Explanation for Working with Rhythmic Phrasing in Improvisation

The material in this book will cover rhythmic phrasing based on 8th notes, triplets and 16th notes as well as some specific polyrhythms. The time signatures used in the examples include 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4.

The material in the book can covered in any order and does not necessarily have to be covered progressively from the beginning to the end.

The term *rhythmic phrasing* refers to the grouping of notes (called a *rhythmic unit*) based on a specific rhythmic pulse such as 8ths, triplets or 16th notes. Depending on the time signature, rhythmic pulse and rhythmic unit, the overall phrasing will generally tend to cross the bar line thereby obscuring the overall time sense of time.

The terms *grouped* or *phrased* are interchangeable. "Triplets phrased in 4" or "triplets grouped in 4" are both correct.

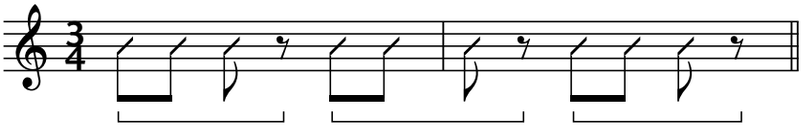
The rhythmic unit may be delineated by a number of techniques. As will be evident in examples throughout the book, the rhythmic unit may be created via the use of accents, rests, partial subdivision and pitch.

A note regarding the notation in the book: In all of the examples and etudes throughout the book, the initial rhythmic unit will be indicated with a bracket.

The term *cycle* is the time it takes for the rhythmic unit to play itself out from beginning to end and to begin again on the downbeat of any succeeding measure.

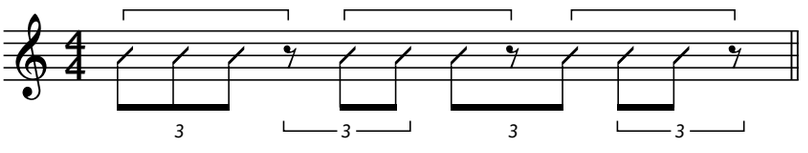
For example, 8ths phrased in 4 in 3/4 take two measures for the unit to start again on the downbeat of the 3rd measure. This two measure cycle will consist of 3 units of the 8ths phrased in groups of 4.

2 Measure Cycle



Another example would be triplets phrased in 4 in 4/4. This is a one measure cycle in which each measure contains 3 units of triplets phrased in groups of 4. Many of these groupings create polyrhythms. In this case, a half note triplet is created by the beginning of each rhythmic unit.

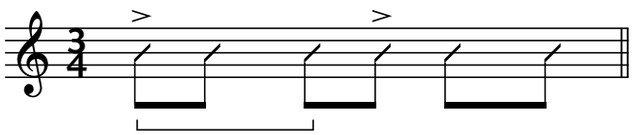
1 Measure Cycle



A) 8th Notes Phrased in 3 in 3/4 (1 Measure Cycle)

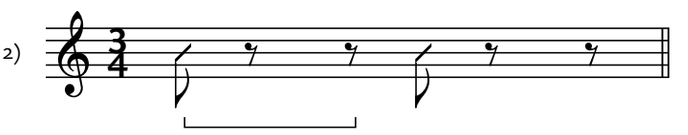
With Accents

1)



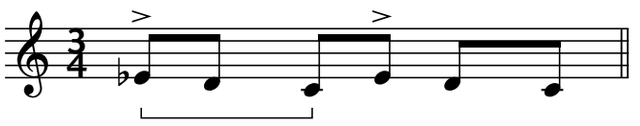
With Rests

2)



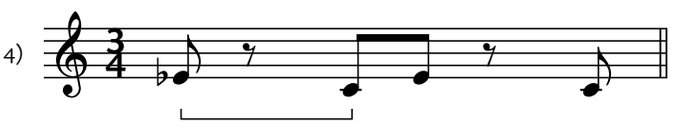
With Pitch

3)



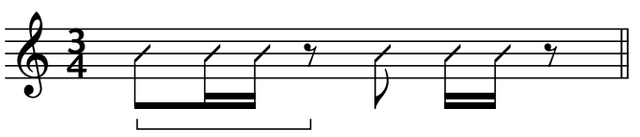
With Pitch

4)



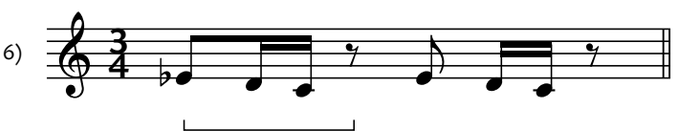
With Partial Subdivision and Rests

5)



With Pitch

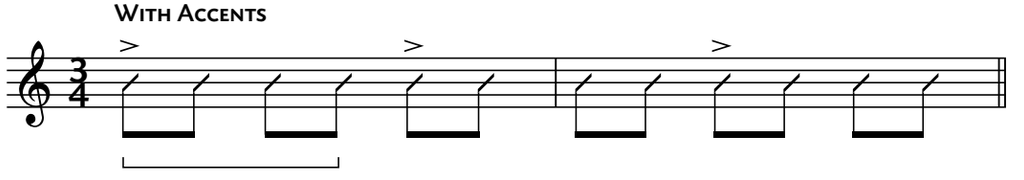
6)



B) 8th Notes Phrased in 4 in 3/4 (2 Measure Cycle)

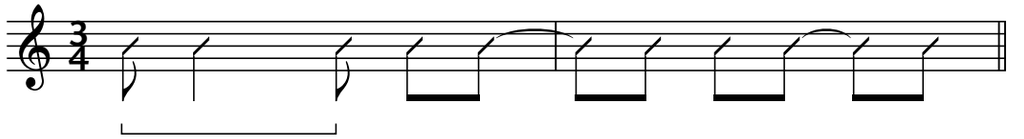
With Accents

1)



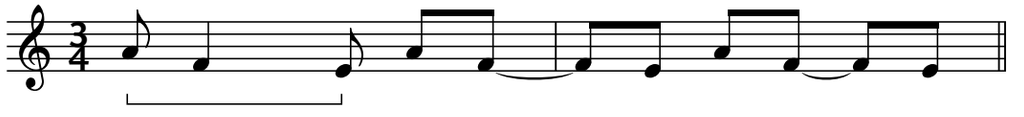
With Syncopation

2)



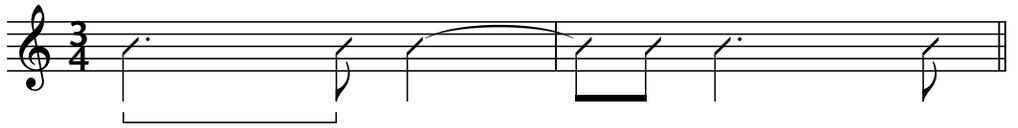
With Pitch

3)



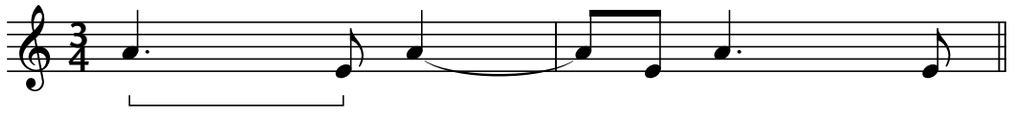
With Dotted Notes and Ties

4)



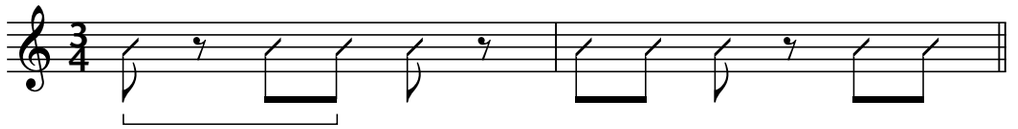
With Pitch

5)



