



The Band Director's Guide to Fall Marching Percussion

**CLINICIAN:
Tyler Dempsey**

**DEMONSTRATION GROUP:
LBJ HS Percussion, Austin**

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Guidance on tuning, technique, basic, exercises, drills, fundraising, strategies, and instrumentation for a better percussion program without a percussion director.

The Band Director's Guide to:

Marching Percussion

T.B.A. convention 2011



Tyler Dempsey
percussion specialist

A reference for smaller percussion sections, and no regular percussion instructor.

Tyler Dempsey

Tyler is an active percussion performer, writer, arranger, educator and clinician with 17 years of experience. Mr. Dempsey has a B.M. in percussion performance from San Jose State University, under Anthony J. Cirone. He marched with the Colts, Bluecoats, and the Santa Clara Vanguard drum and bugle corps. He was also the 1996 Percussive Arts Society - P.A.S.I.C. , individual snare drum champion. Mr. Dempsey has worked with groups such as Phantom Regiment, Colts, Santa Clara Vanguard Cadets, Div III percussion champions Teal Sound, West Coast Sound, and Pioneer drum and bugle corps.

Tyler spent six years as the head percussion instructor, and arranger, of the San Jose State University marching band. He has taught percussion at a multitude of high schools in northern and southern California, as well as Texas. Georgetown HS, a former school of his, won the PASIC high school division, and also came home with the Fred Sanford award for best performing ensemble.

Tyler spends a large amount of time arranging for high school marching bands, as well as drum and bugle corps. Tyler's writing/teaching has brought home 2 PASIC national championships, as well as DCI, BOA and WGI championships. Currently he is arranging for Lyndon B Johnson, Leander, Edinburg, Edinburg North, VanDegrift, Oceanside, and Rouse high schools. He also has music on the Texas Prescribed Music List.

Mr. Dempsey has performed extensively throughout the United States, and overseas. Some high-lights are, the grand opening of EuroDisney, many major hotels in Las Vegas, many semi-professional, and community orchestras and theaters. He is a featured artist at percussion festivals nation-wide and, is currently performing, and teaching in the Austin, Texas area. Tyler is endorsed by Pro-Mark Sticks Inc, Evans drumheads, and published by TapSpace publications.

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Part 1: Choose wisely for a better sound.

Heads - Having quality heads are essential for a good sound. Heads do not last and should be expected to be replaced. Many instructors do snare, and bass drum, heads once a year. Tenor heads will break more frequently. They will quickly wear out producing a dead, non-projecting sound.

Mallets & Sticks -

snare: All students should have the same brand & model. Even though the sticks are the same model, and brand, sticks will often still not match. High pitched, heavier weighted sticks, will be more durable and produce a full quality of sound. Always check to make sure your students sticks match.

Tenors: There are many options for tenors. Your only consideration is the type of sound you like. Sticks produce a thinner sound than a cookie mallet. Same rules apply to matching the sticks pitch.

Bass: Most of the major stick manufacturers have great options for an appropriate mallet for your basses. The size of mallet should graduate with the size of the drum.

* Like heads, sticks break and wear out. Plan on replacing snare sticks at least once during the fall season. Tenors at least once. Bass mallets seem to last a little longer, but having replacements on hand is necessary. They can sometimes take a few days to order and receive.

*"Practice" sticks, and "show" sticks, are a good way to solve the problem of untimely breaking of sticks.

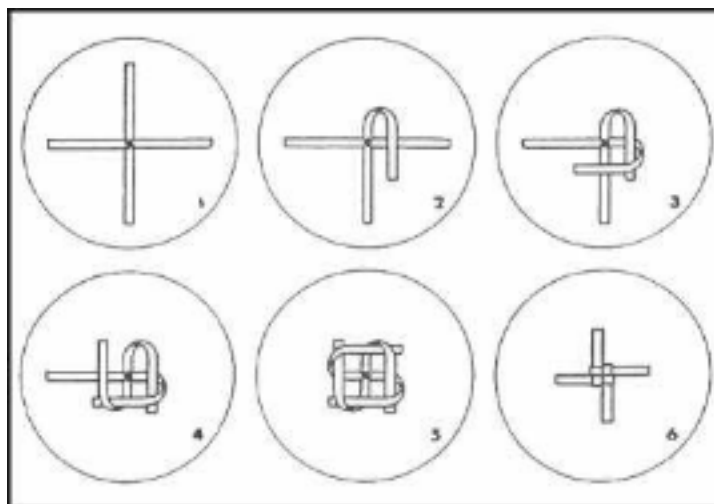
Part 1: Choose wisely for a better sound.

