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DRUM LESSONS IN AALSMEER · SINCE 2011

Starter Book

The first steps on the drum kit: reading, counting, the first beats and rudiments. Teachers' edition, free to use in your own lessons.

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

Anthony · dedrum.studio · Aalsmeer

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For the teacher

WHAT THIS IS

The starter book I have used since 2011 for beginning drummers from age ten and for adults: sixteen pages of theory, worksheets, rudiments, reading exercises and the first grooves and fills, in the order I teach them. One page a week is a good pace; faster is fine when a student is ready.

HOW I USE IT

Every page has the same skeleton: goal, explanation, notes, tempo and 'Done when'. That last one is the sign-off criterion: I only tick it when the student plays it for me, not when it 'more or less' works. At the back are two practice-week sheets (copy them as often as you like) and a tempo card where the student writes down the metronome setting per page. That card does more for motivation than any sticker.

WHAT YOU MAY DO WITH IT

Print it, hand it out, use it in your own lessons, for as many students as you like. Free. Keep the name dedrum.studio in it, don't change the content and don't sell it. Would you do a page differently? Email me, I'd love to hear what could be better.

ABOUT ME

I'm Anthony Marck Amirkhan, drum teacher in Aalsmeer, the Netherlands, and drummer (eight years with Sevdaliza, among others). All pages are typeset in LilyPond and grew out of real lessons with real students. More pages, the Dutch edition and a place to buy me a coffee if the book helps you: dedrum.studio/en/voor-drumleraren.

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Welcome

WELCOME

Great that you're taking up the drums. This book is yours: you use it in your lessons and pick it up at home when you practise. Write in it, tick things off and note your tempos. A book with pencil marks is a book that gets used.

HOW IT WORKS

Every page teaches one thing. At the top is the goal, then the explanation, then the notes. At the bottom is 'Done when': what you need to be able to do before you and your teacher tick it off. In between there is the odd worksheet to practise reading without sticks.

PRACTISING

Ten minutes a day beats an hour on Sunday. Slow and clean works better than fast and sloppy: speed comes by itself, control takes practice. Turn the metronome on and count out loud, even if it feels silly. At the back is a tempo card. Write down the tempo you reach for each page and you'll see your progress.

WHAT YOU NEED

A pair of sticks (5A is a good start), a practice pad or a cushion and a metronome (a free app is fine). A drum kit at home is nice, but not needed for the first months. Questions between lessons? Ask your drum teacher. Hearing protection belongs in the bag too: a filtered earplug, certainly behind a real kit.

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The drum kit on paper

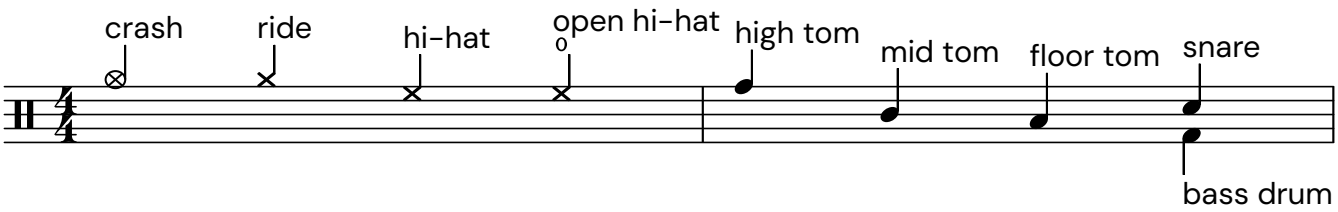
HOW YOU SIT

Set your throne so your knees are slightly lower than your hips. Keep your back straight and your shoulders loose, with the snare between your knees. Your right foot rests on the bass drum pedal, your left foot on the hi-hat pedal. If something pulls or hurts, you're not sitting right. Say so straight away.

HOW YOU HOLD THE STICK

Hold the stick about a third of the way from the back, between thumb and index finger. The other fingers wrap around it loosely, without squeezing. The stick must be able to bounce back after every stroke. Squeezing is the most common mistake, for children and adults alike.

WHERE EACH PART SITS ON THE STAFF



The two thick strokes at the start are the drum clef: this staff shows instruments, not pitches. Crosses are cymbals (hi-hat, ride, crash), dots are drums. The higher on the staff, the higher the sound. Above the notes you sometimes see R or L: right hand or left hand. Below the notes is how you count.

THE THREE RULES OF THIS BOOK

One: count out loud. Two: play slowly with the metronome. Three: only speed up once it works slowly. Every page ends with 'Done when': that is the agreement you tick off together.

DONE WHEN

You can point to the eight parts on the staff and know the three rules by heart.

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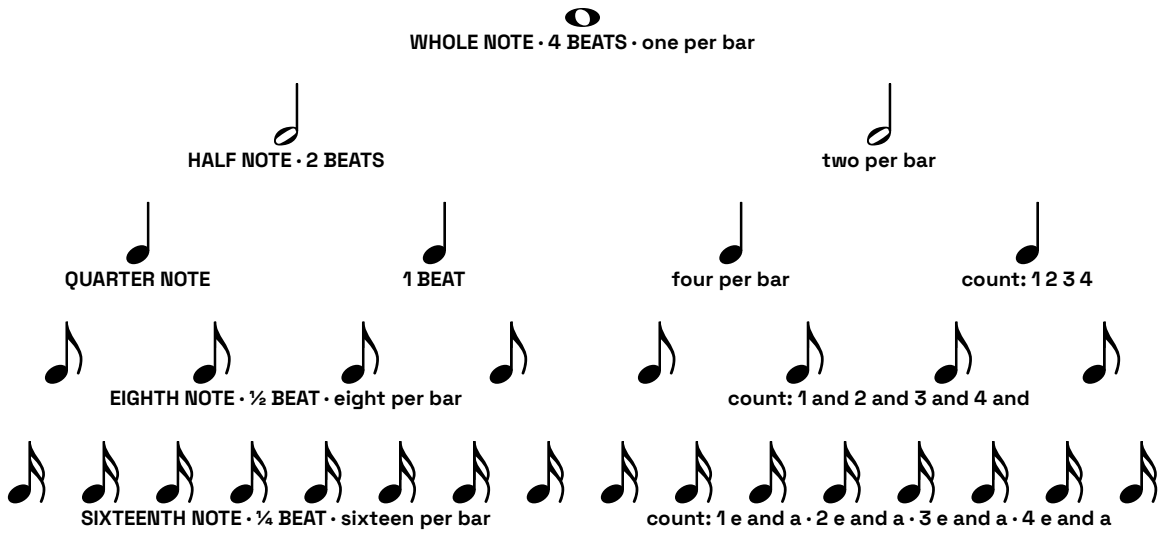
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How long is a note?

