

A Pedagogical Approach for Rudiments

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The Concept

The manner and order of which rudiments are often taught to students does not always represent the most pedagogically sound method. I believe that rudiments should be taught in an order based on elements of music and percussion that are reflected in the rudiments themselves. As a result, we can create through the teaching of rudiments a cumulative course of instruction based on sound musical and percussive principals.

The Six Stroke Method and Rudiments

The Six Stroke Method represents the most basic and fundamental elements of percussion technique. When playing the rudiments the performer will utilize a number of these techniques in combination to create the desired outcome. For instance: the paradiddle is performed by use of the accent/tap and controlled bounce stroke combined. The flam: accent/tap and staccato. By using the Six Stroke Method as a teaching tool, the rudiments are given a tangible context that can be applied and ultimately reproduced.

The Order of Instruction

The following order of instruction is provided as a suggestion based on pedagogical concepts and a cumulative approach to the rudiments. Essentially, as the rudiments are introduced they should build both musically and technically on those already learned.

Group 1- Diddle Rudiments

Diddles should be taught first since they represent rudiments where the primary note is not embellished by a grace note or double stroke. It also makes pedagogical sense to teach all the diddle rudiments at the same time since they require the same techniques to perform. The *single stroke roll*, *single stroke seven*, and *single stroke four* should be introduced later at a time when the students can perform them at a speed that is realistic in a performance situation. This idea should be applied to the diddle rudiments as well. For example, many books teach the paradiddle early on, notating it as slow quarter notes. This is not realistic, as a competent percussionist would not use a paradiddle sticking in a situation where there are four slow quarter notes. Therefore, this is teaching the rudiment out of context.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Accent the first note of each paradiddle.
2. Keep the unaccented beats low- 1-3 inches. This is important for consistency and ultimately speed.
3. Listen closely to the unaccented notes; these need to be even and consistent. If they are consistent, then the accents will be correctly placed.

Group 2- Flam and Drag

The single flam and single drag should be next. These two rudiments are similar in execution; therefore they work well as a pair. Have the student begin by holding the right stick in the upright position while keeping the left stick in set position about 1 inch above the head, and vice versa when playing a left hand flam or drag. This is what a flam, and drag “looks like.” Have the students practice flams and drags in this manner, making the motion extreme so they develop large muscle memory.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Keep the grace notes low- THIS IS CRITICAL.
2. Grace notes are there to embellish the primary note, so especially with drags keeps the grace notes as close to the primary note as possible.
3. Practice drags both open and closed (rudimental and concert style).

Group 3- Rolls

Most instruction methods introduce the five-stroke roll first. Why? Because it is the shortest? Most likely that is the answer. However, that does not make sense because the five-stroke is not the easiest roll to execute. Instead of teaching rolls in order of length, teach them based on what beat they end on. Therefore, we teach the nine-stroke and seventeen-stroke first since they end on strong beats. Then the nine and thirteen-stroke rolls as they end on the “ands,” the next strongest beat. Then the seven, eleven, and fifteen-stroke rolls as they end on the “E’s and A’s” of the beat. Lastly, teach the six and ten-stroke rolls as they are the only two accent rolls. Now there is a pedagogically based method and reasoning to roll order and instruction. Teach buzz rolls first since a young student’s hands will not be developed enough to successfully perform open rolls right away.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Have students play the “skeleton” of the roll first. For example, if it is a nine-stroke roll, have the student play 1e+a 2 without buzzes or diddles so they understand how many hand motions go into the roll. Once this is achieved, have the students alternate between skeleton and roll. This also helps with memorization.
2. Turn the wrists. Rolls will sound crushed if the wrists lock up and too much of the motion is from the arm and elbow.
3. Play the accents.
4. Focus on consistency of the rhythm, and the sound quality of the diddles.

Group 4- Flam Accent, Flam Tap, Flam Paradiddle, Single Flammed Mill

These flam rudiments build on the concepts introduced with the flam earlier. These rudiments continue to use the accent/tap stroke with the addition of the multiple bounce stroke.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Keep the grace notes low.

2. Keep all unaccented notes low.
3. Play the accents.
4. Maintain the flam quality and consistency developed with the single flam.

Group 5- Single Drag, Double Drag Tap, Lesson 25, Single Dragadiddle

These drag rudiments build on the ideas of the drag. As with the more advance flam rudiments, the performer adds more stroke types into the mix- controlled bounce, multiple bounce, and up-stroke.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Keep the grace notes low.
2. Keep the grace notes as close to the primary note as possible.
3. Play the accents.
4. Practice both open and closed drags.

Group 6- Pataflafla, Swiss Army Triplet, Flam Drag

These flam rudiments are the most challenging without the addition of the upstroke.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Keep the grace notes low.
2. Play the accents.
3. Stay relaxed, especially with these rudiments.
4. Maintain the flam quality and consistency developed with the single flam.

Group 7- Drag Paradiddle 1 & 2, Single, Double, Triple Ratamacue

These rudiments are similar in execution. They use the same stroke types already in use from group 5.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Keep the grace notes low.
2. Keep the grace notes as close to the primary note as possible.
3. Play the accents.
4. Practice both open and closed drags.

Group 8- Flamacue, Flam Paradiddlediddle, Inverted Flam-Tap

This group of flam rudiments uses the same strokes from earlier flam groups with the addition of the up-stroke.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Keep the grace notes low.
2. Keep all unaccented notes low.
3. Play the accents.
4. Maintain the flam quality and consistency developed with the single flam.

