

PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY

DRUMSET TRAINING

Special thanks and recognition to the drum set training resource subcommittee for your expertise and efforts to create this learning resource for students and teachers: Kevin Lehman, Nick Costa, Sean J. Kennedy, Rich Stitzel and Mike Packer.

Drum Set Setup (excerpt from the “Drum Channel Method” by Mike Packer – Hudson Music Publications)

When considering the positioning of drums, remember this key principle: the drums set up to you, you don't set up to the drums. To understand proper placement, let's start by discussing the seat, often referred to as the throne.

Throne Positioning, Posture and Balance:

As drummers, our main goal is to execute our ideas instantly. To achieve this, we need to ensure that we can always move our limbs independently without any restrictions. This requires a balanced and comfortable posture, which starts with the correct height of the throne.

Adjust the throne so your thighs are angled slightly downward; they should never be higher than parallel to the ground. Having them higher can make you lean backward, putting extra pressure on your lower back and affecting your balance. Make sure your back is comfortably straight, and your shoulders are relaxed. As you settle into the throne, your weight should be entirely supported by the seat.



Bass Drum and Hi-Hat Positioning:

It is a common misconception that the bass drum and hi-hat should be positioned at equal distances from the player. However, their placement differs. When playing the bass drum, the goal is to generate and control the rebound of the beater. Position yourself so that your thigh is just behind the footboard. Sitting too close forces your foot and ankle into a stressful position, limiting the beater's rebound. Conversely, sitting too far back reduces your control over the beater. Ideally, the tip of your foot should rest approximately three-quarters of the way up the footboard—this "sweet spot" maximizes rebound and control without the tip of the foot leaving the pedal. For the hi-hat, position your thigh directly over the footboard. The added weight aids in keeping the cymbals closed while allowing the stand to be closer to you, reducing the need to reach when playing with your hands.

Snare Drum:

When seated on the throne with your feet on the pedals, the snare drum should rest between your legs. You can position the drum flat or tilt it slightly towards you. The key is to ensure that you can reach any part of the drum and access any sound without striking your legs.

Toms and Cymbals:

Now it's time to position the toms and cymbals. Generally, they should be arranged so that they are easy to reach without requiring excessive effort or unnecessary movement. As you progress, you should concentrate on using the correct body motions to enhance sound quality, power, and speed while minimizing unnecessary motion and energy.



Drum Tuning

Here are several videos that are excellent resources on how to tune your drum set.

How to tune a snare drum	Presented by PAS Drum Set Committee member Nick Costa
How to tune toms	Presented by PAS Drum Set Committee member Nick Costa
How to tune and muffle bass/kick drum with ported head	Presented by PAS Drum Set Committee member Nick Costa
How to tune and muffle bass/kick drum with unported head	Presented by PAS Drum Set Committee member Nick Costa

Hand Technique (By PAS drum set committee member Nick Costa)

Technique is important to play any instrument proficiently and effectively. Without proper technique, your ability to play certain pieces on your instrument will be limited. Playing the drums is particularly demanding, not only because it matches the challenges of other instruments, but also due to its highly physical nature. Like in sports, proper technique is essential for executing efficiently and preventing physical injury. *Illustration by Steven Noble*

So, how do you avoid this? That's simple - by using your body's natural mechanics and movements combined with physics to your advantage! In this section, we'll explore drum technique to ensure you're playing at your optimal ability with maximum efficiency. Before diving into technique, let's first discuss the two most common grips: Traditional and Matched grip.

Traditional Grip - Used during the Revolutionary Period since drums were carried across the body during battle. This caused the drum to sit at an angle, making it difficult to play in "matched position"



- Right hand is ABOVE the stick, which is held primarily between the thumb and index fingers. The rest of the fingers are wrapped around the stick, and the back of the hand is completely flat. Player moves their wrist up and down to play a drum stroke.
- Left hand is UNDER the stick, which is held in place by resting in the crevice between the thumb and index finger and on the tip of the ring finger.
- Player turns their wrist side to side to play a drum stroke.

Matched Grip - Most common grip today due to its efficiency and ability to develop quicker than traditional grip.



Both Right and Left hand are ABOVE the stick, which is held primarily between thumb and index fingers. The remaining fingers are wrapped around the stick, allowing it to move freely and rebound back after striking a drum. This is also known as *American Match Grip*.

