




Starting Young Percussionists

Effective Techniques for a great start!
(for all levels)

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My perspective:

- I have taught all levels from elementary to university
 - I have been on percussion staff at High Schools & Middle Schools
 - I had a home studio - private lessons
 - I am the parent of “one who likes to hit things”
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**Why are
percussionists
SO.....
..different than
the rest of your
band and/or
orchestra?**

Please give me a few words to describe your
current percussionists (drummers)

Now please describe what you need from your
percussionists (drummers)

Some things to consider regarding percussionists

Three questions to think about:

1. Where is the percussion section located in the standard band/orchestra set-up?

2. Where are the percussion parts located in a standard band/orchestra score?

3. How many instruments do percussionists need to know how to play compared to winds?



the different rows in concert band

1st row: most well behaved,
small, usually filled with flutes

2nd row: some whispering.
usually clarinets, french horns,
other woodwinds

3rd row: whispering and giggling
widespread. trumpets and maybe
low brass

4th row: the most chill; the
quietest row. tubas and low
brass

5th row, percussion: Abandon All
Hope Ye Who Enter Here

**This one sums it up
pretty well!**

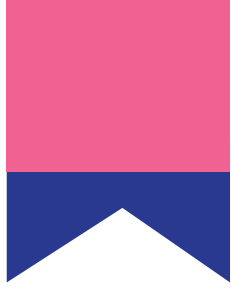


The “Big 3” of Percussion

- Snare Drum Sticking policies translates to many other percussion instruments
- Keyboard Instruments orchestra bells, xylophone, vibraphone, crotales, Marimba & chimes
- Timpani

All percussionists should be able to perform on all 3 of these. Most can do one or the other (SD or keyboard and what are timpani?!)





4 Basics for your percussionists to know

1. **Grip - that translates well the “Big 3” of percussion**
2. **A Sticking Policy**
3. **Method for Counting!**
4. **Choice of sticks, mallets & percussion kits (for practice purposes)**



Basic #1 - Grip

(how you hold the sticks/mallet)

Two types of Grips:

1. **Matched Grip** - hands the same
2. **Traditional Grip** - hands different (left hand cradles the stick) SD only!

* You should start students on matched grip. It transfers easily to each of the “Big 3” instruments!

* On Timpani matched grip is called German Grip

(I teach French grip to my students - palms in & roll

Stick up the thumb - like drum set ride cymbal)



Matched Grip - How to teach it

Parts of the grip:



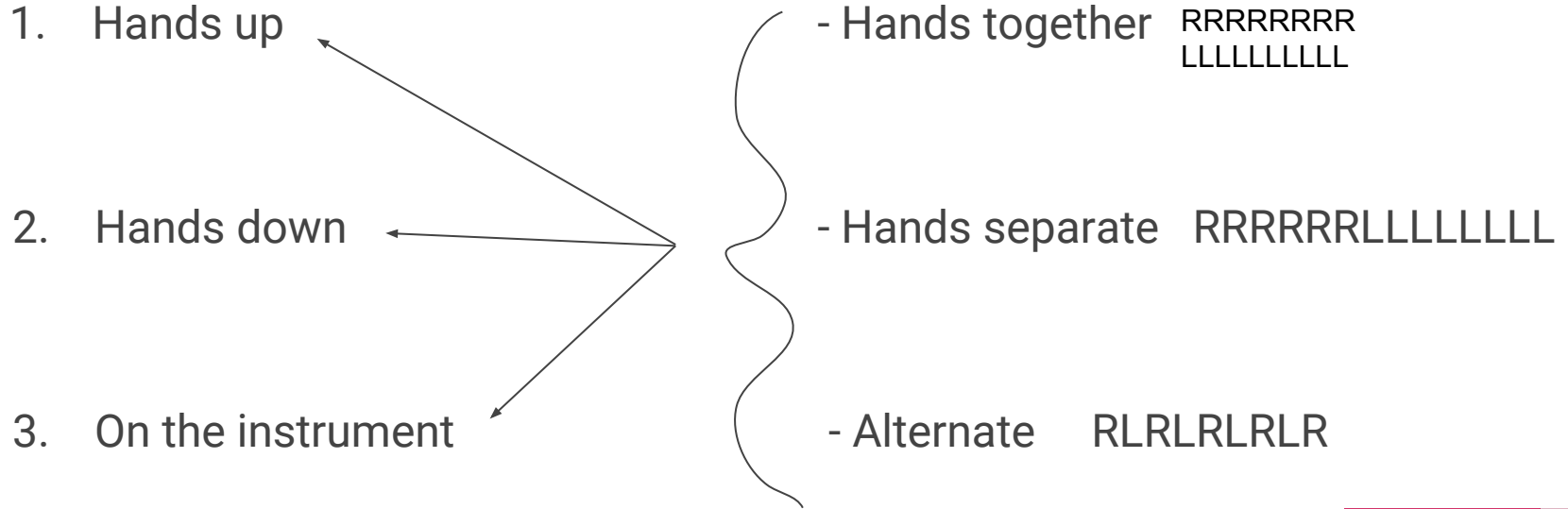
1. **Fulcrum** (pivot point)

