

# The Midwest Clinic

## Have No Fear!! A Band Director's Guide to Marching Percussion

Friday December 21, 2007  
Clinic Time: 8:30 - 9:30 AM  
Hilton Chicago- Williford Room



Presented by

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# Snare Drum Fundamentals

By Bret Kuhn

## Matched Grip

- 1) The Fulcrum is between the thumb and the first and second joint of the index finger.
- 2) Gently wrap ALL fingers around the stick.
- 3) Palms face the ground.



## Left Hand Traditional Grip

- 1) Left hand is in a position to shake hands.
- 2) Fulcrum is between the index finger and thumb, with the stick resting at the base of the thumb and index finger. The thumb should contact the index finger at the first joint.
- 3) The stick will then rest on the last joint of the fourth finger. The pinky finger underneath the fourth finger and the middle finger rests against the stick.
- 4) Rotate your wrist as if turning a door knob. The left arm is a rotating cylinder.



## Proper Body Position

- 1) Stand a few feet away from the drum
- 2) Bend your arms at the elbows, relax your shoulders and put your beads together.
- 3) Slowly walk towards the drum until the beads are in the center of the head.
- 4) Make sure the sticks are parallel to the drum head, 1" above the rim.

## The 3 Muscle Groups in Drumming

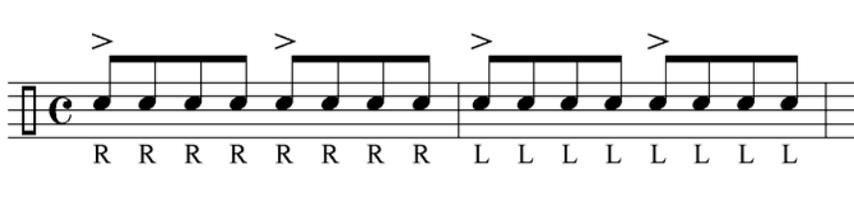
- 1) Fingers
- 2) Wrists
- 3) Arms

# Stroke Fundamentals

**Legato-stroke** - *When the stick rebounds back to where it began.* Use the rebound and energy offered by the drum. Don't inhibit the stroke. You should see one smooth arc with the bead appearing only at the top of the stroke.

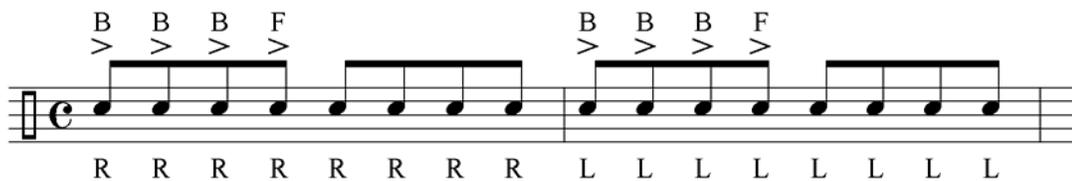


**Down-stroke** - *When the stick ends lower than where it began.* Utilize your back two fingers to freeze the stick as they have the most leverage over the tip. Stay relaxed and don't add more velocity or tension than you had on the Legato stroke. Remember the finger control for freezing the stick happens **AFTER** you strike the drum.



**Legato/Down stroke** - With the next exercise, you can compare the legato stroke to the down stroke. The fourth note starts exactly like the first three, but ends down. Don't put more force on the last accented note.

**B = Bounce**    **F = Freeze** - To stop the rebound.



**Legato Up-Stroke** - Traditionally defined as the lifting of the stick to re-attack the drum. An example would be lifting the left hand during the double right in the Single Paradiddle.

Musical notation for Legato Up-Stroke exercise. The notation is on a single staff with a common time signature (C). It consists of four measures. Above the first two notes of each measure is a bracket with an accent (>) and the label 'LH Up'. Above the next two notes of each measure is a bracket with an accent (>) and the label 'RH Up'. Below the staff, the drum strokes are indicated by letters: R L R R L R L L, R L R R L R L L.

**Staccato Up-stroke** - For example, a staccato up-stroke would be used in the Flamacue or the Inverted Flam Tap. After playing a low tap, quickly lift the stick and immediately re-attack the drum. It is a more muscular technique.

