

Ontario Music Educators Association

Con Fuoco 2021

"Optimizing Your Percussion Students"

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4 Main Percussion Strokes

There are 4 main strokes that percussionists use all the time to play their instruments. To develop these strokes consider the following points:

- Learn to develop each stroke individually in isolation
- Develop each hand by itself
- Start slow...this cannot be stressed enough
- Focus on the sound “tone” produced when playing each stroke
- Once comfortable playing the strokes try putting them together...see other attached PDF “4 Main Percussion Strokes Exercises”

Stroke 1: Legato Stroke/Full Stroke (Loud):

- starts about 8 to 12 inches from the drum head
- the tip of the stick pointing to the ceiling
- we will call this starting position “Home Base”, for the rest of this lesson when we use the term “Home Base” this is the position we will be talking about
- **PLAY THE STROKE**
- return the stick to “Home Base”

* Make sure that you are using your wrist muscles to propel the stick towards the drum with enough velocity to allow the stick to rebound back up. A “wimpy” stroke will get you a “wimpy” sound and the stick will not rebound back.

Stroke 2: Down-Stroke (Loud):

- This stroke starts of “Home Base”
- **PLAY THE STROKE**
- When the stroke finishes you want the stick to end up ½ an inch to 1 inch from the drum head
- Be sure to not play into the drum head by leaving the stick on the head, it’s supposed to hover above it

It will take some time to get the finishing distance of this stroke at proper height, be patient, and proceed slowly.

Stroke 3: Tap-Stroke (Soft):

- This stroke starts ½ an inch to 1 inch from the drum head
- **PLAY THE STROKE**
- When the stroke finishes it should return to the same starting position (1/2 an inch to 1 inch from the drum head)

Make sure not to utilize your wrist muscles for this stroke. Use your fingers for this stroke (keep all of your fingers on the stick).

Stroke 4: Up-Stroke (Soft):

- This stroke will start ½ an inch to 1 inch away from the drum head (much in the same start position as the Tap Stroke)
- **PLAY THE STROKE**
- When you are finishing up the stroke be sure to return the stick to the “Home Base” position

This is a very awkward stroke to master. When you start getting a good flow out of it you will feel like you are “pulling the sound out of the drum head”, not literally but your sticks will sure look like you are doing this.

Practice these strokes very slowly on your snare drum, or even on a practice pad. Try to make each hand sound the same. Most importantly stay relaxed! Always focus on maintaining a good fulcrum, and make sure that all of your fingers are on the stick at all times. Once again be patient, and have fun!

Dynamics: Six Volume Levels

Dynamics:

Dynamics can be played in a number of ways, but they always must relate to the ensemble and the sound of the group overall, the phrase of the music, and the environment (outdoors, indoors, large group, small group, staging, and volume capacity of the lead or main instrument that is playing the melody). Different ways of creating dynamics are:

1. Degree of wrist turn, from parallel to the drum to a maximum turn.
2. Inches in height, for example, 3", 6", 9", 12", 15"
3. "Sound" relative to the ensemble
4. "Feel".....does it feel good to play?

*Inches listed below are from the tip of the drumstick or mallet to the playing surface.

Dynamic markings:

Inches and Degrees

<i>pp</i>	pianissimo	very soft	1.5" (5 deg.)
<i>p</i>	piano	soft	3" (15 deg.)
<i>mp</i>	mezzo-piano	fairly soft (medium soft)	4.5" (30 deg.)
<i>mf</i>	mezzo-forte	fairly loud (medium loud)	6" (45 deg.)
<i>f</i>	forte	loud	9" (70 deg.)
<i>ff</i>	fortissimo	very loud	12" (90+ deg.)

Rudiments...the Language of Percussion

Rudiments are like grammar for the modern percussionist. All percussionists, whether you play in a drumline, a drum set, concert snare drum, mallet percussion, or hand percussion, should know their rudiments and have some basic knowledge of them. Rudiments are the lifeblood of everything that percussionists do. They are our letters and words that help us execute our musical sentences and paragraphs with precision and ease.

There are 5 families of rudiments. By organizing rudiments into these categories they are easier to play, practice, and remember. Below is a list of the families of rudiments, as well some rudiments in each family (rudiments in each family are listed in developmental order).

* These rudiments are essential in performing the majority of the selected repertoire in the Grade 0.5-3 range.

