

THE DRUMMERS

Overture

A beginner's guide to drumming and percussion

INTRODUCTION

The word *overture* is a musical term. It comes from the French word *ouverture*, meaning opening.

Like a piece of music played at the opening of an opera, ballet or stage musical which gives a taste of what's to come, this book is designed to give you a taste of drumming and percussion. It will introduce you to the tools and techniques which each successful drummer and percussionist builds on over time.

The information in this book is *rudimentary* or basic. It is my opinion that all beginning drum set and percussion students should have a solid understanding of all the material in this book.

How long should it take to finish this book?

A student attending weekly lessons with an experienced drum / percussion teacher and practicing roughly 30 minutes per day, **should be able to complete this book in around 15 to 20 weeks.**

TIPS AND ADVICE

Why do you want to learn to play drums?

Wanting to be able to play an instrument is the first step. Having lessons is another step. But have you thought about everything else involved in *learning to play an instrument*?

Discussing these questions with your teacher will help them understand what you're thinking, feeling and expecting:

1. Why do you want to learn drums?
2. Have you tried learning any other musical instrument before?
3. Do you learn music at school?
4. Do you know anyone else who plays a musical instrument?
5. What type of music do you like to listen to?
6. How hard do you think learning to play drums is?

And even though everyone answers these questions differently, the answers help your teacher understand your motivation and expectations, how serious you are about learning the instrument, and how prepared you are for the challenges that come with learning to play a musical instrument.

Attend at least ten lessons

Allow time to get into a routine, learn some basic elements, overcome any nerves, and get to know your teacher/s. Learning to play an instrument takes years of work, ten or so weeks is really just a taste.

Changing teachers / schools

It takes time, sometimes several lessons, for a teacher to be able to really understand the skill level of a student who has transferred to them. This may involve revisiting some easier materials which can be boring, but it's worthwhile to help the teacher understand where you're up to and how they can help you progress.

LET'S GET STARTED

What is a percussion instrument?

A percussion instrument produces its sound by being hit, scraped, or shaken.

Percussionists play lots of different instruments!

The percussion instrument family includes a lot of instruments. There are large free-standing instruments like the marimba, timpani and xylophone, medium sized instruments mounted on stands or cradles like snare drums and cymbals, and smaller handheld instruments like shakers and tambourines.

Most percussionists specialise in a specific instrument, such as marimba or drum set, but all percussionists need to be familiar with and able to play a variety of percussion instruments.

Know your percussion instruments

Pitched (tuned) percussion instruments.

Pitched percussion instruments, sometimes called tuned percussion instruments, are percussion instruments that produce a series of definite identifiable pitches, like a piano, trumpet or violin does.

Pitched percussion instruments include marimbas, xylophones, glockenspiels, vibraphones, tubular bells and timpani. Playing these instruments requires an understanding of rhythm, pitch, melody, harmony and harmonic theory.

Did you know?

Acoustic pianos are percussion instruments. Pressing the keys on an acoustic piano causes small hammers inside the piano to hit tuned strings. This hitting action means the piano is classified as a tuned percussion instrument. So technically a pianist (someone who plays piano) is a percussionist, although they're rarely described this way. Pianos are generally classified as *keyboard instruments* rather than percussion instruments.

Indefinite pitch (non-tuned) percussion instruments

Indefinite pitch percussion instruments do not produce specific pitches. Instead, they produce a general sound or tone.

Indefinite-pitch percussion instruments include snare drums, bass drums, tom toms and cymbals. Playing these instruments requires an understanding of rhythm.

Auxiliary percussion instruments

Auxiliary percussion is a term often used in orchestral style ensembles to describe smaller, secondary or supportive percussion instruments such as triangles, tambourines, shakers, woodblocks, cowbells, mark trees, whistles and other less dominant instruments. They are used as backing or support instruments, or for sound effects.