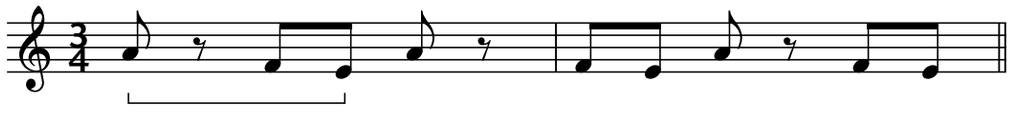
With Rests

6)



With Pitch

7)



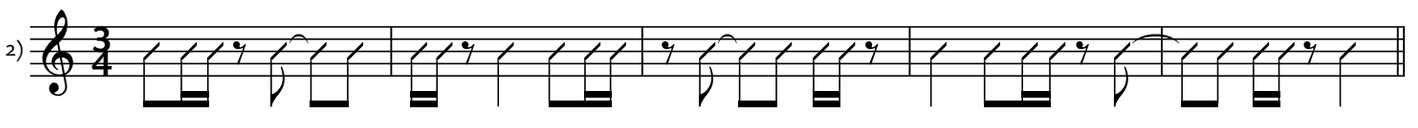
C) 8th Notes Phrased in 5 in 3/4 (5 Measure Cycle)

With Syncopation

1)

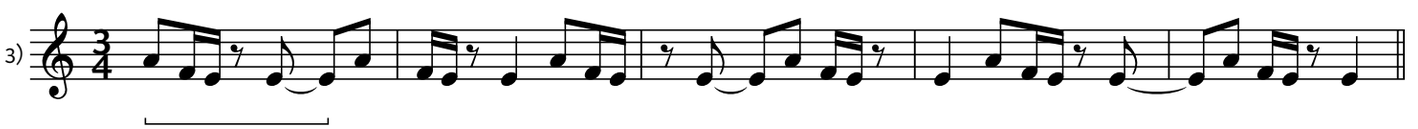
With Partial Subdivision and Rests

2)

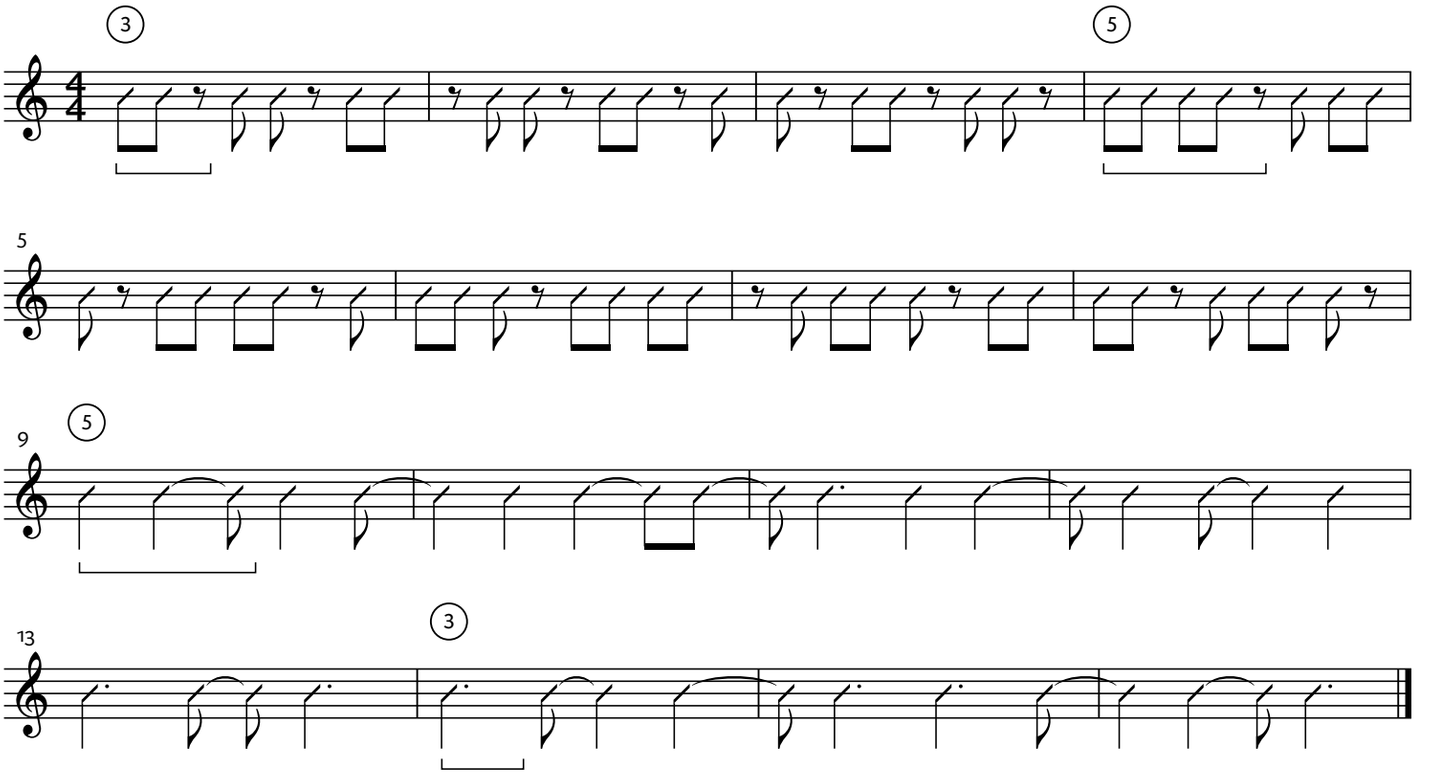


With Pitch

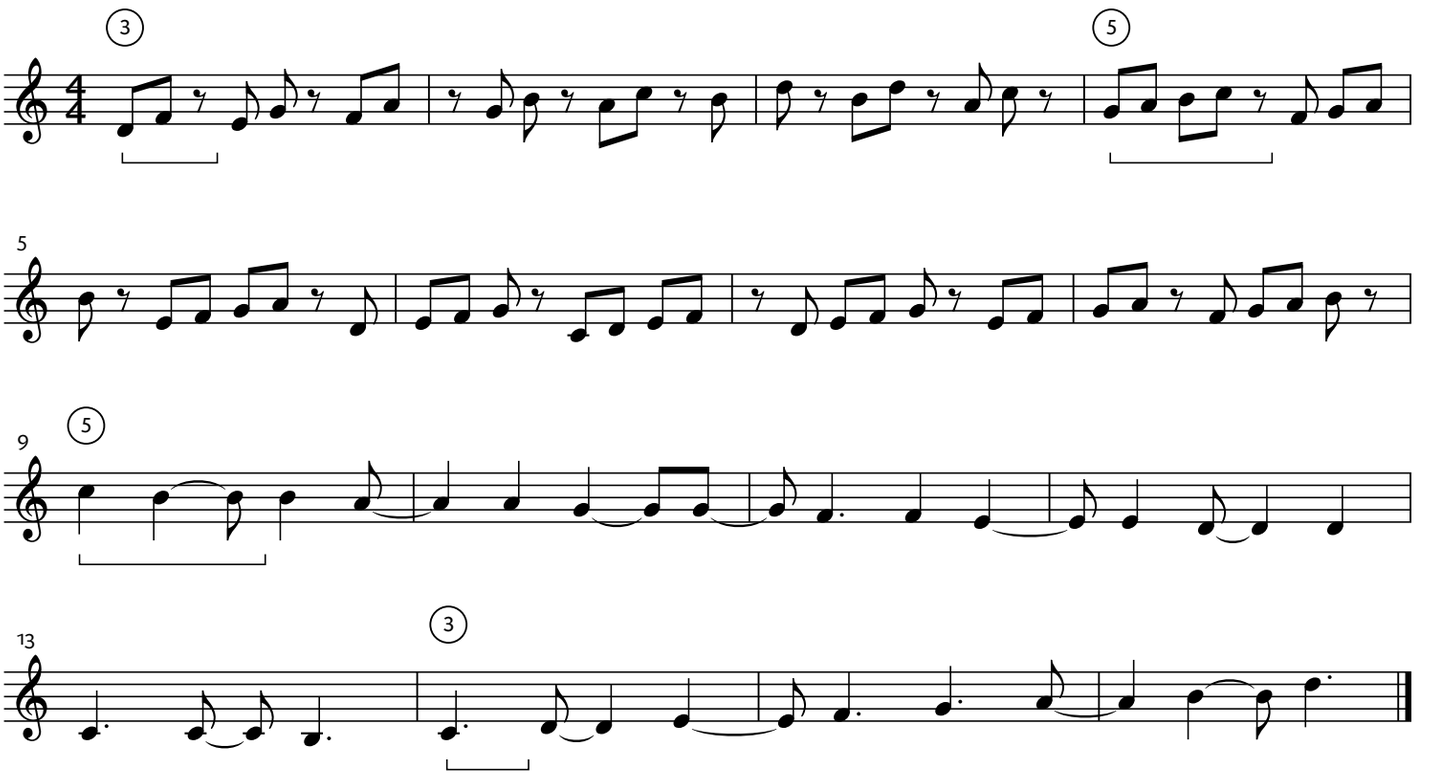
3)



