

Jazz Drum Set Basics: Equipment, Techniques, and Styles (v1.0)

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The information presented in this outline supplements a clinic that presents similar material. This outline offers basic information on drum set equipment, techniques, and styles within jazz and related idioms and is geared toward beginning drummers at the high school and undergraduate level. Band directors at various levels of music education might also find this information valuable, as it will help them equip their program and understand how to better communicate with their percussion students. This is not meant to be a prescriptive outline, particularly regarding equipment. Use the information here as a guide and talk with your musician friends about any of the information covered to determine for yourself what equipment/techniques/styles will work best for you.

Equipment

Standard Drum sizes ("diameter" x "depth")

Bass drum 18"x14" or 20"x14"
Toms 12"x8" and 14"x14"
Snare drum 14"x5"

Standard Cymbal sizes

Ride 18"-22"
Crash 14"-18"
Hi-hats 13"-14"

Standard Hardware

Drum throne
Snare stand
High-tom mount (or snare stand)
Floor tom legs
Bass drum pedal
Cymbal stand(s)
Hi-hat stand

Standard Stick bag

Sticks - "7A" size is a common size for jazz
Brushes
Mallets
Auxiliary sticks (multi-rods, Blasticks, etc.)

Snare Wires - Snare wires vary in number of strands and material. Basic snares wires are 16-20 strands and chrome-plated.

Drum heads:

"Batter" head - for the top of the drum, the head that is struck

"Resonant" head - for the bottom of the drum, vibrates to generate tone and sustain

- generally very thin; will break if used as a batter head
- batter heads can sometimes be used as resonant heads

Coated - most common batter head for jazz styles

Clear - thin clear heads are a common resonant head; thick clear batter heads are common in rock music

- clear heads often work poorly with brushes and are not a common batter head in jazz contexts

Single-ply - single-layer head (common in jazz; more overtones, more open sound)

Double-ply - two-layer head (fewer overtones, less open sound)

A common setup for a drum in jazz contexts is a coated, single-ply batter head and a clear, single-ply resonant head.

If you do not have a music store near you, it might be necessary to look for drum gear online. Used gear often works just as well as new, however if you are buying new and are unsure what to look for, here is a list of some commonly used companies:

Drums: Gretsch, Ludwig, Yamaha, Sonor

Cymbals: Zildjian, Sabian, Dream, Bosphorus

Hardware: Gibraltar, Yamaha, Pearl, DW Drums

Sticks: Vic Firth, Vater, Pro Mark, Regal Tip

Setting Up a Drum Set

Drum Setup/ Seat Height: a drummer's legs should form a right (or slightly obtuse) angle with the floor. From an upright, sitting position, the drums and cymbals should be positioned so no over-extension or dramatic leaning occurs when moving around the kit. In light of this, drum height and angle are subject to personal preference, though the snare drum should be positioned so that strokes do not overextend the wrist in either direction.

Drum Heads and Tuning

Tuning

Simple Tuning:

Step 1) completely loosen all lugs with drum key

Step 2) tighten lugs with fingers until finger-tight (this ensures the lugs are evenly set for Step 3)

Step 3) continue tightening lugs evenly by regular quarter-, half-, or full-turns of the drum key

- tighten in pairs across the drum, moving from pair to adjacent pair

Step 4) Repeat Step 3 as necessary to reach desired sound

Every drum/drum head combination is different; there is no single rule that guarantees a "good" sound. However, if inexperienced and in need of a guide, you might try tightening the resonant head 1-2 half-turns past finger-tight and the batter head 1-4 half-turns past finger-tight. This may get your drum into a roughly playable tuning. Use your ears. Again, every drum is different.

Hand Technique

Types of Movement

Shoulder movement

- moves elbow toward/away from body

Elbow/Forearm movement

- vertical/horizontal movement from elbow
- rotation of forearm

Wrist movement

- vertical movement at wrist (horizontal when palm perpendicular to floor)

Finger movement

- index, middle, 3rd and 4th fingers used to stabilize stick and generate strokes

Fulcrum

- the primary point at which stick is held in the hand, commonly between thumb and index finger
- allows for control of stroke and rebound
- allows fingers to generate strokes

These four types of movement work in tandem with the fulcrum to generate a variety of strokes.

