

Percussion Quick Tips and Tricks: by Kyle Peters

kpeters@esm.rochester.edu

Snare Drum:

1. Instrument Height / Position

- Holding a Water Bottle -> Snare Drum height reference.
- Strainer Position should always be directly in front of the player to insure they are playing over the snares for the best response. This is more noticeable at softer dynamics.

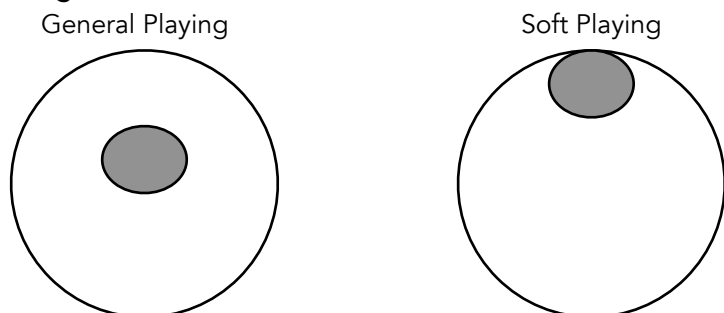
2. Match Grip

- Vic Firth SD 1 "Thumbs on the Flag" / Index finger above thumb but not pointing.
- There should be space in-between the thumb and pointer finger.
- Naturally handing a stick to a student will generally result in the best outcome.
- The back of the stick should be coming out of the side of the hand.

3. Hands in Playing Position

- Thumbs on the flag. (If using a Vic Firth Stick.)
- Back of the hands facing the ceiling.
- Sticks resting on the drum. (Pizza Slice/Angle)
- Pick up sticks - Ski Slopes. *Wrists lift the stick, not arms.

4. Beating Area on the Drum



5. Finding the Fulcrum

- Three point fulcrum - thumb, pointer, and middle finger. Two point fulcrum - thumb and pointer.
- Bouncing Exercise: check the back of the stick. The back of the stick is the best indicator to see if a student is actually bouncing and using a rebound stroke. The hand should remain in playing position.
- Let the drum do the work - drop the stick and let it bounce until it stops.
- Turn to controlled bounce, 8 per hand - Like dribbling a basketball.
- Add the middle finger on the stick. Press lightly into the drum to create a buzz stroke.

7. Rolls

- Overlap is key. Rolls will be produced by both arm and wrist motion.

- Begin a roll with both hands moving. This will help avoid an accented start of the roll.

Double Strokes: One motion, two notes.

Roll Routine:



8. Stick Trajectory

-Sticks should come straight up and down when playing. If the sticks are coming up sideways, or with a curve, have the student play the passage with just their hands. Focusing the motion on the wrists can aid in correct wrist motion when adding the sticks.

-“Patting a dog on the head.”

9. Flams

-One Sound

-One hand high, one hand low - alternating.

-Grace notes LOW - most important aspect. As the speed of flams increase, the main note will have to decrease in stick height.

10. Paradiddle

-During the double stroke, the other hand should be moving up.

11. Dynamics

-Stick Height = Dynamics

-Accent = Higher Stroke, not a faster stroke.

-The beating spot of the drum can be used to change dynamics. The closer to the edge, the softer the dynamic.

12. Eliminating Extra Motion

-Percussionists should get in the habit of always lifting a stroke back to its starting position. This will allow for the most efficient motion when playing.

Mallets:

*Transferable Skills from Snare Drum.

1. Grip

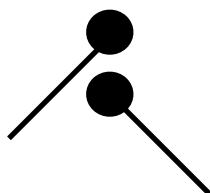
-Same approach as snare drum. Where you grip the mallet will determine the leverage of the stick. The higher up we grip the mallet, the shorter the stick will be. Gripping higher up on the mallet might help with accuracy for faster passages, although is not encouraged for beginner players.

-Generally 1 - 2 inches of stick coming out of the back of the hand.

-Unlike Snare Drum, there is no rebound, student will be required to lift after each stroke.

2. Hand Placement

-Left Hand above the Right.



3. Beating Position

- Slightly above or below the center of the bar.
- When playing faster passages, students can play on the edge of the accidental bars.

4. Four Mallet Grip

- Steven's Grip (Teach One Mallet / One Hand at a time.)
 - Inside Mallet: Place the mallet in dominant hand at the base of the thumb and first joint of the pointer finger (closest to the nail.) The mallet should be supported by gravity in this position, no squeezing required. Place the thumb above the pointer finger, pinch and toss to the center of your hand.
 - Outside Mallet: Turn palm to face you. Place the mallet on the back two joints of the pinky and ring finger, with only half an inch of the mallet going past the pinky. Move the thumb, pointer, and middle finger towards you, in front of the mallet. Close pinky and ring finger.
 - When holding both together, the middle finger will rest at the base of the inside mallet.
- *Starting position - shaking someones hand.

5. Rolls

- Fast alternating strokes, while maintaining a loose grip and a quick *up* stroke.

6. Vibraphone Motor

- Unless the motors are in use for a piece, make sure the resonators are left open to insure the best possible sound from the Vibraphone.

