# Developing Middle School Percussionists

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## The Problem Building the 21st Century Percussionist

- Percussion education has grown by leaps and bounds in the past twenty years. Depending solely on your band or orchestra method book to develop your percussionist will only take them so far and in most cases leave them lacking in many areas.
- These method books often do not properly develop skills needed for young percussionist or only touch a skill set and then quickly move on.
- To continue your students' development, your percussionists need to acquire specific skill sets outside of your method book.

## Developing Middle School Percussionists

This clinic will focus on the development of skill sets needed by middle school percussionists, including the following:

- Legato stroke
- Piston stroke
- Down stroke
- Up stroke
- Double stroke
- Natural sticking
- Alternate sticking
- Scales
- Rudiments

## Selecting Your Percussionists

- Basic stroke
- Ability to maintain a steady tempo
- Rhythmic aptitude
- Pitch aptitude

## The Grip

- The fulcrum
- Thumb and first finger on the fulcrum
- Fingers gently wrap around the stick/mallet, but remain in contact with the stick
- No space between fingers or the stick

## The Stance

- Drum/Keyboard waist height
- 6-12 inches away from the instrument
- Beads together in the center of head/bar
- 90 degree angle

## Legato Stroke

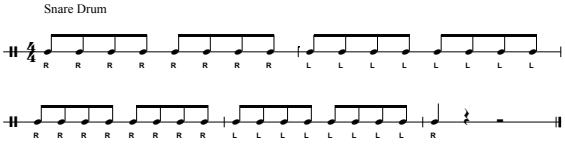
- Legato - in a smooth flowing manner, without breaks between notes
- This stroke should have a full range of motion, starting from the wrist. The fingers should remain in contact with the stick at all times. This is the most basic and one of the most utilized strokes percussionists use.

## Starting the Legato Stroke

- R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L
- R R R R L L L L R R R R L L L L
- R R L L R R L L R R L L
- R L R L R L R L R L R L
- R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L
- These and many other sticking patterns can be found in "Stick Control" by George L. Stone.
- These sticking patterns can be developed and used in middle school, as well as throughout high school.

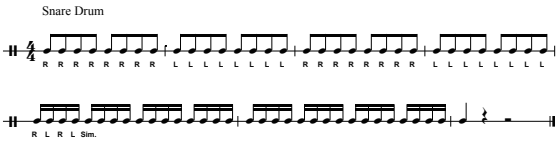
## Continuing the Legato Stroke

Legato Strokes




## Legatos with 16th Notes

Legato Stroke adding 16th notes

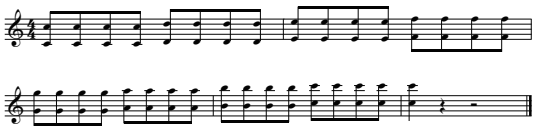



## The Piston Stroke

The piston stroke is utilized on keyboard instruments and is similar to the legato stroke. The piston stroke starts at the top and returns to the top, which creates efficient movement across the keyboard and allows for a fluid stroke.

## The Piston Stroke

The Piston Stroke

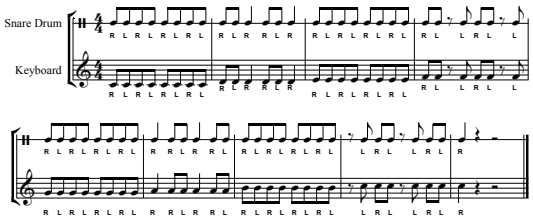


## Basic Timing Elements

- Once students begin to understand the concept of legato and piston strokes, apply those ideas to basic timing exercises.
- These exercises will help percussionists develop a stronger rhythmic vocabulary.
- In addition, they will help students understand natural and alternate stickings.

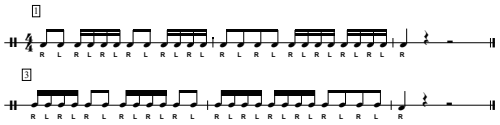
## 8th Note Timing

8th Note Timing




## Combining 16th and 8th Notes Alabama Texas

Alabama Texas

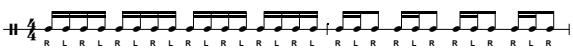


## Natural Sticking and Alternate Sticking

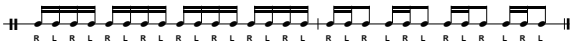
- Natural sticking is based on hands playing on a specific beat, which allows the rhythm patterns to be played with the same sticking throughout a given passage.
- Alternate sticking simply alternates hands through a specific rhythmic passage while moving back and forth from right to left hand.

