



# Setting the Drums on Fire

Learn to Play the Drums

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## Introduction

Who doesn't love a drum solo? It's always the highlight of the show. Drums have got to be one of the coolest instruments both to play, and listen to. But more importantly, the drums are the heart of the band. The drummer is the one who sets the beat for the rest of the musicians to follow.

It would seem that drums are easy to play. After all, anybody can pick up a pair of sticks and start banging on them. But once you begin to take lessons and practice you'll soon find that they are one of the most difficult instruments to master. It takes a great deal of coordination to play the drums well. Each arm and leg is doing something different at the same time and it's not easy to have all four limbs going at once, all the while keeping good time.

If you've been considering taking up the drums as your instrument of choice there are a few things you need to know beforehand.

- Drums can be very expensive. Yes, there are some kits out there that are very cheap but the old adage holds true here too: you get what you pay for.
- They take up a lot of room.
- They're very loud
- They're fun, fun, fun. So if you can deal with the rest; go for it!

## What You're Going to Need

Of course you'll need a drum set (or kit). How many drums in the kit, the sizes of the individual drums, the brand, etc.; they all depend on your personal preferences.

### **You'll also need the following:**

- A metronome – this will help you establish a rhythm and teach you how to keep time.
- A music stand – you'll need this to hold your sheet music and drum tabs.
- Extra sticks – depending on the style of music you'll be playing you'll either be breaking a lot of sticks, or simply need a variety for different sounds.
- Drum keys – these are used to tune the drums and tighten hardware. You can't have too many of these on hand.
- A Practice pad – this is helpful, actually a must-have, for practicing the rudiments. It's very handy because it's small and very portable. You can practice while watching T.V. with one of these.
- A non-slip rug – If you have carpeting you'll want a rug to protect the carpet. If you have bare floors you'll need the rug to keep the drums from sliding all over or scratching the flooring while you play.
- A CD and/or DVD player
- Headphones

## Taking the First Steps

Not only is it very interesting, but it will do you a world of good to learn about the history of the drums and drummers. Nearly every pro drummer will tell you that they learned a lot by studying the masters. Yes, even many of the most hard-core metal drummers have learned from the masters of yesteryear.

You also need to find out about the different types and brands of drums that are available. While you're studying up on these you can get started learning your rudiments with a practice pad and a pair of drum sticks. Doing it this way will give you the opportunity to discover if playing the drums is right for you before you make a large investment.

So, go out and buy yourself a drum pad and a pair of sticks and get started. Drum Practice Pads range in price from about \$17 to \$50, \$60, or more. All you really need though is something simple at first. Evans makes a very high-quality and affordable practice pad. It's also light weight and very quiet so you won't bother anybody while you practice.



**Evans Practice Pad**

## The Ever Popular Rudiments of Drumming

So, what are the drum rudiments anyway? For one thing, they're the most important part of your drumming education. Without them, you'll have a heck-of-a hard time learning to play well. They are fundamental to everything you'll ever play on the drums. Everything you'll play will be some combination of these rudiments. They are rudimentary my dear Watson!

To master the drum rudiments, you'll need to practice, practice, practice! Never substitute technique for speed. Develop the technique first, and then just speed it up as you get better.

Try to learn two or three rudiments per week. Keep at those until you master them. Then, go for a couple more. Never abandon the ones you've mastered though. Always go back to them often to stay polished.

Whenever you are practicing the drum rudiments, start out slowly to get your hands used to the sticking pattern. When you feel that you have this down pat then you can gradually speed up when playing them. By practicing the drum rudiments in this way, you will be able to kinesthetically teach your hands to automatically carry out the pattern of the rudiments. Mastering the basic drum rudiments will enable you to play just about any song you will ever want to play. And, armed with an arsenal of well-rehearsed techniques you'll be able to crank out some impressive solos while making it look easy to your audience.

Practicing the drum rudiments will not even require you to practice them only on an actual drum set. You can practice them just about anywhere. You can practice them in the office, in your car, in school, and even while you are sitting on the couch watching TV. In fact, you don't even need to have sticks to practice them. Just tapping out the beats on your thigh is a great way to practice. But, practicing with the sticks is ultimately much better as you will be able to also practice your sticking technique. Use every opportunity you can find to practice and you'll master the rudiments in no time.