WHAT YOU LEARN

Every note has a shape that tells you how long it lasts. We count in 4/4: a bar has four beats and a quarter note is one beat. Everything you play on the drum kit is built from these five notes.

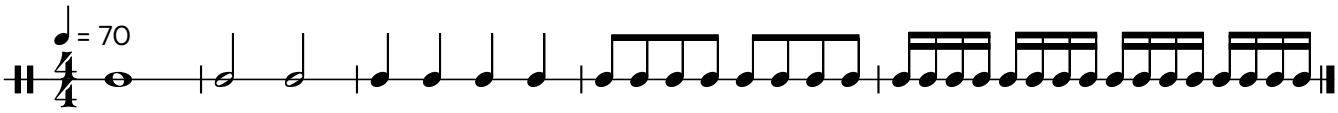
THE NOTE TREE



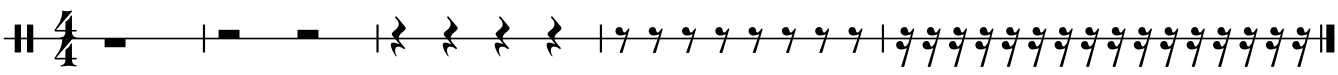
EVERY ROW LASTS THE SAME

One whole note lasts exactly as long as two half notes, four quarters, eight eighths or sixteen sixteenths. Each step down the tree splits the note in two. Eighths and sixteenths are joined per beat with a beam: two eighths or four sixteenths under one beam last one beat.

HOW IT SOUNDS ON THE SNARE



RESTS: SILENCE HAS A LENGTH TOO



REMEMBER

From left to right: whole rest (4 beats), half rest (2), quarter rest (1), eighth rest (½), sixteenth rest (¼). The whole rest hangs below the line (a hole in the ground), the half rest sits on the line (a hat). You don't play a rest, but you keep counting.

DONE WHEN

You can point to the five notes and the five rests and say how many beats they last.

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Fill the bar

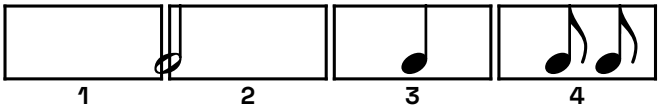
WHAT YOU'LL DO

A bar in 4/4 has four beats. Each box below is one beat. A whole note lasts 4 beats: it fills all four boxes. A half note lasts 2 beats. A quarter note lasts 1 beat. An eighth note lasts only half a beat: two eighths fit together in one box. In every row, draw just enough notes to fill the bar exactly.

HOW LONG EACH NOTE LASTS

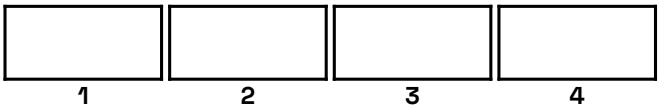
- whole note = 4 beats
- half note = 2 beats
- quarter note = 1 beat
- eighth note = half a beat

EXAMPLE: HALF NOTE + QUARTER NOTE + TWO EIGHTHS = 2 + 1 + ½ + ½ = 4

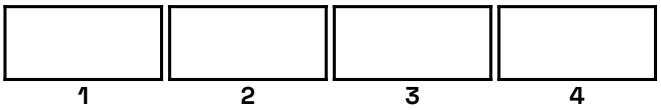


Exactly full!

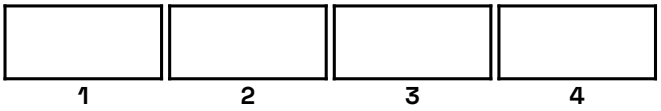
YOUR TURN: DRAW THE NOTES IN THE BOXES



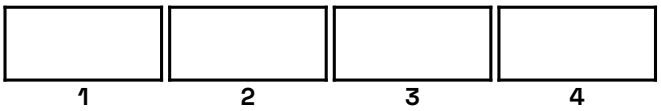
Four quarter notes.



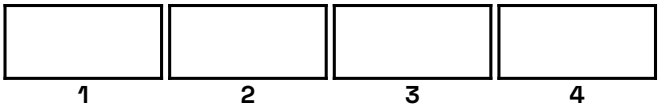
Two half notes.



One half note and two quarter notes.



Make up a bar yourself. Check: do you get exactly 4?



One more. Use eighths too!

DONE WHEN

Every bar is exactly full: not too much and not too little. Show your teacher how you count to 4 in every row.

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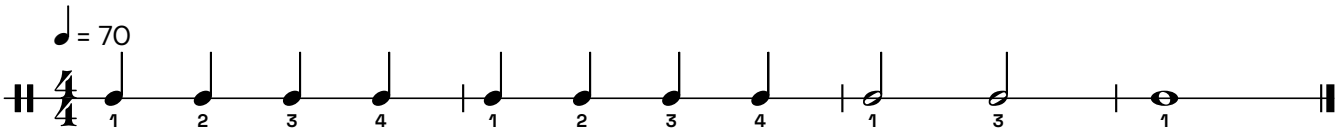
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What does 4/4 mean?

WHAT YOU LEARN

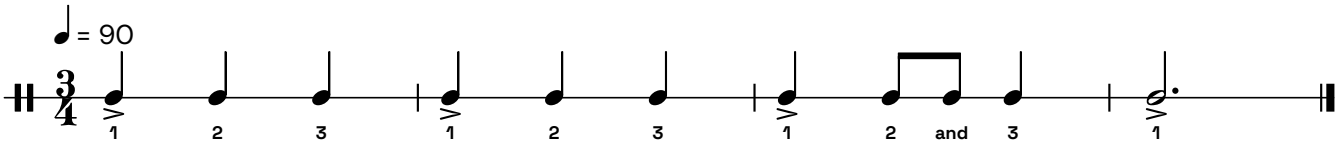
At the start of every part there are two numbers, one above the other: the time signature. The top number says how many beats go in a bar. The bottom number says which note is one beat: a 4 means quarter note, an 8 means eighth note, a 2 means half note.