(continued)

Cymbals - Having a higher quality cymbal will give you a higher quality sound. Cymbals do wear out, and will occasionally need to be replaced. Check for cracked edges, and for cracks around the mounting circle. Always use some sort protective cover for the cymbal mount. The cymbal should have a metal support washer, a felt, and some sort of sleeve where the cymbal touches the mounting mechanism. Metal on metal during impacts can wear-down, and crack, the inner edge of the cymbals mounting circle.



Marching cymbal lines should be expected to go through a few sets of straps a year. These wear out from friction of the cymbal, as well as sweat from the students. Baseball gloves are recommended for practice, as well as performance. Again, the quality of the cymbal dictates the quality of the sound.



Part 1: Choose wisely for a better sound. (continued)

Arrangers - For smaller percussion sections it is highly advisable to secure an arranger who has experience arranging for smaller ensembles. Writing for big ensembles doesn't require the same skill set, as small outdoor ensemble arranging. Embiance, quality of sound, and over-all effectiveness change immensely in the smaller ensemble setting. Getting a big name arranger doesn't necessarily mean you will get a big name sound.

Instrumentation - One of the biggest mistakes, and complaints from adjudicators, is the choice of instrumentation for small groups. Too few of an instrument section, or instruments spread too thin, are some common problems.

- 1 - Better to have a bigger drumline and no pit. Impact from a cymbal line.
- 2 - Synth, concert bass, gong, and suspended cymbal is good option for a one student pit.
- 3 - Eliminating the tenor line isn't a bad thing. Better to have 2-3 snares, and 4 basses, than too few students on a voice. (Matched grip solves the issue of moving students around the instruments over the years.)
- 4 - A minimum voicing for a small pit would look like this:
Xylo/Bells - Vibe - Marimba - Timpani - Percussionist
(cymbals would be needed on Vibe & Marimba)

mic the pit - Hiring a professional sound technician is advised. Their experience, knowledge of mic placement, balancing, as well as over-all effectiveness of sound reinforcement, can not be undervalued.

Marimbas - two SM57's, one at each end of the marimba pointing towards the middle.

Vibes - two SM57's is ideal. However, one placed above the low end pointing towards the center/top-register of the instrument works good.

Xylo - Shouldn't need a mic. Choose mallets that balance well with your mic'd marimba and vibraphone.

Timpani - This instrument shouldn't need mic'ing. If you want extra projection go with at least one mic above, and inbetween, the 29" and the 32" drums. As well as one inbetween, and above the 23" and the 26" drums.

Part 2: Tuning your marching percussion

Snare: Balancing the head as it is put on. Finger tight first, then take up all lugs evenly, checking pitch as you go. Bottom head should be as high as you can get it without breaking. Top head should be taken to a good feel, but high enough to not sound tubby. This is usually higher than most think.

Guts: Many people don't realize that tuning the guts of a snare help with it's sound quality, and snare response. Having tuned guts gives a better snare quality in general. Release the snare mechanism, place two pencils under the guts at opposite ends of the snare strainer. Make sure the pencils are perpendicular to the guts. Return tension to the guts. Use a credit card to pluck the guts individually, and a screwdriver to adjust the pitch. Much like tuning a violin.

