

# Finding the 8-Count

## Swing Dance Basics ♦ TC Swing

**SONG STRUCTURE** When you're first learning Lindy Hop, sometimes it's hard to know when to start dancing to match the music. You don't need formal music training to recognize characteristics of the music. Your ears have been naturally training throughout your life just by listening to music, whether actively or in the background.

Music is organized, which is why it sounds good when the musicians are all playing together.

Most jazz and blues tunes are organized like a book, with an introduction at the beginning, the majority of the information in the middle, and some kind of closing at the end.

### BOOK

Introduction  
Chapter  
Chapter  
Chapter  
Epilog

### SONG

Introduction  
Chorus  
Chorus  
Chorus  
Finale/Outro

In a book, each chapter is made up of paragraphs, and each paragraph is made up of sentences. The choruses of a song are like the chapters of a book; phrases are like paragraphs; and 8-counts are like sentences. Some songs have a few extra 8-counts to tie phrases or choruses together, which is called a bridge.

### BOOK

Chapter	Paragraph	Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
	Paragraph	Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
	Paragraph	Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
	Paragraph	Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence
		Sentence

### JAZZ TUNE

32 bar chorus

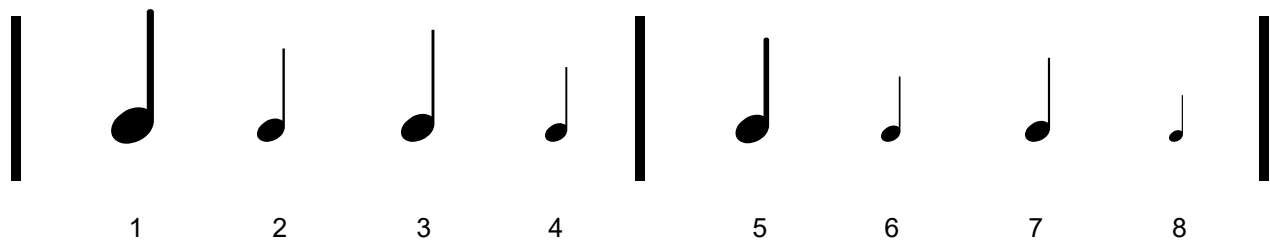
Chorus	Phrase	8-Count	A	I
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
	Phrase	8-Count	A	I
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
	Phrase	8-Count	B	V
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
	Phrase	8-Count	A	I
		8-Count		
		8-Count		
		8-Count		

### BLUES TUNE

12 bar chorus

Chorus/Phrase	8-Count	I
Chorus/Phrase	8-Count	I
Chorus/Phrase	8-Count	IV
Chorus/Phrase	8-Count	I
Chorus/Phrase	8-Count	V / IV
Chorus/Phrase	8-Count	I

**FINDING THE 8-COUNT** The *ground rhythm* is the steady, consistent underlying beat maintained by the rhythm section (piano, bass, drums) that keeps the musicians on track, regardless of other rhythms being played. Beats are organized in groups of four (called *measures* or *bars*), with the first beat (the down-beat) having the most emphasis, signaling the start of the measure. The emphasis fluctuates down to the final beat, which has the least emphasis.



The 8-count is formed by two measures run together, the second having slightly less emphasis than the first. Within each phrase the first 8-count has more emphasis than the others, indicating the beginning to that section. Likewise the first 8-count in a chorus has greater emphasis, providing a definitive start to the section. You'll often hear a musical pick-up on the last few notes before the downbeat to introduce the new section, like the wind-up before the pitch.

Train your ears to recognize elements of the music by choosing a few of your favorite swing tunes and listen critically to them over and over, identifying the 8-counts, phrases, choruses, intros, outros, and bridges. You can do this when you're driving around in the car, doing the dishes, or any time that you usually have music playing in the background.