

Chapter 1



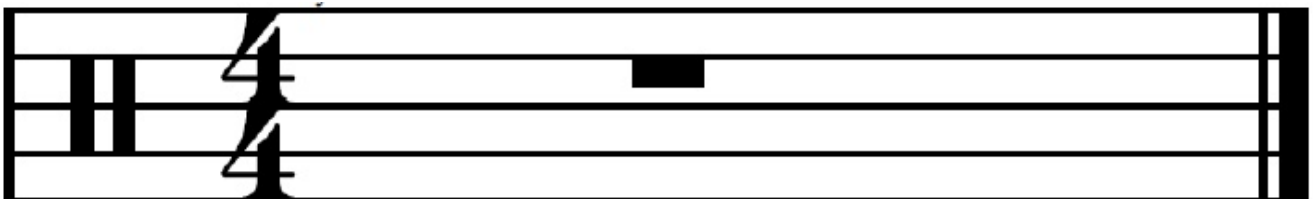
Learning the Basics - Note Values, Counting Beats, Playing Basic Patterns

- **Reading notes, understanding note values, and counting beats.**

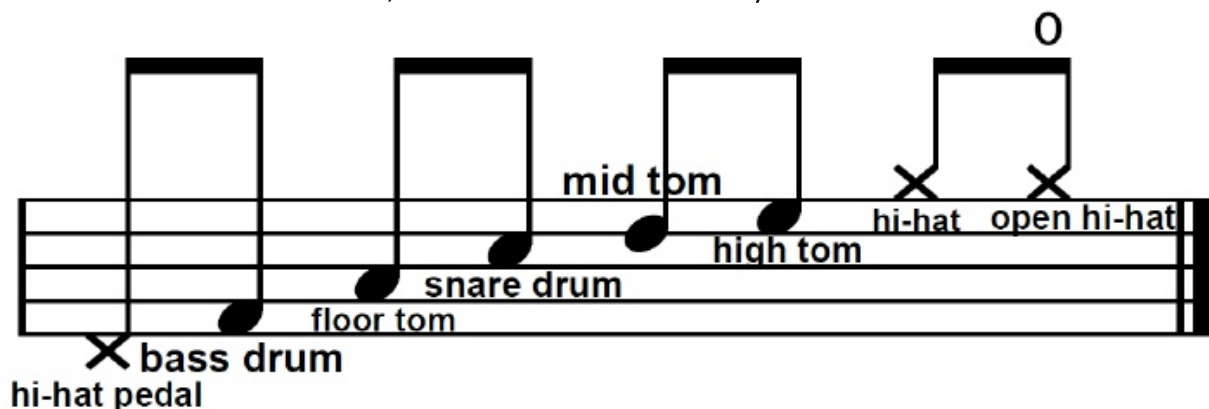
To begin playing the drums it is first important that we understand how music works. Every piece of music can be imagined as a short story, it is composed of paragraphs (sections; like verse, chorus, bridge etc.), sentences (measures), and words (notes). Each note represents what we are playing (which drum we are striking) and also helps us to understand where within the measure the drum is being hit, these are called subdivisions. Let's look at a brief tutorial on reading drum sheet music.

First we have to understand WHAT drum is being played depending on where the note is. All notes are placed on what's called the staff. Later in this chapter we'll get into what the numbers on the right mean, right now all you need to know is that this is a 4/4 time signature, which means there are four quarter notes per measure.

Here is an empty staff -













Here are the notes that you will need to know for the first few chapters. There are more notes that exist in drum music, but we won't need to worry about them for a while.



• Note and Rest Values

Drums are different from most other instruments in that you don't hold notes on the drums. Therefore, note values in drum music have more to do with WHEN the note is being played, as opposed to how long it's being played for. We'll go into more detail after the chart -

Note Value	Note Image	Rest Image
Whole Note		
Half Note		
Quarter Note		
Eighth Note		
Sixteenth Note		

You will rarely, if ever, see a whole note in drum music. To represent the same idea you'll likely see a quarter note followed by a half note rest and quarter note rest. Let's focus on the note values you'll be seeing over the next several chapters and how to count them. The notes you'll be working with most in the beginning are quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes.

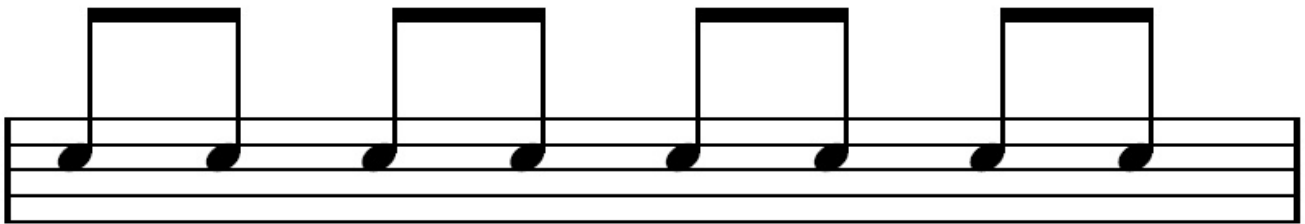
• Counting the different subdivisions

Let's take a look at how we would count the different note values (also called subdivisions) and how we would count different combinations of note values. Understanding how to count different combinations of note values will help dramatically when you start learning to play more complex phrases, so having a solid understanding of counting is an important fundamental skill to develop. Let's start with the basics.