1. The Roll Family:

- ***Single Stroke Roll**
- ***Double Stroke Roll**
- ***Multiple Bounce Roll**
- ***5-Stroke Roll**
- 7-Stroke Roll
- 6-Stroke Roll
- 9-Stroke Roll
- ...and more

2. The Paradiddles Family:

- ***Single Paradiddle**
- ***Double Paradiddle**
- ***Paradiddle-diddle**
- Triple Paradiddle
- ...and more

3. The Flam Family:

- ***Single Flam (Alternating Flams)**
- ***Flam Taps**
- Flam Accents
- Flamacue
- ...and more

4. The Drag Family:

- ***Single Drag**
- Single Drag Tap
- Double Drag Tap
- ***Single Ratamacue**
- Double Ratamacue
- ...and more

5. The Hybrid Family:

- ***Single-3**
- ***Single-5**
- Single-9
- Heirta
- ...and more

Repertoire Chart

Composition	Location	Categories	Performance Elements	Percussion Instrumentation
“Odyssey” David Marlatt	Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019	Grade 1	- long rolls with dynamics - percussion 2 importance	- Concert Snare Drum - Concert Bass Drum - Tambourine - Woodblock - Suspended Cymbal - Bells
“African Folk Trilogy” Arr. Anne McGinty	Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019	Grade 1	- eighth note awareness - section awareness	- Concert Snare Drum - Bells, - Cowbell - Claves - Cabasa
“Celtic Air and Dance No. 1” Arr. Michael Sweeney	Ontario Band Association	Grade 1	- rudimental awareness - 16th note variations - short and long rolls - tempo changes - 2 note timpani tuning - long rolls with dynamics	- Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Concert Toms - Triangle - Suspended Cymbal - Bells
“Celtic Air and Dance No. 3” Arr. Michael Sweeney	Ontario Band Association	Grade 1.5	- rudimental awareness - 16th note variations - short and long rolls - tempo changes - 2 note timpani tuning - long rolls with dynamics	- Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Tambourine - Crash Cymbals - Suspended Cymbal - Bells - Timpani (Bb, F)

<p>“Three Czech Folk Songs”</p> <p>Johnnie Vinson</p>	<p>Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019</p>	<p>Grade 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eight percussion players - mallet/stick choice - rhythmic awareness - long rolls, rudiments - 4 note timpani tuning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Tambourine - Triangle - Woodblock - Crash Cymbals - Suspended Cymbal - Bells - Xylophone - Timpani (Bb, F)
<p>“Creed”</p> <p>William Himes</p>	<p>Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019</p>	<p>Grade 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accents - dynamics - flams - stick and mallet choice - syncopation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concert Snare Drum - Concert Bass Drum - Tambourine - Triangle - Suspended Cymbal - Bells - Chimes - Timpani (F, C)
<p>“Prelude and Pursuit”</p> <p>Michael Sweeney</p>	<p>Kiwanis Music Festival Syllabus Secondary School Bands “B” Grade 10 and Under</p>	<p>Grade 2.5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mallet Choice - 2 timpani - timpani long roll - interlocking percussion - heavy focus on the percussion section - short rolls - accents - dynamics - multiple mallet percussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Mark Tree - Suspended Cymbal - Crash Cymbals - Bongos - Claves - Triangle - Bells - Vibraphone - Marimba - Xylophone - Timpani

<p>“Gypsy Dance”</p> <p>Joseph Compello</p>	<p>Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019</p>	<p>Grade 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - various short and long rolls - changing time signatures - 16th note variations - 3 note Timpani - 2nd percussion details (pinched cymbals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Suspended Cymbal - Crash Cymbals - Tambourine - Castanets - Maracas - Claves - Triangle - Bells - Xylophone - Timpani (G, C, D)
<p>“Shenandoah”</p> <p>Frank Ticheli</p>	<p>Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019</p>	<p>Grade 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 note timpani - various pitched percussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triangle - Suspended Cymbal - Vibraphone - Chimes - Timpani (G, B, E)
<p>“Greek Folk Song Suite”</p> <p>Franco Cesarini</p>	<p>Ontario Band Association Festival Syllabus 2019</p>	<p>Grade 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choice of mallets, - accelerando - percussion 1 two players? - Changing time Signatures - 4 note timp tuning - Mallet choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Tambourine - Tam-tam (Gong) - Woodblock - Crash Cymbals - Suspended Cymbal - Vibraphone - Xylophone

<p>“Oracles of Sirocco” Robert Sheldon</p>	<p>Kiwanis Music Festival Syllabus Secondary School Bands “A” Grade 10 and Under</p>	<p>Grade 3.5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 note timpani - 16th note variations - accents - dynamics - interlocking section parts - short rolls - endurance/ repeating the same pattern -changing time signatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concert Snare drum - Concert Bass Drum - Mark Tree - Bells - Timpani (F, Ab, Bb, C) - Tambourine - Crash Cymbals - Suspended Cymbal - Triangle - Hi-Hat
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Sample Percussion Evaluation Rubric

* This a sample Percussion Evaluation Rubric for percussionists to evaluate them on repertoire performance, as well as skill development. I have included the following categories:

- Rhythm
- Technique
- Accent Control
- Sticking Combinations
- Tempo
- Subdividing

You could also include:

- Dynamics
- Phrasing
- Tone
- Articulation

These are suggestions, if you are going to add categories remember to use percussion focused vocabulary to make the assessment and evaluation authentic for your percussionists.