Tenors: One of the most common errors with tuning tenors is not tuning them high enough. Like the snare heads, balancing the head as it is tuned, is essential. There are several tuning schemes for tenors. Start with the lowest drum, as it is more difficult to get to sound pure. Work up through the drums from biggest to smallest. Always making sure that the fundamental pitch, and overtones, match on all lugs.

ex: 14" - B 13" - E 12" - F# 10" - A 6" - C & E
(Cavaliers 2002)

Bass drums: Like tenors balancing the head as it is tuned up, is essential. Matching the pitch, and the overtone, for each lug is how to make the drum sound good. You can hear the pitch, and overtones, better by softly placing a finger in the middle of the head. You then strike the area of the head, near the lug you are tuning, while keeping your finger in the center of the head.

Part 2: Tuning your marching percussion (continued)

There are many bass drum tuning schemes. I have found that having a 5th, between the bottom 2 drums, gives a very nice resolve to motion of the melodic lines or runs. Always tune bottom bass first, and move up the drums.

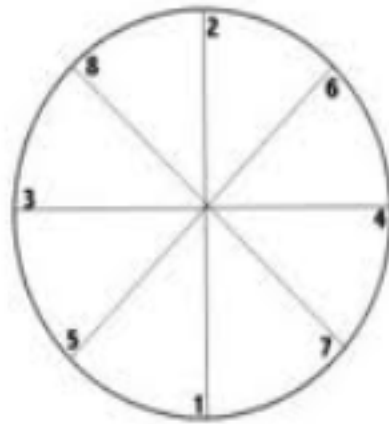
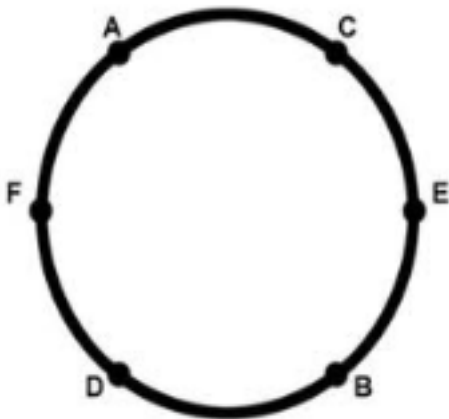
ex: recommended size & interval between next drum up

(5)	28"	Perfect 5th
	24"	Perfect 4th
	22"	Major 3rd
	20"	Major 3rd or more
	18"	(usually near the top end of the range.)

ex: low (C - G - C - E - G) high

- (4) Use the 28" through the 20" drums
- (3) the bottom 2 drums resolving on a perfect 5th.

* Always clean your bearing edge surfaces, and clear debris. Waxing the bearing edge allows for a more even distribution of tension.



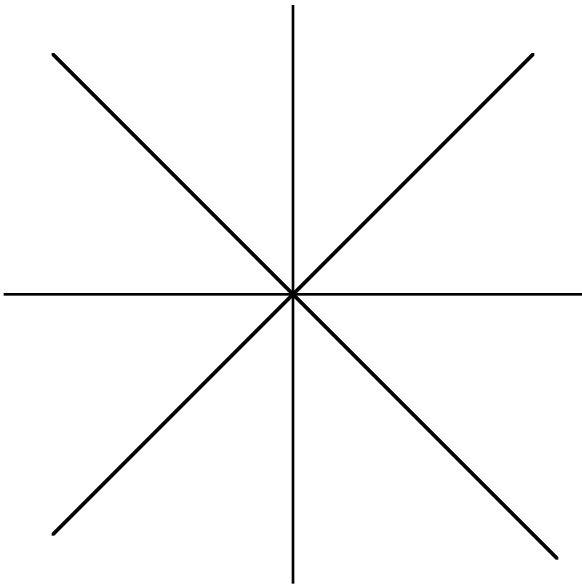
Part 3: Marching basics for drumline

Crab step -

- On balls of feet.
- Hips flat to the front at all times.
- Shoulders to the front at all times.
- Drums stay level.
- Mvmnt. Left - Right foot in front, traces the line of mvt.
- Mvmnt. Right - Left foot in front, traces the line of mvt.

Direction changes "Star drill"

This drill will move through, and establish, all direction changes. Take the time to cover how the feet, and weight, transfer on all directions changes.



