

# Drumset FUNdamentals

Dave Black & Mark Dorr



## Arranging Your Drumset

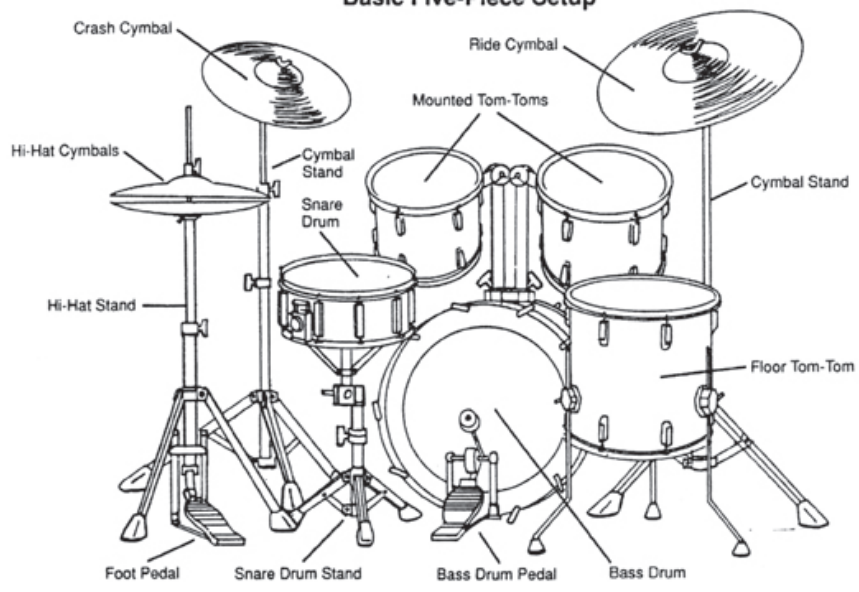
### Overall Setup

The drums and cymbals should be centralized around the player in such a way as to minimize reaching, stretching and twisting. The drums should be set in such a way as to accommodate the player—not the reverse.

Basic Four-Piece Setup



Basic Five-Piece Setup



### NOTATION



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### Throne (Stool) Height

The position and height of the drum throne is critical to proper balance and directly affects the flexibility and performance of the feet. Because each person is built differently, throne adjustments are of a personal nature. It is crucial to find a height and distance that will allow total relaxation, specifically of the hips, legs, ankles and upper body. (If you experience pain in your lower back, additional adjustments will need to be made.)

Adjust the throne height so the hip is slightly above the knee when sitting. Draw an imaginary straight line vertically from the front of your knee to the back of your foot. In this position, the ligaments, tendons and muscles are flexible and free to move naturally, whether you play heel up or heel down. (Stretching exercises will help achieve maximum flexibility.) From this position, make slight height and distance adjustments to suit your personal needs. Remember, if you sit too close or too far away from the drumset, your limbs may move unnaturally, causing undue stress on your joints, ligaments and muscles, which, in turn, will minimize flexibility when playing. Always set the drums up to you!

### The Snare Drum

Whether played with matched or traditional grip, the snare drum should be positioned and angled so that the proper alignment of the forearms and hands is not affected. With matched grip, the snare drum is usually flat or slanted down toward the player; with traditional grip, the snare drum is usually tilted slightly down toward the right (if right-handed).

### The Mounted (Rack) Toms

Drummers may use one or more mounted toms. They should be slightly tilted toward the player so as to allow him/her to clear the drums' rims when striking the heads comfortably with the side of the stick tip. (The stick should almost be parallel to the drumhead.) Avoiding a severe angle with the drumstick will not only produce the best tone, but will also reduce the likelihood of damaging the drumhead.

### The Floor Tom

The floor tom should be approximately the same height as the snare drum. It may be slightly angled toward the player or toward the snare drum.

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## Overall Cymbal Setup

If you are using several cymbals, it is wise to arrange them around yourself in such a way as to minimize reaching, stretching and twisting. In order to obtain the most optimal tonal/playing position, the cymbals should be positioned so that your elbow is slightly ahead of your shoulder in order to avoid tension. The exact placement, of course, will depend on your physical size and technical ability. If a regular cymbal stand does not allow for correct positioning of the cymbals, the use of a boom stand is highly recommended. Remember, proper cymbal positioning will help to assure optimal sound quality and volume while minimizing any possibilities of damage to the cymbal(s). Again, the drums/cymbals should be set in such a way as to accommodate the player—not the reverse.

### The Ride Cymbal

The ride cymbal should be positioned in such a way as to allow the stick to strike 2 to 4 inches in from the edge.

### The Crash Cymbal(s)

Drummers often use one or more crash cymbals so that a cymbal can be matched with a particular instrument sound. Crash cymbals are generally tilted slightly and positioned so that the drumstick's shaft is allowed to strike the cymbal's edge at about a 45-degree angle. (Some drummers place their crash cymbals above normal playing height to maximize visual effect.)

