

Starting With Correct Grip

There is nothing more important for the beginning percussionist than to establish the correct snare drum grip. The percussionist with an improper grip will continually be hampered as he or she tries to learn and develop more advanced snare drum technique.

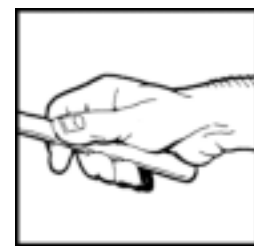
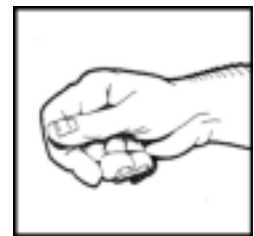
Matched Grip versus Traditional Grip

Historically, two ways have evolved to hold the drum sticks: the *traditional grip*, with the left wrist working in a rotating fashion and the right in a waving motion, and the *matched grip*, where both wrists work in a waving motion.

The matched grip (holding both sticks the same way) is preferable to the traditional grip for several reasons. First, it is much easier to learn. Students often do not learn the left hand traditional grip correctly. Second, the matched grip is a universal grip which, with very little modification, can be used to play marimba, xylophone, bells, timpani and drum set, in addition to snare drum. The traditional grip was developed centuries ago for use on a slanted marching drum. Now, with flat carriers, the matched grip can be used even for marching. However, many still choose to use traditional grip for its visual appeal. This is not a sufficient reason to begin snare drum study with traditional grip, especially when students who choose to play other instruments in the percussion family will eventually have to learn matched grip anyway. On the other hand, the traditional grip has been used successfully for years by many professional percussionists. Ultimately, your teacher will be your best guide as to which grip will be best for you.

Steps to Learning the Matched Grip

1. Completely relax your hands. Notice that the fingers are slightly curved and that the thumb falls against the first joint of the index finger and not against the side of the hand.
2. Place the drum stick into the hand so as to maintain the hand's natural position. Maintain the gap between the thumb and the side of the hand. A fulcrum is created between the thumb and the first joint of the index and middle fingers - a "three-point grip."
3. The wrist must work in a waving motion which makes it necessary for the hands to be held palms down with the top of the hand flat.



Proper Stance & Drum or Pad Height

The snare drum or practice pad should be positioned so as to allow the free use of the arms and wrists. Usually, this will be slightly below the waist.




Once the grip has been established, play the following sticking patterns. Be sure to use a relaxed, waving motion.


Repeat each pattern many times at an even tempo.

1. R R R R | R R R R
2. L L L L | L L L L
3. R L R L | R L R L
4. L R L R | L R L R
5. R R L L | R R L L

Introduction to Accents

Accents are notes which are given more emphasis or volume, and are indicated by placing an accent mark (>) above or below a note. To produce an accent it is necessary to raise the stick which is about to play the accent. The following exercises should be practiced, paying careful attention to stick height. The arrows indicate when the stick should be lifted in preparation for the accent.

1. 

2. 

After the accent has been played, the stick must return to its original position unless it is going to play another accent. Each beat must end with the stick in position to correctly perform the next beat. It can now be seen that there are four basic ways to strike the drum:

1) *The "tap/down"*

The stick is positioned one inch above the drum head and returns to this position after striking the drum. Only the wrist is used. This prepares the stick to play another tap.

2) *The "stroke/up"*

The stick is positioned at approximately a forty degree angle, slightly below eye level, and returns to this position after striking the drum. The entire mechanism of the arm and wrist is used. This prepares the stick to play another stroke.

3) *The "tap/up"*

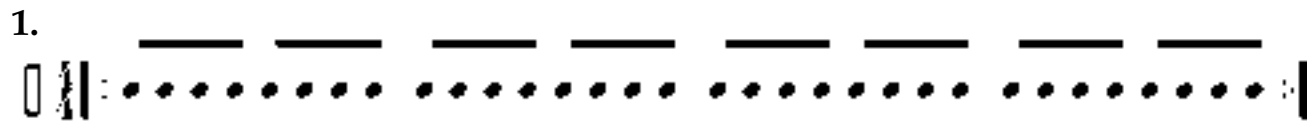
The stick is positioned one inch above the drum head, and returns to the stroke position after striking the drum. The wrist is used to play the tap, and the arm is used for the rebound. This prepares the stick to play a stroke.

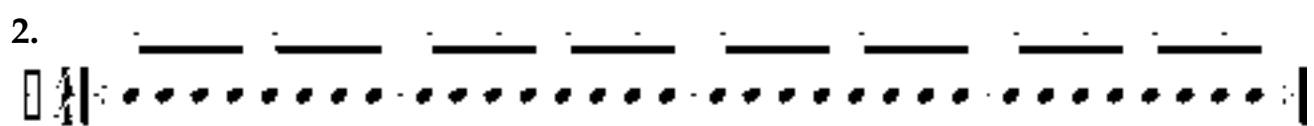
4) *The "stroke/down"*

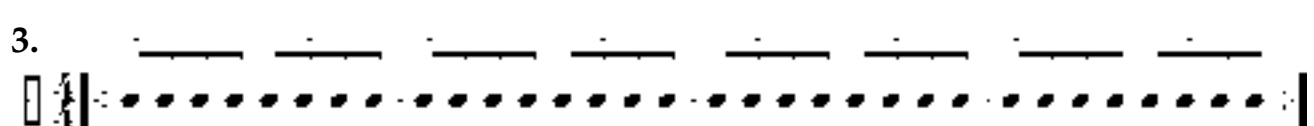
The stick is positioned at approximately a forty degree angle, slightly below eye level, and returns to the tap position after striking the drum. The entire mechanism of the arm and wrist is used to play the stroke and the wrist is used on the rebound. This prepares the stick to play a tap.

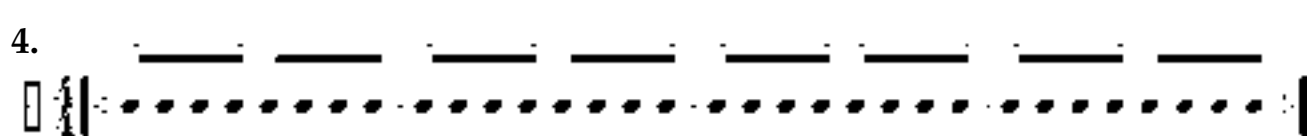
Accent Studies

Start each exercise with either hand. Use alternating strokes throughout.

1. 

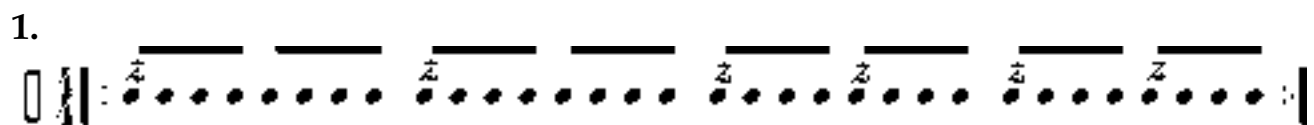
2. 

3. 

4. 

Buzz Studies

Buzz each note with a "z" on the stem.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 