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Playing Basic Rhythms On The Drum Kit

On this page we'll be learning how to play some basic rhythms around the kit using the snare drum and the toms. If you don't have a middle tom, you can replace all middle tom notes with snare drum notes.



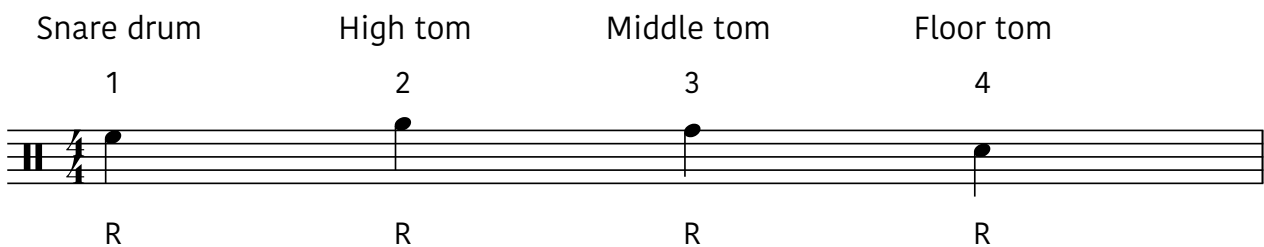
In this book, sticking patterns (which hands to use for a given pattern) are written for people who are right handed. If you are left handed, all sticking patterns should be reversed - right hand notes become left hand notes and vice-versa. The kit will also be set up differently for left-handers (see videos online).

As a general rule when moving around the drums, start every new beat (1, 2, 3 and 4) with your strong hand. This will help you to avoid crossing your hands over. You'll notice that the sticking patterns given to you will follow this general rule.

First, try playing quarter notes around the drums with your strong hand.

R = Right hand
L = Left hand



1.   



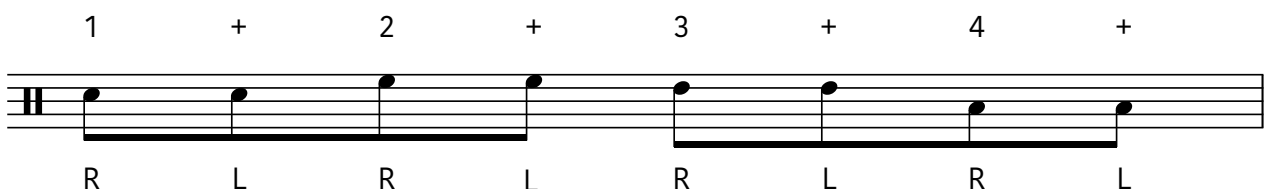
Snare drum High tom Middle tom Floor tom

1 2 3 4

R R R R

Next, try playing 8th notes clockwise around the drums, alternating between your strong hand and weak hand. Playing with a click here will help with your timing.

Exercises 2-9 target tempo = 65-70bpm

2.   

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

R L R L R L R L

Next, try playing 16th notes around the kit. Note that whether the note stems go up or down has no effect on the rhythm.

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

Track 6

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

Try alternating between 16th notes and 8th notes. Start on the snare drum:

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

Track 7

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

Now try this pattern around the kit:

5. 1 e + a 2 + 3 e + a 4 +

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

Here's another pattern created using 8th notes and 16th notes. Try it on the snare to begin with:

6. 1 + 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 +

Track 8

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

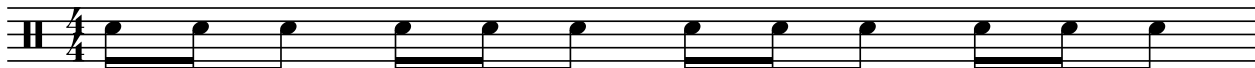
Try it around the kit:

7. 1 + 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 +

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

Here's a new rhythm. Count 16th notes but don't play the last one 'a'. This creates a group of 3:

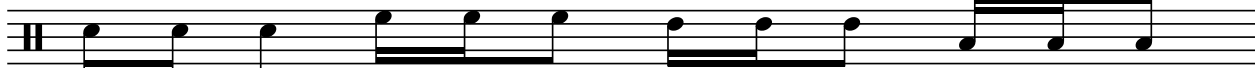
8. 1 e + (a) 2 e + (a) 3 e + (a) 4 e + (a)

Track 9 

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

Try it around the kit:

9. 1 e + (a) 2 e + (a) 3 e + (a) 4 e + (a)

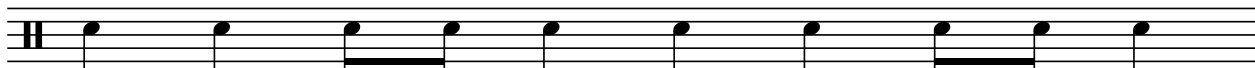


R L R R L R R L R R L R

Now try alternating this new rhythm with groups of 8th notes. First, try this on the snare:

