



Using A Metronome

*Groove, timing and feel is arguably **the** most important part of bass playing. If your sense of rhythm and groove is strong, you have the tools most of your fellow musicians are looking for in a bass player. You will also have the power to make the listener tap their foot or nod their head. That's your aim! I would say if there was ONE thing to work on as a bass player it would be to work on your groove. Taking responsibility for your own timing and groove will reap huge rewards.*

An attempt at a few definitions

It is surprisingly tough to define what groove, timing and feel actually are, but I'll give it a go. One thing for sure is that there is a very close relationship between them and your sense of rhythm. They work together to create head-nodding moments. When there is no groove, you get no head nods and - instead - more pained expressions. Groove is everything! Regardless of genre.

Groove: A bass player can be 'in the groove' or 'in the pocket' (pocket and groove are interchangeable) and when they are, all the notes and rhythms are flowing effortlessly within the musical situation whether that is in a band, playing along to a metronome or just playing solo. A very solid technique allows you to achieve this.

Timing: This one's easier. Your sense of rhythm and timing is related to your ability to play music on the bass in time. You are completely in control if you can manipulate time and play across a range of tempos. Where you place your notes in relation to the beat is very important in nailing different genres. This 'beat placement' is a fascinating area of music and something you can work on with a metronome but, for now, just be aware of it but don't worry too much about it.

Feel: There are loads of examples of words that mean different things in music and here's one. It can mean the different styles and tempos that are encountered. In the last lessons we learnt about 8th notes etc. Well, a lot of rock music is played with an 'eighth note feel'. Sixteenth note funk playing by the likes of Jaco Pastorius and Rocco Prestia is a thing of great beauty. Blues and jazz are built on a 'swing'

feel. Knowing different feels and how to play them authentically will, without question, make you a better musician.

But a player's feel also relates to many things such as where they place the beat and their timing and touch. If you are told you play with great feel, that is the ultimate compliment. If you are recording to a click (the name for the metronome beats you hear in a studio) then these exercises will prepare you well.

I don't really think you can develop a great sense of groove, timing and feel without having excellent control over your instrument (that's where Fretboard Knowledge and Technique in particular come in).

7 Metronome Exercises Using 1 Groove

Here is the very simple groove we will use. You can use *any* bass line you fancy. Credit to Victor Wooten who is a big fan of these types of exercises...Now there's a guy with serious groove. These exercises will work on your internal clock making you less and less reliant on the metronome (or on a drummer for that matter).

The idea is that you set the metronome to click on all beats and then only 2 beats in the bar then only 1. The fewer clicks there are the more you have to use your own clock. Be prepared for a little frustration at first! Get through that and you'll soon be a groove monster.

The image shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time. The top staff is a bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The first measure contains a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. The second measure contains a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows the fretboard with fingerings: 0, 0, 0 for the first measure and 3, 3, 3 for the second measure.

All examples are played in the video lesson so if you need to know how to do any of this, watch the video.

Aim: Simply to play in time with ease! It looks and sounds easy but... well, you'll find out. So you set the metronome (www.metronomeonline.com or a physical one or one on your phone or DAW) to a comfortable tempo and half that speed when you go to 2 beats in a bar, then half *that* speed when you go to 1 beat in the bar e.g.

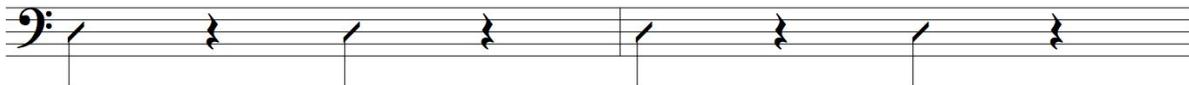
	Fast	Moderate	Slow (difficult!!)
Exercise 1	120 BPM	100 BPM	80 BPM
Exercise 2 and 3	60 BPM	50 BPM	40 BPM
Exercise 4,5,6 and 7	30 BPM	25 BPM	20 BPM

BPM = Beats Per Minute

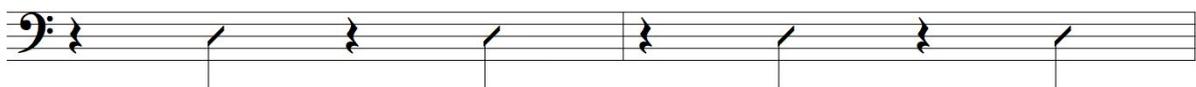
- Exercise 1 - Metronome on beats 1 2 3 and 4



- Exercise 2 - Metronome on beats 1 and 3



- Exercise 3 - Metronome on 2 and 4



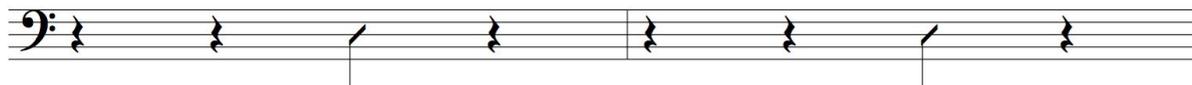
- Exercise 4 - Metronome on beat 1



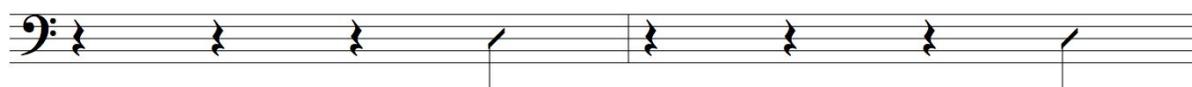
- Exercise 5 - Metronome on 2



- Exercise 6 - Metronome on 3



- Exercise 7 - Metronome on beat 4



If you are new to a metronome you will probably hate it for a while. It is rarely easy to immediately play in time to a click so be patient and consistent with your practice. It's almost like meditation. When you crack it you will have one of the most important skills a bass player can possibly have: the ability to play a groove bang in time.