

COMPLETE DRUM SET WARMUP

INSTRUCTIONS

After many years of trial and error, I have settled upon a routine for warming up the hands and feet optimized for the drum set that has greatly affected my playing in a positive way. I want to share with you that routine, in hopes that you will find it as helpful as I have.

I have found that this warm up routine has many benefits, both physical and mental. From a physical standpoint, the idea is to gradually warm the muscles and joints up by using slow and deliberate motions with the wrists and fingers, and feet. By playing the alternating pattern with the feet, and following the written sticking with the hands, the result clears any mental “cobwebs” between your right and left sides, activating both sides of your body equally. From a mental standpoint, while performing the warmup I have found that very often (and quite quickly) I fall into a mental “zone” which helps to clear my mind of any clutter and puts me in a relaxed, almost zen-like state. I’m focusing on staying tension-free and relaxed while letting the metronome guide my hands and feet. The result is that my brain becomes more open and ready to focus on my upcoming performance, while ridding myself of any self doubt or extraneous thoughts. As a result, I have more confidence in my technical abilities as a drummer and in my overall musical state of being.

LETTER A

When starting this exercise, set your metronome to quarter note = 135 BPM and begin by focusing on staying relaxed and playing light, completely tension free, while remembering to breathe. This is very important. Do not be too concerned with the sound that you are making. Only concern yourself with staying with the metronome and keeping free of tension in your hands, fingers, wrists, and feet. Your hands and feet should be working together in tandem. Use wrist strokes. Let the sticks and pedals do the work, using the natural rebound of the stick off the head. Try not to play any accents at this point. Continue like this until it becomes effortless to play. It might take one minute or five minutes. Now you are ready to move the tempo up 15 BPM’s to 150. Rinse and repeat, each time bumping the tempo up 15 BPM’s, all the way up to quarter note = 210. Once the tempo becomes faster (180 and higher), you might need a few seconds to rest in between tempo changes. This is okay and perfectly normal.

LETTER B

The accented notes should be just enough to separate them from the unaccented notes. Use a small up and down pumping motion with the wrist and forearm to achieve the accents. Again, remain relaxed and tension free. Truth be told, I like to alternate between Letter A & B when doing my warm up. I will start with Letter A at BPM = 135,

and then switch over to Letter B before moving up the tempo. I encourage you to practice it this way also. However, for younger or inexperienced players, you might want to practice these as two separate ideas and that's why I chose to separate them on paper when I wrote them. There is no right or wrong way to implement these ideas into your warmup routine.

LETTER C

By now your hands should be feeling really warm, and when time is short you could stop right here. However, when I have the time I like to continue with a few other exercises to keep the chops feeling fresh. Letter C is an exercise I picked up from a Steve Smith DVD, and it takes you through singles, doubles, and inverted doubles leading with both right and left hands. At BPM = 210 this will be a difficult exercise for most, but find the top speed at which you can get through all 8 bars without any hiccups in the stream of 16th notes. Remember, you're going for cleanliness, not just speed. Stay relaxed. Feel free to add an accent on the "1" of each bar if that helps to make the transition from one sticking to the next.

LETTER D

Using the Moeller stroke (using a "down, tap, up" stroke), this exercise reinforces the "whipping" power stroke that is so effectively used on the drum kit. You're still at quarter note = 210 BPM.

LETTER E & F

Up until now we've done single strokes and double strokes so this gets our hands used to playing multiple strokes. The key here is letting the stick BOUNCE on the head, using the natural rebound of the snare head or drum pad. The stick is doing the work, and you are just getting out of the way to allow that stick to bounce in a controlled manner. This can be played using the Moeller stroke or simply by using the free stroke, at your discretion.

LETTER G & H

We all know the paradiddle so well but I want you to think about it in more of a MACRO sense. Think of each grouping of 4 notes (that is, each RLRR or LRLL) as ONE idea or thing. Now using the momentum generated from the accented note, allow the stick to finish the double on that side of the paradiddle. When doing this correctly, it should almost feel like you're only playing R L R L (or in the case of Letter H, R R R L L L), from the accents themselves, with the unaccented notes almost playing themselves.

