A FRESH APPROACH to the Snare Drum

by MARK WESSELS

A LOGICAL APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING RHYTHMIC READING ABILITIES, RUDIMENTAL TECHNIQUE AND MUSICIANSHIP ON THE SNARE DRUM.

also including:

“GETTING OFF TO A GREAT START” INSTRUCTIONAL DVD!
VIC FIRTH’S TOUR OF PERCUSSION & 40 ESSENTIAL RUDIMENTS POSTER!
INSTRUCTIONS ON PLAYING THE ACCESSORY PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS!

MP3 CD INCLUDED!
Playable on all computers and MP3-capable players
A note from the author:

The purpose of this book is to provide the beginning percussion student with a foundation of basic playing techniques, rudimental skills, reading ability and musicianship that is required to play the snare drum and most of the common percussion instruments. This book includes step-by-step instructions and suggestions regarding practice habits, sticking and stroke styles designed to develop a well rounded player and musician.

The playalong tracks on the Accompaniment MP3 CD not only to makes practicing fun, but will also to expose you to music that utilizes percussion instruments and musical styles from around the world. For convenience, I recommend that you transfer the MP3 audio tracks to your computer — and, using a music library program such as iTunes or Winamp, load the tracks onto an iPod or other MP3 player for easy access.

The “Getting Off to a Great Start DVD” has video lessons on all the basic fundamentals, including: Setting up and tuning your new drum, gripping the sticks and making a perfect rebound stroke — everything you need to get off to a great start. And if you want an idea of how broad the world of percussion really is, don’t miss Vic Firth’s “Tour of Percussion” — a collection videos from some of the world’s top drummers and percussionists!

If you find the instructional videos on the included DVD helpful, downloadable video podcasts are available for FREE on iTUNES (search for "Fresh Approach" in the iTunes store) or you can also watch them on YOUTUBE. If you don’t have access to a qualified private instructor, these lessons can be a big help as you work through the book.

For the band director using this method to teach beginning percussionists, the free downloadable podcasts can be an invaluable source of information in preparation for your class. Or with a computer and projector, you can bring me into your classroom to help teach your percussionists — or reinforce the information you’re providing to them.

I sincerely hope that you’ll enjoy using this book and that it’ll be the beginning to a lifelong love of drumming — and to music. Good luck in your endeavor to learn to play the snare drum!

Mark Wessels

This book is dedicated to my wife Lynn, and my children Kaitlyn and Drew.

For information on other products from Mark Wessels Publications, or to order additional copies of “A Fresh Approach to the Snare Drum,” please visit us online:

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Lesson 1

Technique Workout

Before you begin Lesson One, you must have perfected the REBOUND stroke using the “One Hand Exercise” on the previous page with a metronome set on 120. Every exercise that you learn in this book serves as a building block for new techniques, so it is important to master each one before moving on to the next!

Our first technique exercise is called “8 on a hand” and reinforces the proper REBOUND STROKES that you learned in the previous exercise, only this time with 8 strokes on the right, followed by 8 on the left.

On day 1, practice this exercise at 120 beats per minute (b.p.m.) on your metronome for TWO MINUTES without stopping. On day 2, practice for two minutes at 140; day 3 at 160; day 4 at 180 – always paying attention to producing perfect rebound strokes on each hand.

RRRR RRRR LLLL LLLL

REPEAT FOR 2 MINUTES WITHOUT STOPPING.

After working on rebound strokes in the “8 on a hand” exercise, you can add the “4-2-1” exercise notated in the TECHNIQUE WORKOUT section of the book on page 77.

Snare Drum Rudiment:

Single Stroke Roll

The snare drum rudiments are a collection of the fundamental skills and techniques necessary to becoming a successful percussionist. Mastering the rudiments will take many years of practice and practicing them EVERYDAY is important if you want to develop into a great drummer! Included with this book is a rudiment poster, which includes all 40 essential rudiments.

Our first rudiment is called the “Single Stroke Roll” – or as I like to call it – ALTERNATING SINGLE STROKES. The goal on this lesson is not to produce a “roll”, but rather to play perfect alternating rebound strokes at a slow tempo. Over the course of the year, we’ll gradually increase the tempo until it begins to sound like a “roll”!

Practice this rudiment at m.m. = 120 for two minutes on day one, m.m. = 140 on day 2, etc.