Extreme angling of a crash cymbal will restrict the cymbal's movement, diminish its response and put unnecessary pressure on the bell (cup) area. If a greater cymbal angle is desired, a cymbal tilter—often also incorporating a spring to serve as a shock absorber—may prove desirable.

### The Hi-Hat

The hi-hat is placed to the left of (and slightly above) the snare drum, and is operated by the left foot (for a right-handed player). The hi-hat consists of a pair of cymbals mounted one above the other and connected to a foot pedal. When at rest, the cymbals should be separated by 1 to 2 inches.



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### Solo Fills

Solo fills are simply fills played in solo fashion, without any other instruments sounding. They are generally played louder with the purpose of drawing attention to the drummer. Always practice fills in a musical “time” setting; although fills break away from the basic beat, they should not speed up or slow down. As a general rule:

1. One should think of fills as melodic lines.
2. Fills can be used as a way to bridge sections of a musical work.
3. The volume and complexity of a fill will depend on what happens next within a specific tune.

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LAST CHORUS

J = 106

21

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### Playing Setups for Ensemble Figures

The drummer is expected to “set up” major ensemble entrances. This concept, idiomatic to jazz alone, calls for a drummer to play a rhythm that leads up to a major ensemble entrance. It usually ends on the beat just before the ensemble figure begins and helps to keep the ensemble’s entrance tight.

Example A:



Example B:



### Within the context of an ensemble “shout chorus”



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**Soloing**

Drummers are frequently called upon to solo within a piece of music. Such solos can be measured (for example, 4 bars in length) or unmeasured (often called “open,” meaning that the solo’s length is up to the drummer and/or band leader).

An extended discussion on how to play fills/solos goes beyond the scope of this clinic. The best way to get a feel for how to play fills is to listen to recordings of great drummers, attend live performances, play along with your private instructor, and to practice in an ensemble setting (including bass, piano, guitar, etc.). There is simply no substitute for a great deal of focused listening and/or playing in order to master the playing of ensemble figures, solos and fills.

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## Suggested Method Books for Private Lesson Study (Beginning to Intermediate Level Drumset)

There are many excellent drumset methods available today. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

### Technical Studies and Sight-reading:

*Stick Control*, George L. Stone  
*Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*, Ted Reed  
*Accents and Rebounds*, George L. Stone  
*Modern Reading Text in 4/4*, Louis Bellson and Gil Breines  
*Modern School for Snare Drum*, Morris Goldenberg  
*Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*, Charles Wilcoxon  
*Modern Interpretation of Snare Drum Rudiments*, Buddy Rich and Henry Adler

### Multiple Musical Styles and Topics:

*Alfred's Beginning Drumset Method*, Sandy Feldstein & Dave Black  
*Drum Sessions I-II*, Peter O'Gorman  
*Studio and Big Band Drumming*, Steve Houghton  
*Jazz, Rock, and Latin Sourcebook*, Charles Dowd  
*Moves and Grooves*, Elliot Fine  
*The Ultimate Drumset Reading Anthology*, Steve Houghton

### Chart Reading (exclusively):

*You're In The Band, Volume I*, Mike Ehrhard  
*Essential Styles for the Drummer and Bassist I*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington  
*I've Got You Under My Skins*, Irv Cottler  
*The Ultimate Drumset Reading Anthology*, Steve Houghton

### Jazz:

*Alfred's Beginning Drumset Method*, Sandy Feldstein & Dave Black  
*Shuffle Drumming Workbook*, Chet Doboie  
*Studio and Big Band Drumming*, Steve Houghton  
*Jazz, Rock, and Latin Sourcebook*, Charles Dowd  
*Drum Solos and Fill-Ins for the Progressive Drummer*, Ted Reed

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## **Rock, Fusion, Funk, Contemporary:**

*Alfred's Beginning Drumset Method*, Sandy Feldstein & Dave Black

*A Funky Primer*, Charles Dowd

*Realistic Rock*, Carmine Appice

*Rockin' Bass Drum, Book II*, John Lombardo and Charles Perry

*The Encyclopedia of Groove*, Bobby Rock

*Rock 'n Roll Drums*, Palmer-Hughes

*Monster Book of Rock Drumming*, Joel Rothman

*Jazz, Rock, and Latin Sourcebook*, Charles Dowd

## **Afro-Caribbean, Brazilian, African:**

*Jazz, Rock, and Latin Sourcebook*, Charles Dowd

*Moves and Grooves*, Elliot Fine

*Brazilian Percussion Manual*, Daniel Sabanovich

## **General Reference:**

*52nd Street Beat: Profiles of Modern Jazz Drummers 1945-1965*, Joe Hunt

*The Great Jazz Drummers*, Ronald Spagnardi / William F. Miller, ed.