8 cts. forward -
8 cts. forward right oblique -
8 cts. right crab -
8 cts. back right oblique -
8 cts. backwards -
8 cts. back left oblique -
8 cts. left crab -
8 cts. forward left oblique -
Halt

8 cts. back to center
8 cts back to center
8 cts back to center
8 cts back to center
8 cts back to center
8 cts back to center
8 cts back to center
8 cts back to center

Part 3: Marching basics for drumline (continued)

Circle drill & "Vulcan 3/4" exercise (attacks & timing)

Students set up on a pre-marked painted circle, and use crab-step around the circle. The vulcan exercise is for timing and attack skills, as well as ensemble rhythm cohesiveness. Start exercise using a metronome. Cut the ensemble anytime an attack is thick, wide, or not perfect. Restart the exercise, with the met. The end goal is for the ensemble to be able to execute this exercise with no errors WITHOUT a metronome. A miracle worker for ensemble tightness and timing, and teaching an ensemble spatial control visually. (be patient, can take time.)

Vulcan 3/4 Timing

The image displays the musical notation for the "Vulcan 3/4 Timing" exercise, consisting of four staves of drum notation. The notation includes rhythmic patterns, stickings, and measure numbers.

Staff 1: Labeled "Ens." with a 3/4 time signature. It contains six measures with the following stickings: R ¹, R ², R L ³, R L ⁴, R L R ⁵, and R L R ⁶.

Staff 2: Contains six measures with the following stickings: R L R ⁷ L, R L R ⁸ L, R L R ⁹ L R, R L R ¹⁰ L R, R L R ¹¹ L R L, and R L R ¹² L R L.

Staff 3: Contains seven measures with the following stickings: L R ¹³ L R L, L R ¹⁴ L R L, R ¹⁵ L R L, R ¹⁶ L R L, L ¹⁷ R L, L ¹⁸ R L, and ¹⁹ R L.

Staff 4: Contains five measures with the following stickings: ²⁰ R L, ²¹ L, ²² L, ²³, ²⁴, and R ²⁵.

Part 4: Technique & Fundamentals

Matched grip vs. Traditional grip

I would say the only consideration here is how much movement of students you have, between instruments. If you plan on turning bass players into snare drummers, you may want to consider matched grip. I reserve traditional grip for circumstances where I have the students that can do it.

Bass drum technique

There are a multitude of approaches to bass drum tech. The particular approach I use is in the appendix section, at the end of this guide.

Back to Basics handout

A collection of short fundamental exercises that build the rudimental needs of a drumline. (BlueDevils 1989)
This is also found in the appendix section of the guide.

Natural Sticking

An organization of sticking used to unify motion, and look, of a drumline. Each hand (sticking) has an assigned beat to play on for all note values, and rhythms.

Straight's Natural Sticking (black) compared to "Alternating Sticking" (gray).

The image displays four staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, comparing two sticking patterns: Straight's Natural Sticking (black) and Alternating Sticking (gray). Each staff shows a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with corresponding sticking patterns written below. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with sticking patterns like RLRLRLRL and LRL. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with sticking patterns like RLRLRLRL and RLRLRLRL. The third staff shows a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with sticking patterns like RLRLRLRL and RLRLRLRL. The fourth staff shows a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with sticking patterns like LRLRLRLRL and RLRLRLRL.

E.W. Flack ©2011

Part 4: Technique & Fundamentals (continued)

Chops & roll building

Roll quality, and chops are an important aspect of having a good quality of sound with your drumline. Rolls are a developed skill, and set of muscles. It is important to work on rolls with the students. It will develop other strengths they need to have good control.

Strength Building Exercises:

1 - 100 count roll. Literally. You students should be able to do a few of these. Great with tracking.

The image shows musical notation for a 100-count roll exercise. It consists of two staves: 'snare' and 'drums'. Both are in 4/4 time. The snare staff shows a continuous roll of eighth notes with the pattern 'RLRLRLRL' written below the first few measures, followed by 'ETC>' at the end. The drums staff shows a steady eighth-note accompaniment with numbers 1 through 5 written below the first five measures.

