

by Mark Perrett + John Lluvera



DRUMLINE TECHNIQUE

TECHNIQUE GUIDELINES FOR MODERN CORPS STYLE DRUMLINE



AUTHOR'S NOTE

The world of the marching arts has a beautiful variety of approaches. (Corps Style, Show Band, Pipe Band, Etc.) We love and respect all forms of the activity and understand different genres do things differently. This book focuses specifically on the Corps Style approach. These methods are a mixture of our years performing and teaching in the DCI, WGI, and BOA circuits.

We have always tried to keep everything as generalized as possible when writing our books, so this was an opportunity for us to zoom in and get detailed on a specific subject. Whether this becomes your exact pedagogy, or simply acts as a reference, you will get the most out of this book if you approach it with an open mind.

With anything in life, it is great to always be a student. Take from this what you like and build your own idea of what the marching arts means to you. We are simply offering some helpful tips that have proven to be successful during our time as performers and educators in the Corps Style activity.



THE SNARE LINE



SNARE LINE PHILOSOPHY

Snare drummers play on one drum and typically use one of two grips (Matched or Traditional). Since there is one head to play on, snare drum is a great place for beginning performers to start learning. Snare drummers are highly technical performers and use a unified approach from player to player. The goal is to balance so well together that the full line sounds like one powerful unit. There is a high level of discipline, but everyone also understands how to get along, be leaders in the ensemble, and knows how to have a great time while upholding a high standard of excellence.

The snare drum was the first marching percussion instrument. Made to be loud, staccato instruments, snare drums helped military units communicate on the battle field over long distances as far back as the 1300s.

Snare drums have evolved rapidly over the years and, in the corps style activities, are now considered “High Tension” drums. Snare drums attach to the body using a harness.

The heads for marching snare drums have also evolved. High

tension drums use Mylar or Kevlar drum heads which allow them to be tuned to very high pitches.

Snare drums sizes will vary but typical *Corps Style* drums are generally 13” or 14” in diameter.

In this section you will learn about instrument basics, playing zones, implement details, muscle groups, matched and traditional grips, positions, heights, dynamics, and hand motions. The snare drum is a very sensitive, monotone instrument that requires years of dedicated practice to master.

INSTRUMENT BASICS

The snare drum is an instrument with a top and bottom head. The heads are stretched over a shell and can be tuned to very high pitches. There are a variety of heads with different purposes and you should do your best to match the head to the music you are playing. For example, if your show music is dark and ominous, you might want a head with a darker sound. If your show is happy and uplifting you might want to use heads with a brighter sound. The tuning of the drum will also change the sound significantly.

RIM - A metal hoop that rests over the drum head to tighten it around the outer edge of the drum shell. This also acts as a playing surface to get unique sounds from the instrument including rim clicks, rim knocks, and rim shots.

TOP HEAD - An interchangeable playing surface that can be tuned to change the pitch of the drum. The top head is thicker than the bottom head and has more durability.

HARNES CONNECTOR - All brands will be slightly different, but this piece connects the drum to a harness or drum stand. Attach this in a way that won't interfere with a stick bag and ensure the snare strainer is easily accessible.

BOTTOM HEAD - An interchangeable drum head that can be tuned to change the pitch of the drum. The bottom head is thinner than the top head and has less durability.

SNARE GUTS - A set of synthetic wires that run along the bottom of the head. By making contact with the head the wires vibrate creating the "snare sound" you hear. Activating the snares will minimize the vibration of the bottom head creating a staccato sound.

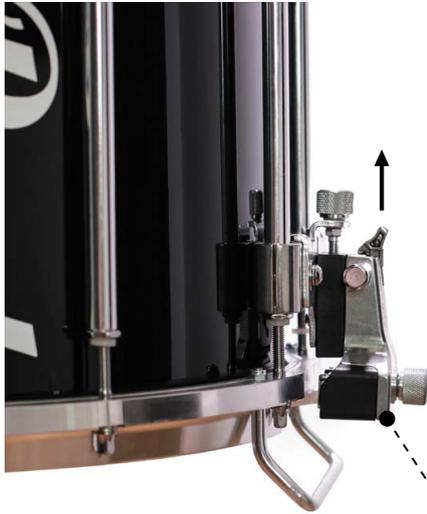
HOOP GUARD - A detachable "foot" that connects to the bottom rim. This allows you to set the drum on the ground without scratching the rim or puncturing the head.



TOP



BOTTOM

**UP (SNARES ON)****DOWN (SNARES OFF)**

STRAINER/RELEASE - This mechanism (Also known as a "Throw Off") is connected to the snare guts on the bottom of the drum and moves them up and down. This takes the guts on and off the drum head. You can change the pitch and resonance of the guts by tightening and loosening them using the snare strainer. While the tension of the guts will vary based on your tuning scheme, a good rule is to have the snares make full contact with the bottom head. If you tighten the guts too tight the vibration will be so quick that you will no longer hear the "snare sound". Use a tension that gives you the snare response you desire and allows a full body of sound from the instrument.

** NOTE: You can remove snare guts to dry out the sound of the instrument.*

TUBE LUG - This is a hollow bar that the tension rod screws into. This houses the tension rods from both the top and bottom of the drum.

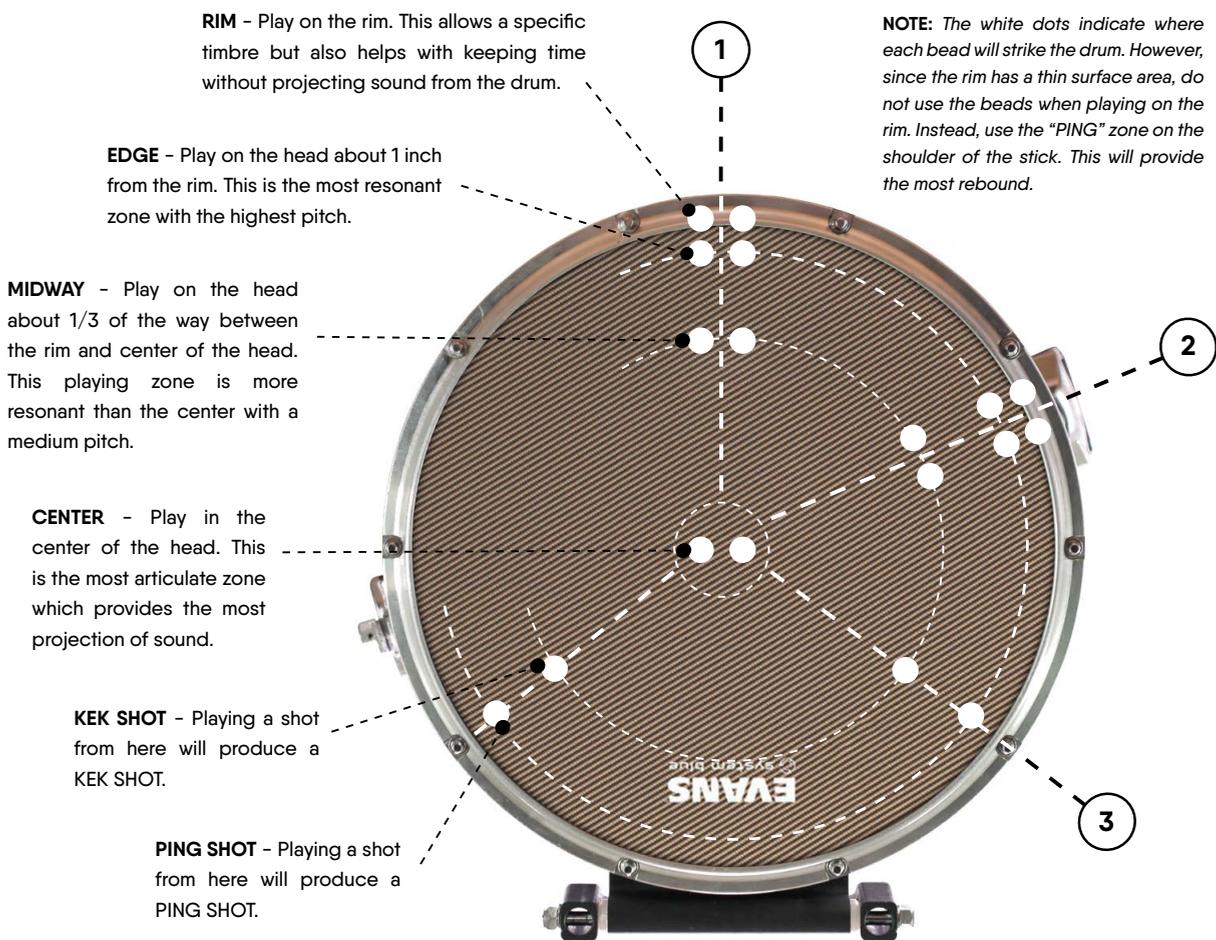
TENSION ROD - A screw that raises and lowers the rim to change the tension of the drum head. The more you tighten the screw the higher the pitch of the instrument.

SHELL - A circular, hollow shell (Often wooden or carbon fiber) that sits inside of the drum hardware. When you strike the drum, air moves through the shell and helps create the sound you hear from the instrument.



PLAYING ZONES

A “PLAYING ZONE” is where you physically play on the instrument. Different parts of the drum will create different sounds/timbres and change the resonance of the instrument. We use these zones to help us be more expressive as musicians. Zones include the CENTER, MIDWAY, EDGE, RIM, and SNARE BED.



HOME ZONES - Starting in the center of the head, all zones directly in front of you is part of the HOME ZONE.

SNARE BED - Since the snare guts run diagonally along the bottom of the drum, you can use the same zones from the HOME ZONE, but play towards the rim in the direction of the snare guts.