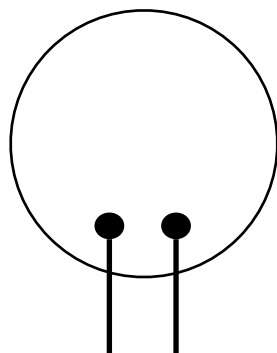
Timpani:

1.Grip

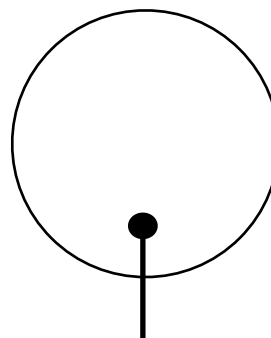
- Snare drum grip, hands in playing position - turn hands so the thumbs are facing the ceiling.
- Mallets should create parallel lines, and index fingers should be out above the thumb.
- Back two fingers firm. All fingers working the same amount. The player controls the lift - no rebound.

2. Beating Spot:

Two Mallets on a Drum



One Mallet on A Drum



3. Lift

- “Imagine the drum is 1000 degrees.” Quick Up.
- Mallet head should start and stop in the same place.

4. Dynamics / Articulation

Dynamics = Stick Height
Articulation = Speed

5. Rolls

- Rolls on timpani are fast alternating strokes. The larger the drum, the slower the speed of the roll.
- I like to have the beating spot at about 3 inches apart when rolling to assure the fullest possible sound.
- Fp roll, strike the drum with one full lift, then sneak in after the sound begins.

6. Sitting vs Standing

- Mallets should strike the drum almost parallel to the floor. If a student is standing and their mallets strike the drum at a large angle, they should sit to play for the best possible sound.
- Tuning Considerations - for pieces with fast tuning changes, sitting is best.

Auxiliary Percussion:

General: 45 Degree Angle

Tambourine:

1. Grip

- The tambourine will be held with the player's non dominant hand.
- Thumb on top of the tambourine, fingers on opposite side of head.
 - *No fingers should go through the hole on the tambourine.
- Tambourine should be held at a 45 degree angle to the floor for general playing.
 - *Angle of the tambourine will determine the articulation of the instrument.

2. Jingles / Construction

- Silver - Bright, best for all around playing in both a band and orchestra.
- Bronze - Dark, more suited for concert band playing.
- Copper - Blend of Bright and Dark, heard in most professional orchestra.
- Brass - Usually more affordable, and a good starting jingle choice for young players.
- Stacked vs Separated:
 - Stacked = More articulate. Best for rhythmic passages, needing clear articulation.
 - Separated = Less articulate. Best for rolls, and general playing.

3. General Playing

- Player holds the tambourine out in front of them, at a 45 degree angle.
- The playing hand (dominant hand) will form a “sock puppet” face to bunch your fingers together.
- Strike the tambourine across from the thumb and over the jingles with wrist motion - the same stroke you would play with a stick on a snare drum.

4. Rolls

a. Shake Roll

- Hold the tambourine up at a 90 degree angle to the floor.
- Rotate the wrist back and forth, while not squeezing the tambourine too tight.
- Additional motion can be added by adding a fanning motion, moving the tambourine back and forth.

b. Finger/Thumb Roll

- Place thumb on first joint of middle finger.
- Brace the middle finger with the pointer finger
- Using the pad of the middle finger, place on the edge of the tambourine.
- Push the tambourine up into the finger, creating friction.

5. Advanced Techniques

-Hand / Knee

-Hand / Heel

-The addition of the knee and heel of the hand will occur on the e's and the a's of the beat, while the hand maintains eighth notes.

Triangle:

1. Grip / Playing Position

- Hold the triangle clip with the thumb and pointer finger in the non dominant hand.
- The other three fingers can be used to support the triangle, or muffle the triangle.
- The open end of the triangle should be facing towards the arm.
- Strike the triangle on the bottom at a 45 degree angle to create the most overtones.

2. Rolls

-Rolls will be created by striking the bottom and side of the triangle in a back and forth motion. Keep the beater from being too close to the inside angle of the triangle for the fullest sound.

Cymbals:

1. Crash Cymbal Grip

- Similar to Snare Drum, the hand will grip the strap with no fingers going through the strap.
- Rest your knuckles on the bell.

2. Playing Technique

- To practice the correct motion, have your hands and arms do opposite circles.
 - Dominant hand - Down and Out
 - Non Dominant hand - Up and Out
- Hands should meet in the middle.
- Place cymbals together with 1 inch separation at the top.
- Dominant Hand Cymbal faces down, Non Dominant Hand Cymbal faces up.
- Cymbals should strike together at a 45 degree angle, with a slight flam.
 - Dominant hand cymbal should be slightly more flat than the left hand.

Other Considerations:

Bass Drum - Strike the drum slightly off-center.

Suspended Cymbal - Strike the cymbal towards the edge. If it is one single hit, the cymbal can be struck with two mallets on each edge for a quicker response.

Starting Stick/Mallet Considerations:**Snare Drum:**

Beginners - Vic Firth American Custom SD 1 - General

Intermediate/Advanced - Promark Concert Two Snare Stick

Timpani:

Dragonfly Percussion School Band Series

-Aluminum Sticks - Soft / Medium / Hard

Mallets:**Marimba:**

Malletech M-Tech Marimba Mallets

MT - HM18 - Hard

MT - MM12 - Medium

MT - SM6 - Soft

Vibraphone

Malletech Dave Samuels Series

DS18 - Hard

Glockenspiel:

Malletech Orchestral Series

Model OR65R

Hardware Recommendations:

Snare Drum Stand: Liberty One Extended Concert Height Snare Drum Stand

Gibraltar 7614 Concert Cymbal Cradle

Black Towels for Music Stands - Holds mallets, small aux percussion, etc.

Notes: