplet Contours
3. 4 Against 3

Enjoy the learning, and see you at the cliff ...

Other Level 2 Tutorials

- 2A: More Scales
- 2B: Melodic Shapes
- 2C: Swing Rhythms
- 2E: Embellishments
- 2F: Melodic Development
- 2H: Tune Forms
- 2K: Preparing Concert Material

- ▶ The current of 3 against 4 underlies swing rhythms and style. You can also use rhythms and contours of 3 against 4, even 4 against 3, to heighten rhythmic interest in your solos. This interest will spread to your performing group, too!

Part 1 – 3 Against 4

A) What's all this about 3 and 4?

*The driving rhythmic force in jazz is the constant struggle between groups of *two* beats (or four beats) and groups of *three* beats. This is what creates the basic swing rhythms you learned about in Tutorial 2C

*You can use 3-against-4 to your advantage in many different ways in your solos.

*Playing three notes or beats against a background of four adds rhythmic tension and interest. The great improvisers use patterns of 3-against-4 skillfully.

B) How do I play 3 against 4?

- Play 3/4 rhythms in a 4/4 tune
- Play 3-note or 6-note contours of eighth-notes

C) How do 3/4 rhythms in 4/4 tunes work?

*When you play a 3/4 rhythm in a 4/4 tune, you can repeat the 3/4 rhythm so the feeling of 3-against-4 is strong.

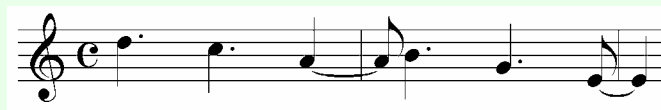
*Each time you play the 3/4 rhythm, the melody seems to repeat one beat earlier, compared to the 4/4 background. After three bars (or four 3/4 rhythms) the 3/4 melody repeats on its original beat.

===== or

*You can use rests, offbeats, and triplets in the 3/4 rhythm. Here are some sample rhythms:

*Another 3-against-4 idea is to play consecutive dotted quarter-note values; each contains three eighth-notes.

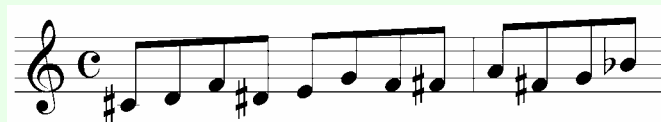
(Part 1 – 3 Against 4)



- **TRY IT** – Basic: In a 4/4 meter, play a melody that repeats a 3/4 rhythm twice. Medium: Start on beat 2 of bar 1. Challenge: Start on an offbeat eighth-note in the first bar.

D) What are 3-note and 6-note contours?

*A contour is a group of notes that all head in the same direction – all up or all down. After each new 3-note or 6-note group, the rhythm shifts to the downbeat or to the offbeat. For easy recognition, you should repeat the same contour several times.



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Ascending 3-note contours



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Descending 3-note contours

*Mixed contours alternate between up and down. When you use mixed contours, be sure to accent the starting note of each contour; otherwise, the last note of the previous contour can be unintentionally grouped with the next contour.

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*You can also use contours of 6 eighth-notes to create a feeling of 3-against-4. The example below has a wider skip after each group to make the groups stand out:

(Part 1 – 3 Against 4)



- **TRY IT – Basic:** Repeat an ascending three-note contour consisting of all eighth-notes. **Medium:** Use all dotted quarter-notes. **Challenge:** Use contours of six 8th-notes.

Part 2 – Triplet Contours

A) What are triplet contours?

*They are eighth-note triplets or quarter-note triplets in uneven contours. Groups of 2, 4, or 8, for example, produce a feeling of 3 against 4.

B) How do I use triplet contours of 4?

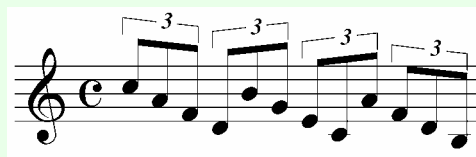
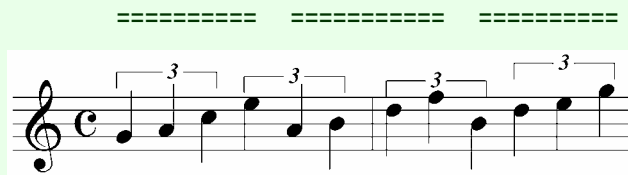


*In 4/4 tunes, you can fit quarter-note triplets or 8th-note triplets into contour-groups of 2. To do this, repeat the contour every two notes. For example:

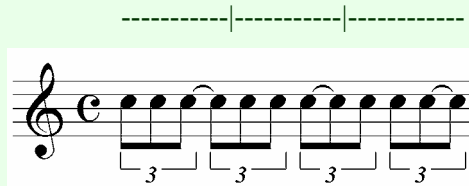
- **TRY IT – Basic:** Play a melody with quarter-note-triplets in contour groups of 2. **Medium:** Play a melody with eighth-note-triplets in contour groups of 2. **Challenge:** Combine both approaches in a melody.

C) How do I use triplet contours of 4?

*In 4/4 tunes, you can fit 8th-note triplets or quarter-note triplets into contour groups of 4. To do this, repeat the contour every 4 notes.



Another way to make a contour group of 4 is by tying the third and fourth triplets in a triplet group:



- **TRY IT** – Basic: Play a melody with quarter-note triplets in contour groups of 4. Medium: Use 8th-note triplets in contour groups of 4. Challenge: Combine Basic and Medium in a melody.

Part 3 ~ 4 Against 3

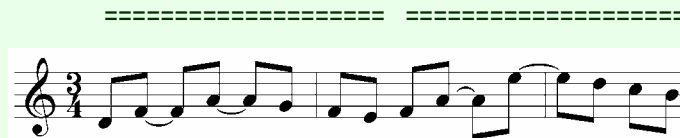
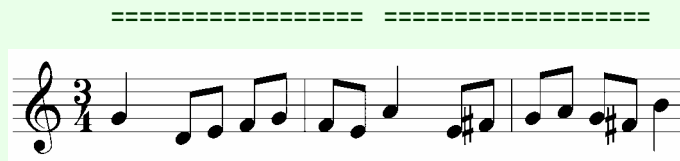
A) What is 4 against 3?

*4-against-3, using rhythms or groups of 4 against a background of 3, is used less often than 3-against-4, but it's still a great idea to use in solos.

B) How do I use 4 against 3?

- Play 4/4 rhythms in a 3/4 tune
- Play 4-note or 8-note contours of eighth-notes
- Play a bracket of 4 quarter-notes in a 3/4 bar

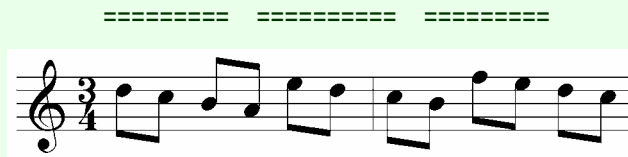
*When you play 4/4 rhythms in a 3/4 tune, repeat the 4/4 rhythm so the feeling of 4-against-3 is strong.



(Part 3 – 4 Against 3)

C) How do I use 8th-note contours of 4 against 3?

*In 3/4 you can repeat contours of four 8th-notes to create a feeling of 4-against-3:



*A more complex way to play 4 against 3 is to play contours of four consecutive *offbeat* quarter-note values in 3/4 time. You can also use ascending or mixed contours with an idea like the one following.

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► **TRY IT** – Basic: Repeat a 4-note contour in a 3/4 meter, using eighth-notes. Medium: Use offbeat quarter-values.

D) How do I use 4-note brackets?

A 4-quarter bracket fits the value of four quarter-notes into a 3/4 bar. You can also put 8th-notes anywhere in the bracket, as long as the total value is four quarters.



► **TRY IT** – Basic: On a flexible scale, repeat a 4-note bracket in a 3/4 meter, using quarter-notes. Medium: Use 8-note brackets in each bar. Challenge: Mix 8th-notes and quarter notes in each bracket.

That's all for Tutorial 2D!

Next is the Quiz – to get started, click Next.

QUIZ - 2D: Three and Four

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  Back to review the Tutorial before taking the Quiz.

1) A triplet contour

A) is mostly ascending B) is mostly descending C) has groups of 2 or four notes D) has groups of 3 or 6 notes

2) In a 3/4 tune, which produces 4 against 3?

A) a contour of 8 eighth-notes B) a group of 3 triplets C) an offbeat 3/4 rhythm D) all of these

3) In a 4/4 tune, which produces 3 against 4?

A) a bracket of 4 notes B) a group of 3 triplets C) a triplet contour of 4 notes D) all of these

4) A four-note bracket is associated with

A) 3 against 4 B) 4 against 3 C) mixed contours D) triplet contours

5) Triplet contours can be

A) eighth-note triplets or quarter-note triplets B) used in 4-note brackets C) repeated pitches D) played 4 times per bar

6) Three against four is closely related to

A) swing accents B) swing articulations C) swing rhythms D) swing variations

7) A contour of 4 offbeat quarters is best used in

A) swing B) 3/4 C) 4/4 D) a mixed contour

8) In 3/4, a four-note bracket can be divided into

A) 4 eighths and a quarter B) 6 triplets C) a quarter, 2 eighths, and 2 quarters D) anything except rests



Anasazi Indian Ruins, Colorado

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