Musical notation for Flamacue and Inverted Flam Taps. The notation is on a single staff with a common time signature (C). It is divided into two sections. The first section, labeled 'Flamacue', has four measures with notes grouped by brackets and accents (>). The second section, labeled 'Inverted Flam Taps', has four measures with notes grouped by brackets and accents (>). Below the staff, the drum strokes are indicated by letters: R L R L R L R L, R L L R R L L R.

**Flamacue** - single hand exercise.

Musical notation for Flamacue single hand exercise. The notation is on a single staff with a common time signature (C). It consists of eight measures. The first four measures have notes grouped by brackets and accents (>). The last four measures have notes grouped by brackets and accents (>). Below the staff, the drum strokes are indicated by letters: R R R R R R R R, L L L L L L L L.

**Inverted Flam Tap** - single hand exercise.

Musical notation for Inverted Flam Tap single hand exercise. The notation is on a single staff with a common time signature (C). It consists of eight measures. The first four measures have notes grouped by brackets and accents (>). The last four measures have notes grouped by brackets and accents (>). Below the staff, the drum strokes are indicated by letters: R R R R R R R R, L L L L L L L L.



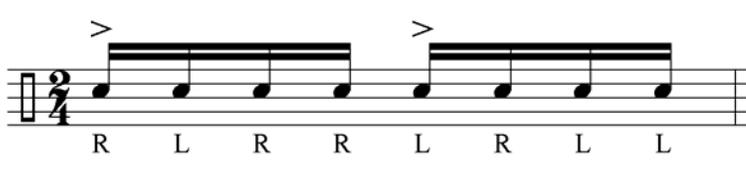


# The 4 Fundamental Sounds in Drumming

- 1) Single Tap
- 2) Double Tap
- 3) Multiple Bounce
- 4) Flam

All of the rudiments contain one or more of these sounds. Here are some examples.

**Single Paradiddle** - Contains singles and doubles



**Five Stroke Roll** - Contains double and single taps. **Eighth Note Roll** - If played as a buzz contains multiple bounce and single tap.



**Flam Accent** - Contains single taps, multiple bounce and flams.



**Flam Tap** - Contains multiple bounce and flams.



# **Tenor Pedagogy For Band Directors** by Ben Collins

Traditionally treated as the alto/tenor voice in the marching percussion battery, a strong tenor section can be a vital musical asset to any marching band. Due to the number of drums and implements (mallets and sticks) a performer has at his disposal, the tenor line is the most musically flexible section in the marching percussion section.

## **Organization of the Drums**

Tenors can come in different sizes (4, 5 or 6 drums) and different configurations (8", 10", 12", 13", or 10", 12", 13", 14"). It is preferred to purchase the larger drums (10", 12", 13", 14"). Although the larger drums are heavier and can cause an issue for smaller players, the larger sized drums provide greater depth in resonance and will blend better to a wind section. There is also an option to add one or two 6" drums known as 'shot' or 'spock' drums. Some groups choose to tune these small drums as high possible and use them for special effects while others tune them to pitches and use them for an additional melodic option in writing.

The drums all have numbers (1-4). The higher the number, the lower the drum. The 'shot' drums have no number assigned to them. For this set of drums (10-12-13-14), the corresponding numbers would be (1-2-3-4). If this were instead the smaller set (8-10-12-13), the numbers would correspond in the same manner.

It is highly recommended that the band director always purchase a stand and a cover for each set of drums.

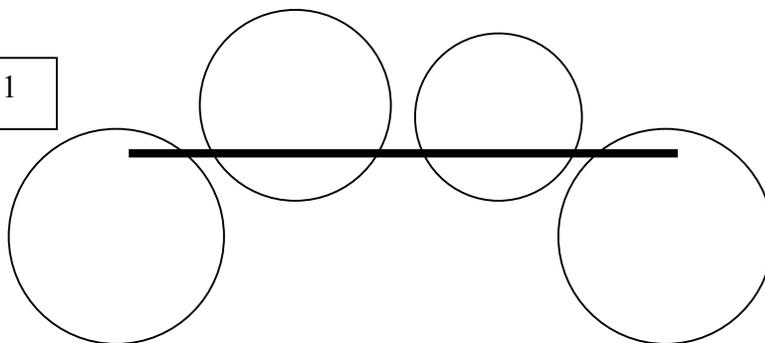
## **Basic Technique**

The basic technique of playing tenors is no different from that of a snare drum. The vertical motion remains the same. The difference is the element of horizontal movement needed to play all the drums during a performance.

