

PRACTICE TIPS

ISOLATE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE PATTERN

If a groove or pattern is too difficult to do all at once try taking some of the parts away and working on one or two things at a time. Maybe try only hi-hat and snare, then only hi-hat and bass then only bass and snare. Finally put all the pieces together. Another idea is to practice small parts of the pattern at a time. If the pattern is over the space of 4 beats try only working on beat 1 by itself until you are comfortable, then move on to beat 2 and so forth.

PRACTICE GROOVES IN 4 AND 8 MEASURE PHRASES

Most music you encounter as a drummer is going to be grouped into phrases that typically consist of 4 or 8 measures. By practicing these phrases they will begin to feel very natural and automatic.

USE VARIOUS VOLUMES AND TEMPOS

Once you are comfortable with a particular pattern you should begin to try it at all sorts of different volume levels, from extremely soft to extremely loud. The same thing should be done with different speeds. Go super slow all the way to super fast, BUT... always make sure that you are still playing the part correctly. Never go faster than you can play accurately and comfortably. Speed will come with time and practice.

USE A METRONOME

The metronome is a great tool to help you play at a steady tempo without speeding up or slowing down. The metronome doesn't lie, 60bpm today will be 60bpm tomorrow so it is a great way to accurately keep track of your progress. It can be somewhat frustrating at first, but if you get used to using one when you first start playing, it will be much easier later in your drumming when things start getting more complex.

LISTEN TO MUSIC!

This should be a given, if you want to play music you need to listen to music. You should be inspired to play by what has come before you. Try to listen to the drum parts of songs and find the quarter note pulse, the 8th note pulse, and smaller subdivisions. Listen to the overall feel, tempo and dynamic (volume) of all the songs parts. Try to play along to some of your favorite songs even if you are not playing the exact beat. A lot of 4/4 rock beats can be interchanged and sometimes the simplest of beats will best support a rock groove!

STRETCHING AND WARMING UP

It is a very good idea to get warmed up and loose before you jump head first into playing. Before you play or practice drink some water and stretch a little. Stretch your fingers, hands, arms and shoulders. Stretch out your back a little and also stretch your legs and ankles. Overuse injuries are common in the world of drumming and some of it has to do with damaging your muscles because they were not loose. Play around lightly on your whole drum set for about 5-10 minutes just to loosen up all your muscles. Make sure that while you are playing you take breaks at least every 30-45 minutes and stretch out.

PRACTICING VERSUS PLAYING

When you sit behind the drums you have to decide what your goal is; are you going to practice or play? Playing is fun, involving and creative. Usually playing isn't just doing the same thing over and over until it sticks. That's what practice is, doing something over and over again until it becomes a feeling. Both of these concepts are very important to becoming a good drummer but one should not supercede the other. Every time you sit behind the drums, even if you only have 10 minutes, you should spend some time practicing and some time playing. The goal of practice is so that eventually you can play what you are practicing with feel and groove.

MUSCLE MEMORY

When you first get a video game you have to learn all the controls before the game becomes fun. You need to learn that A jumps B ducks and so forth. After a little while you don't have to think about this anymore and you just know what you want to do in the game. A very similar thing happens when you practice drums: at first you must tell yourself what limbs to play at what certain count in the measure. But after practice and concentration those moves will start to "play themselves" or almost seem to go on autopilot.