

SINGLE-STROKE ROLL

Playing rudiments properly is a challenge because they are so physically demanding—not so much in terms of muscular strength, but in terms of finesse and dexterity. Many repetitions are necessary in order to train your muscles and to develop the coordination required to play them effortlessly. But all of that practice will be time well spent, since once you develop the proper muscle memory you'll never have to think about the mechanics of the rudiment again.

The first rudiment we're going to look at is the single-stroke roll. The single-stroke roll should be played with free strokes (also known as full strokes or legato strokes), which means that the hands are holding the sticks loosely and are "dribbling" them on the drumhead. Resist any temptation to hold the sticks tightly or to stop the stick at the bottom of the stroke. Allow the stick to rebound back to the "up" position immediately after striking the head.

The technique needed to play this rudiment is pretty much the same at any speed, though different wrist-to-finger ratios will be required depending on the rebound (or lack thereof) of the playing surface. It's common for many players to favor the fingers at high speeds, but keep in mind that finger technique won't work very well on a relatively mushy surface like a floor tom head.

In addition to the exercises provided, be sure to practice this rudiment going evenly from slow to fast to slow over a one-minute period. Practice the exercises with the given stickings, use a metronome (or play along with your favorite tunes), and don't go any faster than you can play comfortably. Note for exercises 2 and 3: Whenever you see a one-bar repeat sign, play the previous measure using the opposite sticking, beginning with the left hand. The only exception to this is in the last measure of each example.

[illegible]

R — (L R) ————— L R R R (L R) ————— L

R R (LR) ————— L R (LR) ————— L

(R L) —————

Note: from here play the 2-bar phrases in reverse order to end up back where you started

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 R R R R R ————— L R ————— L R L

R ————— L R L R L R ————— L R L R L R L

R ————— (LR) ————— L R ————— (LR) ————— L

R ————— (IR) ————— L R ————— (IR) —————

R ————— (IR) ————— L R ————— (IR) ————— L

R ————— (IR) ————— L R ————— (IR) ————— L

R ————— (IR) ————— L R R R (LR) ————— L

R R (IR) ————— L R (IR) ————— L

(RL) —————

Note: from here play the 2-bar phrases in reverse order to end up back where you started

INTRODUCTION

The rudiments are the roots of our drumming art form and are every bit as important today as they were when they were created. I think of the rudiments as the alphabet of our drumming language. Once you've learned this alphabet, you're ready to use it to freely express yourself with a large vocabulary. I've heard drummers say that rudiments and techniques will stiffen them up, ruin their groove, and confine their imagination. This couldn't be farther from the truth, assuming that the rudiments are learned in a musical way and are played with smooth and flowing technique.

When it comes to drumset applications, too often drummers just focus on how to orchestrate a given rudiment around the instrument. While this approach is of value, I don't think it offers enough incentive to make you want to take the time to properly master the rudiments.

For drumset players, the real value of rudiments lies in the physical motions and techniques that are built up and can then be applied in other contexts. While there are many rudiments out there, from the Percussive Arts Society's standard forty to a seemingly endless array of hybrids, I've distilled the list down to the twelve rudiments that contain the essential hand motions you'll need to master in order to play any other rudiment or sticking pattern. Let's look at them one at a time.

- 1. Single-stroke roll.** This rudiment covers successive identical free strokes.
- 2. Double-stroke roll.** This two-stroke combination requires finger control for the second stroke (alley-oop) and the use of pumping forearms at fast tempos.
- 3. Triple-stroke roll.** This three-stroke combination requires finger control for the second and third strokes (alley-oop-oop).
- 4. Buzz roll.** This rudiment requires fulcrum/hand pressure into the drumhead.
- 5. Paradiddle.** This rudiment involves downstrokes and upstrokes, plus a low double after an accent (alley-opp or drop-catch motion).
- 6. Six-stroke roll.** This rudiment contains accents within a roll motion where the wrists turn for accents while the forearms continue pumping, as well as downstrokes and upstrokes.
- 7. Flam.** This rudiment contains downstrokes and upstrokes, as well as the Moeller whip-stroke combination (whip-and-flop) at faster tempos.
- 8. Flam accent.** This rudiment includes downstrokes and upstrokes, plus a low triple stroke (drop-dribble-catch) after an accent.
- 9. Flam tap.** This rudiment contains a bouncing, decrescendoing triple-stroke motion (no-chop flop-and-drop) at medium and fast tempos.
- 10. Inverted flam tap.** This rudiment includes the Moeller whip downstroke (whip-and-stop).
- 11. Drag.** This rudiment covers finger control rebound into finger control double strokes (at faster tempos).
- 12. Dragadiddle.** This rudiment includes accented doubles played with the free stroke/downstroke combination (dribble-catch).

Once you have command of these twelve rudiments, then you can easily work out the coordination to play just about anything else. Rudiments create chops, chops create vocabulary, and vocabulary creates music.

RUDIMENTAL BREAKDOWN

The rudimental breakdown is the process of playing a rudiment from slow to fast to slow as evenly as possible over one minute. It's also been called the open-closed-open breakdown. To alleviate any confusion, "open-closed-open" does not mean to go from an open double-stroke roll to a closed buzz roll. The rudiment itself should never change. In the breakdown, the rudiment should be sped up for twenty-five seconds, held for ten seconds, and then slowed down for twenty-five seconds. You want to focus on evenness and consistent sound quality throughout the process.

Since rudiments require different techniques at different tempos, the rudimental breakdown is the truest test of mastery. Not only are you covering every possible tempo, but you're also demonstrating your ability to transfer from one technique to the next in correlation with the gradual tempo change. The breakdown will also show you the tempos at which you are deficient, so you will know what tempos you need to practice in order to fully master the rudiment. Once you can go through the breakdown with each rudiment and achieve good sound quality and flow, you'll be ready to play the rudiment in any context you

might encounter.

Here are some tips for the rudimental breakdown.

1. Do not rush through it. Use a stopwatch that shows the seconds to make sure you spend as much time slowing down the rudiment as you do speeding up the rudiment. (Slowing down is the more difficult part.)

2. Evenness and consistent sound quality are the most important things, not your top speed.

3. There should be no abrupt changes in tempo or in the velocity of your strokes. You want to morph between tempos and techniques in a smooth and gradual manner.

4. Don't sacrifice execution for faster speed.

5. Gradually lower and raise the stick heights during the breakdown. The change in stick height is so slight that it shouldn't be noticeable at any one point.

6. Rudiments with a single stick height (no accents) should start and stop with the sticks up.

7. Rudiments with two stick heights (containing accents) should start and stop with the sticks low to the drum.