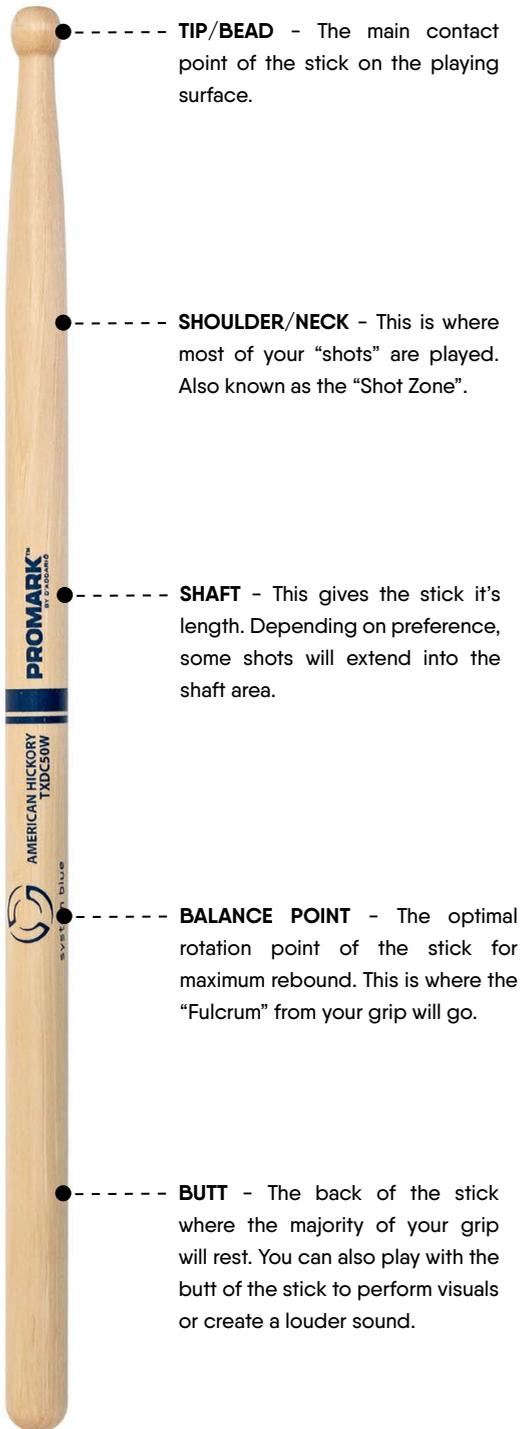
SHOT ZONE - Starting in the center of the head, playing a shot in the direction of the stick angle is part of the SHOT ZONE.

1

2

3

IMPLEMENT DETAILS



3

SHOT ZONES - A “SHOT” occurs when you strike the drum head and rim at the same time. This creates a variety of timbres. You can achieve a range of shot pitches by playing on different parts of the stick. Use the shot zones below to experiment with different shot sounds.

PING SHOT (High Pitched) - Play a shot about 1 inch from the bottom of the bead.

KEK SHOT (Medium Pitched) - Play a shot about 3 inches from the bottom of the bead.

GOK SHOT (Low Pitched) - Play a shot from playing position.



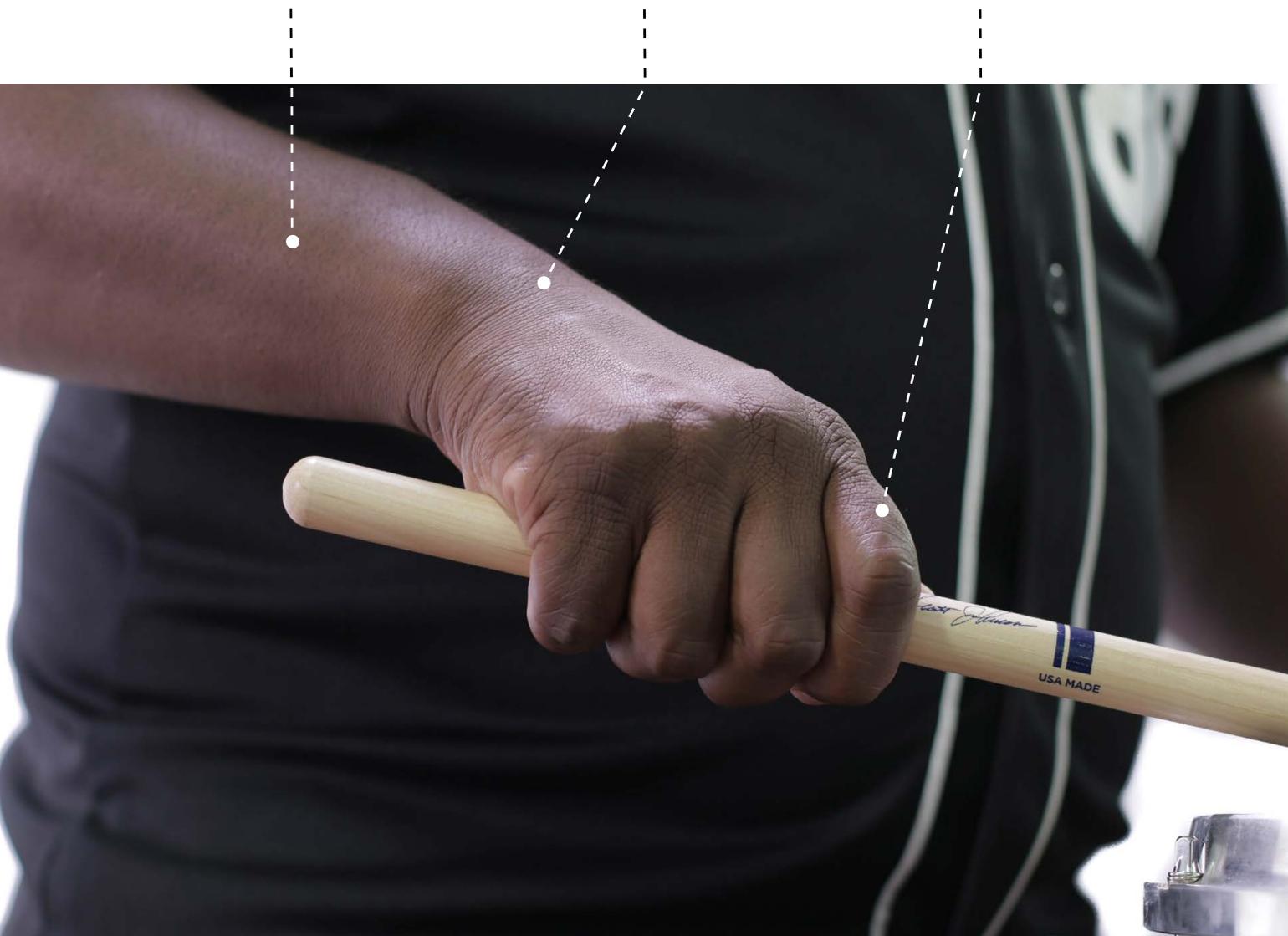
MUSCLE GROUPS

Drummers use 3 muscle groups to manipulate the stick: FINGERS, WRIST, and FOREARM. Each muscle group allows you to manipulate the stick in different ways which will greatly effect mobility, quality of sound, consistency, and overall musicianship. Manipulating these muscle groups in different ways will create different stylistic approaches. In this book, we will demonstrate the “Wrist Turn Technique”.

FOREARM - This is the largest muscle group and acts as an extension of the wrist providing extra weight to your stroke. This allows a wider range of motion and helps in performing higher stick heights.

WRIST - This is the medium sized muscle group and is the main driver of motion. All strokes begin as a result of the wrist turning and acts as a hinge/axis to help rebound the stick off the drum head.

FINGERS - This is the smallest muscle group. Since the fingers have a smaller rotation point, they can move the stick faster than the other muscle groups. The fingers are unique as they physically grip the stick.



THE GRIP

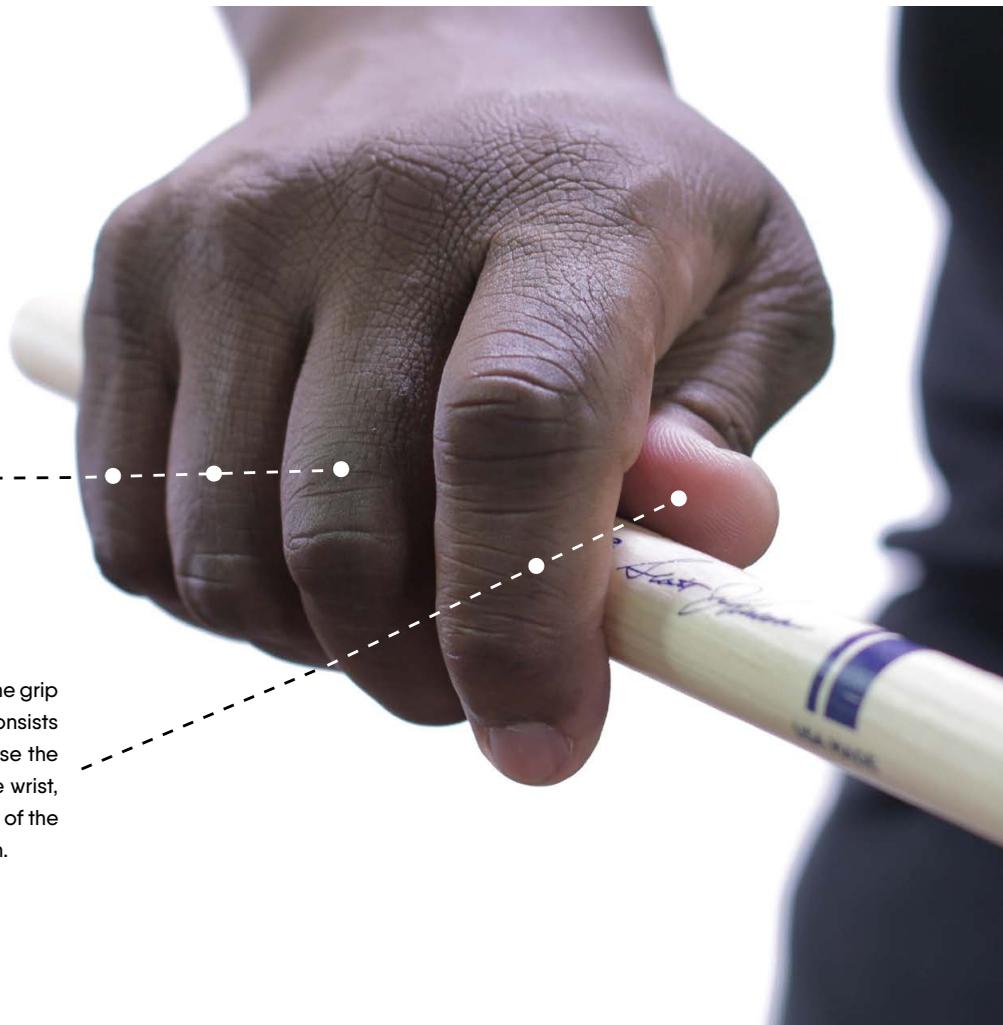
When we drum, the connection between the hand and the stick is called the “GRIP”. There are many different grips we use as drummers, but we will define **Matched Grip** and **Traditional Grip**. Even though these grips require sticks to be in different positions, both grips can be broken down into two parts:

FRONT OF THE GRIP
BACK OF THE GRIP

Having control over both parts of the grip will maximize your stick control. Along with the motion of the stick, the grip is also responsible for how resonant the stick is when you play. **On a scale of 1-10, try playing with a grip pressure of about 3.** This will be just enough pressure for the stick to resonate in your hand without flying out. Make contact with the stick, but don't squeeze it. This pressure will determine your quality of sound.

BACK OF GRIP - This part of the grip consists of the middle, ring, and pinky fingers. Use the back of the grip to help generate velocity by rotating the stick around the fulcrum.

FRONT OF GRIP - This part of the grip (also known as the fulcrum) consists the thumb and index fingers. Use the front of the grip, along with the wrist, to initiate stick motion. This part of the grip helps with timing precision.



MATCHED GRIP

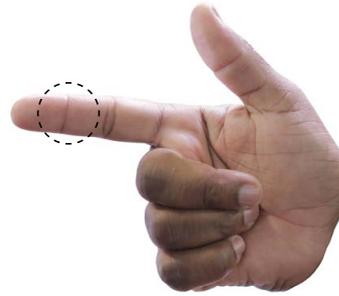
Matched Grip is performed by holding the sticks identically in the hands and typically comes in three different styles; *French Grip* (Palms facing each other), *German Grip* (Palms parallel to the drum), and *American Grip* (Palms slightly angled in). For the purpose of this book we will explain the *American Grip* as we feel it gives the best mixture of finger and wrist mobility. This grip is best used on a flat drumming surface. Use the diagrams on the next page to build the Matched Grip.



BUILDING THE GRIP (MATCHED)

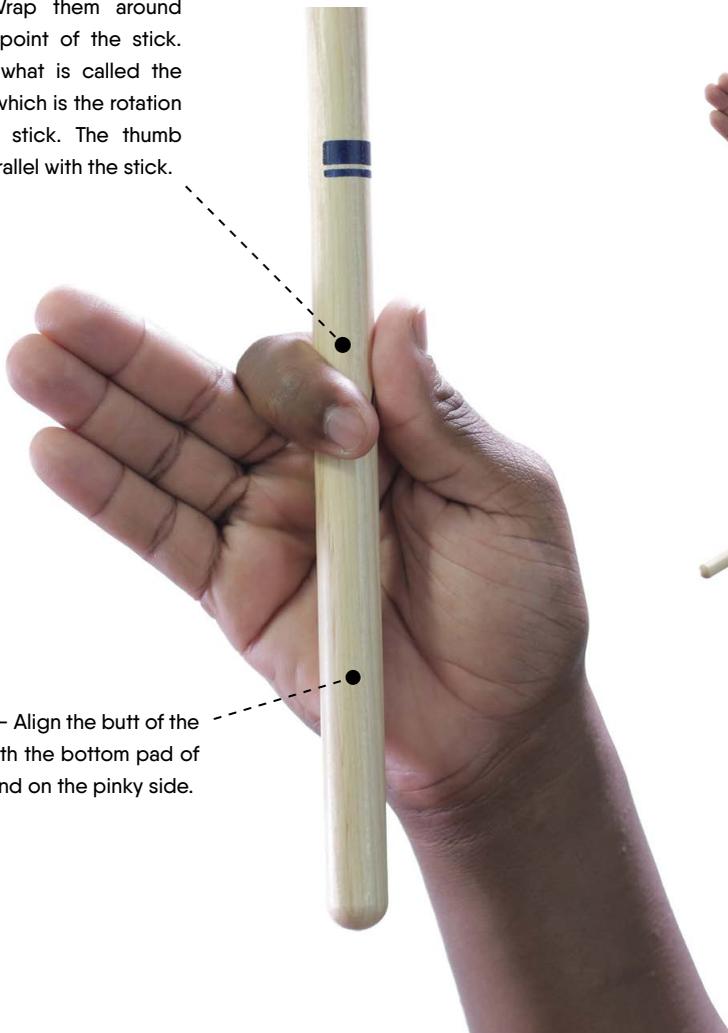


STEP 1 - Take the center of your right thumb...



STEP 2 - And the last knuckle of your right index finger...

STEP 3 - Wrap them around the balance point of the stick. This creates what is called the "FULCRUM", which is the rotation point of the stick. The thumb should be parallel with the stick.



STEP 4 - Align the butt of the stick with the bottom pad of your hand on the pinky side.



NOT THIS



NOT THIS

STEP 5 - Wrap the remaining fingers naturally around the stick. (*Keep fingers relaxed.*)



NOT THIS

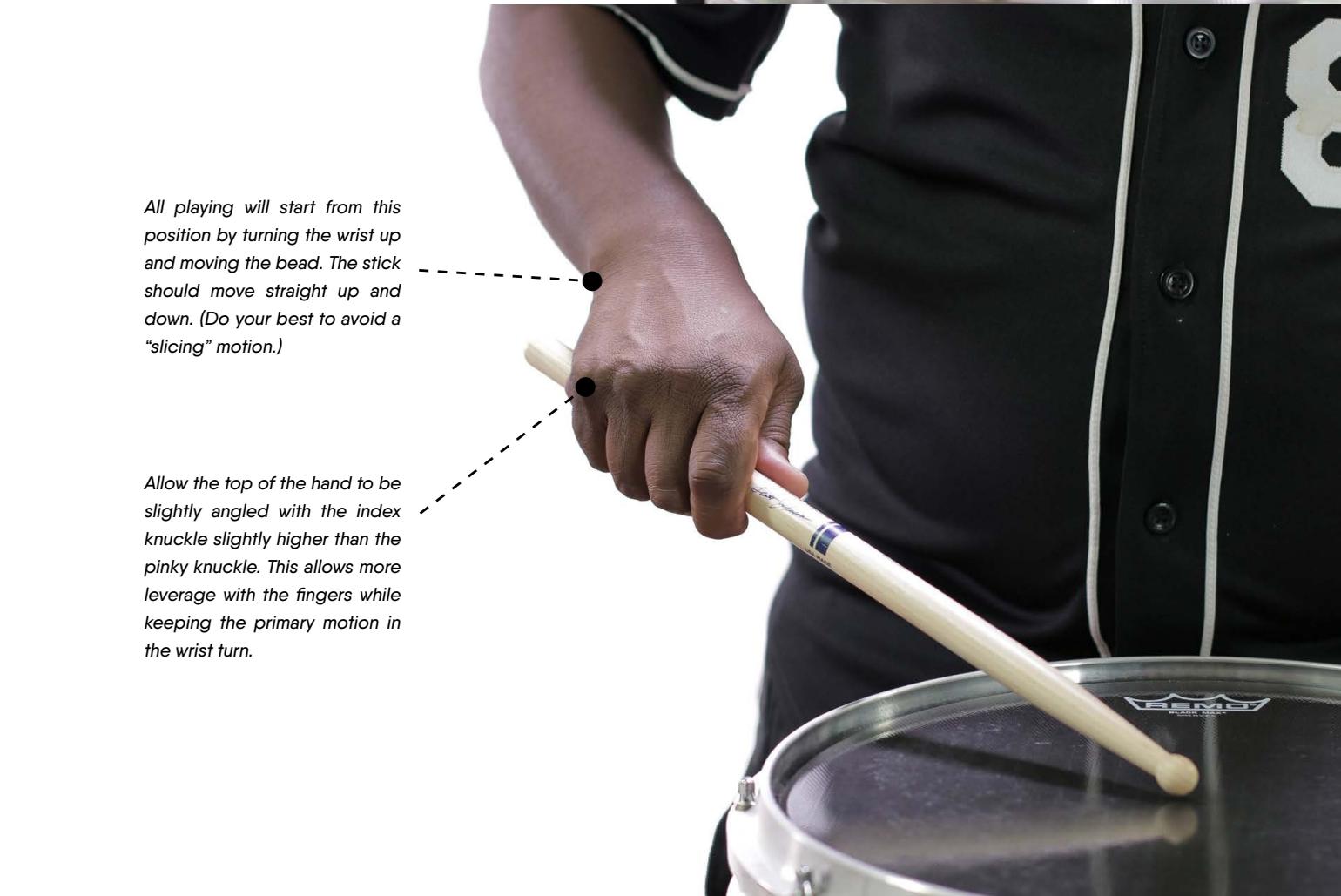


NOT THIS

STEP 6 - Every performer will have slightly different finger lengths. Try to line up the first knuckle of each finger on the stick. This will give nice control, but won't over extend your fingers. You want enough room to open and close the hand as needed.



STEP 7 - Place the bead as close to the center of the head as possible. Then use your left hand to angle the stick two fingers from the rim.



All playing will start from this position by turning the wrist up and moving the bead. The stick should move straight up and down. (Do your best to avoid a "slicing" motion.)

Allow the top of the hand to be slightly angled with the index knuckle slightly higher than the pinky knuckle. This allows more leverage with the fingers while keeping the primary motion in the wrist turn.



STEP 8 - Match the grip. Apply all of the same steps from the right hand to the left hand. Make sure you give just as much attention to the left hand as you did developing the right hand.