This handout will focus on the horizontal motion but attempt to address a few vertical issues that need attention specific to tenor drumming.

The playing area for each drum is about 1.5" from the rim. The drums should be approached in a manner where the playing areas for a straight line across the set, not an arc. (Figure 1: Diagram of playing areas)

Figure 1



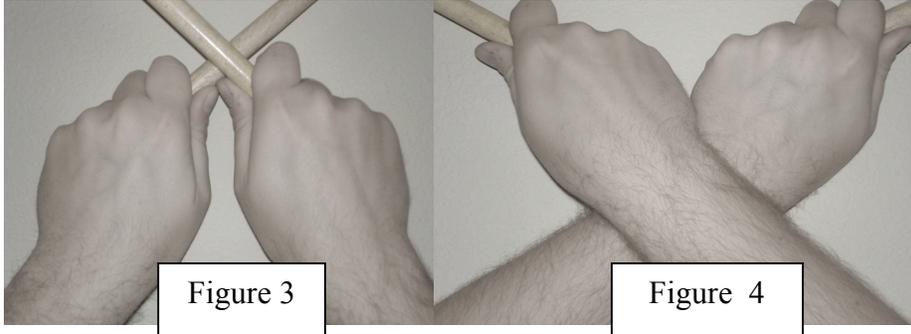
This allows the wrists and arms to remain at a comfortable distance from the body and not become too close to cause poor technique. Some educators have coined this the “wind shield wiper” motion because of the close resemblance to wind shield wipers on cars. This is also a great analogy for young students to ensure correct playing areas and movement across the drums.

When moving across the drums, students should strive for correct wrist motion. The easiest way to teach this is to always have students play on one drum first before playing anything “around” the drums. I often remind my students, good tenor drummers must be good drummers first; the motion is much easier once they can play something well on one drum.

Much like mallet playing, kinesthetic memory will develop as students become more comfortable with how fast their arms need to move in order to deliver their wrists to the drums. This takes slow, deliberate, practice. The best exercise for this is 7/8 motion (figure 2, below).



When playing “crosses” (where one hand goes over the other), there are a few basic things students must keep in mind. The wrist motion must never be compromised for an “around” pattern. A crossed note should have the same sound quality of an uncrossed note. In order for this to occur, crosses between adjacent drums take place at the thumbs (figure 3), and crosses between non-adjacent drums take place at the wrists (figure 4). Crossing can be awkward at first for students. To improve this facet of their playing, a technique I employ is to have them playing legato stroke exercises where every note is crossed so they can become more comfortable. The use of double stops employed in the same manner will also greatly help.



When a diddle or drag is played between two drums it is commonly known as a sweep because of the sweeping motion the arms make. Unfortunately, students will inevitably perform the second note much weaker than the first. Even experienced players struggle with this aspect of tenor drumming. The tendency is to move horizontally before vertically. This will cause students to play the first note too close to the rim, on the rim or completely off the drum. Students need to slow sweeps down so they can learn the speed their arm must travel after the first note is played. If they begin to think in this manner it will help eliminate technique problems from sweeps. Remember, it should be played on one drum first, then “around.”

### **Tuning Considerations**

Due to the location of the playing areas on tenors, the drums go out of tune quickly. It is highly recommended that students be taught how to tune their own drums so they may tune them everyday or at least every other day. The band tunes everyday; the drumline needs to as well. Before tuning a drum to a specific note, each lug must be at the same pitch. The larger the drum, the more attention each lug will need and worse the drum will sound if the lugs are out of tune. The 14” drum takes the longest to tune is the most difficult due to this fact. After each lug has been brought to the same pitch, the drums need to be tuned to a specific note. Good notes for each drum are those that allow the most resonance. Suggested tuning:

14”: G      13”: B      12”: D      10”: A#  
(6”: usually anything higher than a G sounds good)

### **Implementation Considerations**

One of the advantages for the tenor section is the array of colors it can provide. Tenors traditionally use mallets, but sticks are common and other implements such as felt or puff cotton (puffs) at the end produce nice sounds. Placing stick bags on the side of the drums allow your students to use multiple implements throughout your marching band show.