Exercises 10-13 target tempo = 70-80 bpm

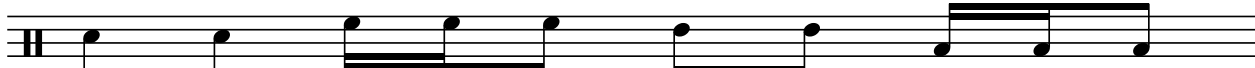
10. 1 + 2 e + 3 + 4 e +

Track 10 

R L R L R R L R R L R

Now move it around the kit:

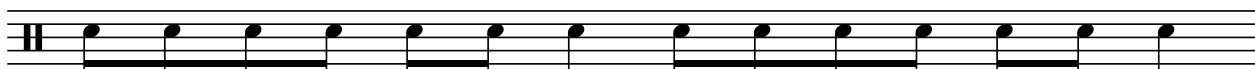
11. 1 + 2 e + 3 + 4 e +



R L R L R R L R R L R

Let's try the same with 16th notes. First on the snare, then around the kit:

12. 1 e + a 2 e + 3 e + a 4 e +

Track 11 

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

13. 1 e + a 2 e + 3 e + a 4 e +



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

Basic Drum Beats And Fills

In this section you'll learn to play your first drum beats. Playing drum beats or 'grooves' is a drummer's main job and provides a clear, strong rhythm for a band to play along to. You'll also learn to pair them with the rhythms you've learnt so far. When these rhythms are paired with a drum beat they're called drum fills.

To play a drum beat, cross your right hand over your left hand. Your right hand will play the hi-hat, left hand will play the snare and right foot will play the bass drum using the bass drum pedal. This will all be flipped if you are left-handed.



Beat 1

First try pairing hi-hats with bass drums:

1.

Then try pairing hi-hats with snares:

2.

Now try playing two of each and repeat:

3.

Then try playing one of each and repeat:

4.

The beat above can be heard in 'The Jean Genie' by David Bowie

Let's try this beat with a simple fill. Where repeat signs are featured in an exercise, play it in a loop until you can play it comfortably.



Exercises 5-13 target tempo = 80-85 bpm

5.

// **Suggested songs to learn:** 'The Jean Genie' by David Bowie, 'You Make My Dreams (Come True)' by Daryl Hall & John Oates

Work on speeding this up. Then, try playing the beat for 3 bars followed by the same fill on the 4th bar:

6.

Now try one bar of the beat followed by an 8th note fill:

7.

Track 13

This exercise will help you to practice getting back to the hi-hat after playing the fill:

7a.

Now try playing the beat for 3 bars followed by the same 8th note fill:

8.

Here, instead of playing the middle tom on the 3rd beat of the fill, try playing the snare. This can be called moving around the kit in an 'L-shape'!



9.

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

R L R L R L R L

Make this beat and fill into a 4-bar sequence:

10.

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

R L R L R L R L

Now try playing a fill using both 1/4 notes and 8th notes:

11.

1 2 3 4 1 + 2 3 + 4

R L R R L R

Try these other similar fills:

12.

1 2 3 4 1 + 2 + 3 4

R L R L R R

13.

1 2 3 4 1 2 + 3 + 4

R R L R L R

In this new beat, you'll be playing 8th notes on the hi-hat instead of 1/4 notes. This means that you'll have extra hi-hats in-between every kick and hi-hat or snare and hi-hat:

Try it with a fill:



This beat can be heard in '1999' by Prince



Exercises 1-7 target tempo = 65-75 bpm

1. Track 17

This exercise will help you to practice getting back to the hi-hat after playing the fill:

1a.


Let's try this in a 4-bar sequence:

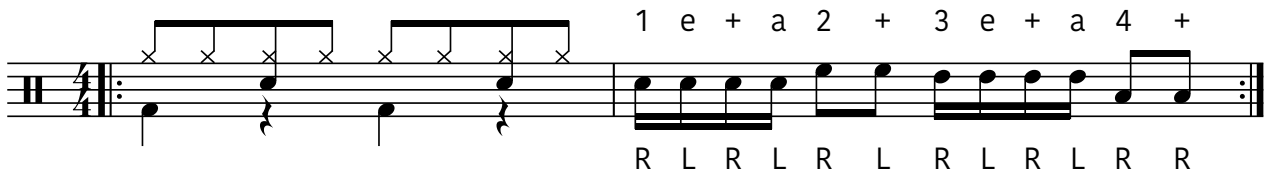
2.

Now try playing the fill in an L-shape:

3.