POSITIONS		
SET POSITION (UP)	SET POSITION (DOWN)	PLAYING POSITION
<p>“Set Position Up” is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by putting your sticks together parallel to the drum. Sticks will come out into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>“Set Position Down” is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by relaxing your hands by your sides. Sticks will come up into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>“Playing Position” is the position all playing starts from. This is performed by placing the beads together as close to the center of the head as possible, sticks two fingers from the rim, and matching both hands identically. Relax your shoulders and raise your elbows until they are parallel with the wrists and angle of the stick.</p>



HEIGHTS & HAND MOTIONS (MATCHED GRIP)

As musicians, we are responsible for playing with a wide range of dynamics. As drummers, we use “stick heights” to help every performer play the same distance from the drum resulting in different dynamics. The lower the height, the softer the volume, the higher the height, the louder the volume. Notice how the forearm is engaged. The stroke is initiated by the wrists, but as you turn the wrist to gain height, the forearm follows. The higher the height, the more forearm you will use.



pp = 1"

Pianissimo - Turn from playing position so the beads are halfway between 3 inches and the head.



mf = 9"

Mezzo Forte - Turn from playing position so the sticks are at a 45 degree angle.



p = 3"

Piano - Turn from playing position so the sticks are parallel to the head.



f = 12"

Forte - Turn from playing position so the beads are 3 inches from vertical.



mp = 6"

Mezzo Piano - Turn from playing position so the beads are double the height of 3 inches. (About the height of a dollar bill.)



ff = 15"

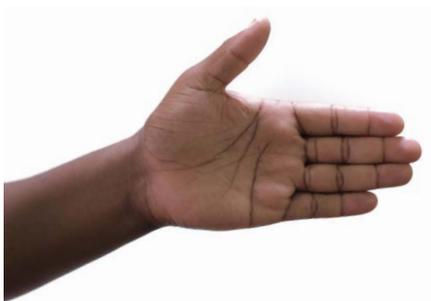
Fortissimo - Turn from playing position so the sticks are straight up and down at a 90 degree angle. (Vertical)

TRADITIONAL GRIP

Traditional Grip is performed with the right hand on top of the stick (*following the same steps as Matched Grip*) and left hand under the stick. This grip was originally developed for a tilted surface, as snare drums used to be worn on a sling to connect to the body, but modern corps style drums now use a harness that allows the drums to be flat or tilted. Traditional grip can be used for both flat and tilted surfaces. Use the information in this section to understand the grip for this technique.



BUILDING THE GRIP (TRADITIONAL)



STEP 1 - Extend your left hand out in front of you.



STEP 2 - Place the balance point of the stick firmly between the thumb and index finger.

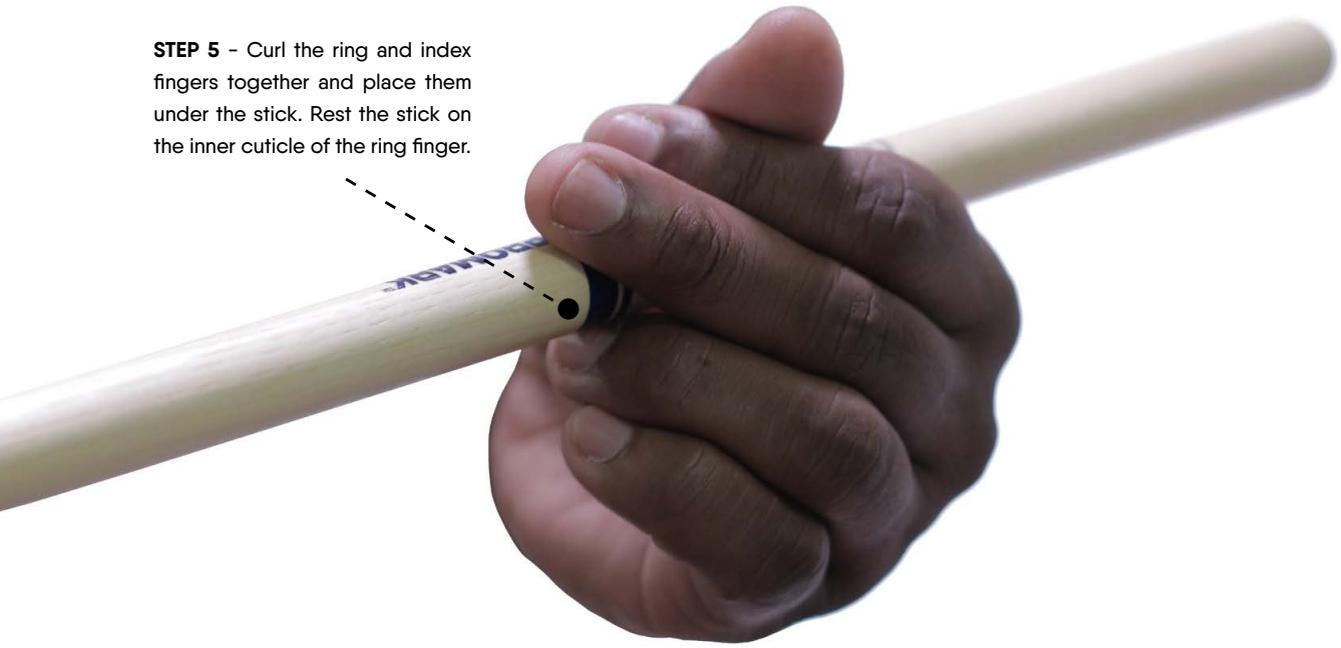


STEP 3 - Curl the index finger to make a connection point with the center of your thumb and the last knuckle of your index finger.



STEP 4 - Curl the middle finger and relax it next to the index finger. *(Follow the same curvature as the index.)*

STEP 5 - Curl the ring and index fingers together and place them under the stick. Rest the stick on the inner cuticle of the ring finger.



NOT THIS



NOT THIS

Make sure the thumb is on top of the stick and parallel with the forearm.





STEP 6 - Place the bead as close to the center of the head as possible. Then use your right hand to angle the stick two fingers from the rim.



All playing will start from this position by rotating the wrist and moving the bead.



POSITIONS		
SET POSITION (UP)	SET POSITION (DOWN)	PLAYING POSITION
<p>"Set Position Up" is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by putting your sticks together parallel to the drum. Sticks will come out into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>"Set Position Down" is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by relaxing your hands by your sides. Sticks will come up into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>"Playing Position" is the position all playing starts from. This is performed by placing the beads together as close to the center of the head as possible (without touching), sticks two fingers from the rim, and matching both hands identically. Relax your shoulders and raise your right elbow until your forearm matches the angle of the stick. Allow your left elbow to relax by your side.</p>



HEIGHTS & HAND MOTIONS (TRADITIONAL GRIP)

As musicians, we are responsible for playing with a wide range of dynamics. As drummers, we use “stick heights” to help us perform those dynamics. A stick height system limits the amount of dynamic expression, but acts as a great foundation to develop uniformity of technique. Once the heights are learned, it is easy to add and subtract height to increase your dynamic range. (*Velocity plays a role in this as well, but stick heights are a unit of measurement all performers can use as a reference for dynamics.*) Each height is initiated by the wrists, but as you turn the wrist to gain height, the forearm is engaged. The higher the height, the more forearm you will use.



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ff = 15"

Fortissimo - Turn from playing position so the sticks are straight up and down at a 90 degree angle. (Vertical)

PLAYING WITH GREAT TECHNIQUE IS WHERE YOU FIND THAT PERFECT BALANCE OF FORM AND FUNCTION. THE WAY YOU HOLD/MOVE THE STICKS WILL NOT ONLY HELP YOUR PERFORMANCE, BUT YOU'LL LOOK GREAT DOING IT.



THE TENOR LINE



TENOR LINE PHILOSOPHY

Tenor drummers play on a set of multiple, single-headed drums and typically use Matched Grip. Since there are many heads to play on, tenor drummers are responsible for performing everything the snares do fundamentally, but also move those demands around the drums. Tenor drums are known to be heavy, so body strength and endurance is needed to carry the instrument. The goal of the tenor line is to provide melodic tones to the drumline. There is a high level of discipline, but everyone also understands how to get along, be leaders in the ensemble, and knows how to have a great time while upholding a high standard of excellence.

The tenor drum (also called timp-toms, multi-tenors, or “quads”) has evolved many times throughout the history of marching percussion.

Originally starting as single headed bass drums turned on their sides, the instrument eventually started using smaller drums, and the number of drums within a set grew over time.

Modern multi-tenors are now configured with up to six drums and connect to the body using a harness with “J” shaped bars called “J-Bars”.

The drum shells are cut in half to allow sound to resonate forward. Tenor drums sizes can vary greatly, but a typical multi-tenor setup will range from 6” to 14” drums.

In this section you will learn about instrument basics, implement details, playing zones, crossovers, muscle groups, matched grip, positions, heights, dynamics, and hand motions. The tenor drum is a melodic percussion instrument that requires years of dedicated practice to master.

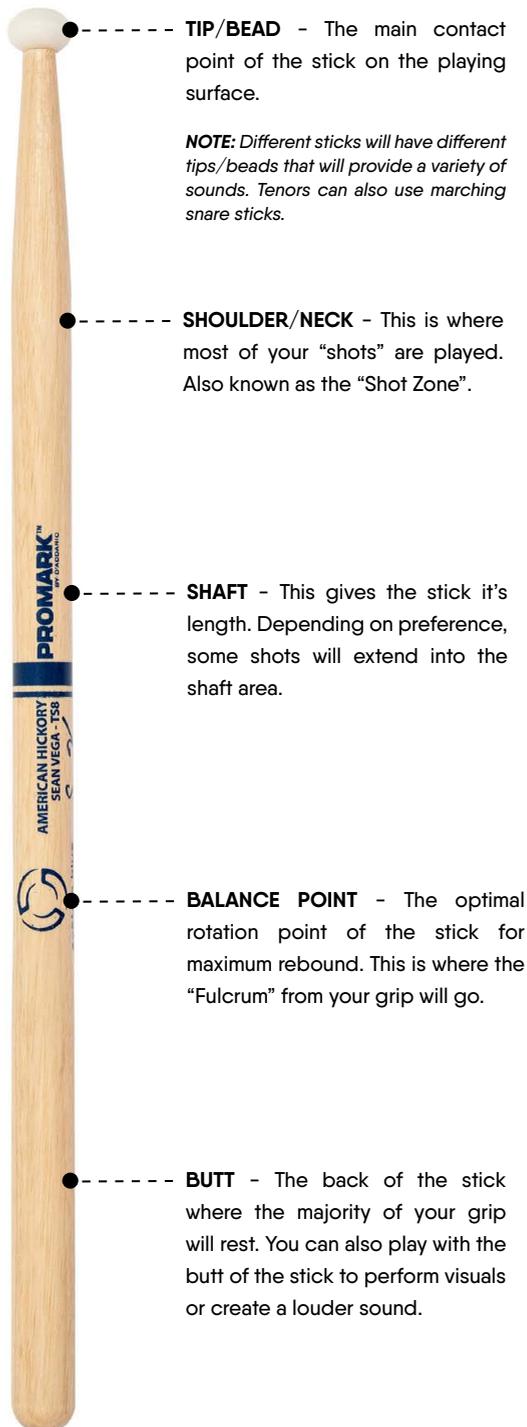
INSTRUMENT BASICS

The tenor drum uses multiple sized drums with heads that are tuned to different pitches. There are a variety of heads available, all with different purposes, and you should do your best to match the head to the music you are playing. For example, if your show music is dark and ominous, you might want a head with a darker sound. If your show is happy and uplifting you might want to use heads with a brighter sound. The tuning of the drums will also change the sound significantly.

