

THE SHUFFLE RHYTHM

Fast blues uses a rhythmic feel called the **shuffle**. The shuffle hits on the first and third beats of an eighth-note triplet, leaving the second beat alone.

First, practice dividing the beat into triplets. Count this example aloud; make sure you spread the word "tri-pu-let" to fit evenly in the space of one quarter note.

To create the shuffle rhythm, don't play the second beat of the triplet. This example is a "short" shuffle. The second beat is a rest, creating a nice tight feel. Damp the string by slightly lifting your fretting hand to play the rest.

This next example is a "long" shuffle. The first note is held through the second beat of the triplet; the third beat gets played the same. This gives the groove a nice open feel and works well when the drummer plays on the ride cymbal.

To simplify things, we will notate the shuffle rhythm with this symbol at the top of a song.

Shuffle (♩ = $\overset{3}{\text{♩}}$)

Long shuffles will look like regular eighth notes, short shuffles will have staccato marks over the first measure, and the short/long shuffle will have staccato and tenuto marks.

Shuffle (♩ = $\overset{3}{\text{♩}}$)

Long Shuffle

Short Shuffle

Short/Long Shuffle

Sweet Home Chicago by Robert Johnson 1911-1938

③
④
⑤
⑥

middle index
ring

0034	22 34	0034 22 34	0034 22 34	0034 22 34
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③
④
⑤
⑥

0034	22 34	0034 22 34	0034 22 34	0044
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③
④
⑤
⑥

index

2266	44 6 4	0034 22 34	0044 0011	2 22 222 2
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Repeat two more times

L 3 J
Triplet

③
④
⑤
⑥

Repeat sign

Triplet

2 2 0 0	22222 220	2 0034 34	0034 22 34
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③
④
⑤
⑥

0034	22 34	0044 0011	2266 44 6 4	0034 22 34
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③
④
⑤
⑥

Tie

7 ring
6 index
7 middle

E Dominant 7th chord

0044	0011	2 2 0 2 2 2	2 0 0
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Triplet