4/4: FOUR BEATS PER BAR, THE QUARTER NOTE IS ONE BEAT



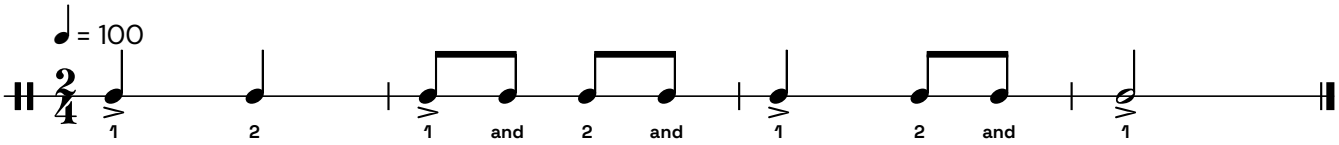
This is by far the most common time signature. Almost all pop, rock, hip-hop and dance is in 4/4. You hear it in the snare on 2 and 4. You can fill a bar with four quarters, two halves, one whole, or any mix that adds up to four beats.

3/4: THREE BEATS PER BAR (A WALTZ)



Count ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three. The first beat is heavy. Waltzes and 'Manic Depression' by Jimi Hendrix are in 3/4. A bar here is three quarters long, so a dotted half note (3 beats) fills the bar exactly.

2/4: TWO BEATS PER BAR (A MARCH)



Count ONE-two, ONE-two, left-right. You hear it in marches and polkas. It often sounds like 4/4, but the emphasis comes back every two beats instead of every four.

HOW TO READ THE TWO NUMBERS

TOP = how many beats in one bar (4, 3, 2, 6, 12 ...)

BOTTOM = which note is one beat (4 = quarter note, 8 = eighth note, 2 = half note)

SO 4/4 = four quarters per bar · 3/4 = three quarters · 6/8 = six eighths

WATCH OUT

A bar must always be exactly full: in 4/4 all notes and rests together add up to four beats, no more and no less. That is the rule that holds everything together.

DONE WHEN

With a new piece you can explain the time signature in one sentence: 'this many beats per bar, and that note is one beat'.

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The dot, the tie and the beam

WHAT YOU LEARN

Three signs that change the length of notes or join notes together. You'll find them in every drum part.

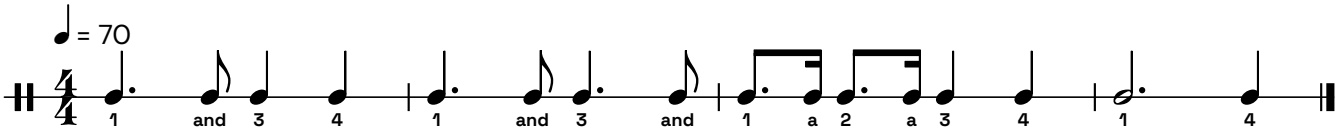
THE DOT: ONE AND A HALF TIMES AS LONG

dotted half note = 2 + 1 = 3 beats

dotted quarter note = 1 + ½ = 1½ beats

dotted eighth note = ½ + ¼ = ¾ beat

A dot after a note makes it half as long again: the note itself plus half of it. A dotted quarter (1½ beats) is almost always followed by an eighth (½ beat): together exactly 2 beats. That is the familiar 'long-short' rhythm.

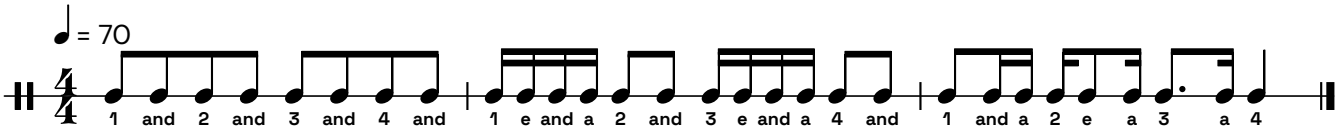


THE TIE: TWO NOTES BECOME ONE



A tie between two notes on the same line means: play the first and keep counting through the second without striking again. So you strike once, but the note lasts as long as both notes together. That is how a note can run across the bar line. On a drum you can't hear the length, but the next stroke does come later: count precisely.

THE BEAM: EIGHTHS AND SIXTEENTHS PER BEAT



Single eighths have a flag; next to each other they get a beam. The beam shows the beat: two eighths under one beam last one beat, just like four sixteenths under a double beam. That way you see at a glance where every beat starts. In 4/4 that is the agreement: never a beam across the beat, except for half a bar of eighths (four under one beam).

DONE WHEN

With a dotted note you say straight away how many beats it lasts, and with a tie you strike only once.

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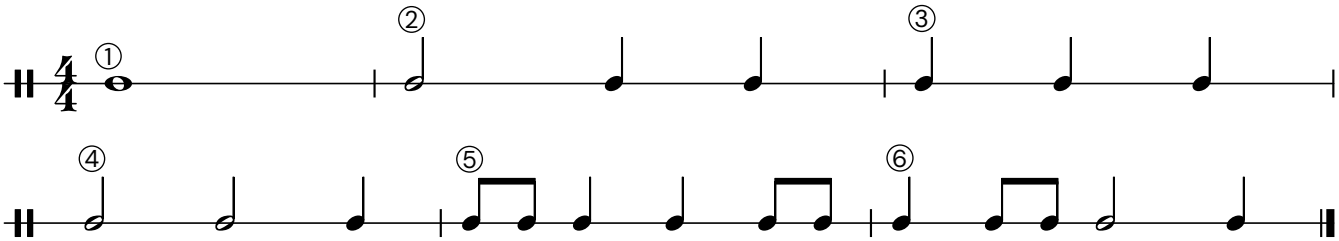
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Is the bar full?