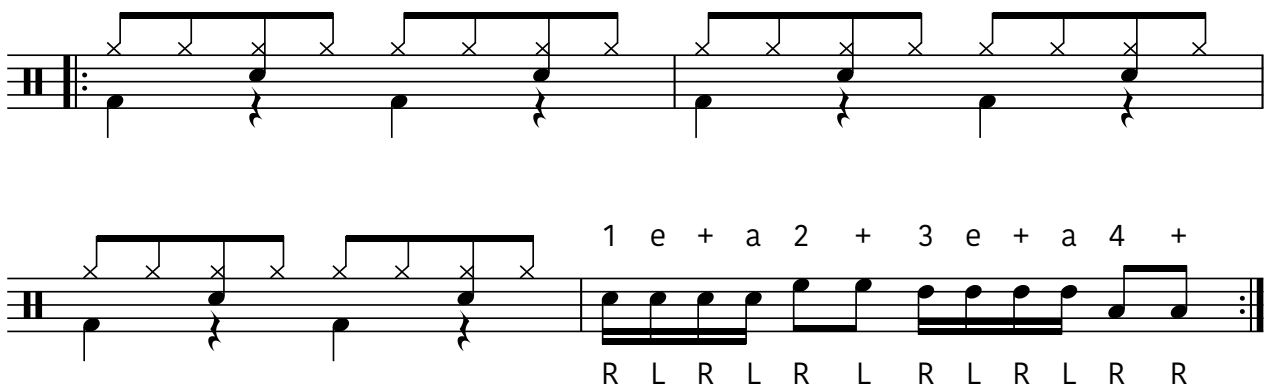
Try that process again but with another fill idea:

4.  Track 18



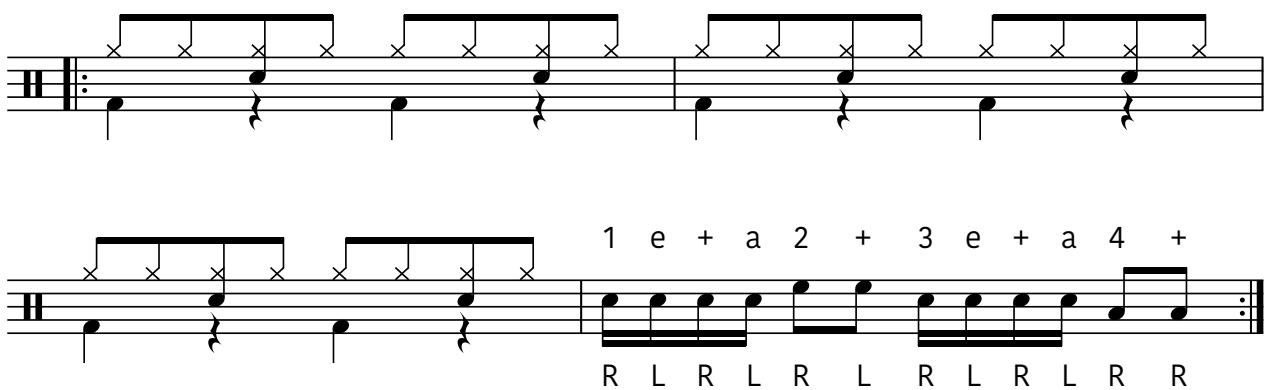
1 e + a 2 + 3 e + a 4 +
R L R L R L R L R L R R

5.



1 e + a 2 + 3 e + a 4 +
R L R L R L R L R L R R

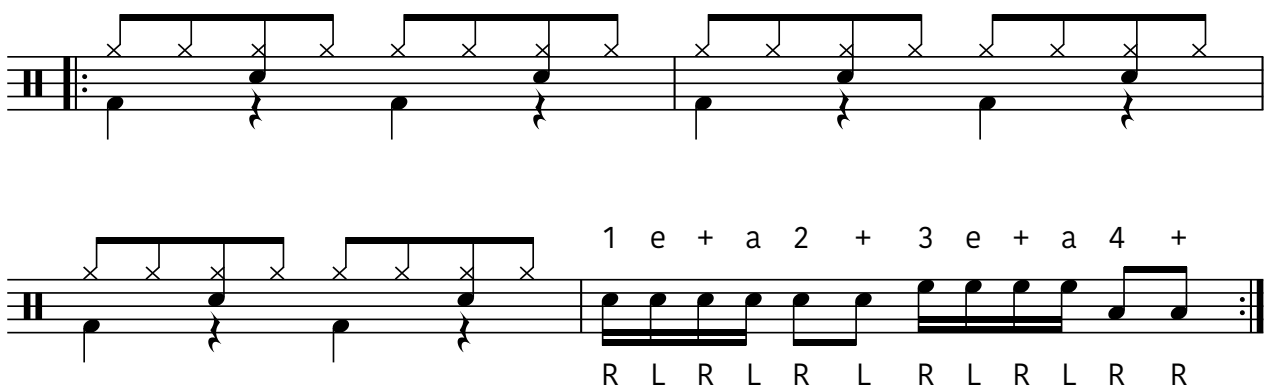
6.