RLRL RLRL RLRL RLRL

Also practice starting on the left. Starting with the “weak hand” increases your ability to make every stroke sound the same.

LRLL LRLL LRLL LRLL LRLL

Snare Drum Rudiment:

Double Stroke Roll

Again, we’ll learn this rudiment at a slow tempo, playing ALTERNATING DOUBLE STROKES. Work to ensure that every stroke sounds exactly the same. Check out the video lessons included on the DVD to get some valuable practice suggestions, as well as see a demonstration of this rudiment!

RRLL RRLL RRLL RRLL

If you’re right-handed, leading with the left will strengthen your weaker hand.

LLRR LLRR LLRR LLRR LLRR

On page 76, I’ve included a LESSON PROGRESS CHART to help you track the tempos of the essential exercises and rudiments that you’ll learn as we progress through the book. Refer to this chart frequently as a guide for your weekly progress!
Start these sticking exercises with a metronome set on 120, playing each line separately for two minutes. Then try all 10 lines without stopping, repeating each line twice. After you can play all ten with consistent rebound strokes and no mistakes, move the metronome up to 140 and repeat the process. Once you reach 180, you’re ready to play along with the accompaniment MP3 track!

1. R R R R  R R R R  L L L L  L L L L
2. R R R R  L L L L  R R R R  L L L L
3. R R L L  R R L L  R R L L  R R L L
4. R L R L  R L R L  R L R L  R L R L
5. R L R R  L R L L  R L R R  L R L L
6. R L R R  L L L L  R L R R  L L L L
7. R L L L  R R L R  R L R L  R L R L
8. R R R L  R R R L  R R R L  R R R L
9. L L L R  L L L R  L L L R  L L L L
10. R L R L  R R L L  R L R L  R R L L

HOT TIP:
If you have problems playing a line without mistakes, slow down! If you practice it correctly at a slow tempo, you’ll learn it much quicker than by making repeated mistakes.

Before we start reading music, here are a few musical terms you need to memorize:

**Staff:**

- 1 2 3 4 5
- 1 2 3 4
- 5 lines and 4 spaces

**Bar Lines:**

Divides the staff into measures

**Measure:**

Space between two bar lines

**Double Bar:**

Marks the end of a section

**Quarter Note & Rest:**

Tells when to play or rest

**Time Signature:**

Top number tells how many beats are in one measure
Bottom number tells what kind of note receives one beat

The "Getting Off to a Great Start DVD" ends with the Essential Musical Terms video lesson. If these lessons were helpful, I would encourage you to check out the downloadable videos that are available on iTunes and YouTube!
LESSON 5

Technique WORKOUT
The fifth and final stroke style to learn is called the TAP. Taps are soft, relaxed wrist strokes played at 2-3 inches above the drum. This exercise isolates downstrokes, taps, & upstrokes. Practice each hand separately.

The Single Paradiddle
In step two, you will add the two soft taps that finish the Single Paradiddle.

Step Two

Coordination Exercise

Homework
Write the counting under the notes, then supply the top number in the time signature.

8th Rests on the Upbeat
In the following KEY EXERCISES, the 8th notes fall on the downbeat, and the 8th rests fall on the upbeat. Since the rest is on the upbeat, simply leave out the hand that plays the ‘and’ or ‘te’ (the left hand).

8th Rests on the Downbeat
In the next three KEY EXERCISES, the 8th rests fall on the downbeats, and the 8th notes fall on the upbeats. Since the 8th rest is on the downbeat, simply omit the right hand (and play the upbeat with the left).
These exercises use the 8th rest on the **downbeat**. Follow the stickings and practice with a metronome!

**HOT TIP:**
Since playing upbeat 8th notes is rather difficult, I suggest that you practice for several days on the Lesson 5 Appendix until you get a solid "feel" for the upbeat rhythms.

**HOT TIP:**
Remember to tap your **FOOT** on each downbeat! Think of "playing your foot" on the downbeat 8th rests in these lines.

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The Nine Stroke Roll is four multiple bounces or double strokes, followed by a downstroke.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{R LLRL} & \quad \text{L LRL} \\
\text{R LLRL} & \quad \text{L LRL} \\
\text{R LLRL} & \quad \text{L LRL} \\
\text{R LLRL} & \quad \text{L LRL}
\end{align*}
\]

**Rudimental Etude #2**

This etude includes some special instructions. The 'x' on the top line is played by hitting the sticks together in the air, and the 'w' on the bottom line should be played with both sticks on the rim.
LESSON 8

Technique WORKOUT

Are you spending half of your practice time each day on the Technique Exercises and Rudiments? If you ignore the fundamentals of snare drumming, pretty soon your hands will not be able to play the written music! At this time, you should add the Flam to your daily drill of exercises and rudiments.