## Natural and Alternate Sticking Examples

Natural Sticking

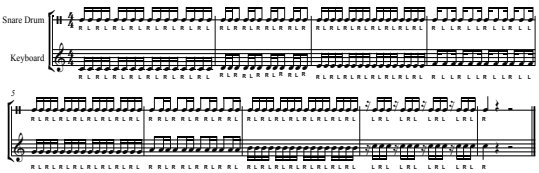


Alternate Sticking



## 16th Note Timing

16th Note Timing



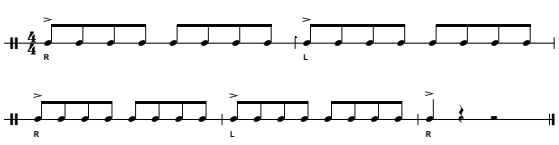

## Down Strokes, Up Strokes, and Staccato Strokes

- A down stroke is used to stop the stick at the bottom. It has a similar range of motion from the wrist, but uses the ring and pinky fingers to stop the stick and not allow it to rebound.
- An up stroke starts from the bottom and stops at the top of the stroke. It has a similar range of motion and comes from the wrist.
- A staccato stroke, also called a tap, is played low, short, and detached.

## Accents and Taps

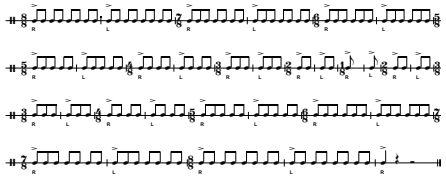
Accents and taps use down, up, and staccato strokes to create two different heights. These exercises should also be developed in 8th notes, 16th notes, and triplets.

Basic Accent and Taps



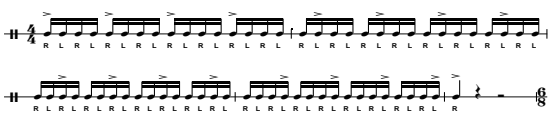
## Countdown

Countdown

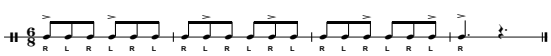


## 4-2-1 Sequence with 16th and Triplet Groupings

16th Note Accent Pattern



Triplet Accent Pattern

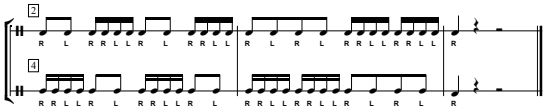


## Double Stroke

- The double stroke is used to create rolls and drags. This stroke is similar to the legato in its range of motion and rebound. It differs in that the player must use the back two fingers, ring finger and pinky, as well as the wrist, to get the second note to sound.
- A good double stroke will come from one motion and create two even notes.

## Double Strokes Using Alabama Texas

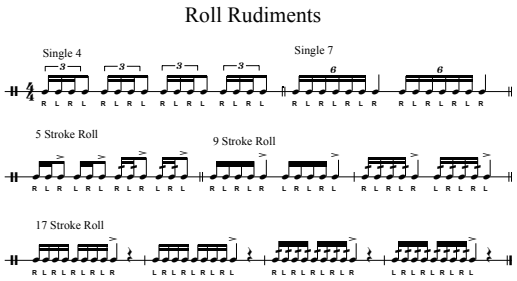
Alabama Texas



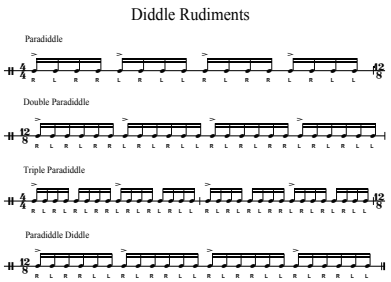
## Combining the Skill Sets

By combining the skill sets discussed previously, we can see how these combinations are used throughout the 40 Percussive Arts Society International Rudiments.

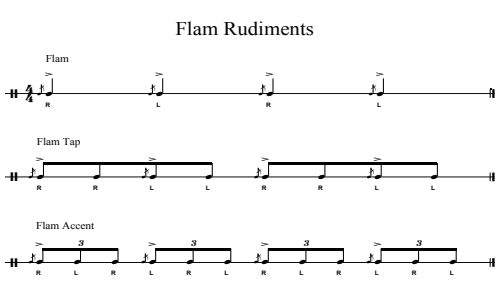
## Roll Rudiments




## Diddle Rudiments




## Flam Rudiments



## Drag Rudiments

Drag Rudiments

Single Drag

Single Ratamacue

## Applying Skills Sets in the Classroom

- Daily warm-up
- Technique development
- Sectionals

## Thank You to the Following

- Jeff Atkins, Kim Bain, Dr. Mark Foster, Mike Holmes, Heather Holmes, Brandon Peters, and Mark Sosnowchik, Jerell Horton, Heather Palmer, Sara Womack
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