Chapter 1 - Learning the Basics - Note Values, Counting Beats, Playing Basic Patterns



This is a measure of quarter notes. We would count this "1, 2, 3, 4"



This is a measure of eighth notes. We would count this "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and"



This is a measure of sixteenth notes. We would count this "1-ee-and-ah-2-ee-and-ah-3-ee-and-ah-4-ee-and-ah"

Now that you have a basic understanding of how to count music, let's look at one last thing before we get into our first warm up exercises.



HAVING TROUBLE?

Try using a metronome to help you get an idea of how to count different combinations of note values. If you don't have one, you can find free metronomes in the app store of any smart device or online.

• Using a metronome to practice and track your progress

If you like to keep track of your progression, and see yourself improving, a metronome is a great way to do it. Like with most instruments, drums require a lot of practice and progressions in playing happen incrementally so sometimes people feel like they aren't making any headway. If you would like to see hard data that you are improving, use a metronome! While it can be difficult to play along to a metronome at first, getting the hang of it early on will improve your overall playing forever. After all, a drummer's job is the time keeper, and a metronome does exactly that - keeps time.

One of the aspects of playing to a metronome that makes it so difficult is that when you are on time you usually can't hear the metronome. If you are playing on an acoustic kit and have headphones on with a metronome beep blaring through them the kit will still often drown out the counts of the metronome. Just remember, if you can't hear the metronome, you're probably playing on time!



This is a Boss DB-30 metronome. It is simple, effective, cheap, and easy to use. Almost all metronomes have the same basic features, some include advanced features like changing tempos, and storing tempo data. All you need for the time being is something that will keep time. The 120 at the top denotes the tempo, or the speed you'll be playing at. This is also called the Beats Per Minute (or BPM). At 120 BPM you'll have 2 beats per second, at 60 BPM you'll have 1 beat per second. If you're just starting out learning to play drums and you would like to use a metronome, you should start around 80-90 BPM to get a feel for playing to a metronome. Believe it or not, playing slower can actually be more challenging! The tempo value buttons will increase or decrease the tempo, or you can use the tap button to tap out a tempo (keep in mind a tap tempo always uses quarter notes to determine tempo.) If you want to hear the different

subdivisions use the rhythm/beat button, or something similar on your metronome (usually denoted with images of quarter, eighth or sixteenth notes.) to change what type of subdivision the metronome will count. On this particular metronome the rhythm/beat button is also used to change the time signature, which denotes how many beats there are per measure. Right now we want to leave that at 4, which indicates a 4/4 time signature. When you start the metronome, you should notice one of the beeps sounds different from the others, usually as a higher pitch. This indicates the first beat in the measure, the "1". If that incessant beeping noise starts to drive you mad you can change the sound of the metronome as well to something more pleasant, like a clave. Personally, I like the high pitched beeping sound as it cuts through best and is generally most easy to hear.

If you try playing to a metronome and you can't seem to stay on time fret not! Instead of getting frustrated and persisting, simply set the metronome aside and come back to it later. I've found that most new students have a much easier time playing with a metronome after they have some free time practice under their belts and have developed a rudimentary sense of time. It's totally fine to set the metronome aside and come back to it after you've experienced some play time. Just make sure you actually pick it back up once you're feeling a little more comfortable moving around the kit! Don't let it just collect dust, it is an important tool for a drummer!

• Other things to consider before you start

Before you start playing make sure you have your kit set up comfortably and you feel natural holding the sticks. Some books may tell you that you should have the kit set up a specific way. I don't agree with this, I've seen some professional drummers with kits set up in very strange ways playing amazing stuff. If you start playing and something doesn't feel right, make adjustments. Also keep in mind this book is meant to accompany an instructor, if you are starting from scratch it's important to find a teacher for at least a few lessons to go over how to hold the sticks and basic technique.

• How to practice phrases and exercises (the two minute rule)

There is a method of practicing called "The Two Minute Rule" that is very effective in helping to increase speed as well as keep track of your progression. Use a metronome and set a tempo that seems like it would be easy for you to play at (I recommend starting around 80 BPM.) If you are able to play the exercise or phrase for 2 minutes at the set tempo, bump the tempo up 5-10 beats per minute and try again. As soon as you make a mistake take note of the tempo you were at and move on to another exercise. Next time you come back to that exercise, start at the last tempo you were able to complete successfully, and go from there.

• Basic warm up exercises

Here are a couple of basic warm up exercises to get your hands and feet moving. While these are extremely basic, they can be practiced for quite some time, increasing speed and working on technique is something every drummer can always improve on. Just because we are learning these early on does not mean you should just forget about them as you move forward, practice these exercises often!