Using the drum pad is a great way to practice drum rudiments. It's not as loud as the real drums, and you can take it with you most anywhere you go. The drum pad has a bounce that closely resemble that of a real drum so it feels more like you are playing on the real thing.

Always remember that without the drum rudiments, there wouldn't be any drumming. So, by practicing and mastering the drum rudiments, you will eventually have an easier time playing the drum set as a whole. Remember these tips and you will be playing the drums like a pro in no time at all.

It's beyond the scope of this book to teach basic music theory so if you don't know how to read music I would recommend getting a book or video that will help in this area. ***One deal that I highly recommend is to get [Drum Basics](#). Not only will you get some valuable drumming lessons but a FREE metronome and a FREE "Learn How to Read Music" ebook as bonuses.***

So, once you've gotten yourself a practice pad and sticks, move on to the next page and get started with the 26 basic American rudiments. It's not really necessary to learn the entire PAS 40 rudiments unless you're studying music in college or plan to enter competitions.

As you practice, start with your metronome on a lower setting. Just a few beats per minute (bpm) will do until you begin to gain coordination. Once you've mastered the pattern, try the rudiment at a an increased rate of bpm. Continue in this way until you begin to "break". That means the speed at which you're unable to keep up the pattern and start messing up. Keep at it. Always challenge yourself. In this way you'll increase your speed and stamina.

In the pages that follow are the 26 basic American Rudiments along with exercises for practice. ***For extra help and to see and hear them played by a professional see: [Drum Rudiment System](#)***





# Double Stroke Rudiments

## Exercise #1–Double Stroke Open Roll

      
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

      
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

      
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

      
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

      
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

      
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

Exercise #2 –5 Stroke Roll



Exercise #4 –7 Stroke Roll

R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L


R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L


R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L


R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L


R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L R LR L


# Exercise #5—10 Stroke Roll

10 >>>   
R RL  
L LR

10 >>>   
R RL  
L LR

10 >>>   
R RL  
L LR

10 >>>   
R RL  
L LR

10 >>>   
R RL  
L LR

Exercise #6—11 Stroke Roll

//   //   //   //   //   //

R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL

L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR

//   //   //   //   //   //

R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL

L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR

//   //   //   //   //   //

R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL

L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR

//   //   //   //   //   //

R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL

L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR

//   //   //   //   //   //

R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL   R   RL

L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR   L   LR

Exercise #7—13 Stroke Roll



# Exercise #8—15 Stroke Roll

15 15 15 15 15

R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

15 15 15 15 15

R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

15 15 15 15 15

R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

15 15 15 15 15

R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

15 15 15 15 15

R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

# Diddle Rudiments

## Exercise #1—Single Paradiddle





## Exercise #2—Double Paradiddle



# Flam Rudiments

## Exercise #1—Basic Flam



Exercise #2—Flam Accent

LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L

LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L

LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L

LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L

LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L

LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L LR L R RL R L

Exercise #3—Flam Tap



Exercise #4—Flamacue

LR L R L LR  
RL R L R RL

LR L R L LR  
RL R L R RL

LR L R L LR  
RL R L R RL

LR L R L LR  
RL R L R RL

LR L R L LR  
RL R L R RL

Exercise #5—Flam Paradiddle



Exercise #6—Flam Paradiddle-Diddle

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

LR L RRL L RL R L L RR

# Drag Rudiments

## Exercise #1—Basic Drag





Exercise #2—Single Drag Tap



Exercise #3—Double Drag Tap

LLR LLR L RRL RRL R

LLR LLR L RRL RRL R

LLR LLR L RRL RRL R

LLR LLR L RRL RRL R

LLR LLR L RRL RRL R

Exercise #4--Drag Paraddiddle #1

R L L R L R R L R R L R L L

R L L R L R R L R R L R L L

R L L R L R R L R R L R L L

R L L R L R R L R R L R L L

R L L R L R R L R R L R L L

Exercise #5—Drag Paradiddle #2

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L    R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L    R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L    R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L    R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L    R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L    R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

