



LEICESTER DRUM SCHOOL

BASIC DRUM PATTERNS & CONCEPTS

FOR BEGINNERS

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Introduction

Although this book is aimed at the beginner, some of the information, especially the theory, may be new to more experienced drummers. Inside you will find many exercises which, with a little patience and determination, will help you get to grips with the basics of drumming. I cannot emphasise the importance of working with a good tutor to avoid developing bad habits.

YouTube is a fantastic resource for tutorials, but you can't beat having an actual tutor for real feedback on your playing.

The exercises in this book range in difficulty from the *Initial* level to *Grade 2* of the Trinity Drum Kit Syllabus, with most of the patterns based around simple backbeats. These kinds of beats are very common in popular music and learning to play them with feel and commitment is a rite of passage for every drummer!

Practising with a metronome is essential in order to develop a good sense of time. However, once you have mastered a few of the patterns, try playing along to some well-known songs too. See if you can keep in time with them. If you can't, find some slower tracks. Remember as a drummer your primary roll is that of a timekeeper.

Start listening to great drummers for inspiration. You might never be able to play as well as them and you should never, ever worry about that. What you will gain is an understanding of feel, playing in time and the realisation that every drummer's style is unique to them.

A Standard 5 Piece Drum Kit

A standard kit comprises the following drums:

- 1 x Snare Drum (14")
- 1 x Bass Drum (22")
- 2 x Toms (12" and 13")
- 1 x Floor Tom (16")

And the following cymbals:

- 1 x Hi Hat Cymbals (14")
- 1 x Crash Cymbal (16")
- 1 x Ride Cymbal (20")

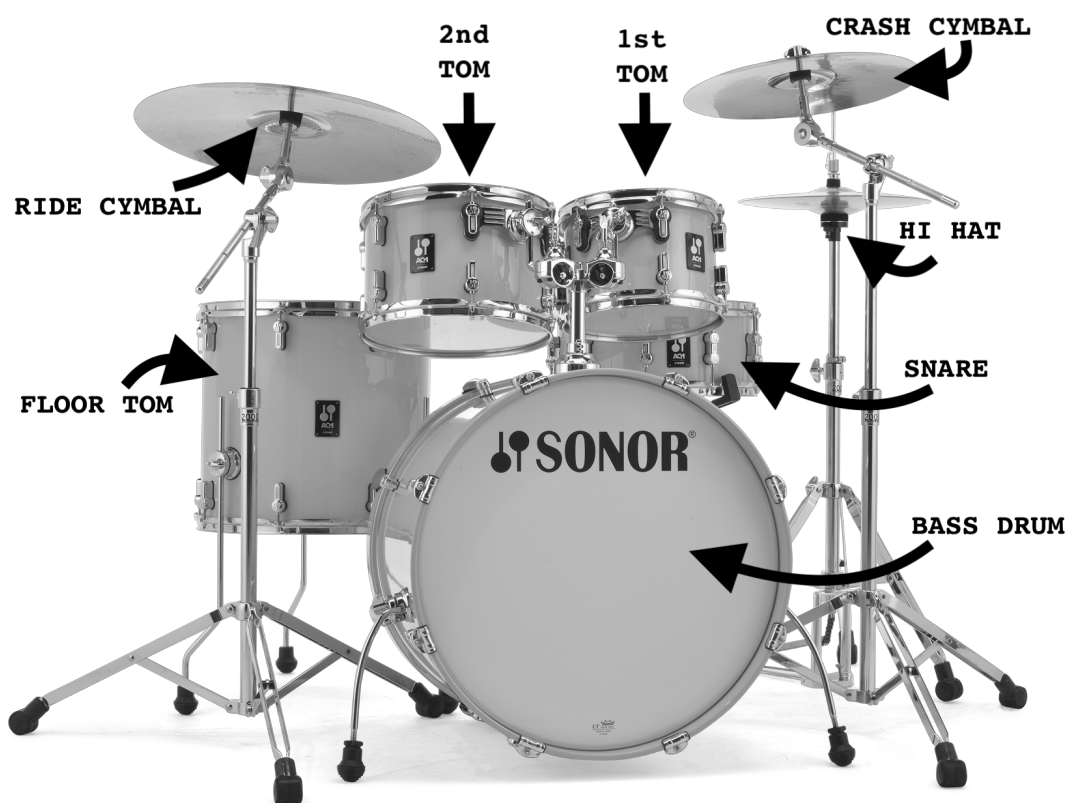
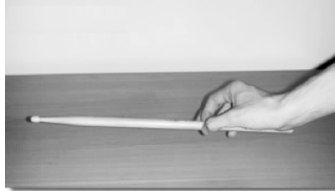


Fig 1: Parts of the drum kit.

