

Free Stroke

The first stroke this program will focus on is the free stroke. This stroke is commonly referred to as full stroke and legato stroke. The term free stroke was first coined by Bill Bachmen. It best describes the stroke because it is free from any tension in the performer, and it moves in a natural and free-flowing motion.

The free stroke is used on consecutive strokes with the same heights.

Guidelines

- Stick starts and stops at the same height.
- The back of the stick should not hit the back of the palm of your hand.
- Let the bead of the stick slam into the playing surface.
- The stick goes down and returns back up at the same speed.
- All four fingers remain in contact with the stick without any tension.
- Stick resonates with a high pitch.
- High-velocity strokes.

When the free stroke is performed properly there will be two points that will be very apparent. First, the stick has enough velocity on the way down to come right back up to the starting position. Secondly, your hand is relaxed and free from tension so the stick will not be stopped by the palm of your hand, allowing the stick to return all the way back to the starting position.

Free Stroke for Matched Grip

Start with the stick in the up position. Your wrist should be bent and hand open, with all four fingers in contact with the stick and free from tension.



With a confident fulcrum use your wrist and fingers to throw the bead of the stick towards the playing surface. To create enough velocity for the stick to return to the starting position, quickly put the stick in motion with the wrist and fingers. As soon as the stick is in motion, relax your fingers so the bead can naturally strike the playing surface and rebound to return to the starting position on its own. At no point in this stroke should the back of the stick come in contact with the bottom of your palm. The back of the palm is used to stop the stick at a different height than the start, commonly referred to as the brakes. It will also stop the stick from resonating.

Something to watch for...

If you notice that the stick is moving back up to the starting position with less velocity than it when down, there may be two possible issues. You may not be moving the stick down with enough velocity for it to return to the starting position or the back of the stick maybe coming in contact with your palm stopping it from rebounding back to the starting position.

Something to think about...

The free stroke is similar to bouncing a basketball. You send the ball down with enough velocity to return to your hand. In most cases, the ball will return with enough force to move your hand upward slightly, as should the stick.



When you start learning the free stroke you may drop your stick...
This is okay; It shows your hand is relaxed, just a little bit too relaxed!

Take your time developing this stroke; it is the foundation for what we are building in the program.

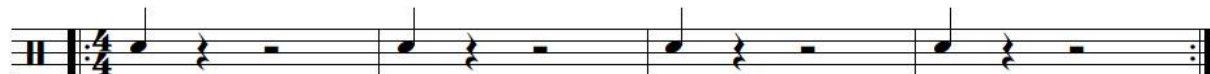
Putting the Free Stroke in Motion!

Isolated Free Strokes

As we start to work on performing the free stroke the first thing we will do is play isolated free strokes. Doing this will give you time to check out what you are doing to make sure you are performing the free stroke properly. Become confident and consistent with the isolated free stroke, before you move on in this program. This stroke is the foundation of your drumming, the stronger the foundation the stronger everything else will become.

The exercise below is to help you work on the isolated free stroke. Play along with a metronome or with your favourite track. The goal of this is to perform every stroke with the same motion and to produce a consistent quality of sound. Use all the guidelines and information you just learned about free stroke in this chapter.

♩ = 90



R L B R L B R L B R L B

Performer Check List

- The velocity of the stick going down is the same when returning back to the starting position.
- The stick starts and stops at the same spot.
- Use your wrist and fingers to initiate motion.
- No tension in your arms or hands.
- All your fingers are in contact with the stick.
- The back of the stick doesn't touch the bottom of your palm.

Consecutive Free Strokes

Now that you have taken the time to develop a consistent and correct isolated free stroke it is time to connect them. Using the same technique as before start slow and make sure you are doing it correctly.

The exercise below is to help you work on the consecutive free stroke. Play along with a metronome or with your favourite track. The goal of this is to perform every stroke with the same motion and to produce a consistent quality of sound. Use all the guidelines and information you just learned about free stroke in this chapter.

♩ = 90

R _____ B _____ L _____ B _____

Performer Check List

- The velocity of the stick going down is the same when returning back to the starting position.
- The stick starts and stops at the same spot.
- Use your wrist and fingers to initiate motion.
- No tension in your arms or hands.
- All your fingers are in contact with the stick.
- The back of the stick doesn't touch the bottom of your palm.

Drumline Exercise

It is now time to start your first full drumline exercise. There are many different versions, but the most common is "8 On A Hand". Go to the exercise section for some examples.