WHAT YOU'LL DO

In 4/4 every bar has exactly 4 beats. No more and no less. But below I've cheated: some bars are too full and some aren't full enough. Add up the notes in every bar. A whole note is 4, a half is 2, a quarter is 1, an eighth is half a beat.

CHECK EVERY BAR



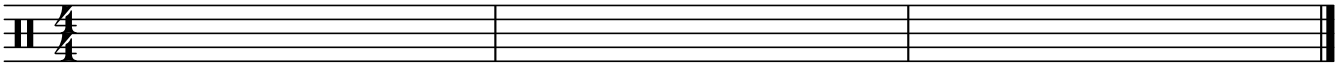
WRITE IN EACH BOX HOW MANY BEATS THE BAR HAS

bar 1	bar 2	bar 3	bar 4	bar 5	bar 6

Circle the number of every bar that has exactly 4 beats. Cross out the bars that are wrong.

FIX THE WRONG BARS

Write the bars that were wrong again here, now with exactly 4 beats. Take a note away or add one. Write the number of the bar above it.



DONE WHEN

You have the right number for all six bars and have repaired the three wrong ones. Then play bar 2 and bar 5 for your teacher and count along.

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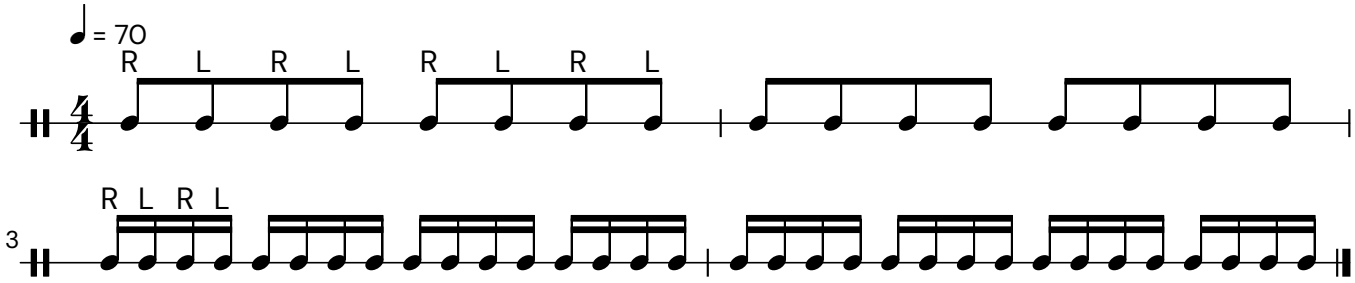
Single stroke roll

GOAL

The first rudiment: alternating, right-left, even and relaxed. This is the basis of every fill.

HOW TO DO IT

Play line 1 in eighths and line 2 in sixteenths. The same movement, twice as fast. Keep your wrists loose and let the stick bounce back. Count the sixteenths as '1 e and a, 2 e and a'.



TEMPO: 70 → 120. A minute per tempo, only go up when it stays relaxed.

DONE WHEN

With your eyes closed you can't hear which hand is playing: right and left sound exactly the same.

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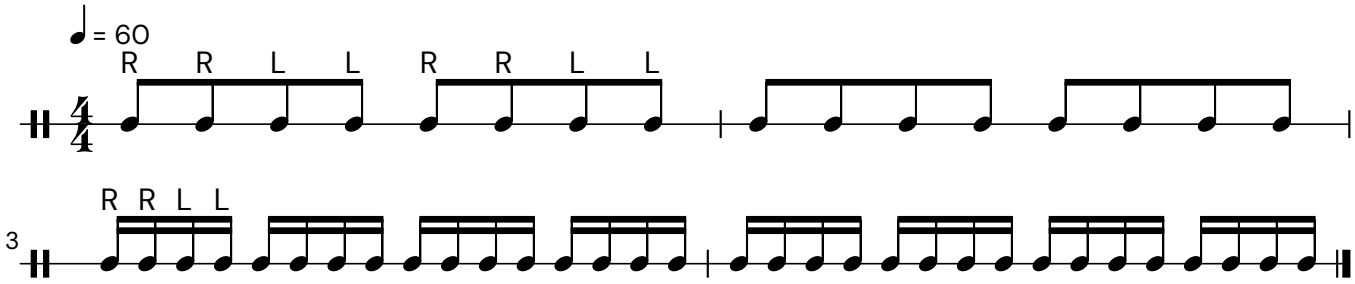
Double stroke roll

GOAL

Two strokes per hand: right-right-left-left. The second stroke comes from the bounce of the stick, not from force.

HOW TO DO IT

Start very slowly in eighths and let the second stroke of each hand come 'by itself'. Then in sixteenths. The second stroke must not be softer than the first.



TEMPO: 60 → 110.

DONE WHEN

All four strokes per group sound equally loud and you can keep it up for 30 seconds.

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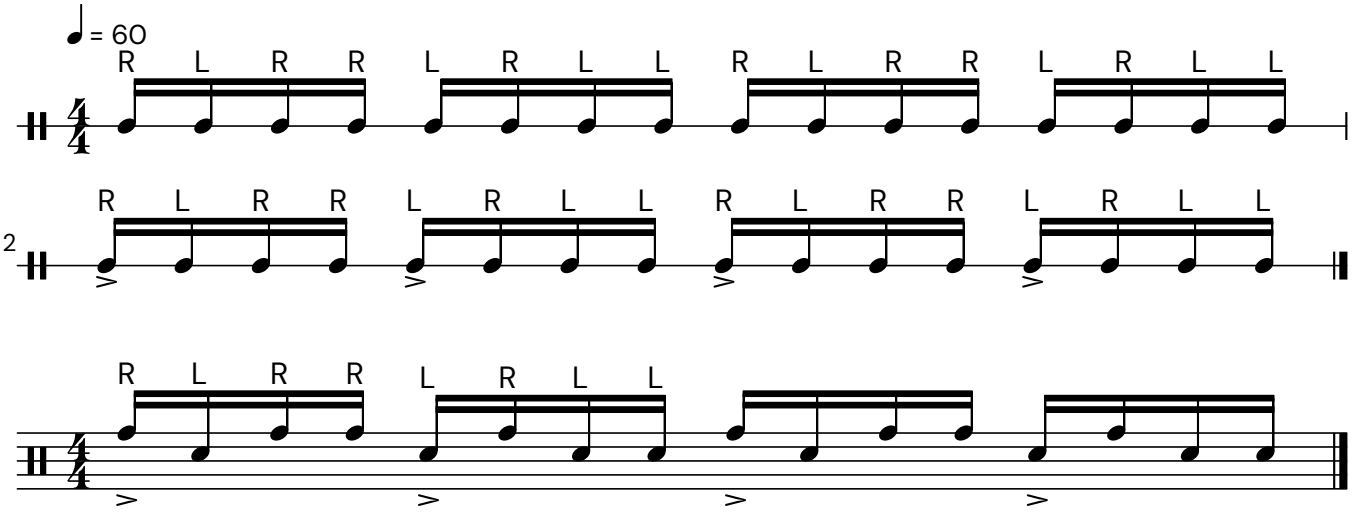
Paradiddle