Drum kits are often marketed as 'Rock' or 'Fusion' sizes. The sizes of the drums above fall into the rock category. Fusion sizes are smaller, typically with a 20" Bass Drum, and 10", 12" and 14" Toms.

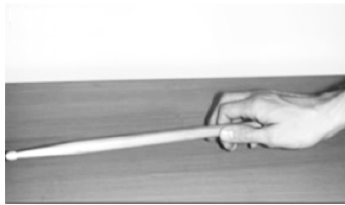
How to Hold Drumsticks

1. To start, lay a drumstick in front of you with the tip pointing away. Pinch the stick about 1/3 of the way along, using your thumb and forefinger, palm facing downwards.



Step 1

2. Next, roll the stick across your forefinger so that it is now between the **first and second joints** of the index finger but touching the first joint (**Steps 2 & 3**).

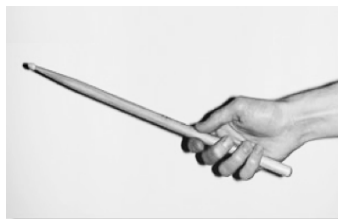


Step 2



Step 3

3. Now that you are holding the stick with the thumb and index finger, palm still facing down, curl the other fingers loosely around the stick (**Step 4**). Don't grab the drumstick tightly, since as you hit the drum, the stick should pivot around your index finger.



Step 4



Step 5

4. Finally, tilt your hand at a slight angle to the right for the right hand, and to the left for the left hand (**Step 5**). This will enable you use the 3 curled fingers to bounce the stick, and is also a more natural hand position. For the matched grip, of course, the drumsticks are held with left hand a mirror image of the right, forming capital 'A' shape (**Step 6**).



Step 6

NOTATION

Reading Music

In order to understand how to read music, it is necessary to become familiar with the principles of *musical notation*; the set of visual symbols and instructions which musicians translate into a musical performance. Whilst musical notation is a vast subject, you don't need to know a lot to get started.

Drum Legend

Music for the drum kit is written on a *stave* comprising five horizontal lines. Different elements of the drum kit are positioned on these lines, or the spaces between them. As can be seen in the legend below, drums are represented by dots, and cymbals by crosses.

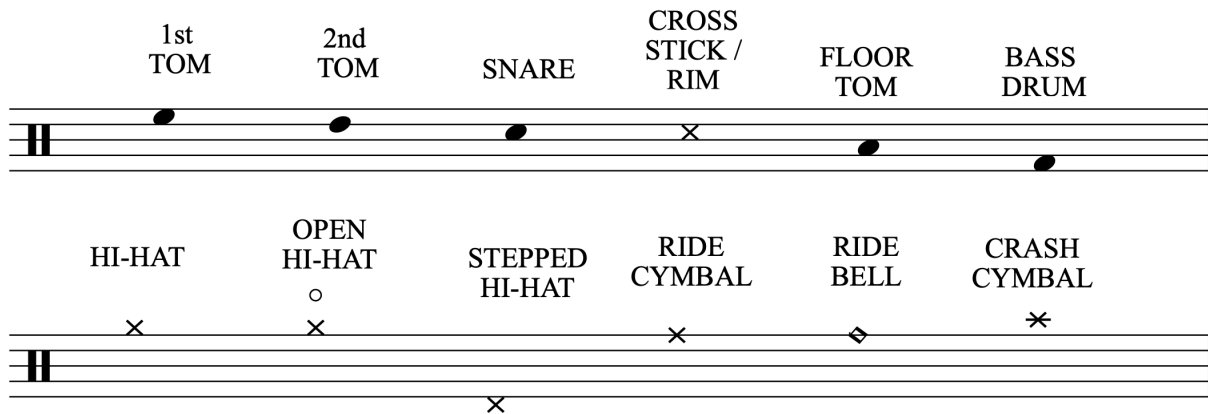


Fig 2: Drum legend showing the positions of the drums and cymbals on the stave.

Drum kits can vary in size dramatically. Rock and metal drummers often have large kits, sometimes with two bass drums and multiple toms. At the other end of the spectrum, jazz drummers often settle for much smaller kits, with just a couple of toms.