2 - "Pyramid"

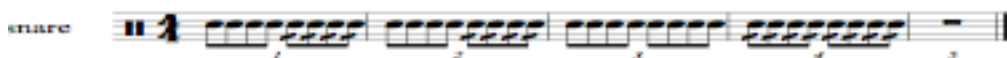
Double beat long. One time thru with one hand, then one time thru with the other. Next is twice thru on each hand. Then three times thru, on each hand. Keep on adding repetitions to each hand until 7.

The image shows musical notation for a 'Double Beat' exercise. It is titled 'Double Beat' and 'traditional'. It features three staves: Snare/Tenor, Bass, and Sn. Tr. (Snare/Tenor). The Snare/Tenor staff has a '3' above the first measure. The Sn. Tr. staff has a '3' above the first measure. The notation shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests, typical of a double beat exercise.

Part 5: Common errors in playing / fixes

- Stickings. - Make sure these are clearly identified, and marked
- fluid “check” motion. (in rhythm, and rolls as well).

Many time the secret to cleaning a drumline is found in unifying their approach to the “check” of a pattern. Once everyone has good control of tempo, in a check, segments will begin to align. This works on rolls very well. Practice segments of music with out rolls, and place emphasis on the check of the role. Maintaing the check, once the roll is back into the music, is the difficult part of cleaning rolls with a drumline.



- 2 height control

Work on two-height control. Many times a student will not stop the rebound of a stick, in order to get the taps into balance. Getting the back of the hand closed is the what you want to see, in order to achieve good tap control.



- first left on patterns, checks, and rolls.

The most common error. Getting into a pattern clean will depend on a precise left hand space, and timing, to execute at a high level. This is a good place to look for errors, and timing problems.

Part 5: Common errors in playing / fixes (continued)

- flam pattern & grace note control

The skill involved here is the control of the hand playing the lower notes. (grace notes & taps) When playing flams the students are creating over-lapping rhythms between the two hands. Learning to control the rhythm of the “non-accent” hand, will clean up flam patterns. A great way to work, and clean, these figures is covered next. Break the hands apart.

- hands apart

Breakdown patterns, rolls, flams, and parts with only one hand on drum, and other one on the rim. This allows the players to hear exactly where the errors are, in a particular hand. Do this with all exercises, music, etc...

Part 6: Balance & Blend

- voice number selection

With smaller percussion sections it is important to get the instrumentation, and voicing, correct. Choices on micing, battery size, and insturmentation need to be based on the size of the winds. 20 winds versus a large drumline isn't going to balance well. Perhaps students need to help in the front ensemble. Depending on your show, it might be wise to only do a front ensemble. (Travis HS 2009,10)

- Tuning selection

Choosing a tuning that projects more, and is lower, might not be a good choice for a smaller ensemble. High tuning will cut out a little of the boominess of the percussion ensemble. Extra muffling, on bass drums, will help too. EVANS drumheads mahufacturers the MX1 & MX2. This head allows you to control the amount of muffling you want.

Part 6: Balance & Blend (continued)

- Bass drums

Tuning is a big portion of this balance problem. Keep a constant ear on this voice. This is the voice that will overpower, a smaller wind section, very quickly. Staging will also help control their over balance.

- Heights, get it right from the get go

If you know your band size ahead of time, then train the students to play a top end of 9 inches. This solves a few issues.

1-cleaner look for drumline.

2-don't have to bring down heights, and volumes.

3-easier motion to develop. Less motion to control.

Part 7: Instructor options (if no percussion director)

- Local college student. (once a week?)
- Graduated high school student.
- Proficient high school student from a large school.
- Hire a professional for a camp (one week, all day.)
- Look for a "student teacher" that is a percussionist.
- Parent, or community member, that has some drumline or percussion experience.

Part 8: Fundraising

- drum-a-thon. Get donations for hours drummed.
hold an "over-night" drum-a-thon. Great for unifying the group, practicing, creating, and growing bonds, while making money.
- car-wash
- coffee
- volunteer for city events. parades, presentations, grand openings, celebrations, openings of community events. Events that will pay a little.