- index finger (first joint) & thumb
- Held $\frac{1}{3}$ the way up from the bottom (butt) of the stick/mallet
- Stick/mallet rocks back & forth at the fulcrum
- Squeeze (firm...not hard)

2. **Guide Fingers** (other 3 fingers) guide stick/mallet into the palm of the hand

As you squeeze the **fulcrum**, the **wrist and guide fingers** work together to **SNAP** the stick/mallet into the palm of the hand to create a **Stroke!**

Grip & Stroke Development - SNAP Exercise



SNAP the stick/mallet into the palm of the hand on the **REBOUND**.
(only let it hit once!)
(for rolls.....twice...or more)





Playing Position (Addressing the Instrument)

1. **Adjust the instrument** (or yourself) so the instrument is about (just below) **waist high**
2. **Elbows out**
3. **Palms down** (matched grip)
4. Bring sticks up (1-3) then move toward instrument
5. **POINT** stick tips to just off center of the drum at about a 90 degree angle
 - On mallets, L over R or R over L, center of the bar (naturals & #/b) or edge (#/b only) **AVOID NODES**
 - On timpani strike drums 1-3" from bearing edge of the drum



Basic #2 - Sticking Policy

First...teach **Natural Sticking** (aka - RH lead or RH dominant) as opposed to Alternate Sticking

Second (for Snare Drum) add rudiments

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drum_rudiment

<http://www.pas.org/resources/rudiments>

For mallets and timpani:

- Ascending notes start with LH, Descending start with RH (in general)
- Alternate and then double when necessary

4 Rules of “Natural” Sticking

(aka - Right Hand Lead or Right Hand Dominant)

- **Rule #1** (for quarter, half, dotted half, and whole notes)

All counts 1 & 3 = **R**

All counts 2 & 4 = **L**



- **Rule #2** (for eighth notes)

All counts 1,2,3,4 (downbeats) = **R**

All &'s (upbeats) = **L**



4 Rules of “Natural” Sticking Continued

- **Rule #3** (for quarter, half, and dotted half notes in $\frac{3}{4}$ time or triplets)

When in 3 (triple meter) or for any sort of triplet...Alternate! **RLR LRL**



4 Rules of “Natural” Sticking Continued

- **Rule #4** (for sixteenth notes and eighth note/sixteenth note combinations)

All counts/beats 1,2,3,4 etc. (downbeats) and &'s (upbeats) = **R**

All “e’s” and “a’s” = **L**



A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a sequence of notes with sticking patterns. The notes are: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter. The sticking pattern below the staff is: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L.

Application of Natural Sticking

1
R L R R L R R L R R L R R L R R L R

4
R R L R R L R R L R R L R R L R R L

7
R L L R L L R L L R L L R L L R L L

10
L R L L R L L R L L R L L R L L R L

Rudiments - Rolls

7 5 stroke rolls



Musical notation for 5 stroke rolls, consisting of three measures. The first measure contains four quarter notes. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth-note roll of four notes. The third measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth-note roll of four notes, ending with a repeat sign. A blue double-headed arrow icon is in the top right corner.

R L R L R L R L R R L RR LL R R L R L R R L R RLL R

13 Tap 5 stroke rolls



Musical notation for Tap 5 stroke rolls, consisting of three measures. The first measure contains four quarter notes. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth-note roll of four notes. The third measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth-note roll of four notes, ending with a repeat sign. A blue double-headed arrow icon is in the top right corner.