D) Mixed Phrasing of 8th Notes in 4/4



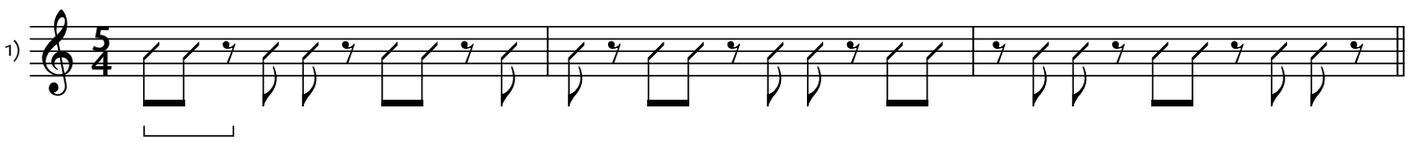
E) Mixed Phrasing of 8th Notes in 4/4 with Pitch



A) 8th Notes Phrased in 3 in 5/4 (3 Measure Cycle)

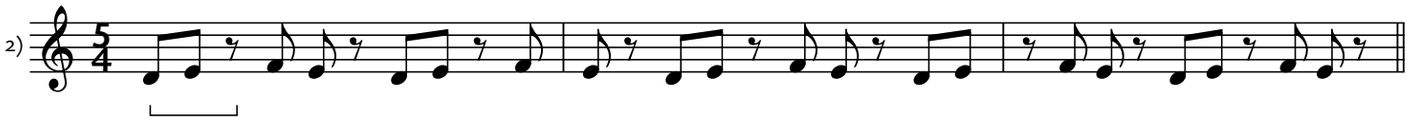
With Rests

1)



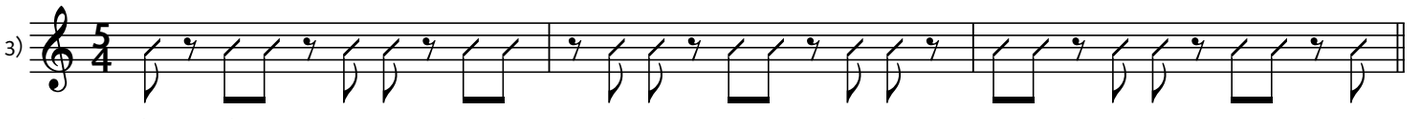
With Pitch

2)



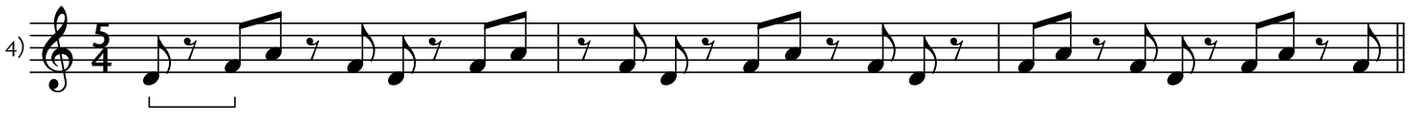
With Rests

3)



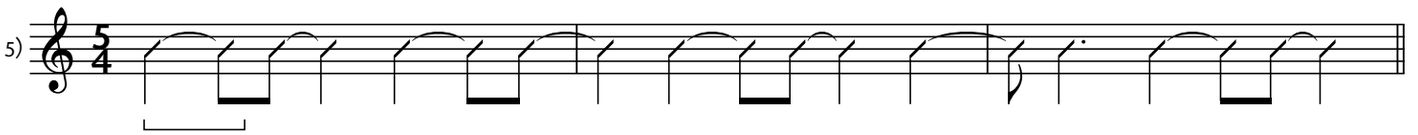
With Pitch

4)



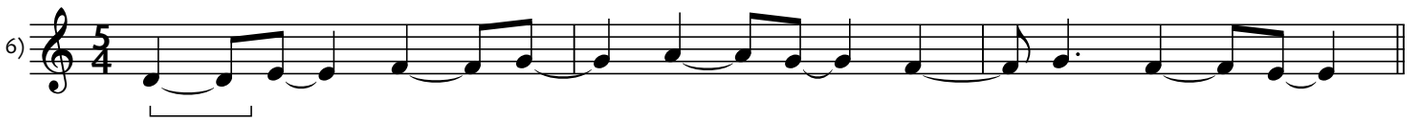
With Ties and Dotted Notes

5)



With Pitch

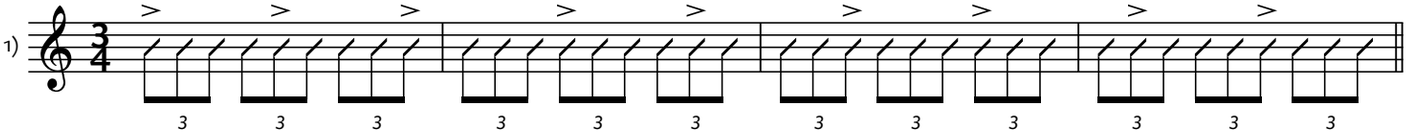
6)



B) Triplets Phrased in 4 in 3/4 (4 Measure Cycle)

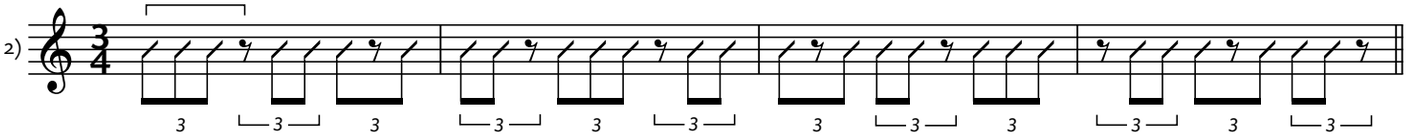
With Accents

1)



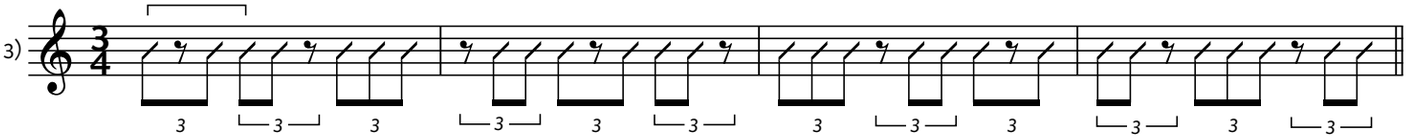
With Rests

2)



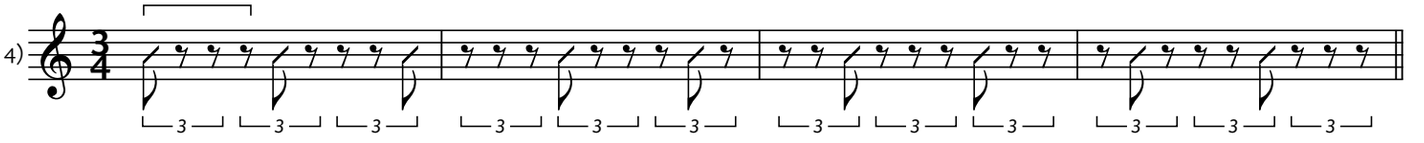
With Rests

3)