After reading the two brief descriptions above, which grip sounds easier? If you said matched grip, you're correct! Matched grip allows you to hold the stick the same way with both hands, while letting the stick move freely and rebound back after striking a drum. This allows you to use your body's natural motion and physics in the same way with both your right and left hand.

Although it is advised to learn both grips, you should focus on matched grip since it is quicker and easier to develop. This is very important for you and your students since they will receive the "instant gratification" they're seeking. This will allow them to self-motivate, which is key to learning any instrument.

HOW TO HOLD THE STICK - (AMERICAN) MATCHED GRIP

1. Hold the stick primarily between the thumb and index fingers.



2. Place the stick on first digit (1st crease down from the nail) and hold in place with thumb.



3. Hold the stick **loosely**, as if the thumb and finger are a door hinge and the stick is the door.

Wrap the rest of your fingers loosely around the stick, creating a pocket between your fingers and the palm of your hand. This will make sure your stick moves upwards and downwards.



Glossary of Terms

Fundamental Terms:

1. **Drum Kit/Drum Set:** The complete set of drums and cymbals that a drummer uses.
2. **Snare Drum:** The drum with a sharp, crisp sound, usually placed in the center of the drum kit.
3. **Bass Drum/Kick Drum:** The largest drum in the kit, played with a foot pedal.
4. **Hi-Hat:** Two cymbals mounted on a stand, controlled by a foot pedal. Often played with sticks or by closing with the foot.
5. **Tom-Toms:** Drums of various sizes mounted on the drum kit or placed on the floor, used for fills.
6. **Cymbals:** Metal plates that produce sound when struck. Common types include the ride, crash, and hi-hat cymbals.
7. **Ride Cymbal:** A larger cymbal used for steady rhythms and patterns.

8. **Crash Cymbal:** A cymbal used for accents, often producing a loud, crashing sound.
9. **Sticks:** The wooden implements used to strike the drums and cymbals.
10. **Foot Pedal:** A pedal used to play the bass drum or hi-hat.
11. **Beat:** The basic unit of time in music, typically what the drummer plays to keep time.
12. **Metronome:** A device that produces a steady beat to help drummers keep time.
13. **Tempo:** The speed of the beat, often measured in beats per minute (BPM).

Intermediate Terms:

1. **Grip:** The way you hold the drumsticks. Common grips include traditional grip and matched grip.
2. **Rimshot:** A technique where the stick strikes both the drumhead and the rim of the snare drum simultaneously.
3. **Fill:** A short drum pattern used to transition between sections of a song.
4. **Groove:** A repetitive rhythm pattern that forms the foundation of the song.
5. **Accent:** Emphasizing a specific note or beat to create a stronger sound.
6. **Rudiments:** Basic patterns or exercises that are the building blocks of drumming technique.
7. **Dynamics:** The volume of the sound being played, from soft (piano) to loud (forte).
8. **Pocket:** Locking in with the other musicians, specifically the bass player that sets the tone of the song.

Coordination/Independence Exercises (Excerpts from the “Playing Techniques Book Series” by Ralph Humphrey & Joe Porcaro, Hudson Music Publications)

Having good coordination and limb independence is critical for drum set players. Independence allows drummers to perform multiple ideas at once, such as playing a steady rhythm with one hand while improvising with the other. Coordination is crucial for achieving precision and fluidity, ensuring that each limb works in harmony to produce a cohesive sound. Together, independence and coordination form the foundation of dynamic and versatile drumming, allowing drummers to express their ideas with confidence and creativity.

The following are excellent exercises to develop independence and coordination.

Foundational Level Coordination & Independence exercises:

Practice the 2-bar phrases. Remember to focus on one hand at a time. Each phrase should be repeated until you are aware that the required motions are becoming uniform, and the rhythms and accents are accurate and consistent. Gauge your progress by writing down metronome markings each time you practice.

1 $\frac{4}{4}$ R R - - e t c. | |

2 $\frac{4}{4}$ R R - - e t c. | |

3 $\frac{4}{4}$ R R - - e t c. | |

4 $\frac{4}{4}$ R R - - e t c. | |

5 $\frac{12}{8}$ R R R - - - e t c. | |

6 $\frac{12}{8}$ R R R - - - e t c. | |

Apply the foot examples below to the hand phrases above, which focuses on basic duple note and beat values and triple note and beat values. There will be several ways to combine the hand and foot patterns. You should do as many as is necessary to establish good coordination and overall body balance. Again, a metronome is good to gauge progress and to check your timekeeping and phrasing abilities.