GOAL

Right-left-right-right, left-right-left-left. This rudiment combines single and double strokes and turns up everywhere in grooves and fills.

HOW TO DO IT

Say it out loud: pa-ra-did-dle. Play with an accent on the first stroke of each group (line 2). Line 3: spread the hands over snare and high tom. Then you hear how it sounds in a fill.



TEMPO: 60 → 100.

DONE WHEN

You hear the accent on the first stroke of each group and the rest stays soft and even.

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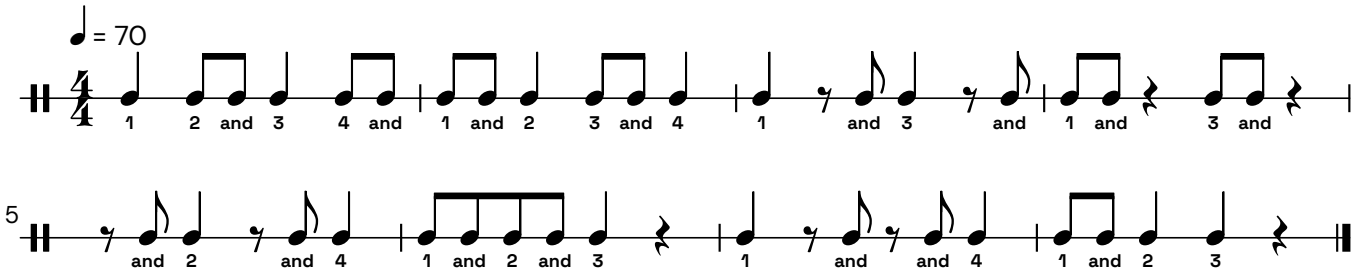
Reading eighths

GOAL

Playing from the page. Quarter notes, eighths and rests mixed, on the snare.

HOW TO DO IT

First clap and count out loud: 1-and-2-and-3-and-4-and. Then play alternating right-left (on a rest you skip a hand, that's fine). If you make a mistake, just keep going and try to do better next time.



TEMPO: 70 → 100.

DONE WHEN

You play the eight bars in one go at 90, without stopping or slowing down.

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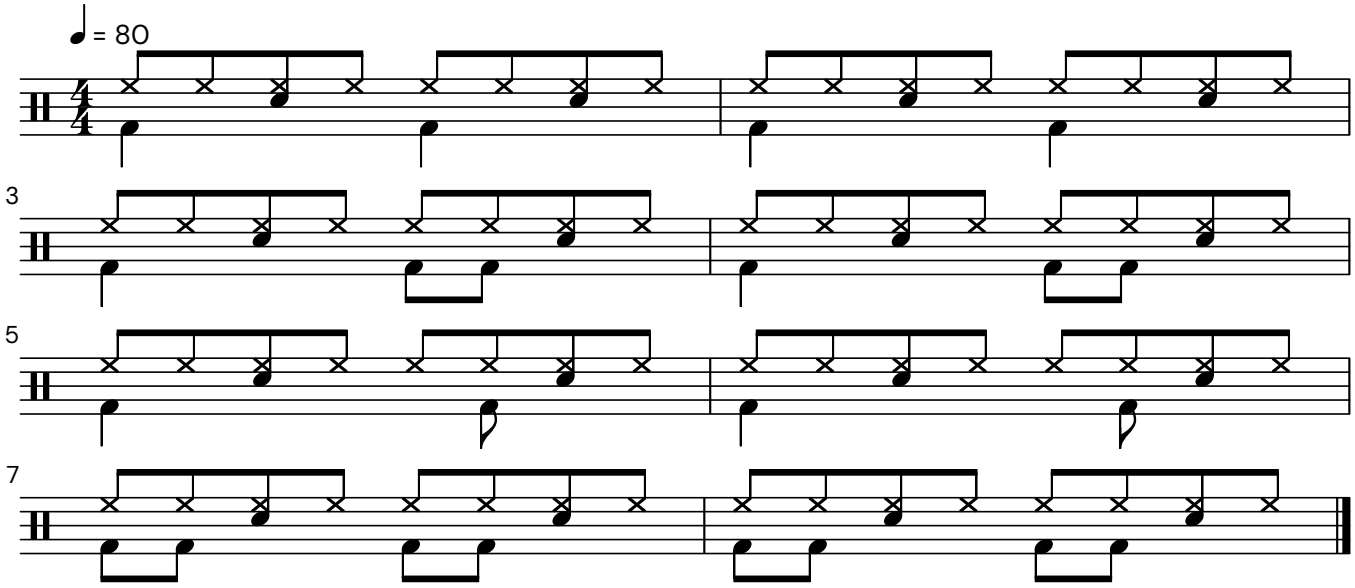
Rock beat with variations

GOAL

Keeping the basic beat going while the bass drum does something slightly different each time. The hi-hat and snare don't change.

HOW TO DO IT

Play every line four times. The hi-hat always plays eighths, the snare always on 2 and 4. Only the bass drum changes. Count out loud, especially on the 'and' of 3.



TEMPO: 80 → 110.

DONE WHEN

You can switch from line to line without the hi-hat stumbling for a moment.