*For the Record: A Collection and Analysis of Transcribed Drum Solos*,  
transcribed by David M. Wood

*Hitmen: Inside Look at the World of the Studio Drummer*, Sam Bradley

*Different Drummers*, Billy Mintz

*Drum Wisdom*, Bob Moses

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*There are many excellent drumset methods available today. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:*

### Technical Studies and Sight-reading:

*Accents and Rebounds*, George L. Stone  
*Master Studies*, Joe Morello  
*Odd Time Reading Text*, Louis Bellson and Gil Breines  
*The Moeller Method*, Jim Chapin (ms)  
*Portraits in Rhythm*, Anthony Cirone  
*Patterns: Volume I-Rhythm and Meter Patterns*, Gary Chaffee  
*Patterns: Volume II-Sticking Patterns*, Gary Chaffee  
*Patterns: Volume III-Time Functioning Patterns*, Gary Chaffee  
*Patterns: Volume IV-Technique Patterns*, Gary Chaffee  
*Drumset Etudes, Books I-III*, Joe Holmquist  
*Drumset Reading*, Ron Fink  
*Linear Drumming*, Michael Snyder

### Multiple Musical Styles and Topics:

*Musicians Guide to Polyrhythms, Volumes I and II*, Peter Magadini  
*The New Breed*, Gary Chester  
*Studio and Big Band Drumming*, Steve Houghton  
*Drum Concepts and Techniques*, Peter Erskine  
*Double Bass Drumming*, Joe Franco  
*Bass Drum Control*, Colin Bailey  
*Even in the Odds*, Ralph Humphrey  
*Jazz, Rock, and Latin Sourcebook*, Charles Dowd  
*New Orleans Drumming*, Roy Burns and Joey Farris  
*Moves and Grooves*, Elliot Fine  
*Poly-Cymbal Time*, Peter Magadini  
*Linear Drumming: A Creative Approach*, Michael Snyder / Charles Dowd, ed.  
*A Drummer's Digest of Rhythms and Charts*, Fred Bocchino  
*Essential Techniques for the Drumset*, Ed Soph  
*The Ultimate Drumset Reading Anthology*, Steve Houghton  
*Country Styles for the Drummer and Bassist*, Brian Fullen and Roy Vogt  
*Alfred MasterTracks (Blues; Jazz; Fusion; Latin)*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington  
*New Orleans Drumming*, Roy Burns and Joey Farris

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## Brush Technique:

*The Sound of Brushes*, Ed Thigpen

*Contemporary Brush Techniques*, Louie Bellson, Hank Bellson and Dave Black

## Chart Reading (exclusively):

*Essential Styles for the Drummer and Bassist II*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington

*Drummers: Masters of Time*, Steve Davis

*Standard Time: Jazz Drums*, Steve Davis

*Jazz Drums: Style and Analysis*, Steve Davis

*Wipe Out*, Jim Chapin

*Drumset Reading*, Ron Fink

*I've Got You Under My Skins*, Irv Cottler

*The Ultimate Drumset Reading Anthology*, Steve Houghton

*Their Time Was The Greatest*, Louie Bellson

## Jazz:

*Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer, Volumes I & II*, Jim Chapin

*The Art of Bop Drumming*, John Riley

*Shuffle Drumming Workbook*, Chet Doboie

*Jazz Bible of Coordination*, Joel Rothman

*Drum Solos and Fill-Ins for the Progressive Drummer*, Ted Reed

*Drumset Independence and Syncopation*, Dave Black

*Alfred MasterTracks - Blues*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington

*Alfred MasterTracks - Jazz*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington

## Rock, Fusion, Funk, Contemporary:

*Future Sounds*, David Garibaldi

*Advanced Funk Studies*, Rick Latham

*The Drummer's Cookbook*, John Pickering

*Alfred MasterTracks - Fusion*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington

*A Funky Primer*, Charles Dowd

*Encyclopedia of Groove*, Bobby Rock

*The Fusion Drummer*, Murray Houllif

*Linear Drumming*, Michael Snyder

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## **Afro-Caribbean, Brazilian, African:**

- Rhythms and Colors: Listen and Play*, Airto Moreira  
*Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset*, Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner  
*The Drumset with Afro-Caribbean Rhythms, Parts I & II*, Chuck Silverman  
*Practical Applications Using Afro-Caribbean Rhythms, Part III*, Chuck Silverman  
*Brazilian Rhythms for Drumset*, Duduka Da Fonseca and Bob Weiner  
*The Essence of Brazilian Percussion and Drumset*, Ed Uribe  
*Brazilian Percussion Manual*, Daniel Sabanovich / Anthony J. Cirone, ed.  
*Fundamentals of Calypso Drumming*, Lennard V. Moses  
*Realistic Reggae Rock*, Carmine Appice  
*West African Rhythms for Drumset*, Royal Hartigan, Adzenyah, and Donkor  
*Latin Rhythms for Drums and Timbales*, Ted Reed  
*Alfred MasterTracks - Latin*, Steve Houghton and Tom Warrington  
*The Essence of Afro-Cuban Percussion and Drumset*, Ed Uribe  
*Brazilian Percussion Manual*, Daniel Sabanovich  
*Afro-Latin Rhythm Dictionary*, Thomas Brown  
*Rhythms and Colors / Listen and Play*, Airto Moreira and Dan Thress