The image displays eight musical staves, numbered 1 through 8, each representing a different foot pattern for coordination exercises. Each staff begins with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#).
Staff 1: Labeled '1' and '4/4'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 2: Labeled '2'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 3: Labeled '3' and '4/4'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 4: Labeled '4'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 5: Labeled '5' and '12/8'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 6: Labeled '6'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 7: Labeled '7' and '12/8'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.
Staff 8: Labeled '8'. It shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and finally a quarter note. The pattern is repeated.

Practice the following exercises that begin to develop 'tap' strokes. They must stay low to the head and be played at a soft dynamic. Keep the shoulders relaxed and the arms comfortably hanging at each side of the body. The exercises also include the Moeller 'prep' motion for accents. The timing of this motion will improve as the body recognizes the motion and starts to retain muscle memory. You will notice that the motion needs to be quick, which reduces the amount of exaggeration that is generally made when practicing at slower tempos. Once these exercises are comfortable, apply the foot patterns underneath them to further develop coordination and independence.

The exercises are written in 4/4 time and use the following notation: $\wedge$ for accents, $>$ for taps, and P for pedals. Exercises 1-4 are in two measures each, while 5-7 are in one measure each.

Exercise 1: $\wedge$ T T T T T P | $\wedge$ T T T T T P
 R L L L L L L R R R R R

Exercise 2: $\wedge >$ T T T P | $\wedge >$ T T T P
 R R L L L L L L R R R R

Exercise 3: $\wedge >>$ T T P | $\wedge >>$ T T P
 R R R L L L L L L R R R

Exercise 4: $\wedge P \wedge$ T T P | $\wedge P \wedge$ T T P
 R R R R R L L L L L R

Exercise 5: $\wedge P \wedge$ T T P $\wedge P \wedge$ T T P
 R R R R L L L L L L L R R R R

Exercise 6: $\wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P$
 R R R L L L L R R R R L L L L R

Exercise 7: $\wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P \wedge P$
 R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R

Intermediate Level Coordination & Independence exercises:

These exercises are intended to continue developing coordination and independence. Once the phrases have been played on the snare drum, begin to voice the accent notes to the other drum set instruments. In addition, lead with the left hand. Once they become comfortable, add the foot patterns below to further develop Control, not speed, is the goal.



Foot patterns:



Fill Development (By PAS drum set committee member Nick Costa)

When playing the drum set, drum fills are used to transition from one section to another, or to embellish part of a groove all while helping the music move forward. Below are a few common rhythms that can help you develop your drum-fill vocabulary.

Start by playing the rhythm on one voice of the drum set to get familiar with it, then put it into context by transitioning from a groove to the fill, then back to the groove. Once you can easily transition from between them, orchestrate the rhythm(s) around the drum set using different voices (drums), sticking patterns, accents, dynamics, diddles, or split between your hands and feet.

Try the following fill variations by playing a standard 8th note groove for 3.5 measures, then the fill. Transition back to the groove and repeat. Giving yourself 3.5 measures of groove gives you the ability to mentally reset before trying again. This will help develop the procedural pattern (muscle memory) to add the various fills into your vocabulary efficiently. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Fill 1



Fill 2



Fill 3



Fill 4



Fill 5**Fill 6****Fill 7****Fill 8****Grooves/Styles**

The following are essential grooves that all drummers should know. The video demonstrations of each style included is performed by PAS Drum Set Committee members Kevin Lehman and Rich Stitzel. The grooves are demonstrated at slow tempos first for understanding and then and faster, more performance related tempos.

Songo 2:3 (Afro-Cuban)

The basic groove has a half-time feel, with beats one and three played on the cowbell, and the bass drum playing on the "and" of two and four. The left hand is free to orchestrate around the toms to emulate the conga patterns played in a traditional Latin music rhythm section.



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Mambo (Afro-Cuban)

The Mambo (Afro-Cuban) drum groove is a rhythmically intricate pattern that serves as the foundation for the mambo style, a vibrant genre of Cuban dance music. This groove is characterized by its complex rhythms and dynamic interplay and orchestrations between various percussion instruments, which collectively create a compelling, danceable groove.



