

EXPLORING ODD TIME

In any time signature the top number shows the number of beats to be played in each bar, and the bottom number represents the note to receive on count eg. 4/4 means there are 4 beats in the bar and a 1/4 note receives one count, or 7/8 means there are 7 beats in the bar and an 1/8 note receives one count. We will be looking at ways of changing a standard beat into something a little more 'odd'.

Take a standard 1/8 note rockbeat in 4/4 time

1.

1. Musical notation showing a standard 1/8 note rockbeat in 4/4 time. The staff shows a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, counts 1, 2, 3, and 4 are shown with plus signs between them. The notes are: quarter note on 1, quarter note on 2, quarter note on 3, and quarter note on 4. A repeat sign is at the end of the staff.

This same beat can be written as a bar of 8/8 time (counting 8 eighth notes per bar). Note that this doesn't change the sound of the beat it simply changes the count.

2.

2. Musical notation showing the same 1/8 note rockbeat in 8/8 time. The staff shows an 8/8 time signature. Above the staff, counts 1 through 8 are shown. The notes are: quarter note on 1, quarter note on 2, quarter note on 3, quarter note on 4, quarter note on 5, quarter note on 6, quarter note on 7, and quarter note on 8. A repeat sign is at the end of the staff.

By taking away one 1/8 note from the end of this beat we create a new time signature of 7/8 (7 eighth notes per bar)

3.

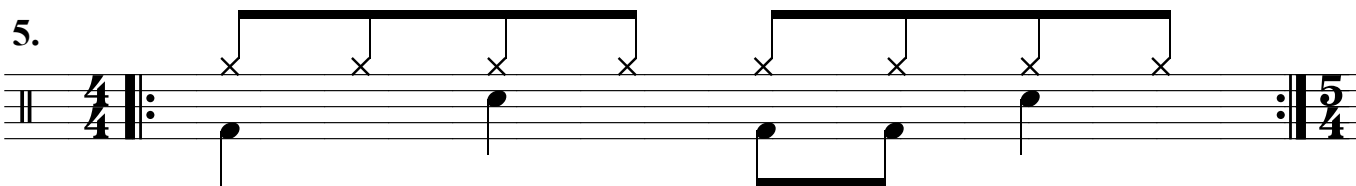
3. Musical notation showing the 1/8 note rockbeat in 7/8 time. The staff shows a 7/8 time signature. Above the staff, counts 1 through 7 are shown. The notes are: quarter note on 1, quarter note on 2, quarter note on 3, quarter note on 4, quarter note on 5, quarter note on 6, and quarter note on 7. A repeat sign is at the end of the staff.

Alternatively by adding one 1/8 note to our bar of 8/8 we create a new time signature of 9/8 (9 eighth notes per bar)

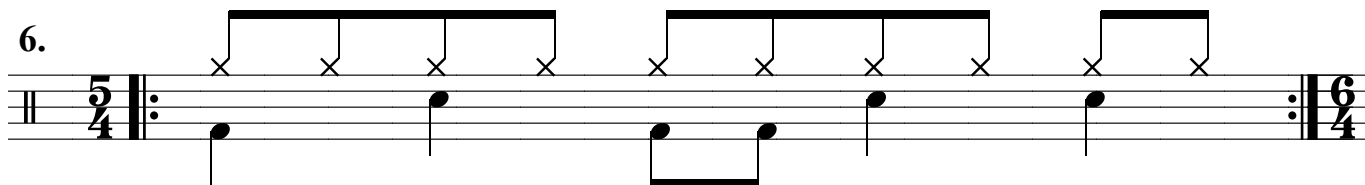
4.

4. Musical notation showing the 1/8 note rockbeat in 9/8 time. The staff shows a 9/8 time signature. Above the staff, counts 1 through 9 are shown. The notes are: quarter note on 1, quarter note on 2, quarter note on 3, quarter note on 4, quarter note on 5, quarter note on 6, quarter note on 7, quarter note on 8, and quarter note on 9. A repeat sign is at the end of the staff.