Part 9: References

Greg Goodman; Austin ISD fine arts director
Jeremy Spicer; head high school director. SASI director
Don Haynes; Head high school band director.
Paul Pape; percussion director
Mike Clark; "Bass Drum technique" manual
Chad Dempsey; Head band director

Part 10: My selections & preferences

Snare: heads - Hybrid (white) ; MX5 snare-side
sticks - Promark DC20 Dennis DeLucia
tuning - bottom (high!!); top (middle to high)

Tenor: heads - Evans Corps Clear (2-ply)
sticks - Pro-mark "Mike Stevens" tenor stick
tuning - 4th between drum 1 & 3. drum2 down a M2
from drum1. 4th between drum 2 & 4.

Bass: heads - Evans MX1
mallets - Promark
tuning - (bottom to top) 5th, 4th, 3rd, 3rd

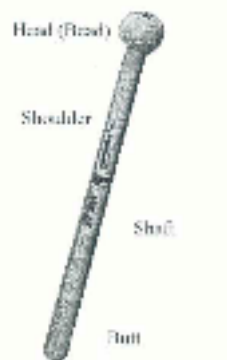
Bass Technique Manual

Introduction

The Bass Drum Ensemble (Bassline), if utilized efficiently, can provide many key elements within an outdoor performing ensemble. These include melody, counter-melody, tempo, rhythmic "feel", and the lower depth needed to produce a full ensemble sound. Given an individual player's role within a Bassline, it can provide a different set of challenges than an individual snare or tenor player. Rhythmic accuracy, timing, independence, and awareness become crucial to the success of a Bassline. One must work as an individual while at the same time achieving the presence of a single unit with NO individuals. Many percussionists are under the impression that bass drum is an "easy" instrument, with many instructors defaulting students to bass drum if they are not "good" enough for snare drum or tenor drums. While bass drum is one of the easier instruments to learn, it is also one of the most difficult to master.

Mallet Description

The Bass Drum Mallet is comprised of four main sections - the head, or bead, the shoulder, the shaft, and the butt. The only part that will touch the head of the drum will be the bead of the mallet. We will frequently run sections of music on the rims; in this case, the shoulder of the mallet will be used to play on the rim. The mallet head should never touch ANYTHING but the inside of its plastic bag and the head of the drum. The felt used to make the mallet head is very susceptible to dirt and moisture, and will puff up like a marshmallow when exposed to either of these elements. It will not only make your mallets look bad, but it will severely affect your sound quality as well. TAKE CARE OF YOUR EQUIPMENT.



Implement

The implement is how you hold the mallet, or grip. A correct implement is the difference between good sound quality and bad sound quality - not to mention it looks good.



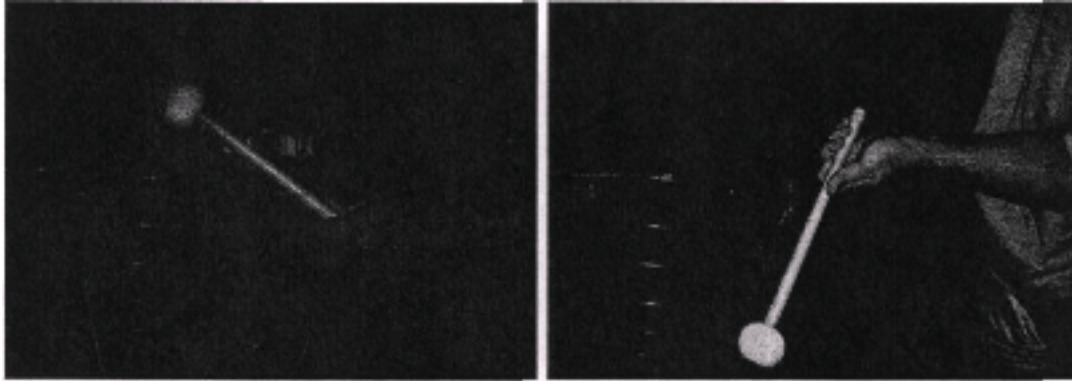
Checkpoints:

- Bead should be in the center of the drum head.
- Mallet should be at roughly a 45 degree angle, as well as making the bead angle slightly in towards the head of the drum - NEVER LET THE MALLETS "HANG OUT" (angle out)!
- Thumb should be at a 12:00 o'clock position.
- Thumb and forefinger create the grip - this should always be tight. This creates the fulcrum, which allows the mallet to "teeter-totter" back and forth between the downward stroke and the pull of the fingers, as needed.
- No gap between lower parts of the thumb and forefinger - always closed. If a gap is present, the fulcrum is not being used correctly.
- Fingers curled around mallet, relaxed. The fingers are used to create the velocity for the initial stroke, and also act as the primary control units for rebounding (such as diddles).
- Butt should not extend past the bottom of the hand - velocity and balance will not be achieved if you choke up too much on the mallet.
- Arms should be relaxed, close to the body - DO NOT TENSE UP!
- Forearm should be parallel to the ground, with upper arm parallel to body.
- Head should be an extension of the back - do not lean head forward or backward.
- Shoulders and arms should be relaxed. DO NOT TENSE UP.
- Knees should be straight, but NOT LOCKED. There will rarely be a time when you will bend your knees, even during marching.
- The heels and toes on both feet should touch each other. Along with this, your weight should be distributed 60 percent to the front and 40 percent to the back - at all times. This is controlled with the feet. Too much weight to the back will cause you to take smaller steps and throws off your balance. Too much weight forward will cause you to hunch over your drum.

Set Position Hands: Hands are gripping the mallets, and mallets should be flat against the rims. Mallets are perpendicular to the ground. If correctly placed, the rims should fit just inside your implement (grip).

Stroke

The "stroke" is basically the movement of the mallet used to create sound. This, of course, is the most vital part of playing the drum - no stroke, no sound. The stroke is primarily the same on all drums, but there are times when we will use what is called a "whip" technique, used for louder dynamics, which will be discussed further.



Stroke Sources and Production

Several different factors are needed to produce a good stroke - these include the correct use of the wrist, fingers, and forearm. The primary motion comes from the rotation of the wrist, as if you were to turn a door knob. The secondary motion happens from the fingers and the forearm to create the velocity needed to produce good sound quality - smaller muscles move objects faster than larger muscles. The finger-squeezing motion is similar to operating a spray gun nozzle on a water hose, without the use of the index finger (which is being used as the fulcrum). The finger motion for bass drum technique is a little easier though, as a bass drum mallet is much slimmer than the width of a spray gun handle and trigger. There is really only a slight motion involved with the forearm - it can basically be defined as dropping the forearm just a bit, about 2 inches total. This slight motion allows the wrist to turn over farther. This motion can be increased as dynamics get very high; however, very rarely will there be a call for any type of dynamic over the double forte (**ff**) range. This ties into the whip technique described earlier, as this technique is a more pronounced dropping of the forearm to achieve the desired height. It is called the whip technique because of the fluidity of the mallet when the proper technique is used - like the end of a whip being cracked. While defining strokes, one key point to remember is to ALWAYS STAY RELAXED!! This is detrimental to the fluidity of the stroke. As the player becomes tense, the stroke becomes very lethargic and heavy, which is the exact opposite of the technique we are striving to attain.... *relax.....*

Stroke Types

There are three main stroke types that we will use - the **Legato Stroke**, the **Marcato Stroke**, and the **Staccato Stroke**. The Legato stroke is a smooth and continuous stroke with fluid wrist and finger motion. The Staccato stroke is a freeze stroke. This stroke will be used mostly in the Two-height classification. This is done by making a stroke at the designated height then stopping, or freezing the stick in the playing position after the stroke is made. To freeze the stroke you must squeeze the stick at the fulcrum and with the back three fingers. The Marcato Stroke will be used rarely, as it can cause undesirable sound quality and distortion.

