



by Steven Burpee

Beginners Guide to Jazz Drumming

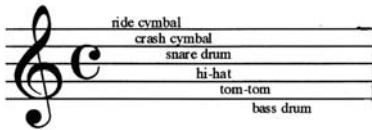
The Role of the Jazz Drummer

Drummers have to be creative people who love to take chances. Most of what you will play as the drummer in the jazz band cannot be found on your printed part. Therefore, all jazz drummers must be good listeners, knowledgeable musicians, and intuitive players. In fact it will require a combination of these skills to fulfill your role as the jazz band drummer.

Your primary objective is to keep time with the band. Although each player must be held responsible for the integrity of the pulse, it is the drummer who provides style and feel to the division of time. In addition to your job as timekeeper, you will be asked to contribute accents, lead dynamic and style changes, double wind rhythms, complement the bass and piano parts, and communicate musically with soloists. In short, you are both the watchdog of the musical cheerleader of the band. All of this is normally accomplished without the aid of a clearly notated drum part.

The Tools of the Jazz Drummer

Be sure to familiarize yourself with the names of all of the parts of the drumset and where notes for each instrument will be written on the treble clef staff.



The Right Equipment

Every drummer should have the following items on hand at all times to give yourself every advantage with the music:

Drumsticks 5A is a good size

1 pair nylon tip for crisper, louder cymbal work

1 pair wood tip for softer, mellower cymbal qualities

1 pair medium felt mallets for ballad cymbal rolls

1 pair telescoping wire brushes wire has a clear sound and the telescoping capability allows you to adjust the stiffness of the brushes

Gum rubber practice pad Use it every chance you get!

Stick bag The items listed above are a substantial investment. Protect your equipment as you would any fine wooden instrument.

The Language of Drumming

You will encounter most of these terms within a short period of time. To learn them helps you to speak and understand the language of music and drumming.

The Vocabulary of Drumming

- Ride Cymbal** The largest and thickest of two cymbals used on the drumset. Most ride cymbals are 20" to 22" in width. This cymbal is used as the main component in time keeping patterns.
- Crash Cymbal** The smaller and thinner of two cymbals on the drumset. Most crash cymbals are 16" to 18" in width. This cymbal is used most often for accents and kicks to emphasize the strongest notes in the music.
- Hi-hat** The two small cymbals mounted on a single stand that open and close through the use of a foot pedal. Most hi-hat cymbals are 13" to 14" in width.
- Fill** A short drum solo used to connect two sections of music or to fill a set-up
- Set-up** A very short solo, sometimes only one note, used to prepare the way for a phrase or accent to be played by the ensemble.
- Kick** To play a rhythm or phrase at the same time as the rest of the ensemble. Also called a "catch."
- Accent** Similar to a kick, but usually only for one or two notes.
- Trap** An old term, short for "contraption", used as a name for the drumset.

Terms Encountered in Drum Parts

- Tacet** Remain silent; don't play.
- X's** Play as many times as indicated. Example: 4 X's = play four times.
- Tempo markings** ♩ = 120. Means that there are 120 beats per minute.
- Vamp** Repeat a short passage until instructed or cued to move on to next section.
- Open or Open solo** A solo chorus designed to be repeated until instructed or cued to move on.
- D.S. (del Segno)** Repeat back to the sign until directed to the coda
- D.C. (da Capo)** Return to the beginning.
- Shout Chorus** A full ensemble passage in a big band chart, usually right after a solo section. Generally played at full volume.
- In 2** Two beats per measure. Old style Jazz and Dixieland both use a two beat feel.
- In 3** 3/4 time with 3 pulses per measure.
- In 1** A fast 3/4 with 1 beat per measure.
- Crescendo** Getting gradually louder.
- Decrescendo** Getting gradually softer.
- Ritard (rit.)** Getting gradually slower.
- Railroad tracks** "///" (cesura). A sudden stop in the music.
- Double time** Twice as fast as before.
- Double time feel** Rhythm section plays as though the tempo is double time, but no values and measure length remain the same. This gives a false appearance that the tempo of the music is twice as fast. Used most often in ballads.
- Fermata** To hold, pause, or interrupt. Release is determined by the conductor.
- Solo chorus** A complete set of chord changes over which solos are played.
- Marcato** (housetop, teepee) Short but fat accent note.
- Staccato** Light, short note.
- Legato** Long, sustained note.
- Time** Play a regular swing pattern as an accompaniment to the ensemble.
- Sock** Old term for crash cymbal.
- Sticks** Use sticks until directed otherwise.