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Bossa Nova (Brazilian)

The bossa nova drum groove is a Brazilian music style that's based on eighth notes and is often played at a slower tempo. The groove is characterized by a standard "bossa nova" clave pattern, which is played in the left hand. The clave pattern is like the Afro-Cuban clave, but it's open to interpretation and variation.



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Samba Tamborim (Brazilian)

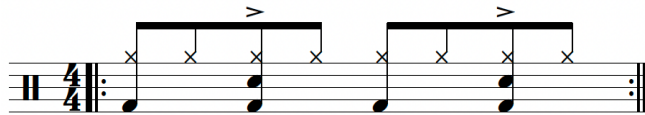
In the Samba groove presented, the bass drum and hi-hat maintain the classic ostinato pattern, providing a steady rhythmic base. Meanwhile, the right hand performs 16th notes, and the left hand plays the tamborim pattern, adding authenticity to the groove.



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Rock – Four on the floor

The basic Rock "Four on the Floor" drum groove is a foundational groove commonly used in rock and pop music. It is characterized by its steady and driving feel, anchored by a consistent bass drum pattern. In this groove, the bass drum plays on all four beats of the measure (1, 2, 3, and 4), creating a solid pulse. The snare drum typically accents beats 2 and 4, providing a backbeat that complements the bass drum's continuous pulse. Meanwhile, the hi-hat or ride cymbal often plays a series of eighth notes, maintaining a steady rhythm that ties the groove together.



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Rock – The Money Beat

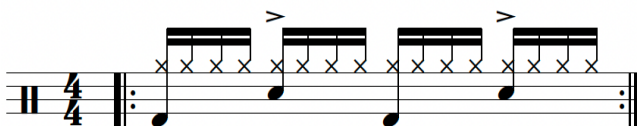
The basic Rock "Money Beat" is a classic drum groove that serves as the backbone for many rock and pop songs. It is known for its simplicity and effectiveness in driving a song forward, providing a solid rhythmic foundation. In this groove, the bass drum is played on beats 1, the "and" of 2, and 3 of a 4/4 measure, creating a steady pulse. The snare drum accents beats 2 and 4, delivering a consistent backbeat that serves as a key element in popular music. Meanwhile, the hi-hat or ride cymbal typically plays a continuous pattern of eighth notes, offering a steady rhythm that binds the groove together.



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16th Note Rock/Funk

In this foundational example of a funk groove, the hi-hat plays a continuous stream of 16th notes, providing a persistent and driving texture. The bass drum and snare form the foundation of the groove: the bass drum typically accents beats 1 and 3, while the snare hits emphasize beats 2 and 4, creating a strong backbeat essential for rock and funk music. As you become comfortable playing it, add ghost notes on the snare drum to add musicality to the groove.



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Texas Shuffle

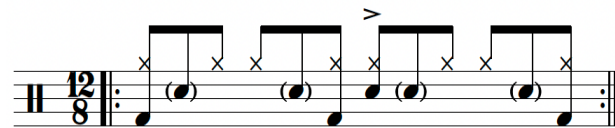
In the Texas Shuffle, the foundation is built on a steady four on the floor played by the bass drum. The left-hand plays all the 8th notes in the bar, placing accents on beats 2 and 4 and all the remaining notes are soft (ghosted). The right hand plays the jazz ride cymbal pattern on the ride cymbal. The combination of the swinging cymbal pattern, solid backbeats and ghost notes, and solid bass drum creates the pulsating rhythm that defines the Texas Shuffle.



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Half-Time Shuffle

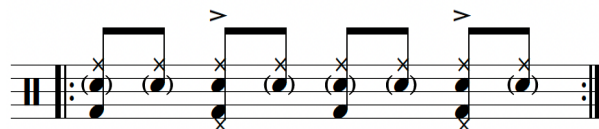
The Half-Time Shuffle is a distinctive and laid-back drum groove that is widely used in various music genres, especially in blues, rock, and funk. This groove combines elements of traditional shuffle rhythms with a half-time feel, creating a unique sense of swing and a relaxed groove. In this example, the hi-hat plays the first and third triplets of each beat. The left-hand plays ghost notes and a big accent on beat 3, giving the groove its half time feel. The bass drum play a common syncopated rhythm that is typical for the style.