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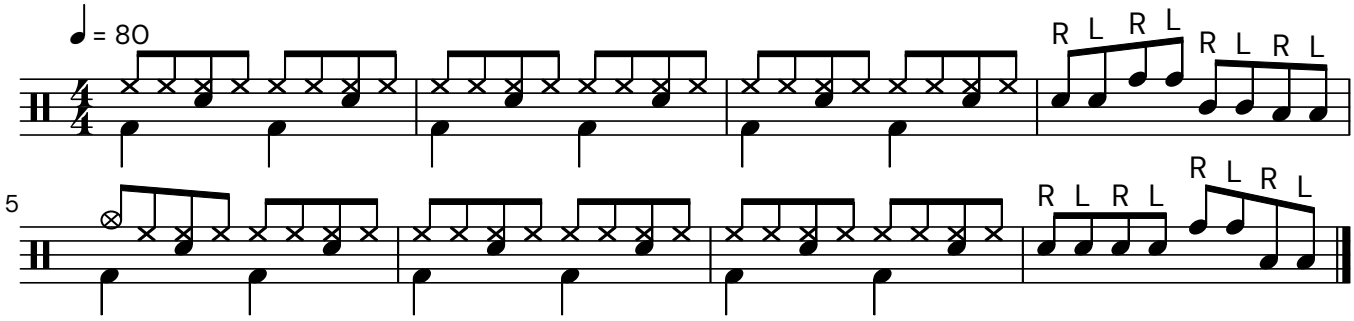
First fills

GOAL

Three bars of beat, one bar of fill and then back into the beat without stumbling. The fill must never change the tempo.

HOW TO DO IT

Play three bars of beat. In bar 4 you play the fill: eighths right-left across snare and toms. Bar 5 simply starts with the beat again, with a crash on beat 1 if you dare.



TEMPO: 80 → 100. Turn the metronome on: the fill has to fit in exactly.

DONE WHEN

Bar 5 starts exactly on time, four times in a row. Then make up your own fill for bar 4.

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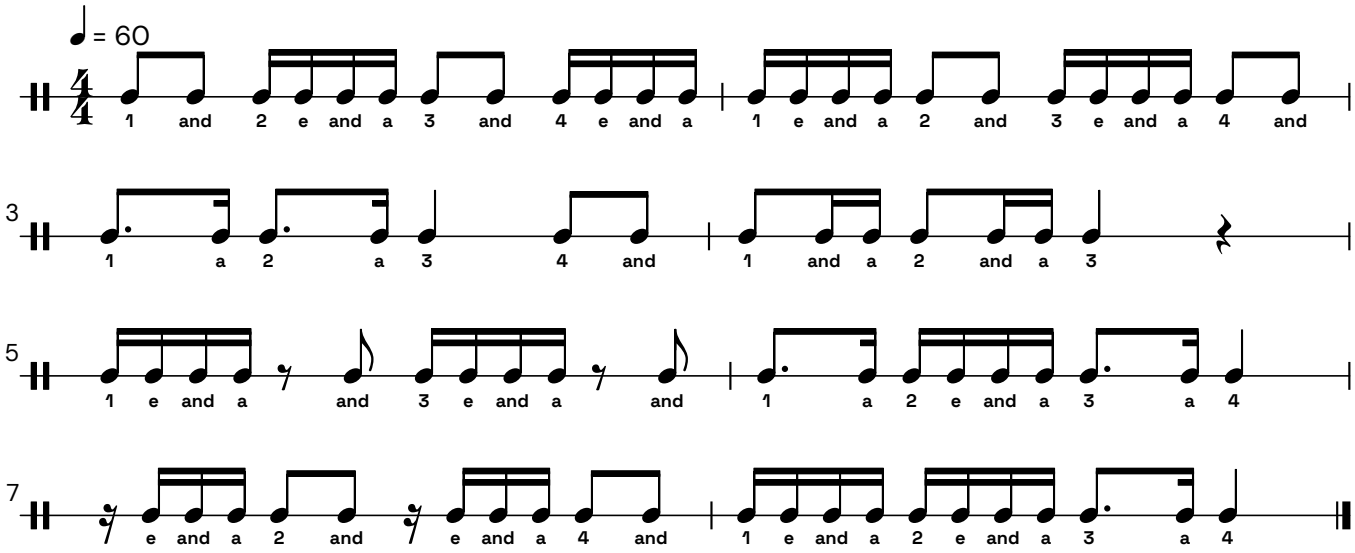
Reading sixteenths

GOAL

Playing from the page with sixteenths added. Eighths, sixteenths, a dotted eighth with a sixteenth and rests mixed together.

HOW TO DO IT

Count every beat in four: 1-e-and-a, 2-e-and-a, 3-e-and-a, 4-e-and-a. First clap and count out loud, then play alternating right-left. A dotted eighth (a note with a little dot) lasts three sixteenths: you play on '1' and not again until the 'a'. On a rest the hand stays still, but the counting goes on.



TEMPO: 60 → 90.

DONE WHEN

You play the eight bars in one go at 80 while counting '1-e-and-a' out loud, without stopping.