Exercise #6—Single Ratamacue



Exercise #7--Double Ratamacue

LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL R L R

LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL R L R

LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL R L R

LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL R L R

LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL R L R

Exercise #8—Triple Ratamacue

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

LLRLLRLLR L R L R R L R R L R R L R L R

## Choosing Your First Drum Set

If you've lived through learning your rudiments and still find the drums to be to your liking, then you're ready for your first kit. With so many brands and setups, how do you choose which one to buy? Here again it depends on several factors:

- The style or styles of music you'll be playing
- Is this just a hobby or do you plan to become a professional?
- Will you be adding on more equipment later?
- What sound suits your taste?
- Do you want a warm sound or a crisp sound?

### *Popular Brands of Acoustic Drums*

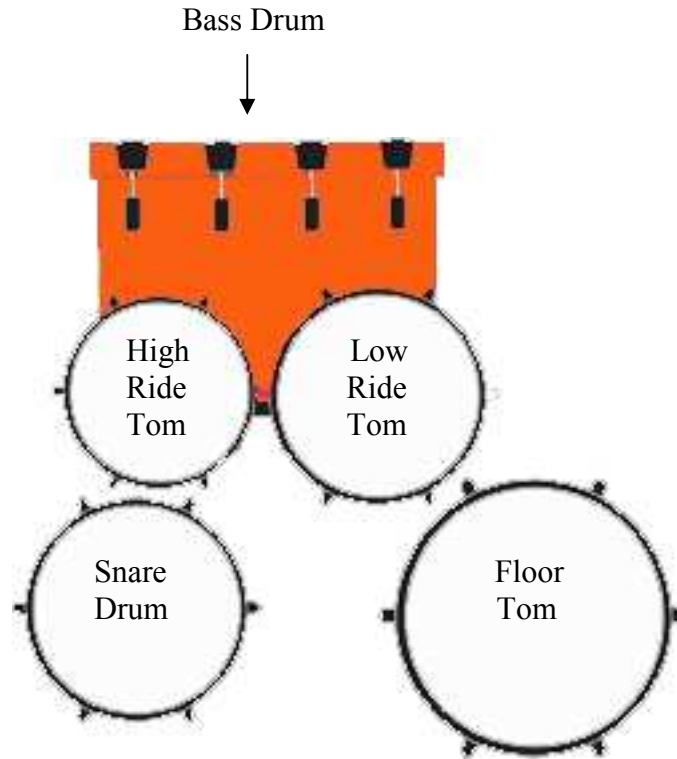
Of course there are others but these are the most popular and easiest to find.

- ✦ Pearl
- ✦ Tama
- ✦ Gretsch
- ✦ Pork Pie
- ✦ ddrum
- ✦ Yamaha
- ✦ Ludwig
- ✦ Peavey
- ✦ DW
- ✦ Mapex
- ✦ Pulse – Low end but very popular for first-time buyers because of the cheap price.

*For extra in-depth help in choosing the right drum set visit: [Drum Gear Buyer's Guide](#)*



