



DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS

MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

BASS DRUMS

EXERCISES AND TECHNIQUE

2024/2025

FUNDAMENTAL BASS DRUM TECHNIQUE

Grip breakdown & guidelines

These guidelines will put the hands in the 'starting position':

1. Fulcrum

- the fulcrum is located between thumb and forefinger
- the thumb should be opposite the forefinger forming a 'cross'
- the main contact points on the mallet are the thumb, forefinger and middle finger
- the thumb and fingers should remain on the mallet at all times

2. Wrist angle

- the wrist should be at its natural angle, as if hanging to the side of the body
- do not 'pull in' or 'push out' the base of the wrist

3. Mallet head placement

- both mallet heads should be placed in the direct center of the drum head
- rotate the wrist by turning the thumbnail in towards the head so that the head of the mallet is just off the surface of the drum

4. Mallet angle

- bend from the elbows so that the forearms are parallel to the ground
- the angle of the wrist should be slightly more than 45° (elbows may move in front of, or behind the body, depending on the size of the drum and the length of the forearms)
- the natural wrist angle should not be affected

Stroke breakdown & guidelines

The following stroke guidelines are designed to develop a consistent fundamental approach to striking the drum. Other specific elements of playing should be addressed after these basics are achieved. Constantly check the grip guidelines and evaluate the grip. Do not compromise the grip when playing passages that require increased (or decreased) effort.

1. play from the wrist

- the primary stroke for the bass drummer is created by a series of motions
- from the correct starting position, break the wrist away from the drum head. Use a knocking motion, with the wrist hinging at the base of the forearm. This motion should be used at dynamic levels ranging from *pp* to *mf*
- once the maximum wrist break is achieved, a slight rotation of the forearm is then implemented. This additional motion should be used at dynamic levels ranging from *f* to *fff*
- forearms should always remain parallel to the ground. Do not abandon the correct forearm-to-arm placement at any time
- the overall approach to stroke technique on the bass drum is much like that of the right hand technique for snare drum. Only slight alterations exist, due to the sideways motion of the bass drum stroke

2. Path of mallet

- the mallet head should travel in a straight path into and away from the drum head
- this motion incorporates a break in the wrist, which can ultimately lead to a slight rotation of the forearm at higher dynamic levels

3. Adhere to dynamic levels

- specified heights should be consistent in both hands
- do not over play attacks or releases
- dynamics are achieved through adjusting the length of the stroke. Striking the surface harder or softer will alter the style of the stroke, resulting in a change of articulation. Consistency in tone quality is dependent on maintaining the style of the stroke within the given dynamic

4. control of opposite implement

- the mallet should return to the starting position when playing is finished
- the non-playing mallet should remain in the proper starting position

Myrtle Singles
Myrtle Wavez 2024/2025

A

5

9

B

C

R... L...

21

R... L...

25

R... L...

27

R... R R L R R R R

*Bass drums play variations A and B unison on first time through

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