01	RIM	A metal hoop that rests over the drum head to tighten it around the outer edge of the drum shell. This also acts as a playing surface to get unique sounds from the instrument including rim clicks, rim knocks, and rim shots.
02	HEADS	Interchangeable playing surfaces that can be tuned to change the pitch of the drum. The larger the head, the more resonate the sound.
03	HARNESS BRACKET	All brands will be slightly different, but this piece connects the drum to a harness or drum stand.
04	TENSION ROD	A screw that raises and lowers the rim to change the tension of the drum head. The more you tighten the screws the higher the pitch of the drums.
05	SHELL	A circular, hollow shell (Often wooden or carbon fiber) with an angled open bottom for maximum projection of sound. When you strike the drum, air moves through the shell and helps create the sound you hear from the instrument.
06	LUG	This is a hollow casing that the tension rod screws into.
07	SHELL GUARD	A protective rubber strip that lines the bottom of all shells.



IMPLEMENT DETAILS



TIP/BEAD - The main contact point of the stick on the playing surface.

NOTE: Different sticks will have different tips/beads that will provide a variety of sounds. Tenors can also use marching snare sticks.

SHOULDER/NECK - This is where most of your "shots" are played. Also known as the "Shot Zone".

SHAFT - This gives the stick its length. Depending on preference, some shots will extend into the shaft area.

BALANCE POINT - The optimal rotation point of the stick for maximum rebound. This is where the "Fulcrum" from your grip will go.

BUTT - The back of the stick where the majority of your grip will rest. You can also play with the butt of the stick to perform visuals or create a louder sound.

3

SHOT ZONES - A "SHOT" occurs when you strike the drum head and rim at the same time. This creates a variety of timbres. You can achieve a range of shot pitches by playing on different parts of the stick. Use the shot zones below to experiment with different shot sounds.

PING SHOT (High Pitched) - Play a shot about 1 inch from the bottom of the bead.

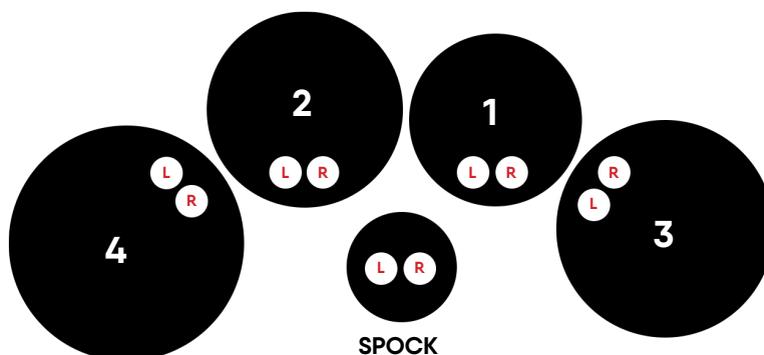
KEK SHOT (Medium Pitched) - Play a shot about 3 inches from the bottom of the bead.

GOK SHOT (Low Pitched) - Play a shot with the bead in the center of the head.

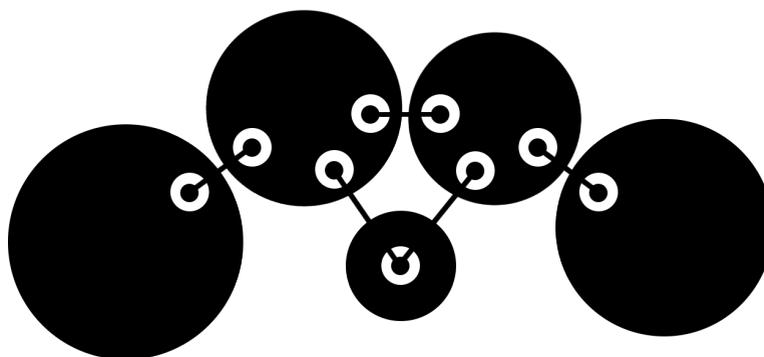


PLAYING ZONES

A “PLAYING ZONE” is where you physically play on the instrument. For tenors, since there are multiple drums, there are multiple playing zones. The zones for drums 1, 2, and Spock are parallel to your body. The zones for drums 3 and 4 are slightly angled to make playing more comfortable on the outside drums.



HOME ZONES	The white circles above indicate where your beads strike the drum. These are called the “HOME ZONES” as you will play most of your music here. Notice how the zones are not in the center of the head like a snare drum. That is because we want to get the most resonant sound from the heads. Play about 2 inches from the rim and find the sweet spot on the head that produces the best sound.
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SWEEP ZONES	Sometimes your music will have multiple strokes go across drums. This is called a “sweep” and sometimes will require you to play on a different part of the head for ease of movement. The white circles above indicate “SCRAPE ZONES” and have a shorter distance from drum to drum than the home zones. This allows you to move faster around the drums while still playing in the sweet spot on the head.
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DRUMS 1 & 2



DRUM 3



DRUM 1



DRUM 4



DRUM 2



SPOCK DRUM

** As you move from drum to drum, do your best to keep your beads in a relatively straight line. Choose the path of least resistance to create a smooth flow from drum to drum. This is especially important when performing crossovers so you don't reach further than you have to.*



In a fulcrum crossover, raise the hand on top slightly allowing the bottom hand to rotate freely at the fulcrum.

CROSSOVERS

Tenor drumming is unique in that performers can play “cross-overs” on their instrument. This is a great way to add musical and visual variety while moving around the drums. You will use the same basic approach as you would playing on one drum with slight modifications due to the hand positioning. There are two main techniques you can use to perform a crossover: **“Fulcrum Crossover”** and **“Wrist Crossover”**.

FULCRUM CROSSOVER

The *Fulcrum Crossover* helps perform crossovers on adjacent drums and is performed by crossing at the fulcrum. (*Right over left or left over right*) As you practice this crossover method, you want as much rebound as possible. Leave enough space between hands so the stick can rebound freely. If the sticks are too close together the bottom hand will not have enough room to rebound.



When playing across drums 3 and 4, cross at the forearm so you can reach the drums and maintain a relaxed approach.

WRIST CROSSOVER

The *Wrist Crossover* helps perform crossovers on distant drums and is performed by crossing at the wrist. (*Right over left or left over right*) As you practice this crossover method, you want as much rebound as possible. Leave enough space between wrists so the hands can rotate freely. If the wrists are too close together the bottom wrist will not have enough room to rotate.

CROSSOVER TIPS

- As you practice crossovers, work towards great sound quality. Check the angle of the bead and make sure you're not stabbing down towards the head. This will create a thin, harsh sound from the drum.
- Keep the hands relaxed and use the home zones as you move from drum to drum.
- Be careful not to overplay or open the space between the hands too far.

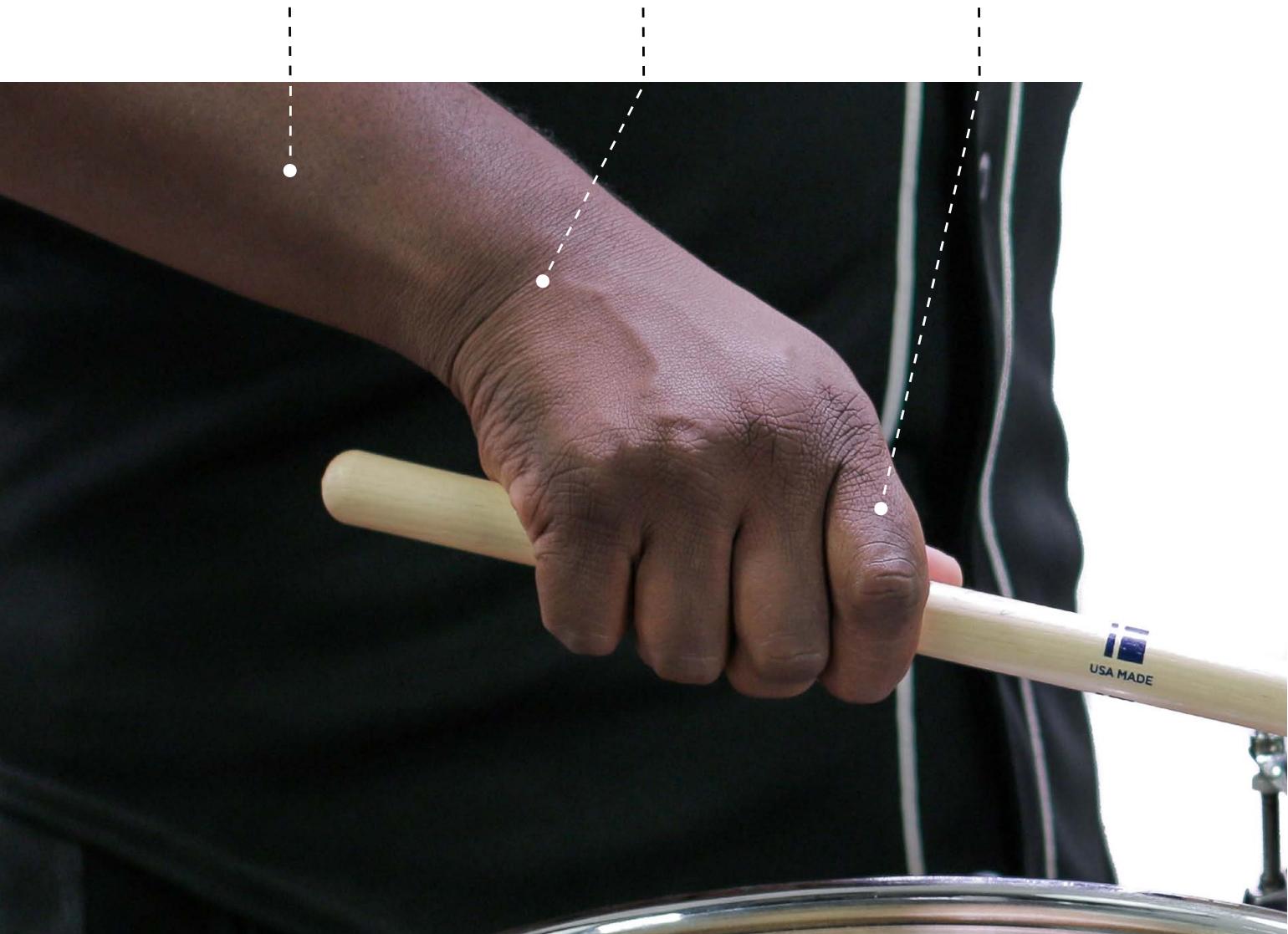
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FINGERS - This is the smallest muscle group. Since the fingers have a smaller rotation point, they can move the stick faster than the other muscle groups. The fingers are unique as they physically grip the stick.