- Brushes** Use brushes until directed otherwise.
- Simile** Continue in the same manner.
- Click** Also known as "cross stick." Lay your left hand stick across the drum. Keep one end on the drumhead and strike the other against the rim. This gives a woody, rimshot type sound.
- Break** Stop playing. Usually a one or two bar rest for rhythm section instruments.
- Groove** Play time in whatever style indicated in your music.
- Drive** Play time, but at a higher intensity level. Usually louder.
- Back Beat** Play a strong accent (usually snare drum) on the 2nd and 4th beat of your time pattern.
- Ad lib.** "At liberty" Feel free to improvise on the basic pattern. Also used to indicate a freely moving section of ballad music.
- Straight Ahead** Basic swing style Jazz.
- Straight 8ths** Played with straight, evenly spaced eighth notes.
- Tutti** Everyone playing together.

Learning to Swing

Learning to play swing style music can be like learning a foreign language. There is a brief period at the beginning when the most basic of concepts must be oversimplified to help the beginner understand. Once the basics are mastered, advanced work becomes much easier. And in the case of learning swing music, the drummer must first learn how the beat is divided and then how to play the basic swing time keeping pattern.

In standard forms of music each beat is divided into two even segments known as eighth notes as shown below. These are typically referred to as "straight eighth notes:"

In this style notes on the beat are given the accents.

In swing music the beat is divided into three parts and the first two are tied together. In effect the rhythm is identical to a triplet figure as shown below:

In this style the strongest accents are assigned the second half of each pair of notes. Beats 2 & 4, the eighth notes between the beat, etc.

Tip: Learning to vocalize swing rhythm by saying the syllables "oo - ba" in an eighth pulse will help you gain a good feel for this uneven eighth note pattern. Practice it as you play the pattern.

The Basic Swing Pattern

The basic beat pattern is quite easy and can be used in almost any swing style piece. In fact, in the early going, your most important task is to play this pattern at a consistent and even tempo.

You must first begin by learning how to play the what is known as the "ride pattern" with the right hand.

If you have trouble playing a nice even swing eighth note pattern try the following exercise using the left hand on your hi-tom while keeping the right on the ride cymbal

Tip: You can actually practice these patterns at anytime time on your leg a shoe, a book, your pancakes or almost anything that is handy!

It is common to see swing rhythms notated in the same manner as the two examples below. Keep in mind that the intention is always to play them as you have learned above. For practical purposes the bottom example is most often used as notation for swing rhythms.

Once you can play the ride pattern you are ready to add more instruments to your swing beat. The hi-hat is very important in timekeeping since it plays the accented beats 2 and 4 and is used as shown below:

Playing Accents and Kicks

Once you have mastered the ability to keep accurate time with the ensemble, you should be asking yourself if there is more to your part than merely playing a swing beat pattern throughout the music. Of course the answer is yes. In fact it is these extras that take

your part from a time keeper's role to a more musical and creative expression. Once again it is important to start with basics. In this case, the basics are learning to play accents.

One note accents are called single accents and can fall on or between any beat. If you can learn to play these accents at any point in the measure, it will make it much easier to learn double and triple accent patterns. Accents of more than one note are frequently referred to as "kicks". Many drummers feel that all accented phrases are just combinations of single accents. Let's first begin by examining how a simple single accent can be played.

The example below demonstrates how an accent might appear in one of your drum parts.



Tip: Concentration on time keeping and keeping track of the music can make it easy to miss this note. Keep an eye open and mark your part with a pencil to help you remember the next time.

Any accent can be played with the left hand on either the snare drum, hi-tom, hi-hat, floor tom, crash cymbal, or with the foot on the bass drum. The example below shows how this accent could be played on the snare drum while maintaining the swing pattern.



Make sure that you play the accent in such a way as to bring attention to only this note. Be careful that your accent does not influence the consistency of your tempo. Many times young drums tend to rush whenever they play these notes. Practice will give you confidence.

Important Note: The drum or cymbal you select for an accent should directly reflect the tone quality and duration of the note played by the ensemble. For example, if the band has an accented whole note a crash cymbal would be a good choice because of the duration of its sound. For an eighth note, a snare drum would be a good choice.