Bongos



Clave



Cabasa



Music Stand



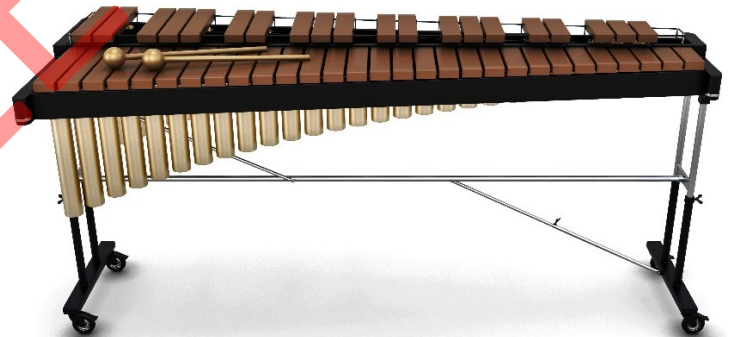
Congas



Suspended Cymbal (*Sus Cym*)



Glockenspiel (*Glock or Bells*)



Xylophone (*Xylo*)

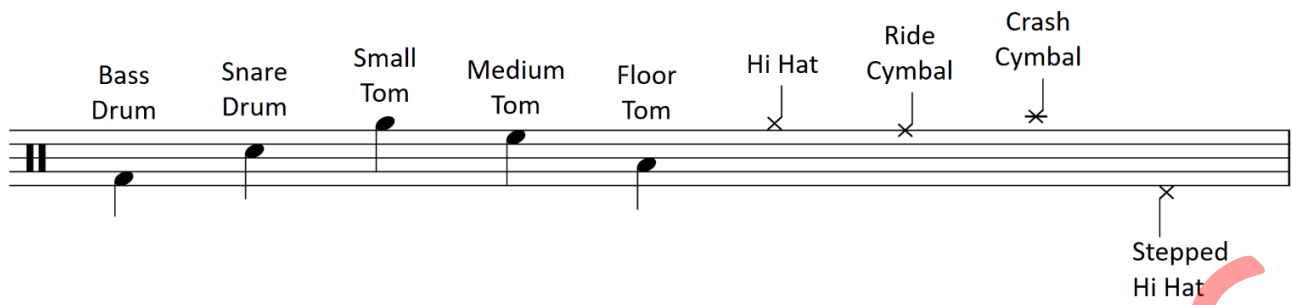


Snare Drum (*Snare, SD or SN*)



Timpani or Kettle Drums (*Timps or Kettles*)

DRUM SET NOTATION KEY



A drum set is a collection of percussion instruments, generally a snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbals, and tom toms. It is very common for drummers to add other percussion instruments to their drum set if the music calls for it.

The drum set shown here has:



- 1 Snare drum
- 1 Bass drum
- 3 Tom toms
- 1 Ride cymbal
- 3 Crash cymbals
- 2 Wood blocks
- 1 Cowbell
- 1 Splash cymbal
- 1 Triangle
- 2 Tambourines
- 1 Mark tree

Plus digital percussion and an extra wide music stand

THE CONDUCTOR (Music Director)

For the purposes of this book the terms *conductor* and *musical director* are the same thing.

The Conductor's / Music Director's Job

The conductor (or music director) chooses the pieces of music the ensemble will play, studies that music and then makes decisions about how the ensemble should perform it. They lead the ensemble at rehearsals and performances and make sure everyone knows what piece is being played and how to play it.

The musicians in the ensemble are expected to follow the conductor and play the music as instructed. The conductor is the boss.

Conducting / Beating time

One of the primary roles of a conductor is to indicate the tempo (speed) of the music to the musicians. To do this the conductor makes motions in the air (beat patterns) with their hand/s or a baton and the musicians play their notes in time with the conductor's motions, like a visual metronome. This results in everyone in the ensemble knowing what the tempo is and allows them to play together. Learning to follow a conductor can be a bit tricky.