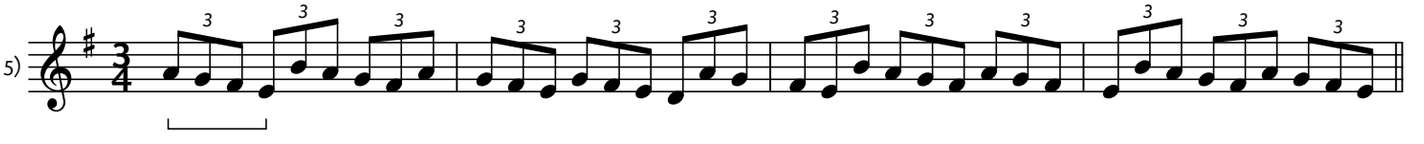
With Rests

4)

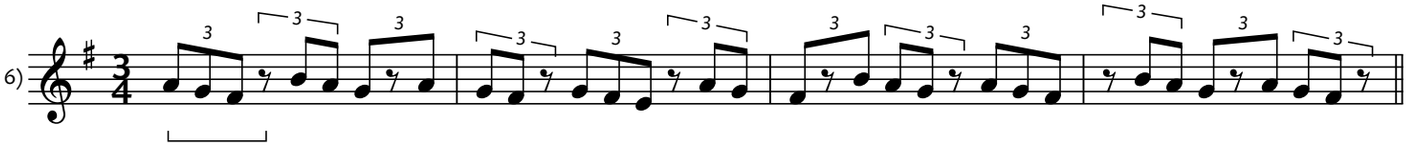


With Pitch

5)



6)



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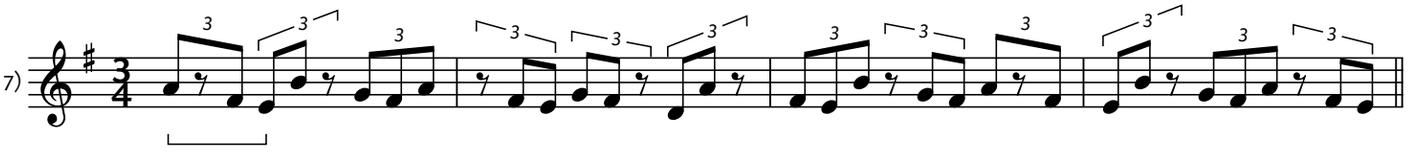
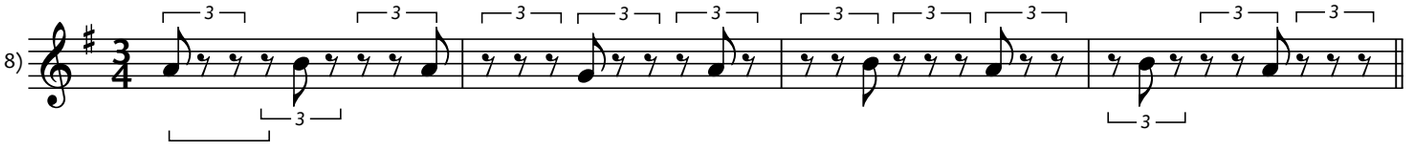


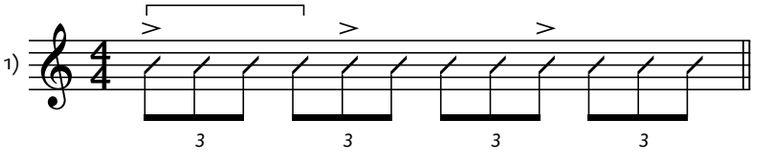
8)



A) Triplets Phrased in 4 in 4/4 (1 Measure Cycle)

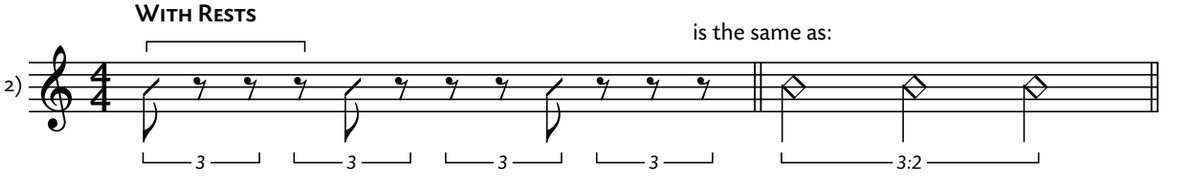
With Accents

1)



With Rests

2)



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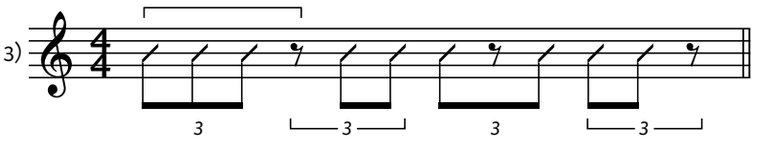
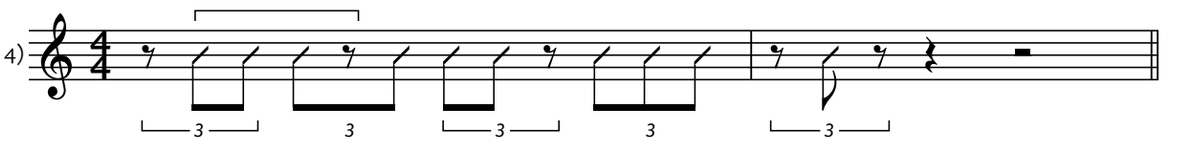


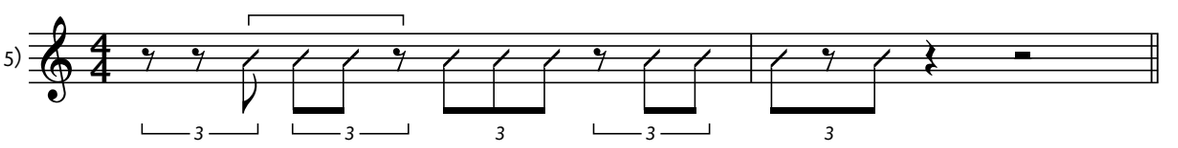
Phrase Beginning on 2nd Triplet Partial of Beat 1

4)



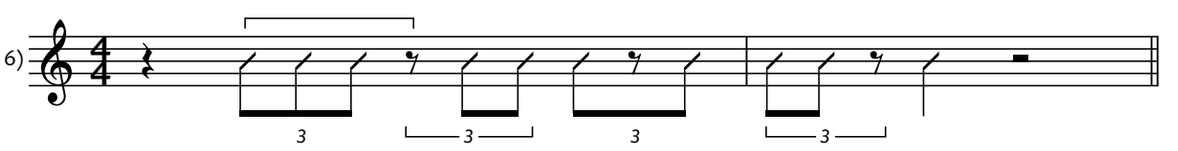
Phrase Beginning on 3rd Triplet Partial of Beat 1

5)



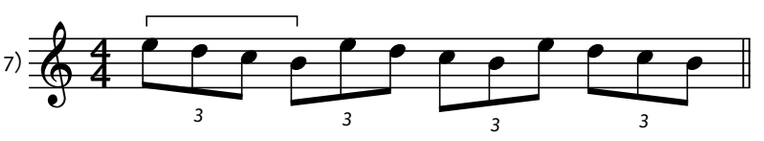
Phrase Beginning on Beat 2

6)