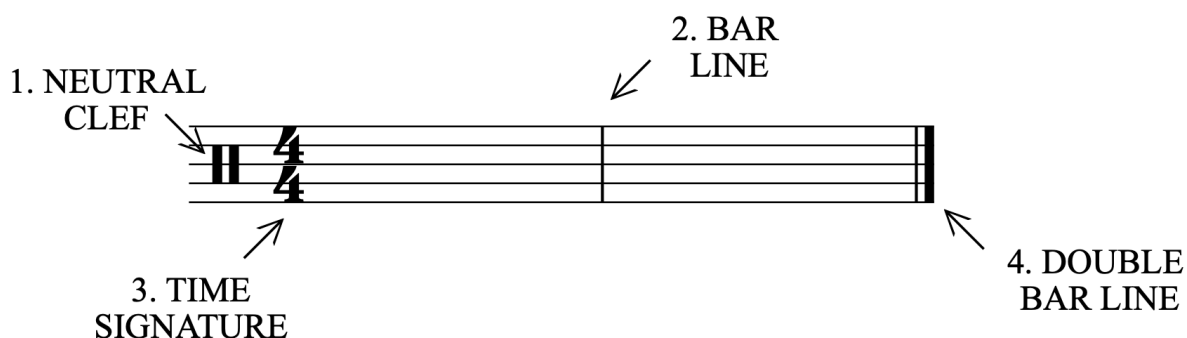


Fig 3: Drum kits vary in size. Compare Terry Bozzio's kit (left) to my kit (right).

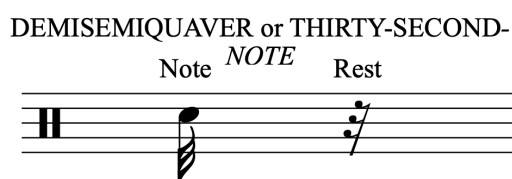
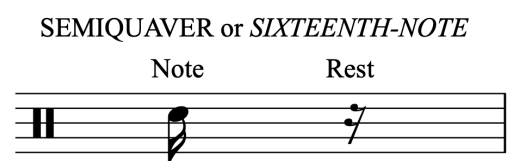
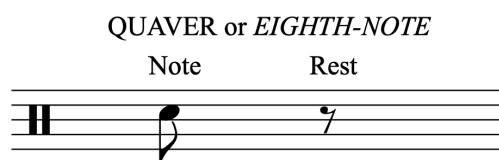
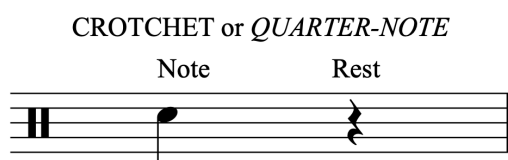
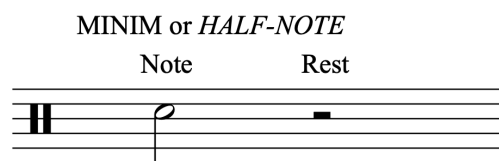
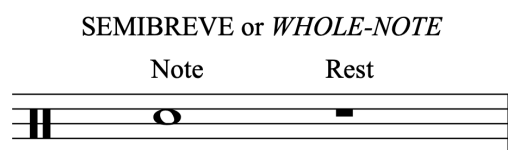
As a consequence, drum notation is not standardised, but some common practises exist. Usually, higher pitched instruments (e.g., 1st and 2nd toms, and cymbals) are placed near the top of the staff, whilst those with lower pitches (e.g. bass drums and floor toms) are positioned near the bottom.

Parts of the Stave

1. These two short vertical lines make up the *neutral clef*. This is required because drum classed as non-pitched percussion.
2. Music written on the staff is divided into bars to make it easier to read. A *bar line* is used to indicate the end of each bar.
3. Each bar contains a fixed number of notes, determined by the two numbers at the beginning of a stave; the *time signature* (see over page).
4. To indicate the end of a piece or section of music, a *double bar line* is placed at the end of the stave.



Different types of notes have different durations or *values*; some are long and some are short, and each note has an equivalent *rest*. The U.K. and U.S. names for notes are given below, with the U.S. names in *italics*.



Although drums and percussion instruments use the same kinds of notes as all the other instruments, duration is less important to drummers because drums cannot sustain sounds in the same way as, say, a piano or a violin. A semibreve performed on a drum sounds the same as a semiquaver!

NB: Drummers get around this by playing *closed rolls*, where the notes are played very close together to produce a long, continuous sound.

Time Signatures

Time signatures comprise two numerals, one on top of the other. As a beginner, it's sufficient to understand the top numeral as the *number of beats in the bar*.