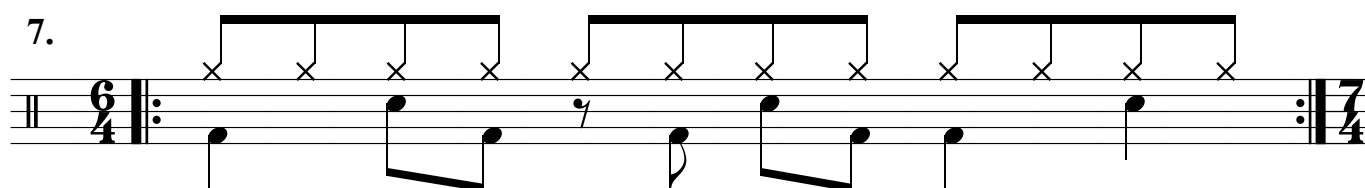
Any 4/4 rockbeat can be changed to an odd time by simply adding or removing notes. After trying the following examples go back to any previously learned 4/4 beats and try them in a different time signature.

5. 

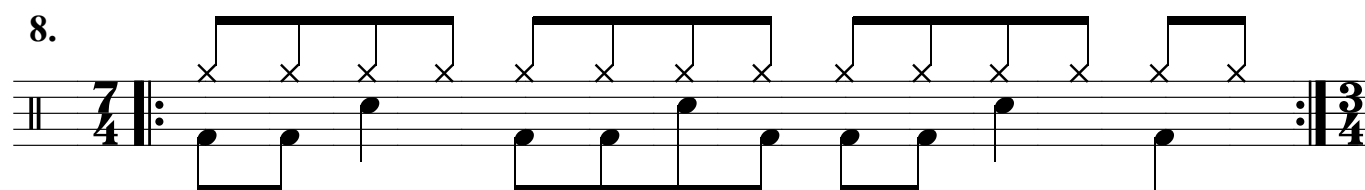
Create 5/4 time by adding one 1/4 note to 4/4 time

6. 

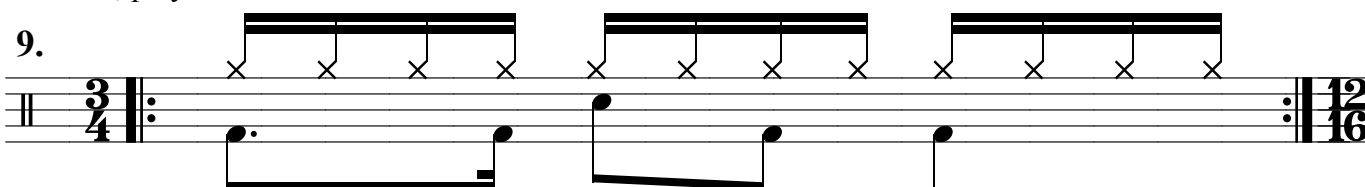
Create 6/4 time by adding two 1/4 notes to 4/4 time

7. 

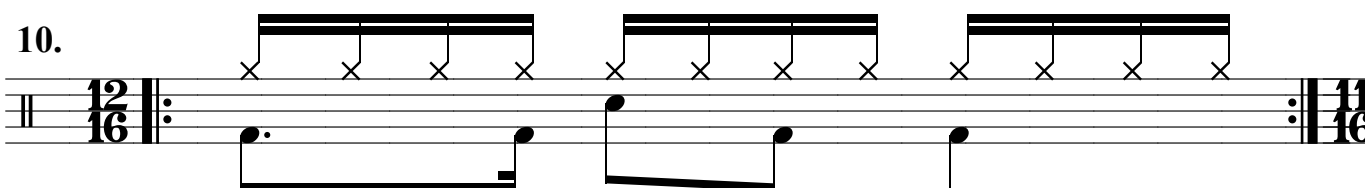
Create 7/4 time by adding three 1/4 notes to 4/4 time

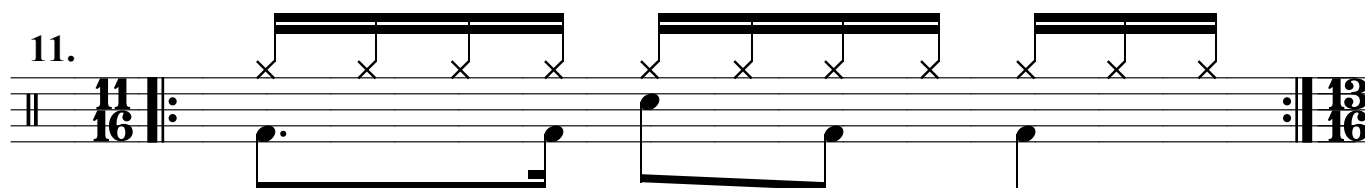
8. 