1 e + a 2 + 3 e + a 4 +
R L R L R L R L R L R R

Here's one more variation:

7.



1 e + a 2 + 3 e + a 4 +
R L R L R L R L R L R R

Try this new drum beat:

Let's try it with a fill:

Exercises 1-4 target tempo = 65-75 bpm

1.

Now develop this beat and fill into 4 bars. Note that this time the fill starts on the high tom and finishes on the snare.

2.

Let's try using another fill rhythm:

3.

Develop:

4.



The beat below can be heard in the intro of 'Yellow' by Coldplay



Try this beat:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Here's a new rhythm. Try counting all of the 16th notes but don't play the second one 'e'.



Track 21

1 (e) + a 2 (e) + a 3 (e) + a 4 (e) + a

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

Now try using it in some fills with the new beat. Let's start with this one, where you'll combine it with quarter notes:

Exercises 1-7 target tempo = 70-80 bpm

1.

R R L R R R L R



Track 22

Next, try alternating the new rhythm with groups of 8th notes:

2.

R R L R L R R L R L



Track 23

Now develop:

3.

R R L R L R R L R L

Now try playing the new rhythm on every beat of the fill. You can practice exercise 4b before coming back to 4a.

4a.

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



Track 24

Try this exercise to help you practice getting back to the hi-hat after playing the fill in 4a:

4b. 1 + a 2 + a 3 (4)

R R L R R L R

Develop:

5. 1 + a 2 + a 3 + a 4 + a

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

Try alternating between the new rhythm and the other 3-note rhythm that you learned earlier on:

6. 1 + a 2 e + 3 + a 4 e +

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

Develop:

7. 1 + a 2 e + 3 + a 4 e +

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

Beat 5

Try this new beat:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



The beat above can be heard in 'Everlasting Light' by The Black Keys



In the exercise below, try playing the beat for 3 bars, followed by a fill. Then try playing along to 'Everlasting Light'. There are no fills - it's simply this beat all the way through!

Target tempo = 75-85 bpm

1. 1 + a 2 + 3 + 4 +

R R L R L R R R L R L

Playing the Ride and Crash Cymbals

The ride and crash cymbals have different uses. 'Crashing' on a cymbal means playing single hits on the edge of a cymbal with the shoulder of your stick. 'Riding' on a cymbal means playing a repeating pattern on top of a cymbal with the tip of your stick.




Crashing



Riding

In the first exercise, instead of playing the first note on the hi-hat with a bass drum, play a single crash and bass drum. You may like to practice playing the first 3 notes a few times before trying the whole exercise.

Exercises 1-4 target tempo = 70-80 bpm


1.  Track 27

R

1 + a 2 + 3 + a 4 +

R R L R L R R L R R


Here, instead of playing your right hand on the hi-hat, play it on the ride cymbal. Everything else stays the same. When playing the ride, try striking it half way in-between the bell and the edge of the cymbal.

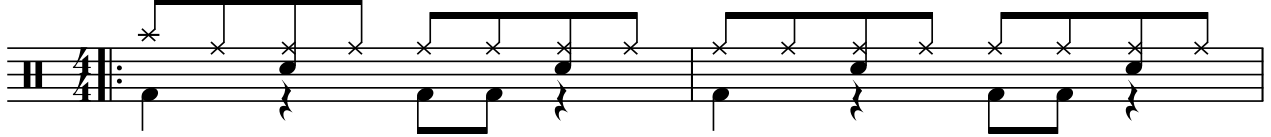
2.  Track 28

1 + a 2 + 3 + a 4 +

R R L R L R R L R R

Now try starting with a crash, then continue on the ride.

3.  Track 29



1 + a 2 + 3 + a 4 +

R R L R L R R L R R

Moving between the hi-hat and the ride cymbal is something that can be found in many songs. For example, at the start of a song you might begin by playing a beat on the hi-hat. Then, you could play a fill to take you into the next section, a chorus or bridge for example, where you might move to the ride.

In the next exercise you'll be combining exercises 1 and 3 together. Here, you'll play the first 4 bars on the hi-hat and the last 4 bars on the ride.

4.



1 + a 2 + 3 + a 4 +

R R L R L R R L R R



1 + a 2 + 3 + a 4 +

R R L R L R R L R R