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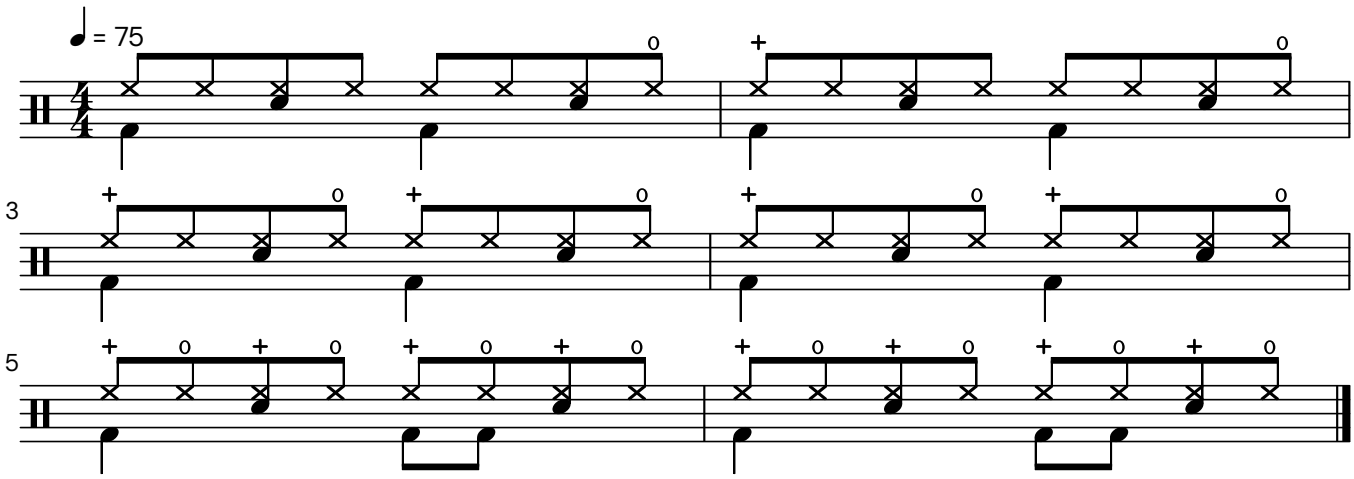
Open hi-hat

GOAL

Letting the hi-hat ring open ('tsss') on the 'and' of 4 and closing it exactly on beat 1. Your left foot joins in.

HOW TO DO IT

Put your left foot with the heel on the floor and the toes on the pedal. On the 'and' of 4 you lift the toes a little while you strike the hi-hat: the cymbals come apart and buzz. On beat 1 you press the toes down again, together with the bass drum: 'tsik'. The small circle above the note means open, the plus means closed.



TEMPO: 75 → 100.

DONE WHEN

The open hi-hat buzzes for the same length every time and audibly closes on beat 1, without the snare on 2 and 4 shifting. Line 2 (open on the 'and' of 2 and 4) as a bonus.

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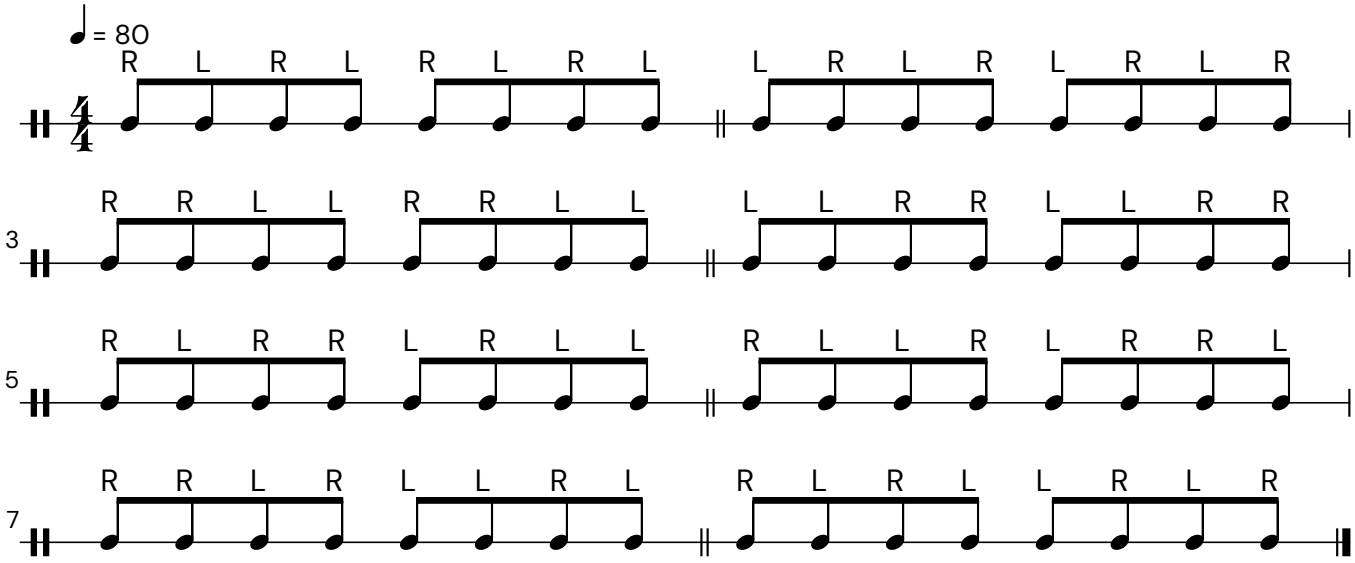
Stick Control, the first eight

GOAL

Hand control: eight stickings that together form the basis of everything you'll play later. After the classic Stick Control by George Lawrence Stone.

HOW TO DO IT

Every bar is one sticking; there are two per line. Play each sticking twenty times in a row without a pause, then move on to the next. Turn the metronome on and play at a tempo where you stay relaxed. It's about evenness, not speed. Ten minutes a day is enough.



TEMPO: 80 → 140 over a few weeks. Note your tempo every week.

DONE WHEN

All eight stickings sound even at 120 and you know them without the page.

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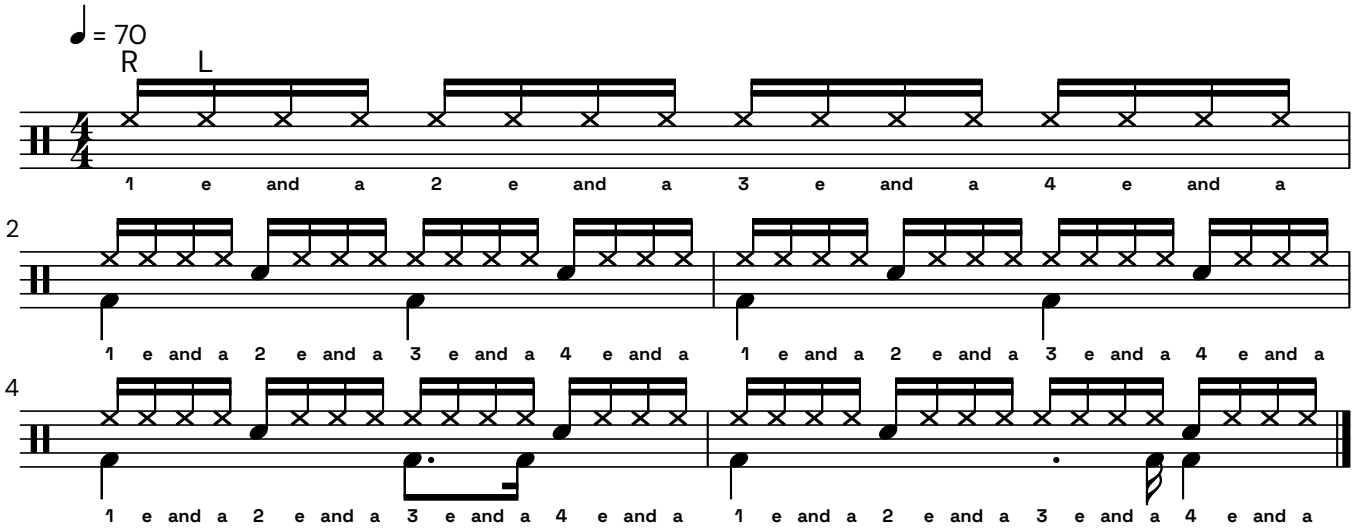
Sixteenths on the hi-hat