# Marching Bass Drum – BASSics

By Jaime Alvarez Calderone

*Text and photos borrowed from Green Beats. Visit [www.tapspace.com](http://www.tapspace.com) for more info.*

Just the same as any wind instrument, a percussion instrument can be played with the same focus and thought to musicianship, sound quality and volume. For example, just as it is possible to overblow a wind instrument, it's also possible to overplay percussion instruments. Students should approach marching percussion just as they would many other areas of percussion, with relaxation and musicianship. Performers must make every effort to stay completely relaxed from the neck, through the shoulders and arms, all the way down to the fingers. Tension affects sound quality and disrupts the flow of the music. Although chops and technique are a necessity, sound quality should be primary.

## Grip



The bass mallet should be held comfortably in the palm of the hand, just below the crease at the base of the fingers. The thumb should be on top of the mallet and should "point" to the mallet head. There should be no visible daylight as well as tension between the thumb and first finger. The remaining fingers should wrap around the mallet in a soft manner.

## Instrument and Performer Set up

Begin with both arms hanging down to the side with the thumbs on the top of the mallets and hands by the legs. The mallets should point forward and down at a 45-degree angle. Without changing the position of the hand, wrist, and mallet, bring your arms up (bending at the elbows) until the forearms are parallel to the ground. This playing position should feel very relaxed and natural. From this position, adjust the carrier and stand so the center of the bass head is lined up with the head of the mallet. It is important to adjust the drum to the player, not the player to the drum (This is similar to adjusting a neck strap for a saxophonist).

Once the drum has been positioned to fit the player, the forearms should be brought toward the drum so they touch the bass drum rim. The player should memorize what part of



the arm touches the rim so you will be able to always find the center of the bass head. The size of the drum will determine whether the player's forearm, wrist, or fingers make contact with the hoop.

In playing position, the mallets and forearm should be parallel to the drumhead. The amount of space between the elbows and ribs depends on the size of the player's body frame. The upper body needs to remain relaxed and free of tension at all times.

## The Stroke

All strokes are initiated from a simple breaking of the wrist, followed by rotation of the forearm. Let the weight of the mallet help with the rotation. As bass drummers, we play AGAINST gravity. The motion for bass drumming is almost always legato (smooth and even). Although some of the bass drum sound comes from muffling and tuning, there is no substitute for consistent technique from player to player.



The path that the stroke takes while playing should be a straight line that matches the angle of the mallet. This is very similar to playing on a horizontal surfaced percussion instrument such as snare drum, keyboard, etc. If you were able to draw a three-dimensional chalk line in the air with the mallet head, the profile view would look like a straight line that follows the angle of the mallet. Consistency of stroke path is important when delivering an equal amount of energy from each stroke to the drum head.

## Dynamics

The stick height system established for the snares and tenors has a somewhat different definition for bass drum because of the orientation of the playing surface. A good mental image/analogy for students to use would be the face of a clock. When in playing position the mallets are at 12 o'clock. A general forte would be if you rotate the mallets out 90 degrees to 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock. Mallets being parallel to the ground are an excellent reference for students and instructors alike. The piano stick height can be achieved with a one-third rotation from the playing surface. The mezzo forte stick height can be achieved with a two-thirds rotation from the playing surface. The fortissimo stick height is rotated another third beyond the forte position.

These measurements are merely a general guide as dynamics (heights) will always be dictated by the needs of the music.



In addition to playing in the center of the head, other playing areas for bass drum are also used. You could change to other playing zones such as "edge" (3 to 5 inches below the rim) and "halfway" (halfway between the center and the bearing edge). Each of these playing areas have different sound qualities and are generally played during softer passages.

### **A Few Timing Tips and Exercises**

Good timing starts from the ground up. The feet are the most important asset to the success of marching percussion. It is important that the feet are the source of pulse and the hands "line up" with the feet, not the other way around.