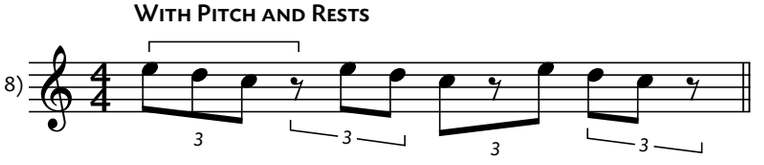
With Pitch

7)

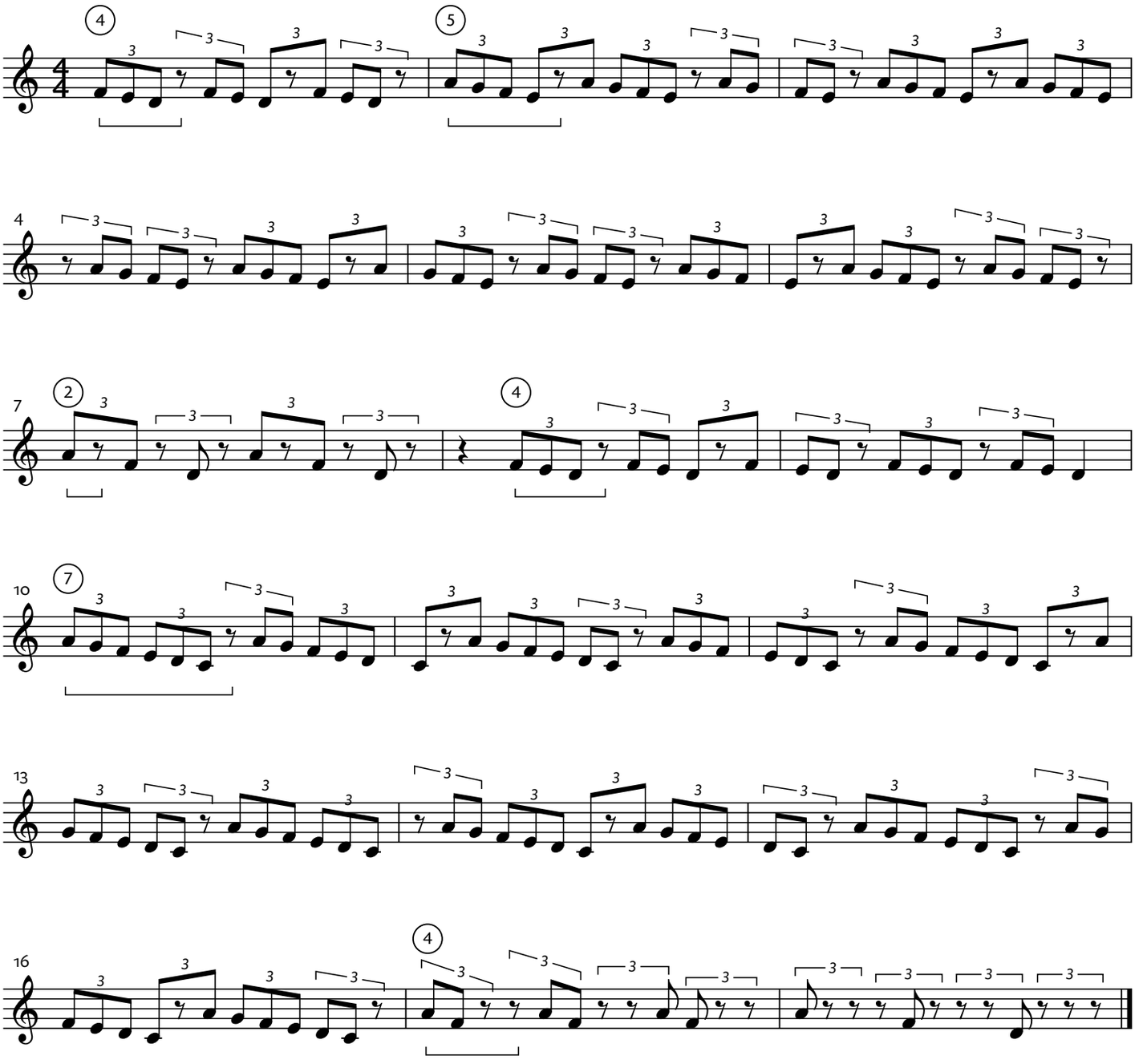


With Pitch and Rests

8)



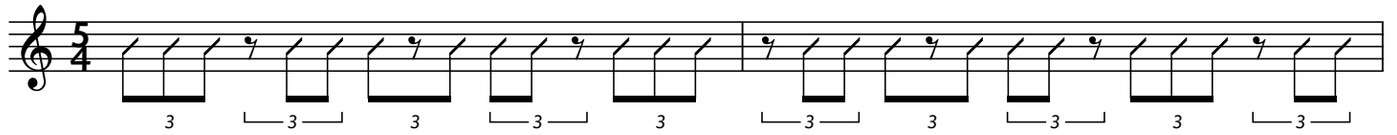
F) Mixed Phrasing of Triplets in 4/4 with Pitch and Rests

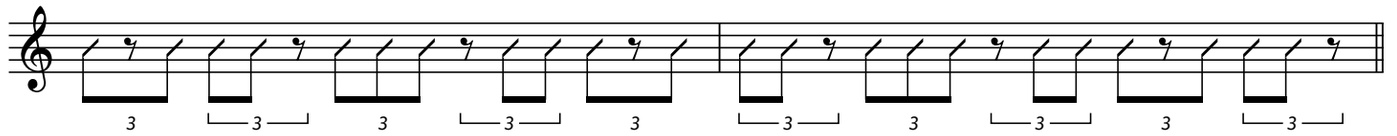


A) Triplets Phrased in 4 in 5/4 (4 Measure Cycle)

With Rests

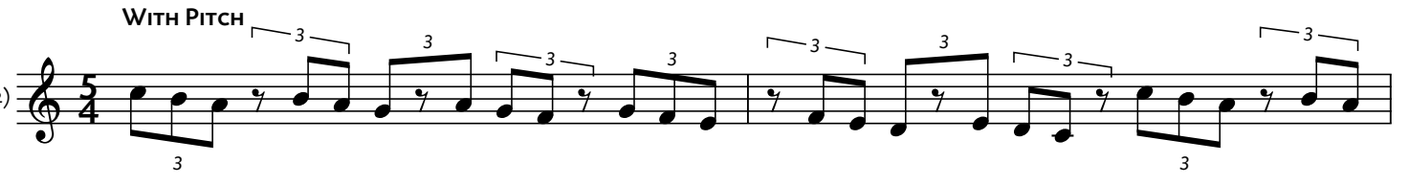
1)

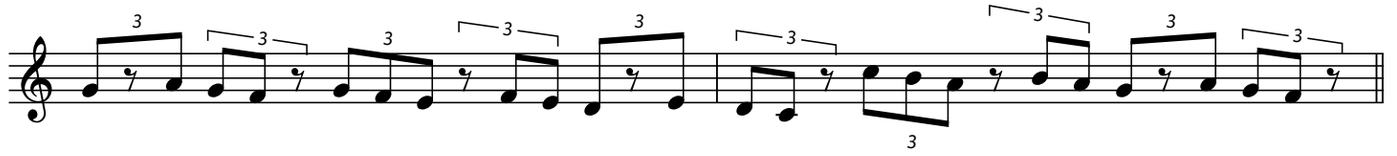




With Pitch

2)

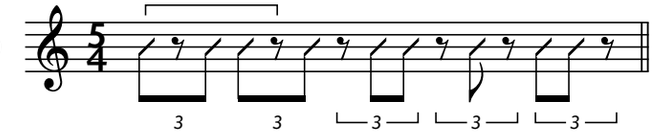




B) Triplets Phrased in 5 in 5/4 (1 Measure Cycle)