Whole Notes / Semibreves

Count In
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Three staves of musical notation for whole notes in 4/4 time. Each staff starts with a count-in of 1-2-3-4. The first staff has notes on the first and third beats. The second staff has notes on the second and fourth beats. The third staff has notes on all four beats.

Half Notes / Minims

Count In
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Three staves of musical notation for half notes in 4/4 time. Each staff starts with a count-in of 1-2-3-4. The first staff has notes on the first and second beats. The second staff has notes on the second and third beats. The third staff has notes on the third and fourth beats.

Quarter Notes / Crotchets

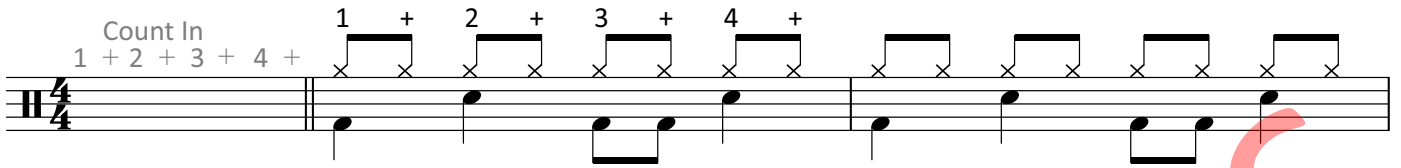
Count In
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Three staves of musical notation for quarter notes in 4/4 time. Each staff starts with a count-in of 1-2-3-4. The first staff has notes on all four beats. The second staff has notes on the first and second beats, followed by rests on the third and fourth. The third staff has notes on the second and third beats, followed by rests on the first and fourth.

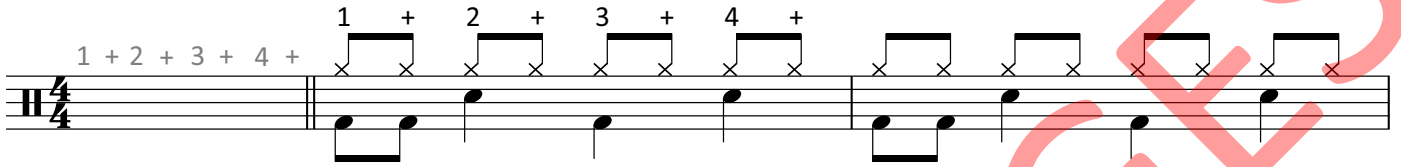
Common Drum Set Rhythms For Rock and Pop Music

The following rhythms are extremely common variations of the previously mentioned *basic rock groove*. These are also very important rhythms for drum and percussion students to master.

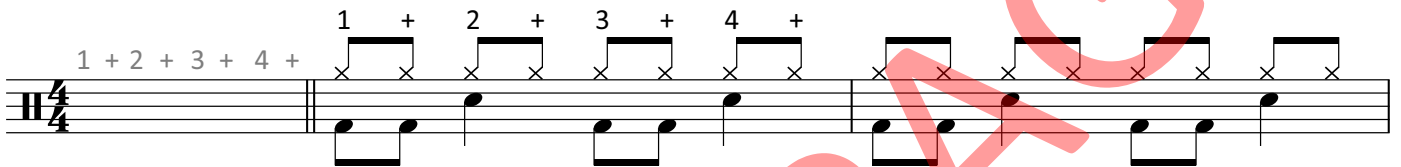
Count In
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



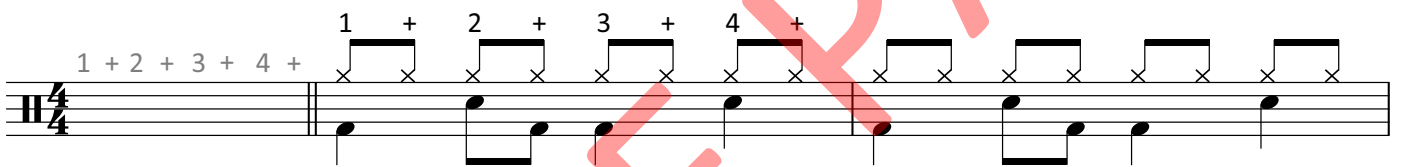
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