Basic Single-Surface Strokes

Full - the stick begins raised, strikes the drum, rebound returns it to the raised position

Down - the stick begins raised, strikes the drum, remains low to the head

Up - the stick begins low to the head, the tip strikes the drum as the stick raises, remains raised

Tap - the stick begins low to the head, strikes the drum, remains low to the head

These strokes are used to generate efficient "stickings" in light of accents and non-accents.

- "stickings" are particular combinations of Right Hand (R) and Left Hand (L) strokes, i.e. "RLRR LRLR"

Grips

German - palm parallel to floor

- stroke primarily generated by wrist, aided by fingers
- fulcrum commonly between top pad of thumb and just below the first joint of index finger

French - palm perpendicular to floor

- stroke primarily generated by wrist and fingers
- fulcrum commonly between top pad of thumb and 2nd joint of index finger

American - palm diagonal to floor, "in between" German and French

- fulcrum position can vary, often similar to German

Traditional

Right Hand

- German, French, or American

Left Hand

- fulcrum at base of thumb
- stick lays between middle and 3rd finger, rests between 1st and 2nd joint of 3rd finger
- stroke primarily generated by forearm rotation, aided by index and middle fingers
- the 3rd and 4th fingers help to lift the stick from the drum head after a stroke

What grip a drummer favors is personal preference.

Rudiments

The "rudiments" - patterns and combinations of single-strokes, double-strokes, triple-strokes, rolls, flams and drags - are the foundation of drum set technique. There are 26 traditional rudiments, with an additional 14 forming the 40 most common rudiments. Many lists can be found online; three prominent resources are the Percussion Arts Society - <http://www.pas.org/resources/rudiments>; Vic Firth - <http://vicfirth.com/40-essential-rudiments/>; and Charley Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos for the Advanced Drummer*. Most, if not all, the great jazz drummers of the 20th century developed their craft through the practice and use of these rudiments.

Basic Jazz Styles - Drummers to Model

<u>Style</u>	<u>Drummer</u>	<u>Sample Recording</u>
Swing	Warren "Baby" Dodds	Baby Dodds Trio - <i>Jazz A' La Creole</i> (1946)
	Papa Jo Jones	Jo Jones Trio - <i>Jo Jones Trio</i> (1958)
Bebop	Philly Joe Jones	Miles Davis - <i>Relaxin' With the Miles Davis Quintet</i> (1956)
	Max Roach	Clifford Brown and Max Roach - <i>Study in Brown</i> (1955)
Ballads	Art Taylor	"I Know Why And So Do You" on Red Garland's <i>Red Garland's Piano</i> (1957)
	Jimmy Cobb	"Blue and Green" on Miles Davis' <i>Kind of Blue</i> (1959)
	Kenny Washington	"Autumn on New York" on Bill Charlap's <i>Live at the Village Vanguard</i> (2007)
Latin Styles:		
Bossa Nova	Milton Banana	Stan Getz and João Gilberto - <i>Getz/Gilberto</i> (1964)
Samba	Rubinho Barsotti	Zimbo Trio - <i>Zimbo Trio</i> (1965)
6/8	Ed Blackwell	"Mopti" on Old and New Dreams' <i>Old and New Dreams</i> (1980)
Jazz Mambo	Elvin Jones	"Reza" on Elvin Jones' <i>Puttin' It Together</i> (1968)

Selected Pedagogical Resources:

Hand Technique

Stick Control: For the Snare Drummer by George Lawrence Stone (George B. Stone & Son, Inc., 2009)

Master Studies by Joe Morello (Modern Drummer Publications, 1986)

Modern Rudimental Swing Solos for the Advanced Drummer by Charley Wilcoxon (Ludwig Masters Publications, 1979)

Drum Set Coordination

Syncopation by Ted Reed (Alfred Music, 1996)

New Breed by Gary Chester (Modern Drummer Publications, 2006)

Bebop/ Jazz Styles

The Evolution of Jazz Drumming by Danny Gottlieb (Hudson Music, LLC, 2011)

The Art of Bop Drumming by John Riley (Alfred Publishing, 1994)

Beyond Bebop Drumming by John Riley (Alfred Publishing, 1997)

The Art of Modern Jazz Drumming by Jack DeJohnette and Charlie Perry (Drum Center Publications, 1988)

Latin/ African Rhythms

Essential Latin Styles for the Drumset by Doug Auwarter (Doug Auwarter, 2004)

West African Rhythms for Drumset by Royal Hartigan (Alfred Music, 1995)

Riddim: Claves of African Origin by Billy Martin (Music in Motion, 2008)