HAVING TROUBLE?

If you're a left handed drummer learning on a left handed kit, then you should be reversing the hands of these, and the rest of the exercises in the book. This may be a pain at first, but you'll get used to it very quickly.

• Exercise 1 - Eight on a hand

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

• Exercise 2 - The Single Stroke Roll

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



DRUM TIP

The Single Stroke Roll is the first drum rudiment drummers learn. It is the foundation to a lot of what we'll be looking at in the following chapters. Drum rudiments are basic Right/Left sticking patterns that we'll learn more about later.

• Exercise 3 - Leading with the weak hand

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

• **Exercise 4 - The Double Stroke Roll**

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



DRUM TIP

The Double Stroke Roll is another rudiment that we'll be looking at more in-depth later on. Don't worry about trying to play this really fast until you've mastered playing it at slower tempo's. Playing this fast requires a technique called a controlled bounce, which we'll learn about later.

• **Exercise 5 - Alternating Hands and Feet**

• **Exercise 5.1**

R K R K R K R K R K R K R K R K

• **Exercise 5.2**

L K L K L K L K L K L K L K L K

• **Exercise 5.3**

R K R K R K R K L K L K L K L K

• **Exercise 5.4**

R L K K R L K K R L K K R L K K

• **Exercise 5.5**

L R K K L R K K L R K K L R K K

• Exercise 6 - Using Two Limbs Simultaneously



DRUM TIP

Once you've spent a little time playing through the exercises and you feel comfortable holding the sticks, moving the sticks and playing the kick drum, it's time to move on to using more than one limb at a time! The first thing we want to learn to do is to coordinate two of our limbs at a time; primarily our right foot and right hand as well as our right and left hands. When playing all beginner phrases we will be holding the hi-hat closed with our left foot. It's important you actually hold the hi-hat pedal down with your foot as opposed to just closing the top hat so it rests in a closed position.

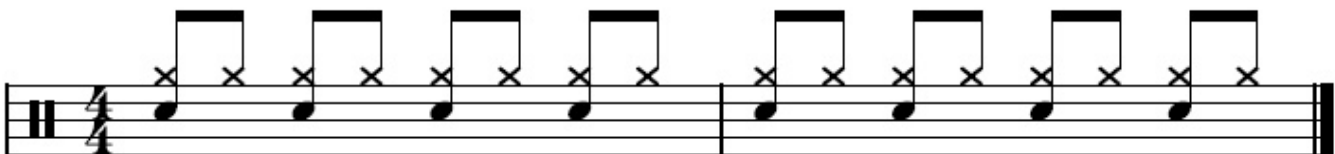
• Exercise 6.1



• Exercise 6.2



• Exercise 6.3



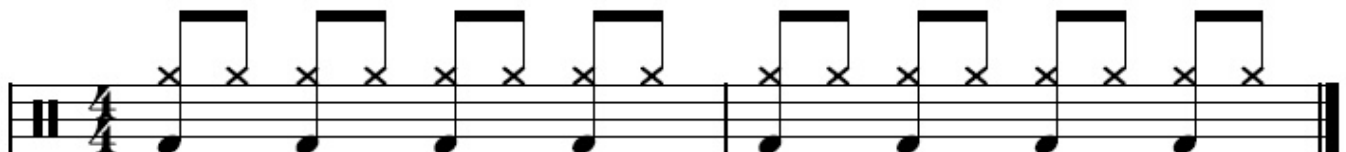
• Exercise 6.4



• Exercise 6.5



• Exercise 6.6



• Final Thoughts on Chapter 1

Once you've completed chapter 1 you should have a pretty firm grasp on how time and counting in music works, and understanding of the different subdivisions we'll use through the beginning phase, as well as basic coordination between your two hand and your kick drum foot. You should understand how a metronome works and why it's important to use one, and you should also have devised a consistent method of practice.

Remember, most of what you're learning here is meant as a guideline, there are always other ways of doing things. Some drummers believe practicing from slow to fast then back to slow is an effective way to increase your speed potential. Give it a try. Some drummers play the hi-hat with their left hand and the snare with their right even if their right handed. This is called playing open handed and is usually frowned upon, but I say give it a try and use what feels more natural to you. I've seen some fantastic drummers play open.

I've seen instructors with very strict methods of teaching. I don't agree with this approach. I believe each individual is unique and learns in their own unique way. If you get half way into Chapter 1 and feel like it isn't advanced enough for you, skip right ahead to Chapter 2. If you find Chapter 2 too difficult you can always come back to Chapter 1! On the other hand, if you find yourself struggling with Chapter 1, just take it slow and make sure you practice, you will be able to get through it and move on!

The most important thing to do when learning a new instrument is to PRACTICE. If you feel like there's too much text then by all means jump ahead to the exercises! There is a lot of valuable information in these words, but nothing can compare to the power of simply practicing your instrument.

So remember -

Practice and have fun with it!

When you're ready let's get started on Chapter 2!