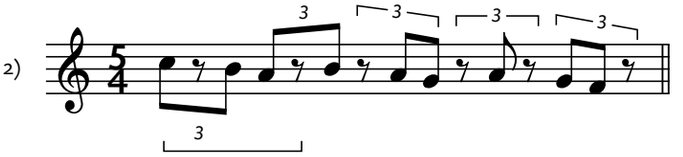
With Rests

1)



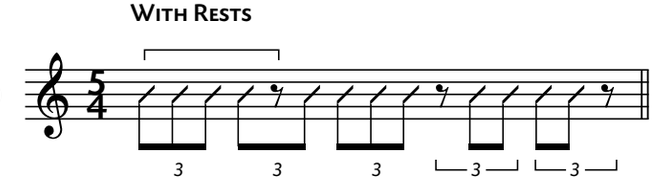
With Pitch

2)



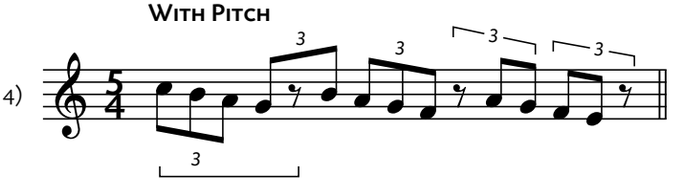
With Rests

3)



With Pitch

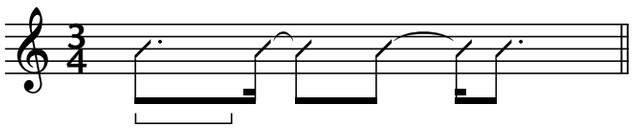
4)



A) 16th Notes Phrased in 3 in 3/4 (1 Measure Cycle)

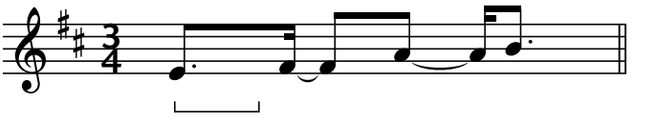
With Ties and Dotted Notes

1)



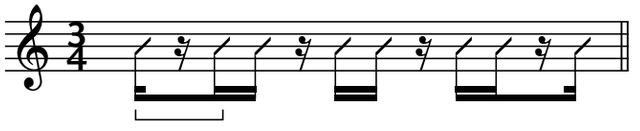
With Pitch

2)



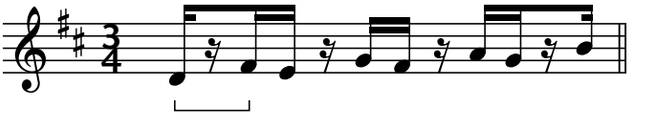
With Rests

3)



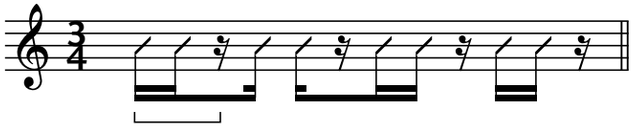
With Pitch

4)



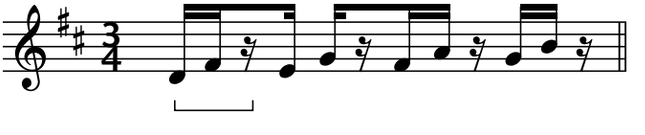
With Rests

5)



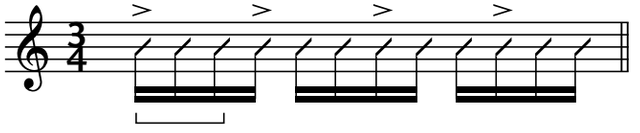
With Pitch

6)



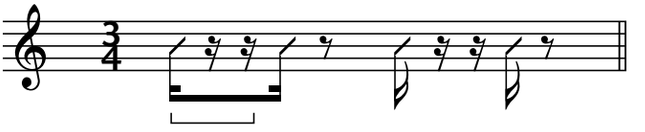
With Accents

7)



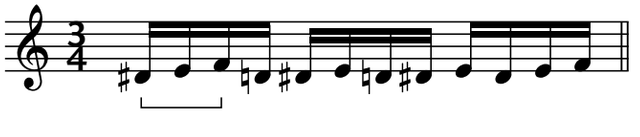
With Rests

8)



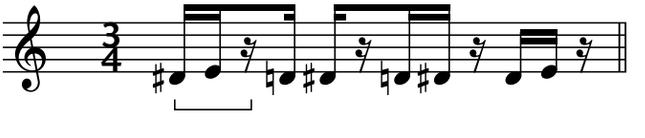
With Pitch

9)



With Pitch and Rests

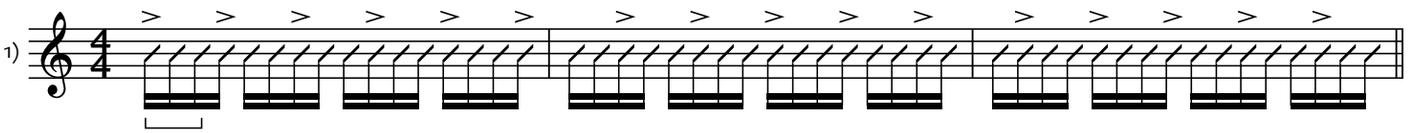
10)



A) 16th Notes Phrased in 3 in 4/4 (3 Measure Cycle)

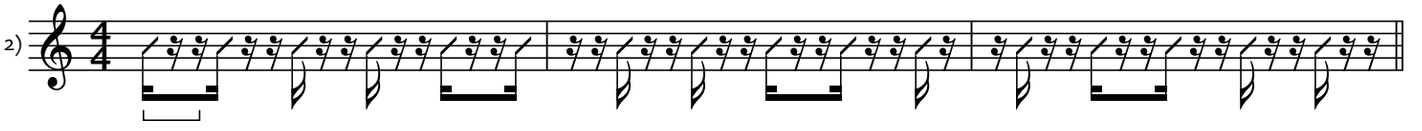
With Accents

1)



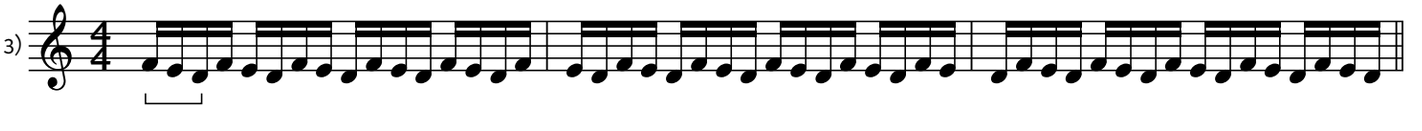
With Rests

2)



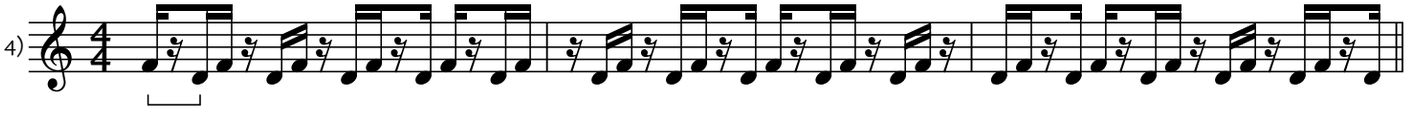
With Pitch

3)



With Pitch

4)



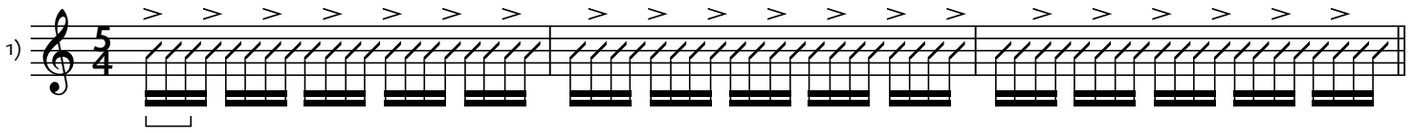
Beginning on 2nd Beat

5)

A) 16th Notes Phrased in 3 in 5/4 (3 Measure Cycle)

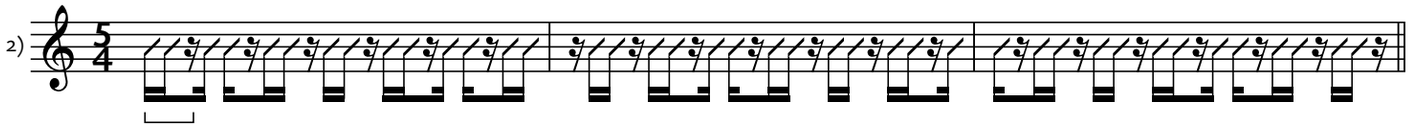
With Accents

1)



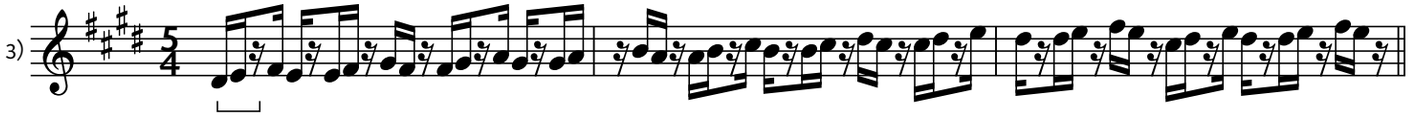
With Rests

2)



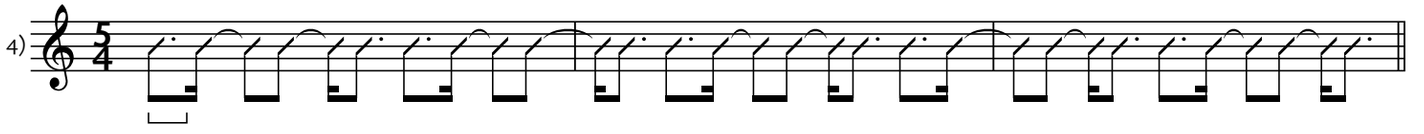
With Pitch

3)



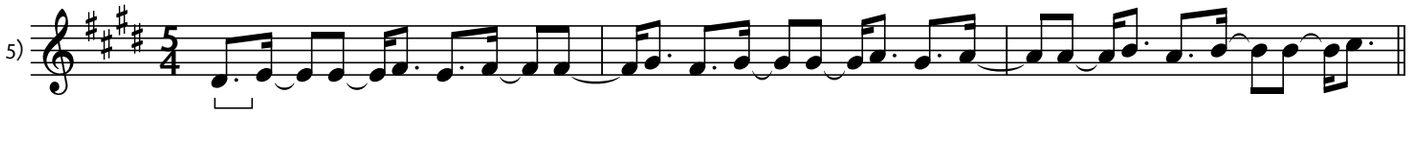
With Dotted Notes and Ties

4)

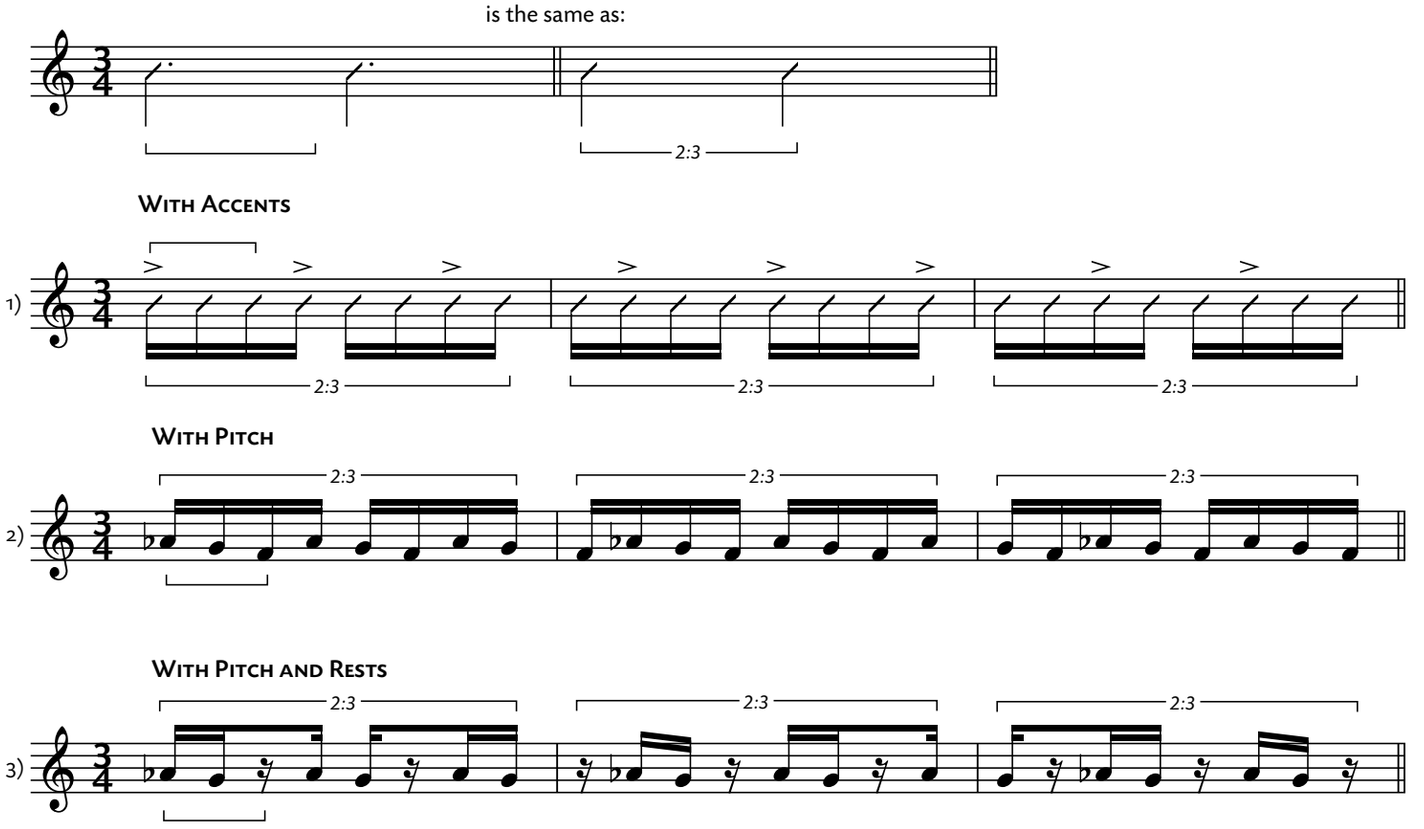


With Pitch

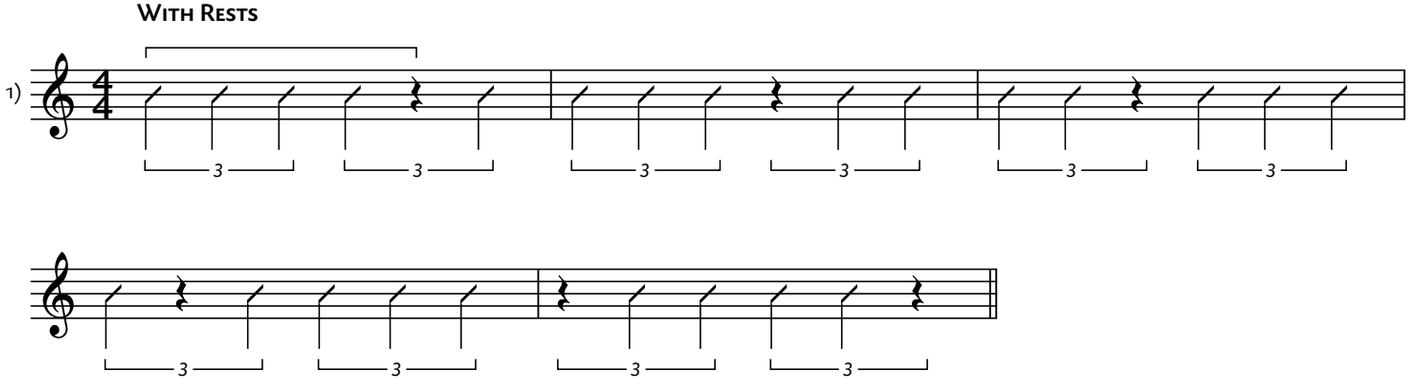
5)



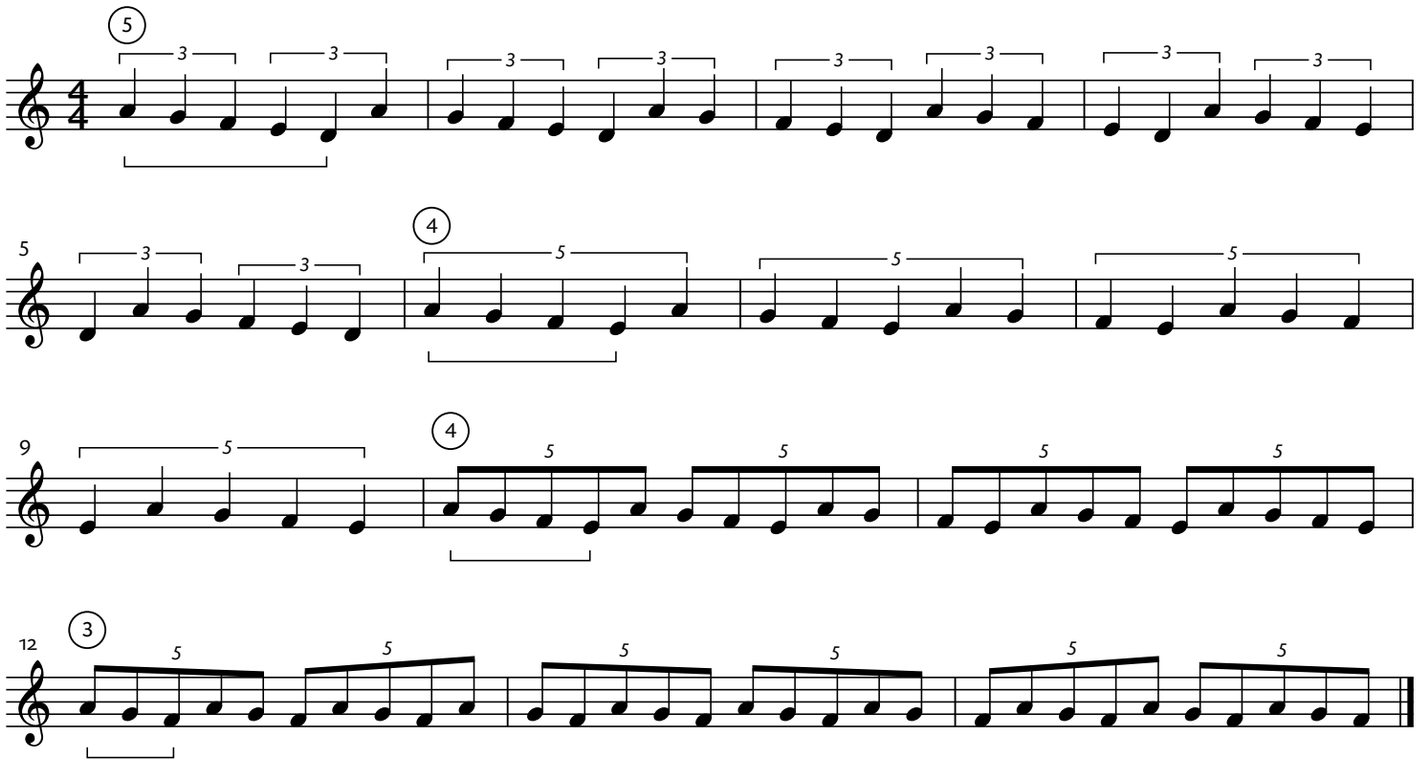
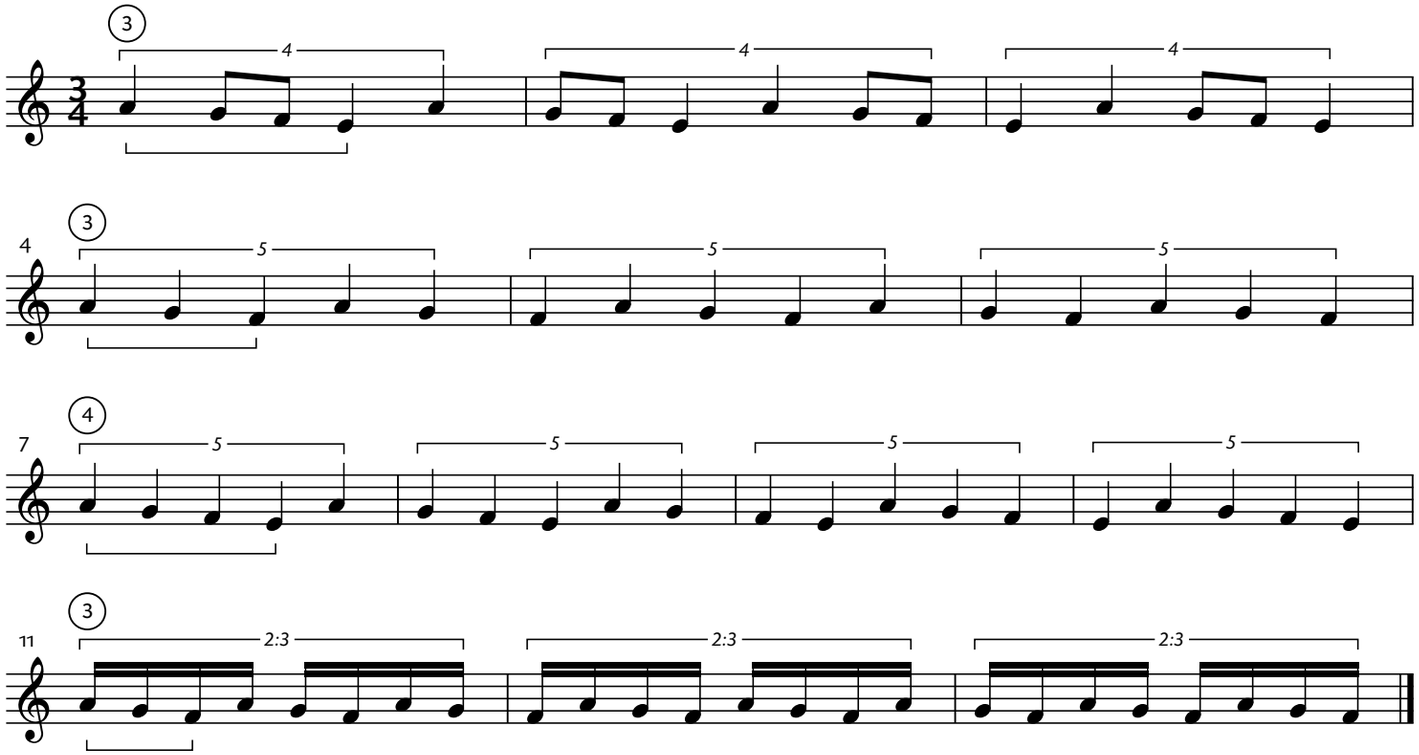
A) 16th Note Partial Subdivision of Duplets Phrased in 3 in 3/4 (3 Measure Cycle)



B) Quarter Note Triplets Phrased in 5 in 4/4 (5 Measure Cycle)



J) Mixed Phrasing of Polyrhythms in 4/4 with Pitch (no Rests)



K) Mixed Phrasing of Polyrhythms in 3/4 with Pitch (no Rests)