THE GRIP

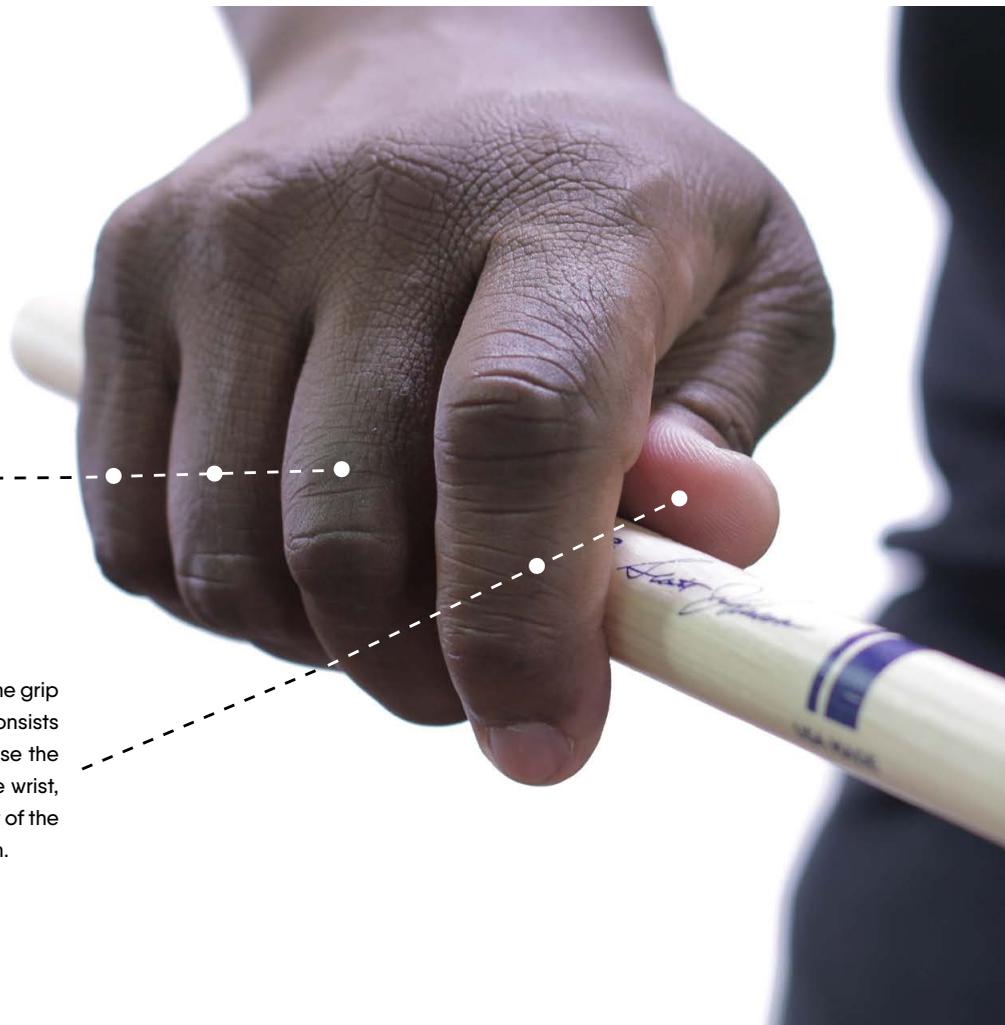
When we drum, the connection between the hand and the stick is called the “GRIP”. There are many different grips we use as drummers, but we will define **Matched Grip**. Even though the full grip is one unit, it can be broken down into two parts:

FRONT OF THE GRIP
BACK OF THE GRIP

Having control over both parts of the grip will maximize your stick control. Along with the motion of the stick, the grip is also responsible for how resonant the stick is when you play. **On a scale of 1-10, try playing with a grip pressure of about 3.** This will be just enough pressure for the stick to resonate in your hand without flying out. Make contact with the stick, but don't squeeze it. This pressure will determine your quality of sound.

BACK OF GRIP - This part of the grip consists of the middle, ring, and pinky fingers. Use the back of the grip to help generate velocity by rotating the stick around the fulcrum.

FRONT OF GRIP - This part of the grip (also known as the fulcrum) consists the thumb and index fingers. Use the front of the grip, along with the wrist, to initiate stick motion. This part of the grip helps with timing precision.



MATCHED GRIP

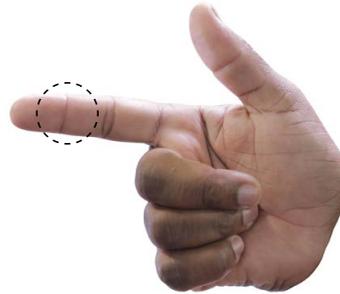
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BUILDING THE GRIP (MATCHED)

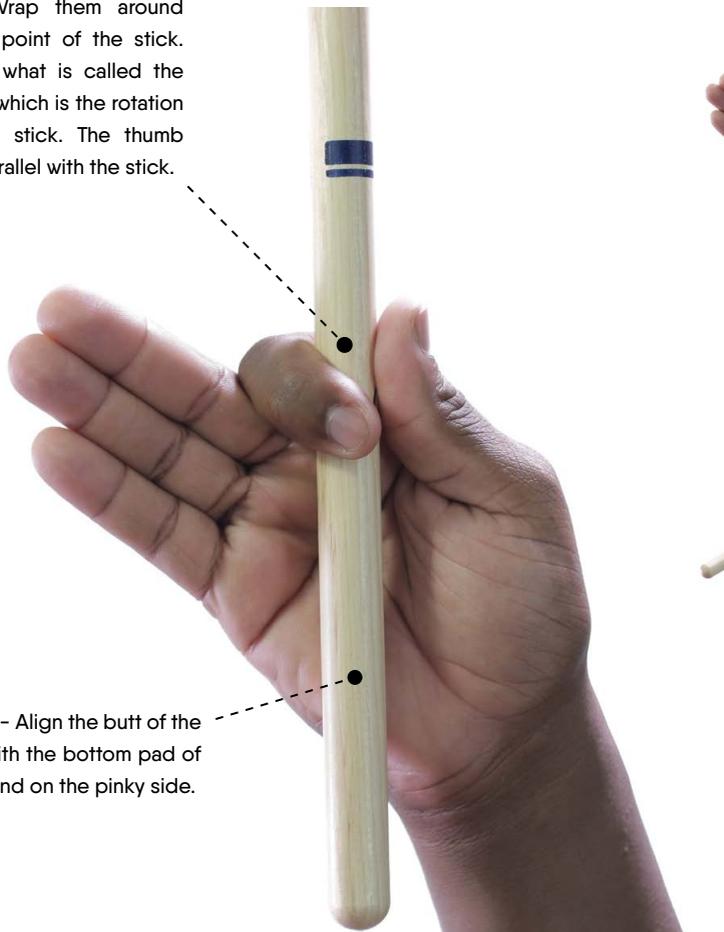


STEP 1 - Take the center of your right thumb...



STEP 2 - And the last knuckle of your right index finger...

STEP 3 - Wrap them around the balance point of the stick. This creates what is called the "FULCRUM", which is the rotation point of the stick. The thumb should be parallel with the stick.



STEP 4 - Align the butt of the stick with the bottom pad of your hand on the pinky side.



NOT THIS



NOT THIS

STEP 5 - Wrap the remaining fingers naturally around the stick. (*Keep fingers relaxed.*)



STEP 6 - Every performer will have slightly different finger lengths. Try to line up the first knuckle of each finger on the stick. This will give nice control, but won't over extend your fingers. You want enough room to open and close the hand as needed.



NOT THIS



NOT THIS

STEP 7 - Place the beads as close to the head as possible in the playing zones on drums 1 & 2. The stick should be about one finger space from the rim.



POSITIONS		
SET POSITION (UP)	SET POSITION (DOWN)	PLAYING POSITION
<p>“Set Position Up” is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by putting your sticks together parallel to the drum. Sticks will come out into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>“Set Position Down” is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by relaxing your hands by your sides. Sticks will come up into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>“Playing Position” is the position all playing starts from. This is performed by pulling your sticks out and placing the beads over drum 1 (right hand) and drum 2 (left hand). Relax your shoulders and raise your right elbow until your forearm matches the angle of the stick. The drums should be low enough so there is no tension in the shoulders.</p>



HEIGHTS & HAND MOTIONS (MATCHED GRIP)

As musicians, we are responsible for playing with a wide range of dynamics. As drummers, we use “stick heights” to help us perform those dynamics. A stick height system limits the amount of dynamic expression, but acts as a great foundation to develop uniformity of technique. Once the heights are learned, it is easy to add and subtract height to increase your dynamic range. (*Velocity plays a role in this as well, but stick heights are a unit of measurement all performers can use as a reference for dynamics.*) Each height is initiated by the wrists, but as you turn the wrist to gain height, the forearm is engaged. The higher the height, the more forearm you will use.



pp = 1"

Pianissimo - Turn from playing position so the beads are halfway between 3 inches and the head.



mf = 9"

Mezzo Forte - Turn from playing position so the sticks are at a 45 degree angle.



p = 3"

Piano - Turn from playing position so the sticks are parallel to the head.



f = 12"

Forte - Turn from playing position so the beads are 3 inches from vertical.



mp = 6"

Mezzo Piano - Turn from playing position so the beads are double the height of 3 inches. (About the height of a dollar bill.)