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Chicago Shuffle

The Chicago Shuffle is an essential groove in the blues genre, characterized by its swinging ride cymbal pattern, strong backbeats, and solid foundation on the bass drum. What makes the Chicago Shuffle different from the Texas Shuffle is the ride cymbal pattern. In the Chicago Shuffle, the ride cymbal plays on all the 8th notes in the bar. The left hand plays all the 8th notes on the snare drum as well and accents the backbeat on beats 2 and 4. The bass drum plays four on the floor and the hi-hat reinforces the backbeat by playing on beats 2 and 4.

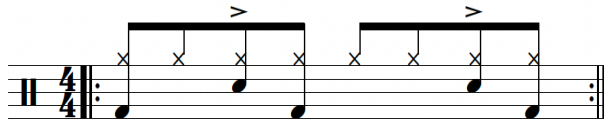


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Specialty Shuffles:

Country (Pop) Shuffle

The Country (Pop) Shuffle combines the swinging feel of a shuffle with the straightforward beat of pop music. It's written below as straight 8th notes but should be played swung.



Pop Shuffle

This groove is like the Country Shuffle above. The only difference is the change in the bass drum pattern.



Purdie Shuffle

The Bernard Purdie Shuffle is a renowned drum groove created by legendary drummer Bernard Purdie. Known for its complexity and groove, this shuffle has become a staple in various musical genres, particularly in R&B, jazz, and funk. The Purdie Shuffle combines elements of a half-time shuffle with intricate ghost notes on the snare drum, creating a feel that is both laid-back and driving.



Porcaro (Rosanna) Shuffle

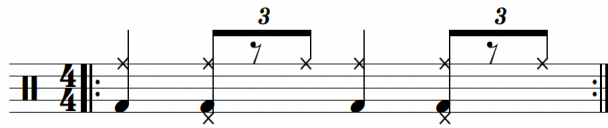
The Jeff Porcaro "Rosanna" shuffle is an iconic drum groove that combines elements of a half-time shuffle with intricate ghost notes and syncopated hi-hat rhythms. Made famous by Jeff Porcaro in Toto's song "Rosanna," this groove is renowned for its complexity and feel, seamlessly blending rock, pop, and jazz influences.



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Swing (Spang a Lang)

The Swing, often referred to as the "Spang-a-Lang" drum groove, is a foundational rhythm in jazz drumming, known for its swing feel and subtle complexity. This groove is key to creating the rhythmic structure and dynamic feel characteristic of swing music, providing a rhythmic foundation that is both supportive and driving.



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Jazz Waltz (Gravy Waltz)

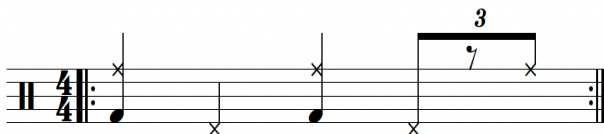
The Jazz Waltz, exemplified by the groove known as "Gravy Waltz," is a unique and swinging rhythm often used in jazz music. Unlike the standard 4/4 time signature common in jazz, the Jazz Waltz is played in 3/4 time, providing a distinct feel that's both interesting and flowing.



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Swing in "2" Feel

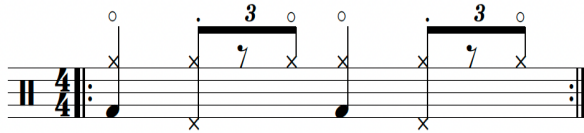
The Swing in "2" feel is a laid-back jazz groove that creates a relaxed, flowing rhythm, often used in ballads or pieces where a smooth, understated groove is needed. This groove emphasizes playing the time in a two-beat feel rather than the more common four-beat swing, giving the music an open, spacious quality that can feel almost floating.



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Swing in "2" Feel (Hi-Hat)

The Swing in "2" feel, particularly when focused on the hi-hat, is a gentle and understated drum groove commonly used in jazz to create a spacious and relaxed rhythmic foundation. This style emphasizes a two-beat pattern rather than the typical four beats found in standard swing and is typically played at soft dynamics, giving the music an open, less dense character that allows melodies and harmonies to breathe.



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Spotify Playlists

The following QR codes lead to curated playlists of the listed styles/genres. They are intended to be an introductory example of each style and be a great springboard for further research and listening.

 Songo	 Halftime Shuffles	 Ride Beat 2 Feel
 Bossa Nova	 Samba	 Mambo
 Rock/Funk	 Money Beat	 Cha Cha

		
16th Note Rock Funk	Shuffle Variations	Brushes in 4 and 2
		
Jazz Ride	Jazz Waltz	