Fig 4: The time signature 4/4

For many years, I didn't understand time signatures much beyond this; the meaning of the bottom numeral remained a total mystery! The penny finally dropped when I learnt about the American method of naming notes, which explains them as fractions: instead of crotchets we get $\frac{1}{4}$ notes; quavers are $\frac{1}{8}$ notes; semiquavers are $\frac{1}{16}$ notes. This is important to remember, as drummers often refer to things like 'straight $\frac{1}{8}$ patterns' and ' $\frac{1}{16}$ note patterns'.

Thus, in the time signature 4|4, the bottom 4 implies $\frac{1}{4}$ notes, so it's telling us there are four $\frac{1}{4}$ notes to the bar:



Fig 5: Four ' $\frac{1}{4}$ notes' or 'crotchets' in a bar of 4/4

In 12|8, the bottom numeral refers to $\frac{1}{8}$ notes. The top numeral tells us there are twelve $\frac{1}{8}$ notes to the bar.



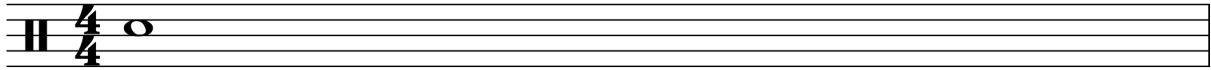
Fig 6: Twelve ' $\frac{1}{8}$ notes' or 'quavers' in a bar of 12/8

COUNTING

Note Reference Page

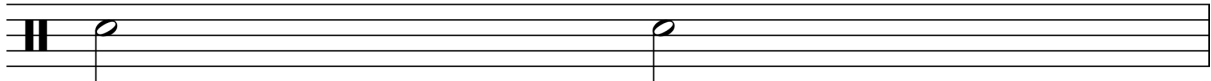
One SEMIBREVE

1 2 3 4



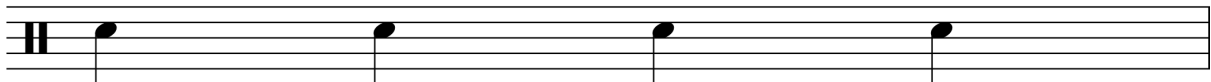
Two MINIMS

1 2 3 4



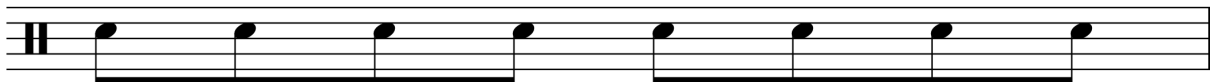
Four CROTCHETS

1 2 3 4



Eight QUAVERS

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



Sixteen SEMIQUAVERS

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a



Snare Drum Counting Exercises


The following exercises are for snare drum only, so a single line staff is all that's required. You will also come across the *repeat symbols*: two lines followed by two dots at the start and end of a section of music:



Technically, any music written in between these two symbols is performed twice; but for now, play these exercises several times before moving on.

Practise Tips


Exercise 1: Counting Crotchets

- Set the metronome to ♩ = 50.
- Count 1,2,3,4 aloud as you play. Counting is provided in the first two lines.
- Always count evenly.
- Some bars contain crotchet rests . You do not play rests, but you must count them!

Exercise 2: Crotchets and Quavers

- Set the metronome to ♩ = 50.
- This time, count 1+2+3+4+ (saying, '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and') as you play. This is how we count quavers.

Exercise 3: Introducing the Quaver Rest

- Set the metronome to ♩ = 50.
- Again, count 1+2+3+4+ aloud as you play.
- Some bars contain quaver rests . Remember, you do not play rests, but you must count them.

Exercise 4: Common Rhythmic Groupings

- This exercise introduces semiquavers into the mix. These should be counted 1e+a 2e+a 3e+a 4e+a (saying, '1e and a', etc...).
- Alternate your sticking throughout.
- Learning to quickly recognise these rhythms will aid with sight reading.