The Whole Note and Whole Rest

The WHOLE NOTE looks like a half note without the stem and receives four beats in quarter time. The following Coordination Exercise uses the whole note.

Homework

A note is missing at the end of each measure. Draw one note that corresponds to the missing note. Use the following note values:

New Rhythm

In this new rhythm, an 8th note takes the place of the last two 16ths:

Key Exercises

Always practice the correct sticking patterns while learning new rhythm patterns. Many percussionists cannot play fast rhythmic parts because they are hindered by poor sticking habits.

The Flam Tap

The Flam Tap is played with the Alternating Flam, adding a soft tap between the flames.
Use the Lesson 8 Appendix in the back of the book for extra practice on this new rhythm.

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**Playing Exercises**

**LINES 1–5**

**MP3 8B**

**HOT TIP:**

The extra lines offered in the appendix on page 60 will help you develop a “feel” for new rhythms. Since they are repetitive, you can concentrate on how the hands FEEL when playing a new rhythm, rather than having to concentrate on reading difficult rhythmic combinations.

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The following exercise is a ROUND for two players. The first player begins with the 1st measure. The second player rests for four counts and begins when the first player reaches the second bar.

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**Round for Two Players**

**MP3 8C**

This etude includes the Flam Tap. The upstroke motion of the flams should be exactly the same in measure 1 and measure 2. Work to achieve a consistent sound on each flam — keeping the grace note low and relaxed.

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**Rudimental Etude #6**

\[ = 100-130 \]

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**MP3 8D**
You Draw
Supply the missing note in the following measures. Use only one note in each measure from the following note values:

Fill in the Blanks!
Write in the counting under the notes, then give the top number in the time signatures.

Technique Workout
To make sure that your technical development is on par with your rhythm reading development, check to see if you can play each exercise and rudiment at these recommended tempos.

Technique Exercises:
- #1: $d = 150$
- #5: $d = 102$
- #8: $d = 140$
- #9: $d = 102$
- #11: $d = 70$
- #12: $d = 90$

Rudiments (p. 82 & 83):
- Single Stroke Roll: $d = 96$
- Single Stroke 4,7: $d = 70$
- Single Paradiddle: $d = 140$
- Flam Rudiments: $d = 90$
  (Flam, Flam Tap, Flam Paradiddle)

Double Stroke Rolls: $d = 102$
(5, 9, 13, double stroke rolls)

Multiple Bounce Rolls: $d = 140$

Speed should not be the only consideration when practicing the Technique Exercises and Rudiments! Proper attention to the correct stroke styles and evenness of sound is most important. The tempos recommended here reflect where you should be ONLY IF you are paying attention to the proper fundamentals of playing the snare drum!

Etude in “8 time”
Start slowly, gradually working up the tempo marked.

$\frac{8}{4}$

ETUDE IN 8 TIME
MP3
GT2A
This entire Rudimental Etude should be played at two heights: a 12 inch (full stroke) height for accents, and a relaxed 2–3 inch height for grace notes, taps and bounces. Play either with multiple bounces or with relaxed double strokes on the 8th notes notated with a slash.

Most of the paradiddles in the following etude are played without accents. Strive to achieve a smooth, even sound when playing the 16th notes drum to drum.
LESSON 14

Technique WORKOUT

The progress chart on page 76 has a complete list of exercises and rudiments that you should be working on at this point in the book. Because the list grows as you add more techniques and rudiments, you might need to alternate between them (select one rudiment from each family rather than work on all of them in one practice session).

Developing great technique requires mental discipline and consistent practice!

More Dynamic Markings

: Crescendo: Gradually get louder

: Diminuendo: Gradually get softer

This short piece uses all of the dynamic markings that we have learned so far. Start at the slowest tempo marked, then work up to the fastest tempo that you can play (without sacrificing quality!).

HOT TIP:
Avoid the "age-old" problem that most drummers have: rushing when you play louder! Work with a metronome to develop tempo control on all dynamic levels!

New Rhythm

Notice that in this new rhythm, the 8th rest takes the place of the first 8th note.