It is essential that all the players in a bass line understand their individual part, how it relates to their feet, how their part relates to other parts, and have the same interpretation of the space between all the notes. This is where it is essential to learn the individual part with the beat versus learning the part as whole. On bass drum, all split parts can be simplified to some sort of "check" or "skeleton" pattern. *Students should individually find a GROOVE in everything they play so it FLOWS. Not just "groovy" music but even more sparse, abstract music has checkpoints that allow you to find some form of "pocket" if you approach it the right way.*

Before we can play 16's, 16<sup>th</sup> note triplets, and 32<sup>nd</sup> notes, we must be able to play the check pattern in time, with the feet. Once the check pattern is well-established, any following notes added must be evenly spaced (relative to the first note on each drum). It is imperative that bass drummers understand basic note groupings and are able to play any partial (with either hand) comfortably.

Below is a sample teaching sequence to help students better at comprehending their individual parts and how they relate to the beat, as well as the full musical picture.

### Sample Bass Drum Music Excerpt



**Step A:** Simplify individual parts to the first note of each grouping per drum. Have the students play this check pattern in one hand while playing quarter note rim clicks in the other. You may also go back and forth between everyone playing and a solo individual playing their part with rim clicks. Once that is comfortable, have the students switch the roles of each hand to the other. This must be done while marking time and using a metronome. Once this is comfortable for every player, it is musically correct, and the alignment of hands to feet is correct, move on to step B.



**Step B:** Drums 2 and 4 will play all notes of the music while drums 1, 3, and 5 continue with playing their check pattern. Drums 1,3, and 5 may also continue the quarter note rim clicks. For drums 2 and 4 make sure the first note of each grouping they play starts in the same place it did during the check patten exercise. All notes that follow in succession should have even spacing leading to the next grouping. When this has become musically correct and the students are comfortable, move on to step C.



**Step C:** Now reverse the roles. Drums 1,3, and 5 will play all notes of the music while drums 2 and 4 play their individual check pattern. Again, Drums 2 and 4 may also add back the rim clicks while playing the check.



**Lastly,** all parts are played as written with the same focus to starting each grouping at the correct time





# Teaching More Than Notes

## Sonatina

Muzio Clementi

C Major Arpeggio      Scale Motion      C Major Arpeggio

L R R L L      R L R L R L R L R L R L R      *p*

*f*

Detailed description: This block contains the first line of musical exercises. It starts with a C Major Arpeggio exercise (C-E-G-A-C) marked with a forte *f* dynamic and fingerings L R R L L. This is followed by a Scale Motion exercise (C major scale) with fingerings R L R L R L R L R L R L R. The line concludes with another C Major Arpeggio exercise marked with a piano *p* dynamic.

3rds      G Major Scale on B      G Major Arpeggio

*f*      L R      L R      L R L R R L

Detailed description: This block contains the second line of musical exercises. It begins with a 3rds exercise marked with a forte *f* dynamic. This is followed by a G Major Scale on B exercise with fingerings L R. The line ends with a G Major Arpeggio exercise with fingerings L R L R R L.

Scale Motion      G Arpeggio      C Minor Arpeggio      G Arpeggio

R L      R R R L L R      R L      L R L R L L

*p*

Detailed description: This block contains the third line of musical exercises. It starts with a Scale Motion exercise with fingerings R L. This is followed by a G Arpeggio exercise with fingerings R R R L L R, marked with a piano *p* dynamic. Next is a C Minor Arpeggio exercise with fingerings R L, and the line ends with another G Arpeggio exercise with fingerings L R L R L L.

Octaves      C Arpeggio

*f*      R L      R R R      R R R R

*p*

Detailed description: This block contains the fourth line of musical exercises. It begins with an Octaves exercise marked with a forte *f* dynamic. This is followed by a C Arpeggio exercise with fingerings R L, marked with a piano *p* dynamic. The line ends with two more C Arpeggio exercises with fingerings R R R and R R R R.

Scale Motion      C Arpeggio      Scale in 3rds      C Scale

R L R L L R L R R L R L R      R L R R R R      L R L R L R L R

*f*

Detailed description: This block contains the fifth line of musical exercises. It starts with a Scale Motion exercise with fingerings R L R L L R L R R L R L R. This is followed by a C Arpeggio exercise with fingerings R L R R R R. The line ends with a Scale in 3rds exercise and a C Scale exercise, both with fingerings L R L R L R L R, marked with a forte *f* dynamic.