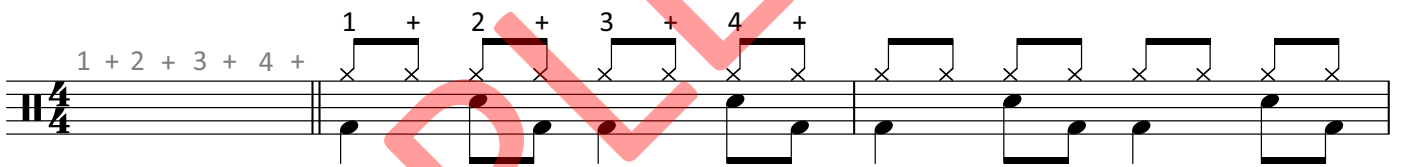
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



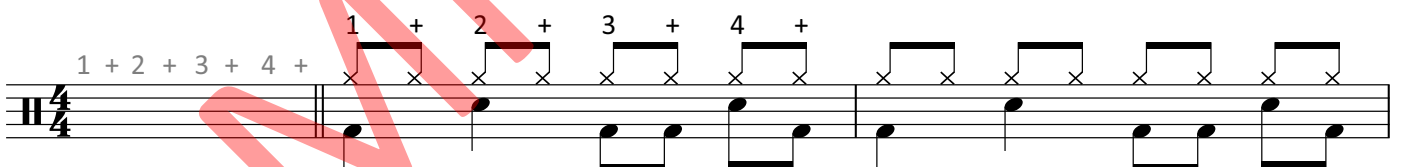
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



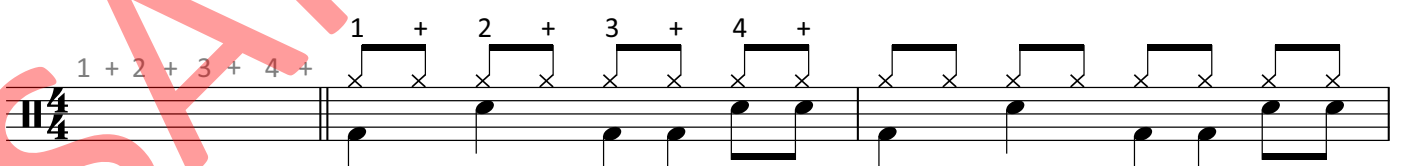
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

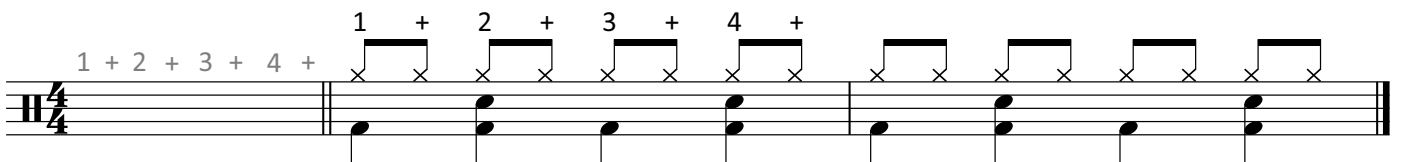


1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



The following rhythm is sometimes referred to as a "*Four on the floor rock beat*" as the bass drum appears on all four beats of the bar. This one can be a bit tricky, so stick with it.

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +



Orchestrating Basic Drum Fills

Orchestration: *The organising, arranging or sharing out of musical elements.*

The following six exercises are basic orchestrations of the previous snare drum fills.

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 e + a

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + a

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 e + a

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

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

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 + 2 + 3 e + 4 e + a

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + a

Practice changing between playing the hi hat and ride cymbal.

Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

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

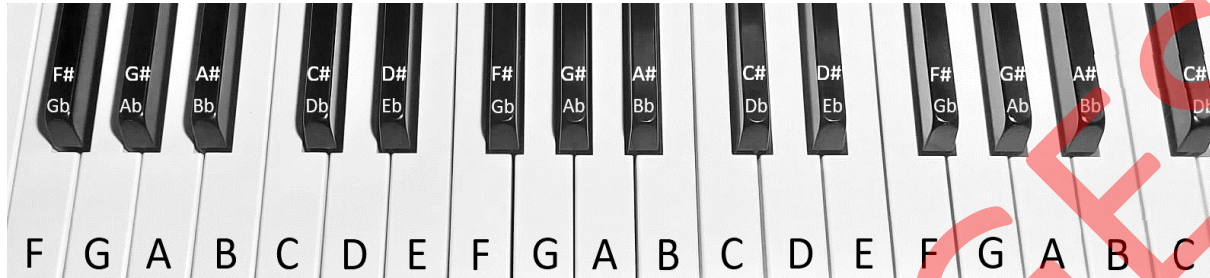
Count
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

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

The following material will mostly relate to a two and a half octave glockenspiel (bell set) with a range from F5 to C8. This is a common instrument in most school / community band rooms.

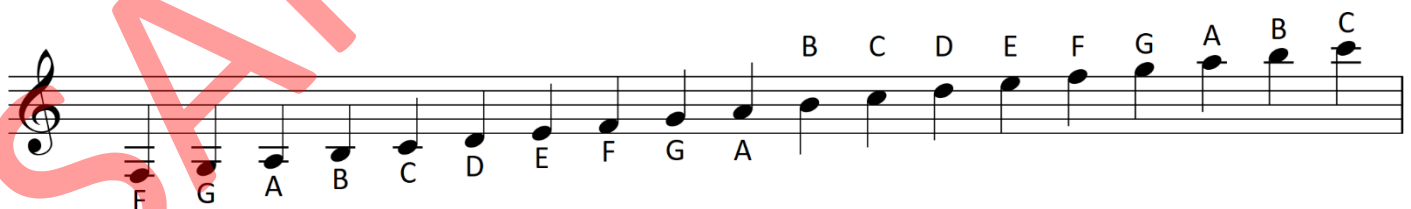
Step 1: Learn the keyboard

Many keyboard percussion instruments have the same layout as a piano keyboard, however the notes are all the same colour. It's important to be able to quickly identify and play the notes on the keyboard percussion instrument.



Step 2: Learn the stave (Treble)

With drum set, the different lines and spaces on the stave represent different instruments. With keyboard percussion, the lines and spaces represent different keys or notes on the instrument. Again, it's important to be able to quickly identify and name the notes on the stave.



Step 3: Combining stave and keyboard

Once you've learned how to read the notes and where they are on the keyboard, it's time to put the two together and practice reading and playing music. There are some basic exercises on page 28 and 29 to practice your new skill.

Common Symbols and Terms Used In Music

pp

Pianissimo (Very quietly)

mf

Mezzo Forte (Moderately loud)

Cresc... OR

Crescendo (Get louder)

⌣

Fermata

(Hold for longer than notated, or small pause)

Section Repeat (play this section again)

Rit... OR *Rall...*

Slow down / Get slower

A

B

C

Section markers... A section, B section etc

p

Piano (Quietly)

f

Decresc... OR

Decrescendo (Get quieter)

//

Caesura (Stop / Wait)

Repeat previous bar

Accel...

Speed up / Get faster

Double bar line (End of the music)

mp

Mezzo Piano (Moderately quiet)

ff

Fortissimo (Very loud)

>

Accent (Play this particular note louder)

TACET

Don't play in this section or song

Repeat previous two bars

a tempo...

Return to the original / previous tempo

4

Multi bar rest

(Don't play for number bars indicated)