GOAL

A groove with sixteenths on the hi-hat, played with two hands alternating. The snare on 2 and 4 then always lands on the right hand: it steps from the hi-hat to the snare for a moment while the left keeps ticking.

HOW TO DO IT

Line 1: only sixteenths on the hi-hat, right-left. Line 2: add the snare on 2 and 4 (right moves from the hi-hat to the snare for a moment, left keeps ticking). Lines 3 and 4: bass drum variations. Count: 1-e-and-a, 2-e-and-a, 3-e-and-a, 4-e-and-a.



TEMPO: 70 → 100. Above 100 your right arm has to work hard.

DONE WHEN

The hi-hat stays even while the bass drum lands on the in-between sixteenths (the 'e' and the 'a').

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Write your own beat

WHAT YOU'LL DO

A beat is a pattern that keeps coming back. Below you see three rows of boxes: one for the hi-hat, one for the snare and one for the bass drum. Each box is an eighth, half a beat. Above the boxes is how you count: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and. Put a cross in every box where you want to strike. Then play your beat together with your teacher!

EXAMPLE: YOUR FIRST BEAT

	1	and	2	and	3	and	4	and
HI-HAT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SNARE			X				X	
BASS DRUM	X				X			

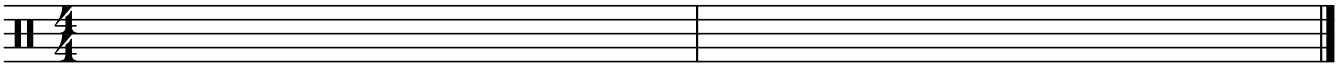
YOUR TURN: MY OWN BEAT

	1	and	2	and	3	and	4	and
HI-HAT								
SNARE								
BASS DRUM								

Tip: start with the hi-hat in every box. Put the bass drum on 1 and the snare on 3, or make up something silly. Whatever you choose: count out loud.

NOW WRITE YOUR BEAT IN REAL NOTES

Crosses at the top are the hi-hat. Notes in the middle are the snare. Notes at the bottom are the bass drum. Write the same bar twice.



DONE WHEN

You play your beat four times in a row without stopping. Then your teacher plays it too, so you hear how it sounds.

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My practice week

WHAT YOU'LL DO

Every day you practise, write down how many minutes you practised. Five minutes is already good! Add what you practised. Did it go well? Then draw a star in the star box. Bring this sheet to your lesson, so you can look at it together.

NAME _____ WEEK OF _____

	MINUTES	STAR	WHAT DID YOU PRACTISE?
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Total ____ minutes this week Stars: ____

WHAT WENT WELL?

WHAT IS STILL TRICKY?

MY STICKER

WHAT I THOUGHT OF THIS WEEK

DONE WHEN

You've filled in the sheet and bring it to your lesson. Didn't practise every day? No problem. Three days is already a great week.

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Tempo card

For each page, write down the tempo you play cleanly (the metronome setting). Fill in a new box every lesson. That way you see your progress, even in a week you didn't notice it yourself.

	DATE / TEMPO →				
Single stroke roll					
Double stroke roll					
Paradiddle					
Reading eighths					
Rock beat with variations					
First fills					
Reading sixteenths					
Open hi-hat					
Stick Control, the first eight					
Sixteenths on the hi-hat					

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Glossary

The words you'll meet in this book and in lessons, in short.

ACCENT a stroke that is louder than the rest (sign: >)

BACKBEAT the snare on 2 and 4, the backbone of almost every beat

BAR a group of beats between two bar lines; in 4/4 that is four

BASS DRUM the big drum, played with the right pedal

BEAT the pulse you count along to; the metronome ticks on every beat

BEAT / GROOVE a pattern that keeps coming back and that you can move to

BPM beats per minute: the number of beats in a minute, in other words the tempo

CRASH the cymbal for a bang on beat 1 after a fill

EIGHTH NOTE a note of half a beat; two per beat, counted '1 and'

FILL a short departure from the beat, usually at the end of four bars

HI-HAT two cymbals on top of each other; you close them with the left pedal and play them with the stick

METRONOME the ticker that keeps the tempo; your best practice buddy

PARADIDDLE the sticking right-left-right-right, left-right-left-left

QUARTER NOTE a note of one beat; four per bar in 4/4

REST a sign for silence; you don't play, but you keep counting

RIDE the big cymbal on the right, for a lighter beat than the hi-hat

RUDIMENT a fixed sticking pattern (single stroke, double stroke, paradiddle, flam)

SIXTEENTH NOTE a note of a quarter beat; four per beat, counted '1 e and a'

SNARE the small drum with the wires underneath, between your knees

STICKING which hand plays which stroke (R = right, L = left)

TIME SIGNATURE the two numbers at the start: how many beats per bar and which note is one beat

TOM the drums without wires: high tom, mid tom, floor tom

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Starter Book, teachers' edition. Made by Anthony Marck Amirkhan for his own lessons and shared for free with drum teachers. Printing and handing out is fine; altering or selling is not.

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