Now, play a 1/16 note beat in 3/4 time

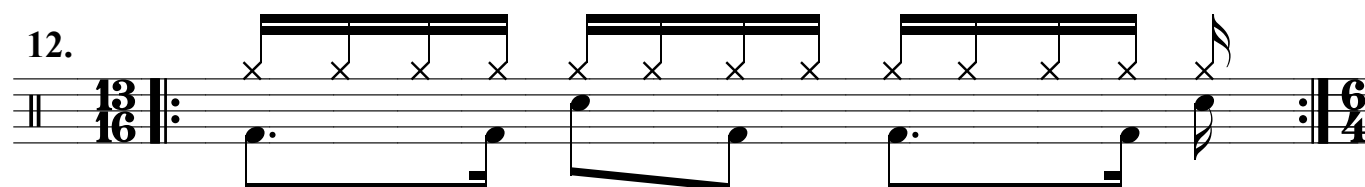
9. 

This same beat can also be played in 12/16 time, since there are twelve 1/16 notes in 3/4 time - count them!

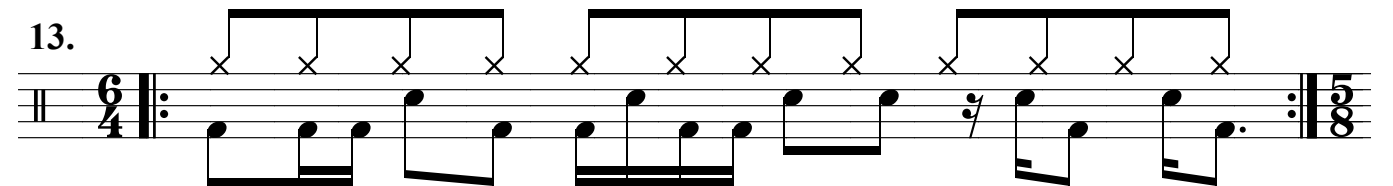
10. 


11. 

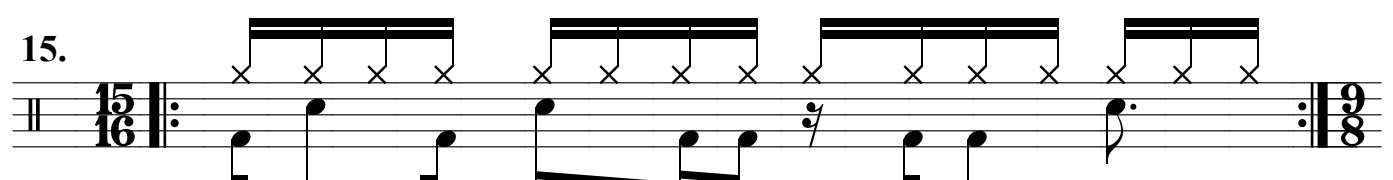
By adding one 1/16 note we create a time signature of 13/16

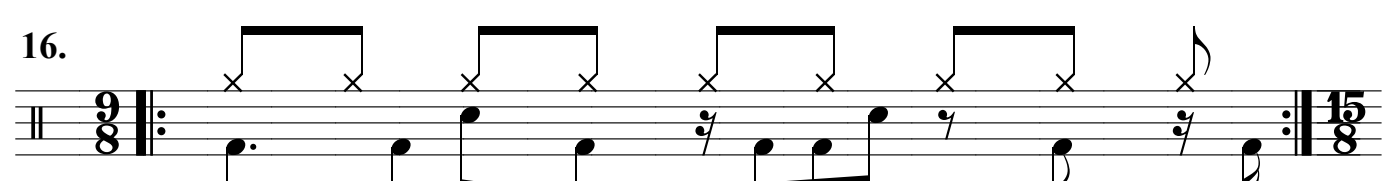
12. 


The following are beats written in various time signatures. Remember to count until the beat begins to feel natural, then play it by feel rather than count. The possibilities are endless for beats in odd time signatures. The best way to explore them further is to take some of your favourite beats, write them down and then add or subtract some notes to create a new time signature. These examples should give you some ideas.


13. 


14. 

15. 

16. 

17. 

18. 

19. 

20. 