R L R L R R L R R RR LL R R R L R R R RLL R

16 9 stroke rolls



Musical notation for 9 stroke rolls, consisting of three measures. The first measure contains four quarter notes. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth-note roll of four notes. The third measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth-note roll of four notes, ending with a repeat sign.

R L R L R L R L R RR LL RR LL R R L R L R R RLL RLL R

Basic #3 - Counting Rhythms

“If you can say it....you can play it” - Teach this first!

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains three measures. The first measure has four quarter notes with counts 1, 2, 3, 4 below them. The second measure has a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, repeated four times, with counts 1 &, 2 &, 3 &, 4 & below. The third measure has four groups of a quarter note followed by a triplet of eighth notes, with counts 1 te ta, 2 te ta, 3 te ta, 4 te ta below. The second staff starts with a measure rest labeled '4' and contains four measures, each with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, with counts 1 e & a, 2 e & a, 3 e & a, 4 e & a below.

Counting Rhythms continued

Use something fun like these to reinforce or support counting...but not to replace it!





Basic #4 - Choice of Sticks, Mallets, Percussion kits & Fundamental Packs - Examples from Innovative Percussion

Elementary & Middle School Music

- Percussion kits - mallets(bells) & drum pad with sticks & mallets

http://innovativepercussion.com/products/educational_percussion_kits

- Innovative Percussion FP 1 -

<http://innovativepercussion.com/products/fp1>

Middle & High School Music

- Practice marimba & SD Percussion kits
- Innovative Percussion FP 2 -

<http://innovativepercussion.com/products/fp2>

- Marimba mallets -

<http://innovativepercussion.com/products/ip240>





Sticks & Mallet Examples

Snare Drum sticks = IP-LD, IP-KW & IP-1

Timpani mallets = GT 3 - wood shaft, general use mallet

Keyboard mallets = Fundamental Series

Yarn w/birch shafts F1, F1.5 & F2 - marimba, xylo

Cord w/birch shafts = F3, F3.5 & F4 - vibes, marimba, xylo

Rubber w/birch shafts = F8 & F9 - xylo, bells xylo, marimba

Plastic w/birch shafts = F10 & F12 - xylo, bells

Brass w/birch shafts - bells



Methods Books

Snare Drum

- **Intermediate & Advanced SD Studies by Mitchell Peters (2 books)**
- **Fundamental & Intermediate Studies for SD by Garwood Whaley (2 books)**
- **Portraits in Rhythm by Anthony Cirone**

Mallets (2 mallets)

- **Fundamental Method for Mallets (books 1 & 2) by Mitchell Peters**
- **Fundamental Studies for Mallets by Garwood Whaley**
- **Masterpieces for Marimba by Thomas McMillan**

Timpani

- **Fundamental Method for Timpani & Intermediate Timpani Studies by Mitchell Peters**
- **Fundamental Studies for Timpani by Garwood Whaley**



Rehearsal warm-up idea

Snare Drum - 'rudiment of the day' - to be played with the band when they play scales on drum or pads.....or an SD etude from a book

Mallets - play the scale with the band

Timpani - tune root, 3rd, 5th and octave of scale and play with the band when they play those notes (ear training)



Hand Percussion- Types & Techniques

“If your audience can see
it then they can hear it!”

Triangle - Alan Abel 6”

- Two striking areas for two different tones
- Beaters - Grover, Stossel

Tambourine - Grover, Black Swamp

- Should have a head (unless specified)
- Type of jingle determines tone (brass, copper, combination)
- Striking area & rolls (hand vs. finger)

Crash Cymbals - Sabian or Zildjian

- 18” - German (dark), French (light), Viennese (all-purpose)
- **Drop method** - let gravity work for you
- Plates do a flam edge to edge (light and dark overtones)



Great Percussion Websites & Links



Innovative Percussion - <http://www.innovativepercussion.com/>

Lone Star Percussion - <http://www.lonestarpercussion.com/>

Steve Weiss Percussion - www.steveweissmusic.com

Black Swamp Percussion - www.blackswamp.com

Making the transition to concert percussion - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCLcRRZjv3I>

Grover Percussion page - <https://www.youtube.com/user/GroverProPerc>

Rustic Percussion - <https://www.rusticpercussion.com/>

