

The Jazz Commandments

Jazz Style & Articulation Clinic

How To Get Your Band To Swing

Jerry Tolson

Professor

Jazz Studies/Music Education

School of Music

University of Louisville

Louisville, KY 40292

jerry.tolson@louisville.edu

(502) 254-1080 (H)

(502) 693-3080 (C)

(502) 852-6972 (O)

(502) 253-9222 (F)

JAZZ BILL OF RIGHTS

All Eighth Notes Are Not Created Equal!

To Swing It You Gotta Hear It!

PREAMBLE TO THE COMMANDMENTS

**You Have to Verbalize,
In Order to Stylize Authentically**

I. Syllables

“Doo” is used for long sounds that occur on downbeats. The articulation symbol used is (-).*

“Day” or “Dah” is used for accented long sounds on either downbeats or upbeats. (>)

“Va”, “da”, or “ba” is typically used on unaccented upbeats. (No symbol is used)

“Daht” is used for accented short sounds whether on downbeats or upbeats. (^)

“Dit” is used for unaccented short notes. (.)

“Dn” is used for notes that are ghost or swallowed. These notes are often designated by an “x” on the staff in place of the note head or a note head in parentheses.

“Dow” is used for notes that are followed by a fall (descending glissando to an undefined ending pitch).

(\)

“Dwee” is used for notes that are preceded by a scoop, which is a slide into a note. (/)

“Doo-dle-da” is used to articulate eighth note triplets.

“Dool-ya” is used for turns and flips. They are usually represented by this symbol. (°)

*Keep in mind that the articulation symbols are not always used in the sheet music. Also note that accented short notes use a different syllable than unaccented short notes and are, as a result, played slightly longer, or as one would say in the jazz vernacular “fat” or “phat.” The notes are still short, but they have more weight and length.

II. Articulation

Example 1

SWING

ooo DA ooo DA ooo DA ooo DA ooo DA ooo DA ooo DA ooo

Example 2

SWING M.M. = 160+

ooo DA HOO DA HOO DA HOO DA HOO DA HOO DA HOO DA HOO DA ooo

Example 3

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SWING M.M. = 180+

Doo Hoo Hoo Day Hoo Hoo Hoo Da Hoo Hoo Hoo Da Day Hoo Hoo Da Doo

III. Commandments

1. Unless specifically marked otherwise, any quarter note or eighth note followed by a rest is played (sung) short.

Example 4

DIT DIT DAHT DA DIT DIT DAHT DAHT DIT DAHT

2. Quarter notes that occur on the downbeats of beats 1 or 3 are usually played long.

3. Quarter notes that occur on the downbeats of 2 or 4 are usually played short.

Example 5

Doo DIT Doo DIT DIT Doo DIT DIT DIT Doo DIT DIT

Exception: More than four quarter notes in a row.

Example 6

DAHT DAHT DAHT DAHT DAHT DAHT DAHT Doo DIT

Exception: Johnny Carson Theme Rule

Example 7

DAH DAHT DAHT DAH DIT DIT

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4. When the rhythmic pattern of two eighth notes followed by a rest starts on a downbeat, it is almost always articulated with the syllables doo-dit.

Example 8

DOO DIT DOO DIT DOO DIT DOO (HOO) DIT

5. A quarter note (or the equivalent thereof) that occurs on an upbeat between two eighth notes (or rests) is played short.

Example 9

Ex #1 Ex. #2 Ex #3 Ex #4

DOO DAHT DIT DOO DAHT DAY DAHT DIT DAHT DAY DOO DAHT DA DOO

Exception: When the upbeat quarter note equivalent occurs as a part of a sequence of eighth notes and is tied across the bar line or the imaginary mid point of the measure, it is played long.

Example 10

DOO DA DOO DAY DA DOO DAY DA DOO DAY DA DOO DIT

6. Upbeat entrances after a rest, especially those that are a dotted quarter note length or longer, should be "anticipated with an accent" (AWA).

Example 11

DAH DOO DOO DIT DAH DIT DAH DAHT DA DOO DOO DIT

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7. A succession (3 or more) of quarter notes (or equivalent) on consecutive upbeats is usually played long and accented.

Example 12

Musical notation for Example 12, showing a sequence of quarter notes on upbeats. The notes are accented and played long. The rhythm is: D00 D0A D0A D0A D1T | D0A D0A D0A D0A D0A D1T. The notes are on a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature.

8. In a line of eighth notes, accent the highest note and any wide leap changes of direction. Ghost (swallow) the lowest note and notes that occur on the weakest upbeats (2 and 4).

Example 13

Musical notation for Example 13, showing a sequence of eighth notes. The notes are accented and played long. The rhythm is: D00 D0A D00 D0N D00 D0A D00 D1T | D0A D00 D0N D0A D0A D00 D0A. The notes are on a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature.

9. The eighth note triplet rhythm is usually articulated by slurring the first two and tonguing the last one.

Example 14

Musical notation for Example 14, showing a sequence of eighth note triplets. The notes are slurred and accented. The rhythm is: D00-DLE D0A D00-DLE D0A D00-DLE D0A D00-DLE D0A | D00-DLE D0A D00-DLE D0A D00-DLE D0A D1T. The notes are on a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature.

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10. All notes of a quarter note triplet should be played long unless otherwise indicated.

Example 15

Example 15 consists of two staves of music. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter note triplets, each with a slur and a '3' below it. The articulation syllables below are: D00 (H00) D00 (H00) D00 (H00) D00 (H00) D00 (H00) D00 (H00) D00 (H00). The second staff shows quarter notes with slurs and accents. The articulation syllables below are: D00 DAY ____ DA D00 DAY ____ DA.

11. Two sixteenth notes followed by a rest are articulated with the syllables “Spit-It” or “Did-It.”

Example 16

Example 16 consists of a single staff of music. It shows two groups of two sixteenth notes followed by a quarter rest. The articulation syllables below are: DID-IT DID-IT DID-IT DID-IT D00 DAY ____.

12A. The syllable “Dwee” is used for notes that are preceded by a scoop.

12B. The syllable “Dow” is used for falls.

Example 17

Example 17 consists of a single staff of music. It shows a sequence of notes with scoops and falls. The articulation syllables below are: DWEE DWEE DWEE DWEE DOW DOW.

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15. In general, dynamics follow the shape of the melodic line. If the line ascends, crescendo. If the line descends, get softer.

Notes that are longer than 2 beats in duration must have dynamic change.

Long notes that enter on an upbeat are usually executed with a sforzando followed by a crescendo.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a swing style. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The first four measures (G4 to D4) are marked with a crescendo hairpin. The last measure (C4) is marked with a sforzando (sfz) and a decrescendo hairpin. The word 'SWING' is written above the staff. Below the staff, there are rhythmic syllables: '000 DA 000 DA 000 DA 000 DA' for the first four measures, '000 DA 000 DA 000 DA 000 DAHT' for the next four measures, and 'DAH' for the final measure. The 'DAH' is underlined and has a long horizontal line extending to the right, indicating a long note.

And the Jazz Gods Said,

Follow these commandments,
And you shall swing your buns off!