Exercise 1

Counting Crotchets

1.1

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

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

1.2

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

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

1.3

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

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

1.4

Continue to write in the counting

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

1.5

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

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

1.6

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

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

Exercise 2

Crotchets and Quavers

2.1 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

2.2 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1+2+3+4+

Continue to write in the counting

2.3 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

2.4

2.5

2.6

2.7

2.8

Exercise 3

Introducing the Quaver Rest

3.1 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

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

3.2 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

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

Continue to write in the counting

3.3 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

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

3.4

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

3.5

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

3.6

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

3.7

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

3.8

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

Exercise 4

Common Rhythmic Groupings

Alternate sticking throughout the following exercises, i.e. RLRL

4.1

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a



4.2

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a



4.3

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a



4.4

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a



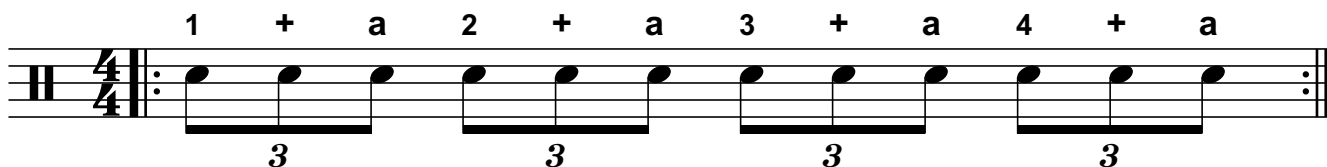
4.5

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a



4.6

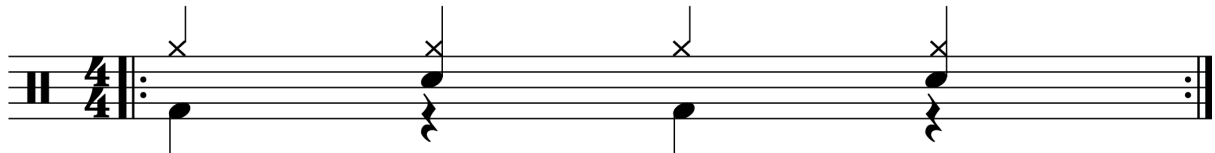
1 + a 2 + a 3 + a 4 + a



BACKBEATS

Backbeats

Have you ever clapped along to a piece of music? The chances are you were clapping along to the *backbeat*; an emphasis placed on beats 2 and 4. In rock and pop, it is common for the backbeat to be played on the snare drum, but it can be accented by any instrument.



Practise Tips

Exercises 5 and 6: Backbeat Patterns

- There are four different stages to these exercises. Work through each stage, repeating several times before attempting the final one.
- These exercises introduce the *hi-hat* and *bass drum*.
- Make sure hands and feet are aligned when played together.
- Count the slowly and evenly, saying '1+2+3+4+'. Don't rush!
- As always, it is recommended that you use a metronome when practising; set the metronome to a tempo you feel comfortable with, i.e., not too fast to begin with.

Exercises 7: Bass Drum Variations

- These exercises explore different ways of varying the bass drum pattern.
- Many of these patterns are found in rock and pop songs and are essential for any drummer wishing to play that kind of music.

Exercises 8: Two Bar Patterns

- These exercises are each two bars long.
- Play each line four times, then move straight onto the next line.
- Try adding a crash cymbal on beat one of the first bar.
- Watch out for the extra snare drums!

NB: These exercises can also be played on the ride cymbal.

Exercise 5

Backbeat Patterns

The exercises below use the following instruments:

	SNARE	BASS DRUM	HI-HAT
H	●	●	×

5.1 Begin by playing four hi-hats with the right hand. Count out each beat evenly:

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
	↓		↓		↓		↓	

5.2 Next, whilst maintaining the hi-hat pattern, add in the snare drum on beats 2 and 4 with the left hand:

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
	↓		↓		↓		↓	

5.3 Now try the hi-hat pattern with the bass drum on 1 and 3:

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
	↓		↓		↓		↓	

5.4 Finally, combine all three instruments; the hi-hat, bass drum on 1 and 3, and snare on 2 and 4. This is a typical backbeat pattern, common in rock and pop.

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
	↓		↓		↓		↓	

Exercise 6

Backbeat Patterns

- 2.1 This time, play eight quaver hi-hats with right hand. Again, remember to count evenly:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

- 2.2 Next, add in the snare drum on beats 2 and 4 with the left hand. Keep counting!:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

- 2.3 Then try the same eight note hi-hat pattern with the bass drum on beats 1 and 3:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

- 2.4 Finally, combine all three instruments; the hi-hat, snare and bass drum. This backbeat is sometimes referred to as a 'straight eight' pattern.

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Exercise 7

Bass Drum Variations

7.1

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

7.2

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

7.3

7.4

7.5

7.6

7.7

7.8

7.9

7.10

Exercise 8

Two Bar Patterns

8.1

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

8.2

8.3

8.4

8.5

8.6

Drum Fills

Put simply, a drum fill is anything that isn't the main beat of a song. They are usually placed at the ends of verses and choruses to give the song forward momentum. When a fill is used as the intro to a song, it is usually to quickly grab the listener's attention.

Drum fills are not just an excuse for the drummer to play as many notes as possible; they provide musical signposts. Often drum fills convey information about the song's structure. When fills are used throughout a piece of music, it is often to signal the conclusion of each musical phrase or chord progression. A drum fill placed at the end of a song's verse may be used to generate anticipation of the chorus.

