Subdividing means splitting each beat evenly. Counting them in your head is the secret metronome to steady time.

Common subdivisions

Eighths divide each beat in half, counted 1 and 2 and. Triplets fit three notes into a beat, counted 1 trip-let. Sixteenths split it in four: 1 e and a.

Swing feel

Swing plays the beat long-short, using the first and last notes of a triplet. It is the basis of jazz and blues shuffles.

Why subdivide at slow tempos

At 50 BPM there is over a second between clicks, and most players rush to fill the gap. Hearing the subdivisions keeps every note in place.

Try this exercise

Keep the tempo fixed and switch from one to two, three and four metronome notes per beat, and back again. It trains you to feel the beat rather than the notes.