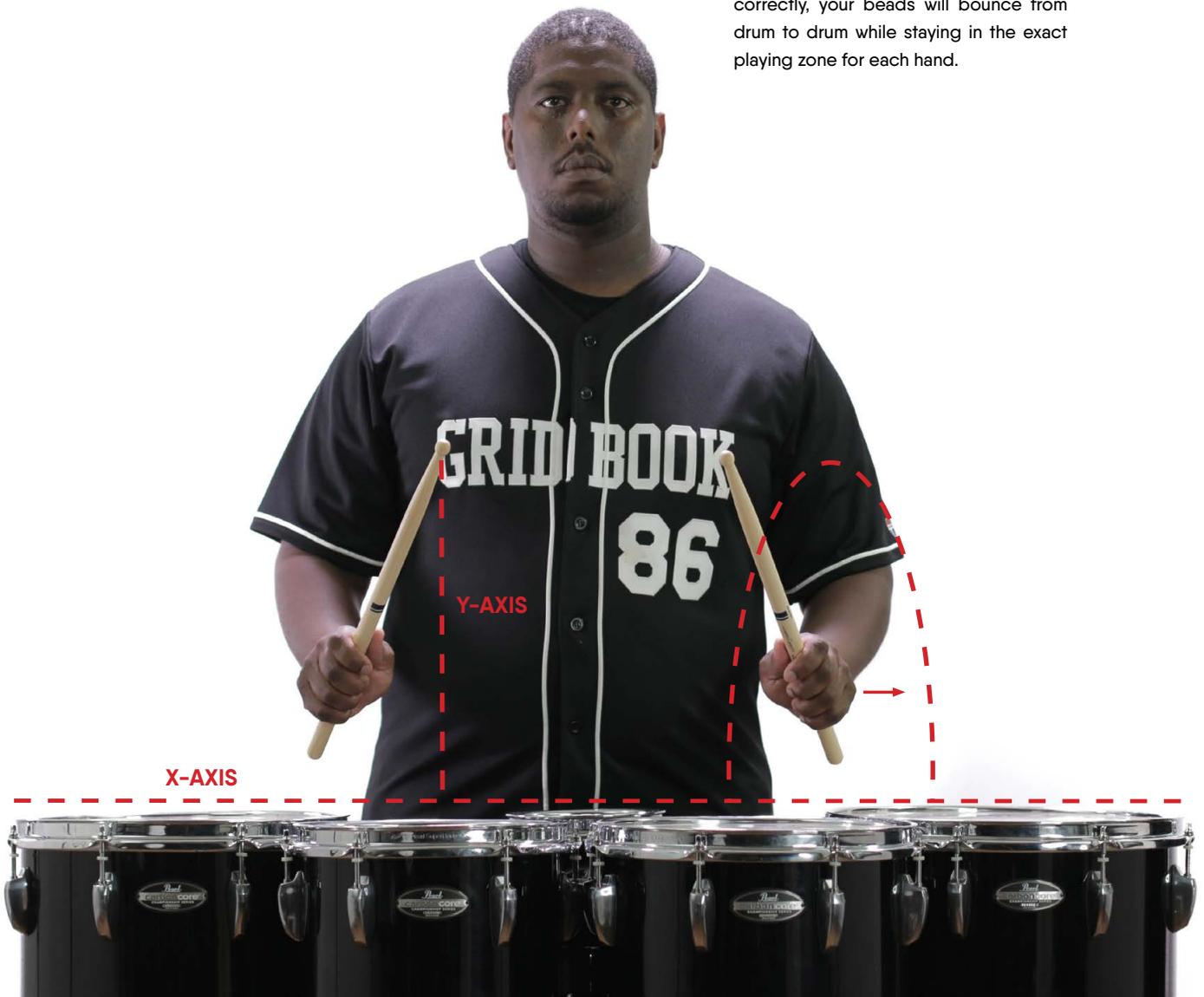
ff = 15"

Fortissimo - Turn from playing position so the sticks are straight up and down at a 90 degree angle. (Vertical)

X & Y AXIS

Tenor drummers play on an X and Y axis. The Y-Axis is vertical allowing your sticks to move up and down, and the X-Axis is horizontal allowing you to move across drums. When you play on one drum, the sticks rebound up and down vertically on the Y-Axis, but as you start moving across drums, you add the X-Axis. As you play from drum to drum, the wrist motion will continue to follow the same technique, but the forearm will move side to side. The position of the wrist stays the same height, but the head will move in an arc motion from drum to drum.

NOTE: Maintain the same hand motions you develop on one drum and apply that motion when moving across drums. Stay relaxed as you play and make sure you use the proper zones. When performed correctly, your heads will bounce from drum to drum while staying in the exact playing zone for each hand.





THE BASS LINE



BASS LINE PHILOSOPHY

Bass drummers play on a single drum that is positioned vertically, as opposed to horizontally like their snare and tenor counterparts. This instrument has playing surfaces on both sides of the drum and is played using Matched Grip. Each drummer plays on a different sized drum which brings melody to the drumline. When the bass line plays together it is called “unison” and when the parts are separated it is called “split”. Since each drum has a different pitch, when all bass drummers play together it creates a full body of sound similar to playing a chord on a piano. When music is played individually each tone is heard separately. Bass drummers are responsible for playing everything the snares do fundamentally, but must also know how to split those demands up and down the drums.

Historically, marching bass drums have been used to provide impacts and anchor the listener to the beat. Modern corps style bass lines have evolved and now play a much bigger role within the ensemble.

Originally drumlines only used a few bass drummers, with the same sized drums, tuned to the same pitch. Today, the use of different sized drums allow the section to be more melodic, musical, and articulate. Depending on the size

of the ensemble, the number of bass performers will vary. (A typical number of basses in 2018 is 5.)

Bass drums sizes can vary greatly, but a typical bass line will range from 18” to 32” drums and connect to the body using a harness.

In this section you will learn about instrument basics, implement details, playing zones, muscle groups, matched grip, positions, heights, dynamics, and hand motions for marching bass drum.

INSTRUMENT BASICS

The bass drum is an instrument with two plastic heads. The heads are stretched over a shell and can be tuned to different pitches. There are a variety of heads with different purposes and you should do your best to match the head to the music you are playing. For example, if your show music is dark and ominous, you might want a head with a darker sound. If your show is happy and uplifting you might want to use heads with a brighter sound. The tuning of the drum will also change the sound significantly.



DRUM CLAW - Snare and tenor drums have metal rims with holes for tension rods. Since bass drums use solid wooden hoops, drum claws hang over the rim with a hole for tensions rods to fit through to tighten the drum head.

TENSION ROD - A screw that tightens and loosens the rim to change the tension of the drum head. The more you tighten the screw the higher the pitch of the instrument.

HOOP - A wooden rim that rests over the drum head to tighten it around the outer edge of the drum shell. This also acts as a playing surface to get unique sounds from the instrument and helps with timing. (NOTE: Use metal "Rim Guards" to help protect the rim from damage.)

LUG - A hollow casing that the tension rod screws into.

HARNES CONNECTOR - All brands will be slightly different, but this piece connects the drum to a harness.

DRUM HEAD - An interchangeable playing surface that can be tuned to change the pitch of the drum. The top head is thicker than the bottom head and has more durability.

SHELL - A circular, hollow shell (Often wooden or carbon fiber) that the drum hardware is connected to. When you strike the drum, air moves through the shell and helps create the sound you hear from the instrument.

DRUM SIZES - Snare and Tenor performers all play the same sized instrument. Bass drummers play on different sized drums per person. The sizes will vary depending on use.



IMPLEMENT DETAILS



MALLET SIZES - Since each bass drum is a different size, there are different sized mallets. Smaller bass drums have the highest head tension so smaller mallets are used for clear articulation. Larger drums have less head tension and use bigger mallets to prevent damaging the drum head.



DRUM 1 - This mallet has a small surface area and provides the most articulate sound.



DRUM 2 - Many top bass drummers (Drums 1 and 2) will use this mallet because it has a little more surface area on the mallet head providing a sound that is more full than a bass 1 mallet.



DRUM 3 - A Bass 3 mallet is great for middle range drums. Drums 3 and 4 can both use this mallet because it is large enough for the size of the drums while still being as light as possible.



DRUM 4 - This mallet has a large surface area and provides a full sound.



DRUM 5 - This mallet has the largest surface area and is best used with the largest drums.