NB: Sometimes fills become famous, like the intro to Led Zeppelin's 'Rock 'n' Roll' or the tom fill in Phil Collin's 'In the Air Tonight'.

Practise Tips

Each of the following exercises combines a simple backbeat pattern with a fill. Although the beat is written for the hi-hat, feel free to try it on the ride cymbal.

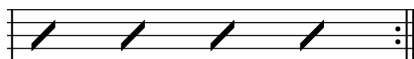
Exercise 9: Introducing Fills

- Practise looping each of these exercises, ensuring that movement between the two patterns (the beat and fill) is smooth.
- Count evenly and don't forget to use a metronome.
- Exercises 9.4 and 9.5 begin with a crash cymbal. When looping, practise moving from the floor tom in the fill to the crash.

Exercise 10 & 11: Four Bar Phrases with Fills

- In these exercises, groups of quavers and semiquavers are used to create interesting fills around the kit.
- The bar where the fills are to be played utilises *slash notation*:

Fill



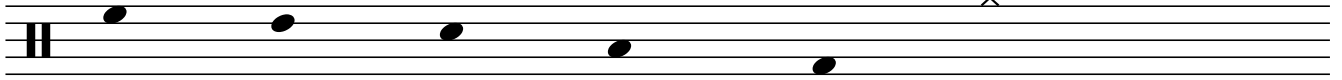
- Slashes are often used in drum charts in bars that are left open to interpretation.
- Refer back to Exercise 4 to help with counting these rhythms.

Exercise 9

Introducing Fills

The rhythms below use the following drums/cymbals:

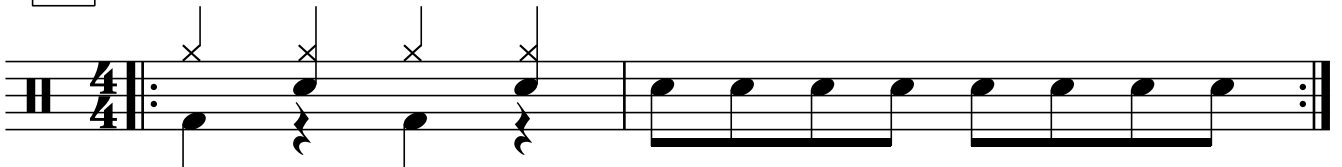
1st TOM 2nd TOM SNARE FLOOR TOM BASS DRUM HI-HAT CRASH
 ● ● ● ● ● x *