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Rhythms	The beat is usually erratic and rhythms are seldom accurate detracting significantly from the overall performance.	The beat is somewhat erratic. Some rhythms are accurate. Frequent or repeated duration errors. Rhythm problems occasionally detract from the overall performance.	The beat is secure and the rhythms are mostly accurate. There are a few duration errors but they do not detract from the overall performance.	The beat is secure and the rhythms are accurate.

Technique	Correct technique is rarely used. Incorrect technique distracts greatly from the quality of performance.	Correct technique is sometimes used. Incorrect technique distracts from the quality of performance. But usually does not strike with excessive force.	Correct technique is usually used. Strikes the instrument with a little too much force but incorrect technique does not distract from the overall performance.	Correct technique is used. Palms are down. Fingers are used to control the level of bounce. Strikes the instrument with only enough force to make a pleasing, clear sound.
Accent Control	Accents are rarely executed cleanly with proper stick heights. No unaccented notes.	Accents are sometimes executed cleanly with proper stick heights. Un-accents could be much quieter.	Accents are usually executed cleanly with proper stick heights. Un-accents could be quieter.	Accents are executed cleanly using proper stick heights and dynamic levels.
Sticking Combinations	Few secure sticking combinations. Markings are not typically executed accurately.	Sticking combinations are rarely secure, but markings are often executed accurately as directed by the piece of music.	Sticking combinations are usually correct though there was an isolated error. Markings are executed as accurately as directed by the piece of music.	Correct sticking combinations. Markings are executed accurately as directed by the piece of music.
Tempo	Tempo is erratic with constant changes in speed detracting from the overall performance.	Tempo is somewhat erratic. There are repeated areas where the tempo changes. Tempo changes occasionally detract from the overall performance.	Tempo is secure with slight variations in speed that do not detract from the overall performance.	Tempo is secure and remains steady throughout the piece/exercise.

Subdividing	Subdivisions are inconsistent and the tempo is erratic and inconsistent.	Subdivisions are somewhat erratic and tempo is insecure.	Subdivisions and tempo are mostly secure and accurate.	Subdivisions and tempo are securer and accurate.
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Percussion Learning Target with Success Criteria

* This sample of a Learning Target and Success Criteria layout that has been developed for percussion students to deliver various skills and concepts. This concept was adapted from the book *Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding in Today's Lesson* by Connie M. Moss and Susan M. Brookhart.

Topic: 4 Main Percussion Strokes

Learning Target: I can play the 4 Main Percussion Strokes with proper technique and precise stick heights.

Success Criteria

I have a very clear and defined fulcrum.

All of my fingers are on the stick.

The palms of my hands are facing the floor.

I can play clear and defined Full/Legato Strokes.

I can play clear and defined Down Strokes.

I can play clear and defined Tap Strokes.

I can play clear and defined Up Strokes.

I can play in the area of their instrument to produce the best tone.

Percussion Learning Target with Success Criteria Student Self Assessment

* This sample of a Learning Target and Success Criteria Self Assessment layout that has been developed for percussion students to have them self assess their progress, and even performance of the 4 Main Percussion Strokes. You will see the learning target displayed, as well the success criteria. The “bullseye” concept was adapted from the book *Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding in Today’s Lesson* by Connie M. Moss and Susan M. Brookhart.

Self Assessment: 4 Main Percussion Strokes

Learning Target: I can play the 4 Main Percussion Strokes with proper technique and precise stick heights.

Assign yourself a number in relation to how close you are to reaching the learning target above. “5” would be a perfect “bulls eye”, and “1” is way out on the edge of the “bulls eye”.

Success Criteria

I have a very clear and defined fulcrum.

1 2 3 4 5

All of my fingers are on the stick.

1 2 3 4 5

The palms of my hands are facing the floor.

1 2 3 4 5

I can play clear and defined Full/Legato Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

I can play clear and defined Down Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

I can play clear and defined Tap Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

I can play clear and defined Up Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

I can play in the area of their instrument to produce the best tone.

1 2 3 4 5

Percussion Learning Target with Success Criteria Student Teacher Evaluation

* This sample of a Learning Target and Success Criteria Teacher Evaluation layout that has been developed for percussion students to evaluate them on their performance of the 4 Main Percussion Strokes. You will see the learning target displayed, as well the success criteria. The concept was adapted from the book *Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding in Today's Lesson* by Connie M. Moss and Susan M. Brookhart.

Teacher Evaluation: 4 Main Percussion Strokes

Learning Target: Student can play the 4 Main Percussion Strokes with proper technique and precise stick heights.

Success Criteria:

Student has a very clear and defined fulcrum.

1 2 3 4 5

Student has all of their fingers on the stick.

1 2 3 4 5

Student has the palms of their hands facing the floor.

1 2 3 4 5

Student can play clear and defined Full/Legato Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

Student can play clear and defined Down Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

Student can play clear and defined Tap Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

Student can play clear and defined Up Strokes.

1 2 3 4 5

Student plays in the area of their instrument to produce the best tone.

1 2 3 4 5

Total Mark /40