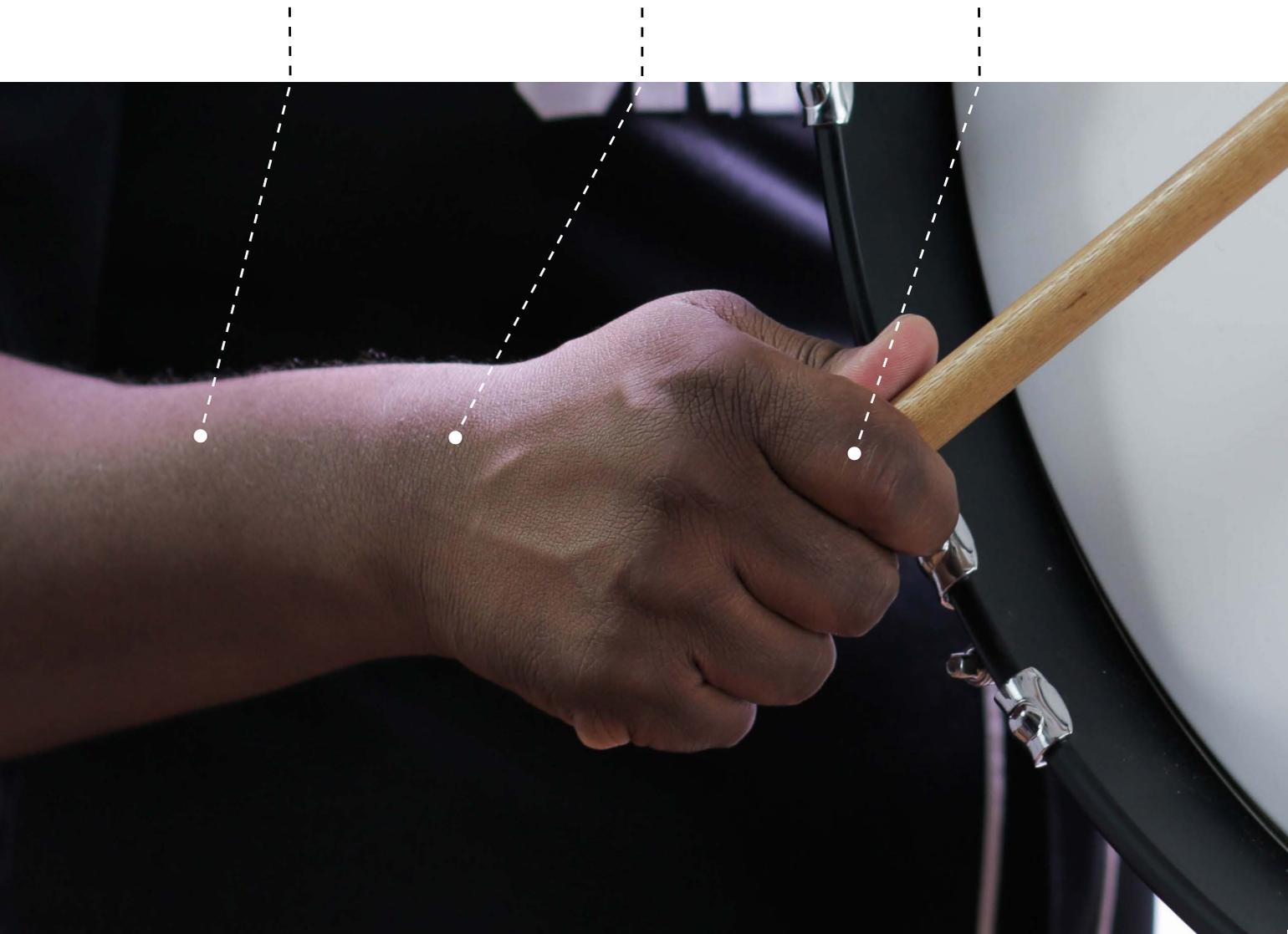
MUSCLE GROUPS

Drummers use 3 muscle groups to manipulate the stick: FINGERS, WRIST, and FOREARM. Each muscle group allows you to manipulate the stick in different ways which will greatly effect mobility, quality of sound, consistency, and overall musicianship. Manipulating these muscle groups in different ways will create different stylistic approaches. In this book, we will demonstrate the “Wrist Turn Technique”.

FOREARM - This is the largest muscle group and acts as an extension of the wrist providing extra weight to your stroke. This allows a wider range of motion and helps in performing higher stick heights.

WRIST - This is the medium sized muscle group and is the main driver of motion. All strokes begin as a result of the wrist turning and acts as a hinge/axis to help rebound the stick off the drum head.

FINGERS - This is the smallest muscle group. Since the fingers have a smaller rotation point, they can move the stick faster than the other muscle groups. The fingers are unique as they physically grip the stick.



THE GRIP

When we drum, the connection between the hand and the stick is called the “GRIP”. There are many different grips we use as drummers, but we will define **Matched Grip**. Even though the full grip is one unit, it can be broken down into two parts:

FRONT OF THE GRIP
BACK OF THE GRIP

Having control over both parts of the grip will maximize your stick control. Along with the motion of the stick, the grip is also responsible for how resonant the stick is when you play. **On a scale of 1-10, try playing with a grip pressure of about 3.** This will be just enough pressure for the stick to resonate in your hand without flying out. Make contact with the stick, but don't squeeze it. This pressure will determine your quality of sound.

FRONT OF GRIP - This part of the grip (also known as the fulcrum) consists the thumb and index fingers. Use the front of the grip, along with the wrist, to initiate stick motion. This part of the grip helps with timing precision.

BACK OF GRIP - This part of the grip consists of the middle, ring, and pinky fingers. Use the back of the grip to help generate velocity by rotating the stick around the fulcrum.



MATCHED GRIP

Matched Grip for marching bass drum is performed exactly the same as the snare with slight modifications to form to the instrument. Relax your hands at your sides, bend at the elbow, and lift your forearm until it is parallel to the ground. The top of your thumb should be flat and the stick should be angled slightly under 45 degrees. Once you find this spot with your body, set the drum up so the center of the head lines up with the mallet head.

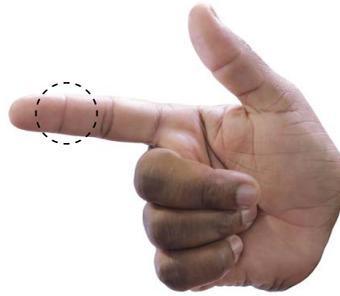
NOTE: Whether you are using a harness or drum stand, always set your hand positions first and align the drum to your hands. Never set the drum and adjust your playing position to match the drum. This will only create bad posture and unnatural stick rotations.



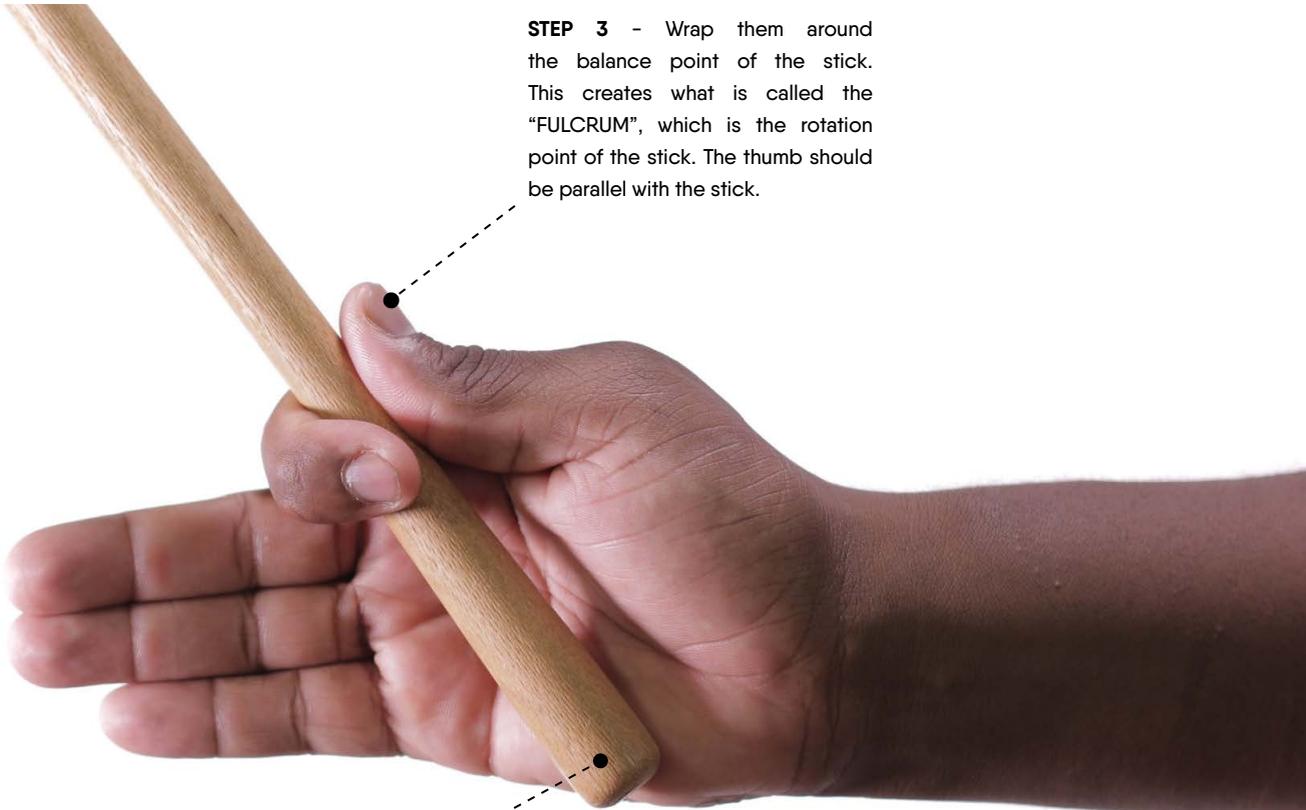
BUILDING THE GRIP (MATCHED)



STEP 1 - Take the center of your right thumb...



STEP 2 - And the last knuckle of your right index finger...



STEP 3 - Wrap them around the balance point of the stick. This creates what is called the "FULCRUM", which is the rotation point of the stick. The thumb should be parallel with the stick.

STEP 4 - Line up the butt of the stick with the bottom pad of your hand on the pinky side.

STEP 5 - Wrap the remaining fingers naturally around the stick. (Keep fingers relaxed.)



Every performer will have slightly different finger lengths. Try to line up the first knuckle of each finger on the stick. This will give nice control, but won't over extend your fingers. You want enough room to open and close the hand as needed.



NOT THIS



NOT THIS



STEP 6 - Put your mallet two fingers from the rim and place the mallet head as close to the center of the head as possible.



NOTE: Make sure the wrist is far enough away so you don't clip the rim with the bottom of the mallet when you start playing.



POSITIONS		
SET POSITION (UP)	SET POSITION (DOWN)	PLAYING POSITION
<p>"Set Position Up" is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by pulling your sticks up against the rim. Sticks should be straight up and down in both hands and will come out into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>"Set Position Down" is a resting place you can go to when you are not playing. This is performed by relaxing your hands by your sides. Sticks will come up into playing position during the count off to play.</p>	<p>"Playing Position" is the position all playing starts from. This is performed by putting your mallets in position by following the "Parallel / 53 Degree" rule. This should put the mallet heads right in the center of the head. Relax your shoulders so there is no tension in the upper body.</p>



HEIGHTS & HAND MOTIONS (MATCHED GRIP)

As musicians, we are responsible for playing with a wide range of dynamics. As drummers, we use “stick heights” to help every performer play the same distance from the drum to perform different dynamics. The lower the height, the softer the volume, the higher the height, the louder the volume. Notice how the forearm is engaged. The stroke is initiated by the wrists, but as you turn the wrist to gain height, the forearm is engaged. The higher the height, the more forearm you will use.



pp = 1"

Pianissimo - Turn from playing position so the mallet heads are halfway between 3 inches and the head.



mf = 9"

Mezzo Forte - Turn from playing position so the mallets are at a 45 degree angle.



p = 3"

Piano - Turn from playing position so the mallets are parallel to the head.



f = 12"

Forte - Turn from playing position so the mallet heads are 3 inches from vertical.



mp = 6"

Mezzo Piano - Turn from playing position so the mallet heads are double the height of 3 inches. (About the height of a dollar bill.)



ff = 15"

Fortissimo - Turn from playing position so the mallets are parallel to the ground at a 90 degree angle.



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