HOT TIP:
Count the first two 16ths out loud on the 8th rest in this new rhythm pattern. SUBDIVIDING a rest will keep you from rushing and also help rhythmic accuracy.

KEY EX. LINES 1-6
14A

Keep the back fingers in contact with the stick when playing rolls. Also, make sure that you are not "pulsating" your right hand (playing the right hand stronger than the left).
Notice that in this new rhythm, the 8th rest falls on the upbeat.

New Rhythm

Remember to count each quarter note roll as you would four 16th notes. Practice both types of rolls: open (double bounce) rolls and buzz (multiple bounce) rolls.

Like the flam, the ruff is a combination of an upstroke (this time bounced), and a downstroke. Unlike the flam however, the ruff is played with a “pickup” bounce stroke, with more space before the primary stroke. Practice the long buzz “pickup strokes” in Exercise A for several days before attempting the double bounce ruff in Exercise B.

Make sure that you “prep” the stick heights for each one of the ruffs in this etude (set the hands at grace note/accent note heights). Think of each ruff as two separate strokes (end-ONE, and-TWO) until you get the feel for it.
As speed increases on Flam Taps, it becomes necessary to play rebound strokes instead of controlled strokes. Use a full stroke on the accent, but allow the stick to rebound for the second and third notes. Repeat on the opposite hand.

Remember that a dot behind a note INCREASES ITS VALUE BY HALF of its original value. Since one 8th note equals two 16ths, a dotted eighth note would be equal to three 16ths:

HOT TIP:
Subdivide every dotted 8th note by counting the first three 16ths. This will help keep an even spacing on this new rhythm pattern.

Playing Exercises

The Single Drag
All “drag” and roll rudiments should be played with double bounces. “Squeeze” slightly on the accents, but remember to relax the fulcrum on the innerbeats.
Spend a few minutes to memorize these new musical terms.

**Accelerando**
abbreviated “accel.”
gradually get faster

**Fine**
pronounced “fee-nay”
the finish — the end

**D.C. al Fine**
“Da Cah-poe aul fee-nay”
Go back to the beginning and play to the finish.

The low tom-tom (notated on the 1st space) should be placed on the left, the snare in the middle, and the suspended cymbal to the right.

**Fast!**

**Slow Rock Tempo**

**C.**

Try to play REBOUND strokes on the Flam Taps in this etude. Since the stick is allowed to rebound, you will hear a difference in sound between regular downstroke accents (sometimes called “staccato strokes”) and rebound accents (sometimes called “legato strokes”).

**Rudimental Etude #18**
Exercise #6: “Stick Control 2”
This is a more difficult exercise to develop control over rebound strokes using various sticking patterns. Stay relaxed and listen for a consistent sound from hand to hand. Watch that the quarter notes are given their precise rhythmic value (don’t rush them)! Play measure 1 & 2 three times, then meas. four & five.

Exercise #7: “Mr. Freeze”
Use this exercise to work on downstrokes (described on page 9), taps (described on page 14) and upstrokes (described on page 11). Squeeze the stick slightly on each downstroke to control the rebound and “freeze” the stick 2 inches above the drum, then immediately relax the hand for the taps and upstroke. Play the taps as soft, relaxed wrist strokes (2–3 inches), then lift on the upstroke to prepare for the next downstroke.

Exercise #8: “Bucks in Three”
Using the same basic technique as Exercise #7. Strive to play the exercise at two heights: 12 inches (a “full” stroke) for the accent and 2–3 inches for the tap and upstroke. Remember: let the weight of the forearm and wrist take care of the volume of the accent! Don’t use any more tension than is necessary!

Exercise #9: “Extended Doubles”
ONLY practice this exercise with your hands on your legs or with the sticks on a pillow! Stay relaxed, but do not allow the stick to bounce.

Exercise #10: “Flam Prep”
Use this exercise to isolate the soft, relaxed grace notes of the flam as described in Lesson 7. Remember: two heights – 12 inches for the PRIMARY stroke, 2 inches for the grace notes. Exercise C should be played with an upstroke motion on the final grace note to prepare for the flam on the opposite hand.
These short etudes were written to give the serious percussion student an opportunity to perfect the methods of playing the various accessory percussion instruments. While playing techniques often vary from teacher to teacher, the instructions given on the next 5 pages will give the student a basic knowledge of common practices regarding the accessory instruments. Read through the explanations on the pages that follow, then work master each etude below.
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