C Scale on E      C Arpeggio      Scale Motion      Scale Motion Hand Follow the Leader

L R R R L R      L R L R R L R L      R R L R L R L R

Detailed description: This block contains the sixth line of musical exercises. It begins with a C Scale on E exercise with fingerings L R R R L R. This is followed by a C Arpeggio exercise with fingerings L R L R R L R L. The line ends with two Scale Motion exercises with fingerings R R L R L R L R, the second of which is marked 'Hand Follow the Leader'.

L  
*p*

Detailed description: This block contains the final exercise, which is a single note (C) on a musical staff, marked with a piano *p* dynamic and fingerings L.

# **BATTERY TUNING RANGES**

*By Bret Kuhn*

**14" SNARE DRUMS** (Remo White Max or Black Max Tops /Clear Ambassador snare bottoms)

Top F-A

Bottom B flat-D

**TENOR DRUMS** (Remo Suede or Renaissance Tenor Heads)

6" shot drum C-F

8" A flat-D flat

10" E flat-A flat

12" C-F

13" A-D

14" F -B flat

**BASS DRUM** (Remo Power Max Heads)

16" A flat-C

18" G flat-B flat

20" E flat-G

24" B flat-D

28" F-A

32" C-E

We usually keep a Perfect 5<sup>th</sup> between drum 4 and 5, and Perfect 4ths between the other drums. Remember we have a 4" size difference between every drum. I also recommend not going larger than a 28" bass drum with high school students.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF TUNING**

- 1) Helps the heads last longer by keeping them more in round with equal tension. Unfortunately tuning means higher to most and it should be about maintaining pitch.
- 2) You have the same sound on practice days that you have on show days. Imagine if the band only tuned for competition.
- 3) If you tune every thing different on the day of a show, the balance and blend of the ensemble will be totally different.
- 4) The feel of the drums to the players will not be the same as practice, causing them performance problems.

**REMEMBER** this is a starting point; find your sound for your group. Every great player on any instrument has his or her own sound. This is what makes art and music so individual and interesting. Enjoy the process.

# CYMBAL DESIGN

Bell Sizes on cymbals.

The larger the bell or cup size on a cymbal, the more the cymbal will offer in regards to volume and overtones. Conversely, the smaller the bell, the more control one will have in the amount of overtones or “spread” of sound underneath the ride patterns. A good example is comparing a Flat Top Ride (no bell) with a Rock Ride cymbal (large bell).

Random Hammering vs. Symmetrical hammering

Symmetrical hammering (i.e., A Zildjian, A Custom, Z Custom) offer an even blend of overtones with emphasis in the mid range/upper mid range of overtones. This is also reinforced with a higher bow shape. Random Hammering (i.e., K's, K Customs, K Constantinople, Classic Orchestral Selections) offer a much broader range of overtones with emphasis in the low end of its overtones (also with a lower profile).

Lathed vs. UnLathed Cymbals

Lathed cymbals are considered the classic design and will have a traditional “flowering of sound” (full expression with a nominal amount of decay). Unlathed cymbals (K Customs) or “Overhammered cymbals (K Custom Dark Cymbals) retain a more focused or constricted sound due to the fact that the sound has either not received the “stress relief” through lathing or that cymbals have been overhammered (after lathing) to regain some of that metal stress that is found in cymbals that have yet to be lathed (attenuated high end and quicker decay).

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## **Cymbal Technique's**

- 1) Strapping Up
- 2) The Resendez Loop
- 3) Set Position/Flip Ups-Flip Downs
- 4) Parade Rest
- 5) Vertical and Horizontal Port Position
- 6) Crash-Sharp-Choppy
- 7) Crash-Fluid and Smooth
- 8) Crash Choke
- 9) Hinge Choke-( Hi-Hat)
- 10) Sizzle-(half sizzle/quarter sizzle)
- 11) Slide/Fusion
- 12) Tap
- 13) Zings
- 14) Bell Screech
- 15) Crazy 8/ Locked 8/ Choppy 8
- 16) Strength Building Exercise

## **Cymbal Technique 101 By Edward Capps**

**[www.cymbaltechnique101.com](http://www.cymbaltechnique101.com)**