⤿ = Repeat previous bar

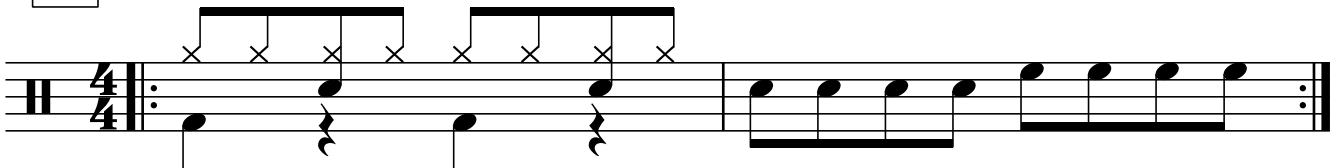
9.1

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

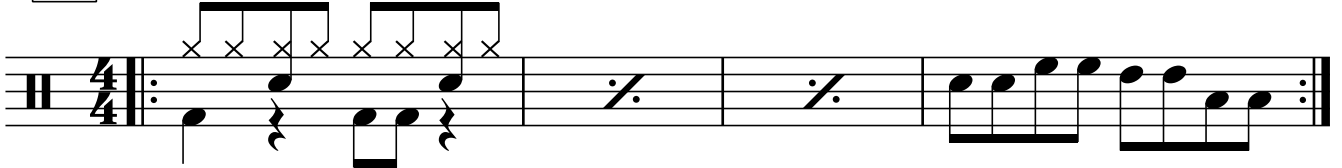


9.2

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

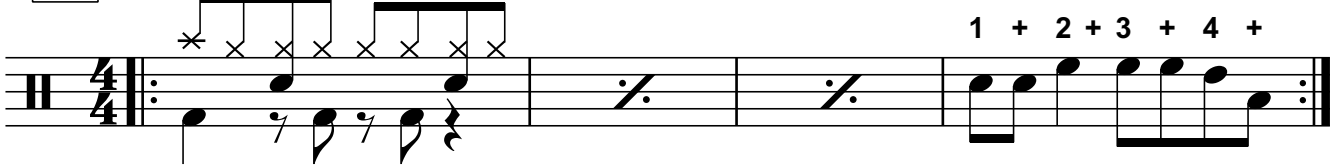


9.3



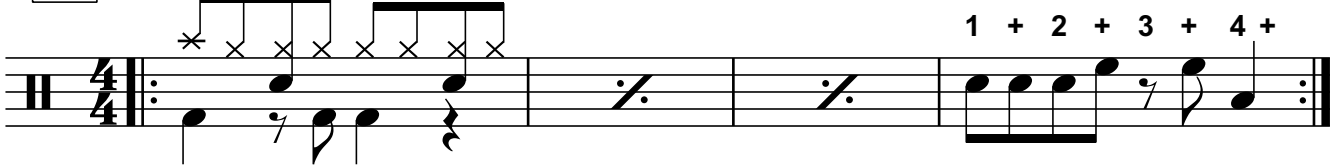
9.4

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



9.5

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



Exercise 10

Four Bar Phrase with Fills 1

The following exercise comprises a four bar phrase with slash notation in the fourth bar. Each fill contains semiquavers and should be played using alternate sticking (i.e., RLRL).

Fills

10.1

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

10.2

1 e + a 2 + 3 e + a 4 +

10.3

1 + 2 e + a 3 + 4 e + a

10.4

1 + 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 +

10.5

10.6

10.7

10.8

Exercise 11

Four Bar Phrase with Fills 2

The following exercise comprises a four bar phrase (i.e., a backbeat lasting three bars with a fill in the fourth). Try using each of the fills below (1-8) to complete the phrase.

Fills

11.1

R L R L R L R R L

11.2

R L R R L R R R L R

11.3

R L R L R L R R L

11.4

L R L R L L R L R

11.5

R L R L R R R L R L

11.6

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

11.7

R L R L L R L R L

11.8

R L R L R L R L R

Hi-Hat Pedal

There are three main ways to play the hi-hat: a) with a stick; b) with the foot pedal (stepped hi-hat) or; c) a combination of both stick and foot pedal to create open hi-hat patterns.



Fig 7: Hi-hat stand, showing cymbals in 'open' position.

Most of the patterns this book has covered so far have focused on playing a closed hi-hat with a stick. The hi-hat is said to be closed when the top and bottom cymbals are pulled together by pressing down on the foot pedal.

Different effects can be achieved by varying the pressure of the foot on the pedal. For example, when the foot presses down firmly, playing on the cymbals with a stick will produce a 'tight' hi-hat sound. Slackening off the pressure a little produces a loose or 'trashy' sounding hi-hat, where the two cymbals are loose enough to rattle against each other.

Pulsing the foot on the pedal causes the cymbals to play against each other, to produce a 'chick' sound. This is referred to as 'stepped hi-hat'. Among other things, this can be used to keep a metronome-like pulse through a rhythm or, when placed on beats 2 and 4, to support the backbeat.

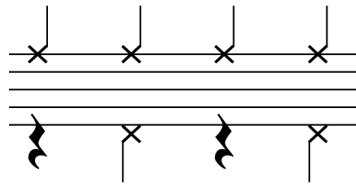


Fig 8: Stepped hi-hats played on the backbeat.

In music notation, open hi-hats are indicated by a small circle over the hi-hat note; closed hi-hat are shown by a cross. Playing open hi-hat patterns requires a degree of co-ordination; from a closed position, the foot pedal needs to lift as the stick comes down to play the hi-hat cymbal.

In some patterns, the hi-hat maybe opened and closed consecutively. When this occurs make sure the ‘chick’ sound of the closing hi-hat coincides with the stick playing the cymbal.

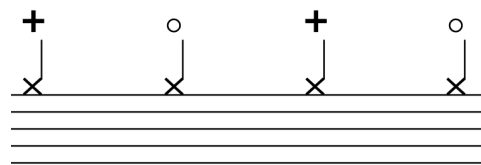


Fig 9: Hi-hat notation: a small circle indicates ‘open’ and a cross is used for ‘closed’.

Practise Tips

Exercise 12 & 13: Stepped Hi-Hat

- Patterns which require co-ordinating all four limbs are not easy! If necessary, leave out the stepped hi-hat at first; learn to play the other elements and then add the stepped hi-hat when ready.