Mallet Heights

In order to create a uniform style and technique we will use a system of matching dynamics, which will be defined in inches from the bead of the mallet to the drumhead. These are not exact measurements, so do not tape a ruler to your drum. Of course the deciding factor to all of this is the music. The music must dictate what techniques and heights are to be used. We do not let the technique or heights dictate the music. This is why we must have mastery of our technique - so we can attain the highest possible level of musicianship. These dynamics markings are all relative to the height.

Dynamic Level

no marking
horizontal line over note (Tenuto)
accent over note
rooftop accent over (Marcato)

Stick Height

3" - slight rotation (example 1)
6" - a dollar bill (example 2)
9" - just over 45 degrees (example 3)
12" - parallel to ground (example 4)



example 1



example 2



example 3



example 4

Playing Areas

The Bass Drum represents a small challenge in that the player cannot see where the mallets and hands are positioned in relation to the playing surface. We can solve this by the use of muscle memory and by "checking" the hand or forearm (depending on the size of the drum) against the rim. There are only 3 areas on the drum that we will strike:

Center - Produces the fullest sound from the head. This is where most of the playing will happen.

Halfway - Used for softer passages, when a full sound quality is needed but without the volume.

Edge - Same as Halfway, but at an even lower volume.

It is also important to note that the player must be very precise when playing in Center. Just the smallest bit off will cause a different sound than another player striking the drum in the correct place - most notably softer volume and an inability to read the rhythms produced from the drum. All players must learn to use the same technique, same dynamic values, and strike the head in the same playing area - if not, there will be problems, most notably "Volume Ticks", which as the name implies, are inconsistencies with volume throughout the line. Remember we are striving to sound like one unit, not single individuals.

Note On Rims

First and foremost, when in an ensemble situation, playing on the rim of a Bass Drum *cannot be heard more than 30 feet away*. The only result you will get from hacking away at the rim will be a cracked rim. Whenever we play on the rim, it will be no more than at a 9 inch height. Now, we will utilize the rims in a couple of different ways. Occasionally, we may run book segments during a "down time" (when we are in a rehearsal, but not being worked with) on the rims. Other times the player will have a part in the book that

calls for the use of the rim. During these times, we have to remember that even though the book may call for double forte dynamic, this is only in reference to the head - NOT THE RIM. The rim click is usually written into arrangements for timing purposes only, not for the sound. Remember, the rim click cannot be heard in an ensemble situation - so keep the rim clicks down.

Timing and Rhythmic Accuracy

Timing and Rhythmic Accuracy are *THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN A BASSLINE*. Individual players within a Bassline must have these two elements to be successful as a whole. The Bassline must not only be able to play the same rhythms and rudiments as the Snare or Tenors, but must also split those rhythms and rudiments up among 5 (or 4, depending on the size of the Bassline) individual players as well. With those aspects in mind, one can quickly realize how challenging the Bass Drum really is. Timing and Rhythmic Accuracy, as a whole, can be summed up as being able to produce a note in the allotted time frame (which can be anywhere from a minute to a split second), the ability to play within a defined tempo, and the ability to make adjustments within a time frame as necessary. We will develop these skills with a number of exercises written specifically for these purposes.

Practice Tips

- Always practice with a metronome.
- Try to use a mirror whenever possible in order to see how your hands are set.
- Always mark time. This allows you to become comfortable with your feet moving in a steady, constant time. This also allows you to develop and practice the independence required to march while playing complex patterns with your hands.

Find a way to practice just as you would on a bass drum. One idea would be to get a foam wrist rest (the type used with computer keyboards – BUT DO NOT USE A GEL ONE!), cut it in half, and tape either piece to each side of a door with duct tape, about sternum height. Find

a way to keep the door in place (some sort of wedge or door stop on either side) so that when you play the door does not move around. This will help you define your strokes, heights, and finger techniques a lot better than just playing on a pad.

Back to Basics

BUCKS

Exercise No. 1

get to 180

A-B-C DOUBLE BEAT

Exercise No. 2

HUK-TA-DIT

Exercise No. 3

TRIPLET 4-2-1

Exercise No. 4

EIGHT ON A HAND

Exercise No. 5