More on Accents

Think of your drum part as a cooking experiment. Every dish has a main ingredient, like potatoes. By itself it is a very bland dish no matter how you cook it. Add salt and pepper and the flavor improves dramatically. Drumming is very similar. Playing only a swing beat throughout an entire piece of music is like cooking potatoes with no seasoning. Accents are your salt and pepper and provide spice to your music. To avoid adding just salt to your music use your bass drum or one of the other drumset elements to create variety.

The chief job of the bass drum in jazz is to play kicks, accents, and double accents played on other parts of the drum set. The example below is from the previous page. The difference is that the kick now is played in the bass drum. The same could be done with crash cymbal, hi-hat, hi-tom, or floor tom.



Now that you've seen an accent demonstrated the following accent should be quite simple to follow. Note, however, that in this case the accent falls on the "& of 1".



Remember: Take care to place this note on the third triplet eighth note of the first beat. Refer to swing basics on page 25 for a refresher on division of swing eighth notes.

The following two examples show how you can incorporate the accent on the "& of 1" into your beat pattern. Again, the approach is to call attention to this emphasized note.



Even More on Accents

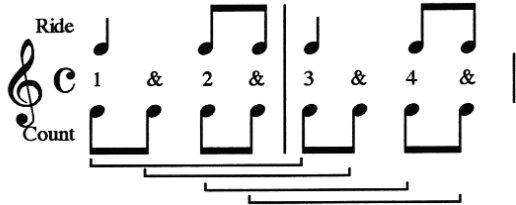
Now you have experimented with two different types of accents that can be played two different ways. The next step is to practice accents on each of the eighth notes in the measure.

To simplify this process you must first consider the standard ride cymbal pattern.



You might notice that the second half of the measure is a copy of the first half. By breaking only half of the measure down into eighth notes you can see that there are really only four placements for accents in the ride pattern. Each of the four placements in the first half of the measure match up with the four eighth notes in the second half of the measure. The diagram below demonstrates this. Note how an accent on beat 1 is played in the same part of the ride pattern as an accent on beat 3. Now look and note

that an accent on the “& of 1” is played much like an accent on the “& of 3”. You can carry this logic out all of the way to the end of the measure.



What this all means is that there are really only four accent points for you to learn. They are:

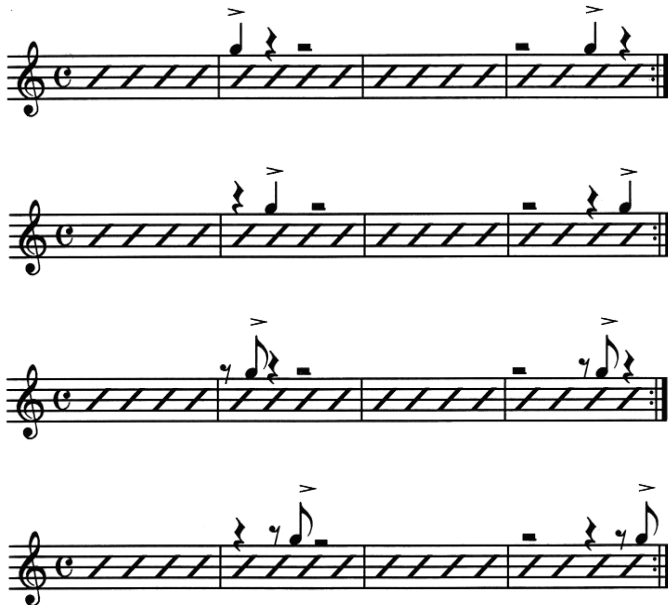
	First Half	Second Half
A	Beat 1	Beat 3
B	& of 1	& of 3
C	Beat 2	Beat 4
D	& of 2	& of 4

Following are four practice examples. They will help you to learn to place accents accurately and will also help you to learn the relationship between the two halves of the measure. Begin slowly and do not increase tempo until you can place each accent effectively. Begin by playing each of the accents on snare drum then learn to play each example using a variety of accent instruments. Take your time and practice regularly.

Accent Practice

Practice Makes Perfect:

1. Work slowly at first.
2. Learn to play each accent on snare drum.
3. Learn to play each accent on bass drum, then cymbal, hi-hat, and tom.



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