Exercise 14: Open Hi-Hat

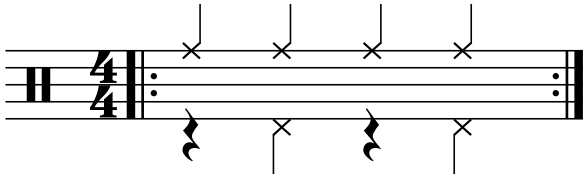
- To achieve a good hi-hat sound, don’t open the cymbals so wide that you only play the top cymbal. Allow a finger space between both cymbals so that they rattle together when struck.

Exercise 12

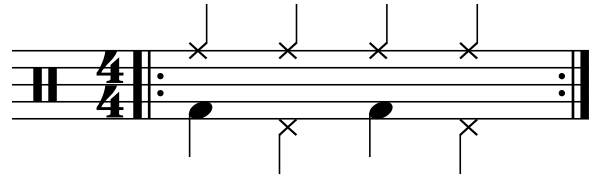
Stepped Hi-Hat

These exercises introduce the *stepped hi-hat*. Play crotchets on the ride cymbal throughout.

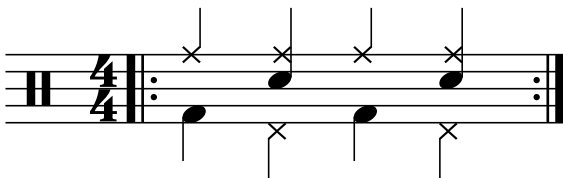
12.1



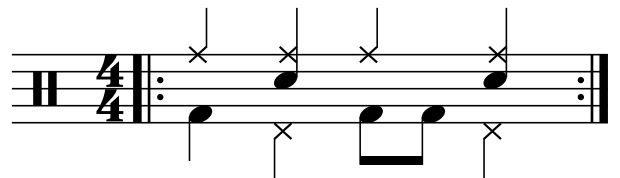
12.2



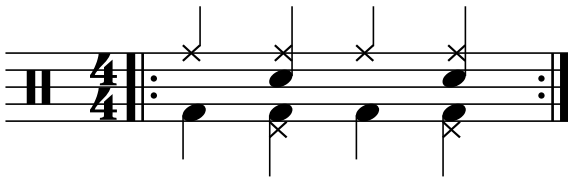
12.3



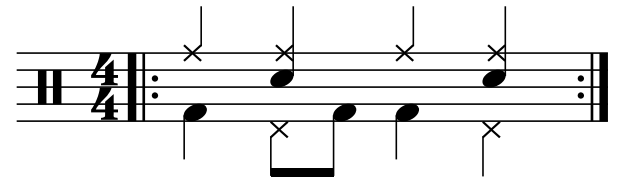
12.5



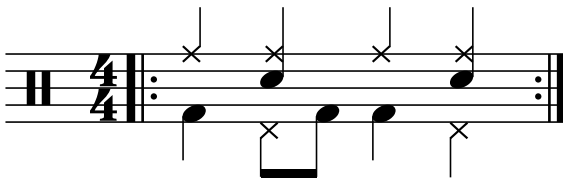
12.9



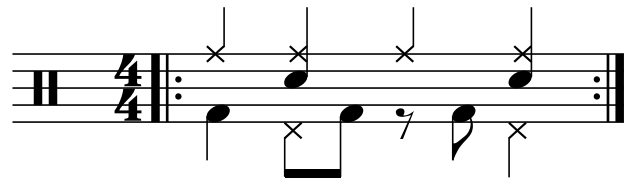
12.6



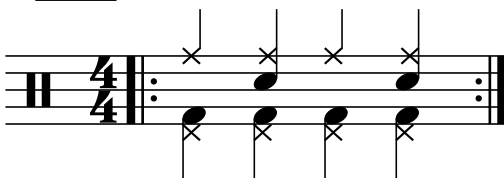
12.7



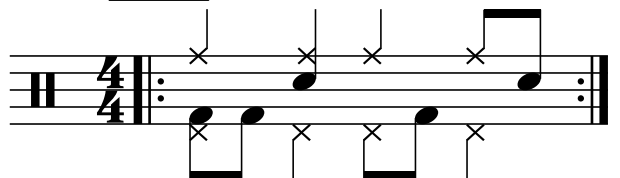
12.8



12.9



12.10



Exercise 14

Open Hi-Hat

Musical notation for Exercise 14, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of eight notes with alternating '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

14.1

Musical notation for exercise 14.1, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

2

Musical notation for exercise 2, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

3

Musical notation for exercise 3, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

3

Musical notation for exercise 3, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

5

Musical notation for exercise 5, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

6

Musical notation for exercise 6, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

7

Musical notation for exercise 7, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.

8

Musical notation for exercise 8, showing a 4/4 time signature and a sequence of notes with '+' and 'o' symbols above them.