## Basic 5-Piece Drum Kit Setup



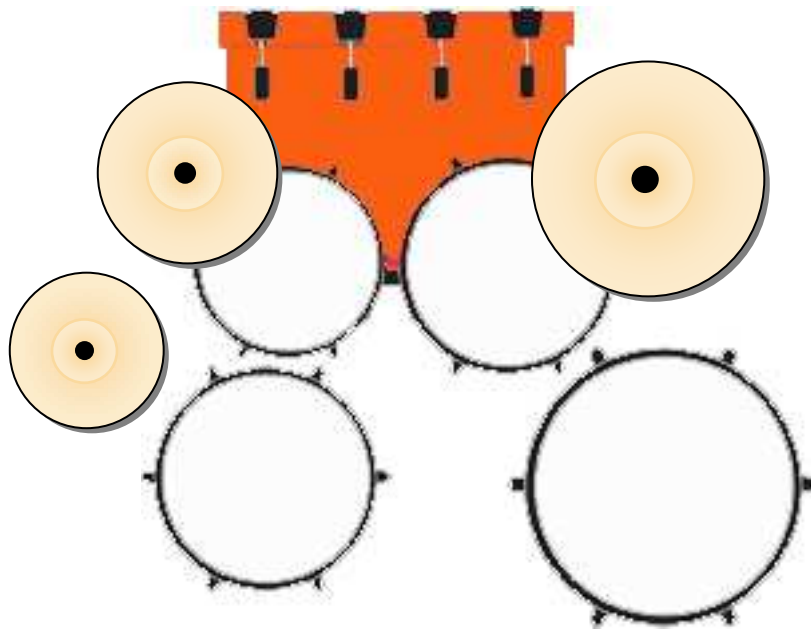
The bass drum keeps the basic beat of the music being played and usually is in relative unison with the bass lines played by the bass guitar player. It is played with right foot (left for left-handed drummers). There is a pedal with a beater that is usually made from a tightly wound cloth material such as felt.

The snare drum is played by the left hand (again, right for left-handed drummers).

The toms: high ride, low ride, and floor toms are usually used for fills but occasionally are played as part of the basic running beat.

## What about Cymbals?

Most drum kit setups have a set of hi-hat cymbals, a ride (or ping) cymbal, and at least one crash cymbal. Cymbals come in various sizes and weights for different purposes and sounds. Some have a darker tone and some have a crisper tone. Some have a quick decay, while others keep ringing on for what may seem an eternity. There are specialty cymbals such as China cymbals, Splash cymbals, cymbals with rivets (known as sizzle cymbals), and so on. You certainly have plenty to choose from!



### *Popular Cymbal Brands*

The more popular brands of cymbals are:

- ✦ Zildjian
- ✦ Paiste
- ✦ Sabian
- ✦ Wuhan
- ✦ Meinl
- ✦ Pearl

## Should You Consider Buying a Used Drum Set?

A new drum set can certainly be expensive. If you have the cash to lay out for a top-of-the-line kit, go for it! What if you're not rich though and just can't afford a new drum set? Or, maybe you just can't see yourself pouring that much money into your hobby or potential career at the beginning stage. Most of these same high-end manufacturers have taken these situations into consideration. They've got you covered by offering a more modestly priced kit. Of course these beginner drum sets are not of the same professional quality as their high-end lines, but these guys do know how to make drums after all. As such even the beginner kits are pretty decent most of the time.

On the other hand, what if you can't afford a new high-end kit but want that professional quality nonetheless?

You can always buy a used kit. Especially during the current recession you can pick up a nice drum set without breaking the bank. Don't be afraid to bargain with the seller either. Most have a "the least I'll accept" number in their head but advertise for a higher price. If you're patient and assertive you can probably work them down and get a feel for that least amount. Then you can make your final offer.

Never buy a drum set unless you're allowed to play it first. Just like a used car, it may look sassy but be quite trashy when you the pedal down. If the person or shop selling the drums won't allow you to try them out, then just turn around and walk out the door.

If you know someone who is experienced with drums, take them along to help you inspect the set you're considering. Look for broken or missing hardware, scratches, and signs of damage from moisture, etc. You may not be too concerned about a few dings here and there and that's fine. It's really only the things that affect the sound or playability of the kit that makes a big difference.

Drum heads can be expensive, especially when you have to replace them for the whole drum set. If they're on their last leg, try to get the seller to replace them or ask them to take a cut on the price since you'll have to replace them yourself if they aren't willing to.

## How to Set Up Your Drum Set

Congratulations on purchasing your first drum set! Now it's time to get it all set up and ready to play. Although the basic arrangement of the drums in a kit is fairly standard, you have complete freedom to make adjustments to make your setup as comfortable as possible for you. You'll just need to make sure that every element of your kit is within easy reach from a sitting position.

Each manufacturer has its own mounting system (for mounting the toms on the bass drum or on drum stands). The best systems give you complete freedom in adjusting the height and angle of each drum to suit you.

Once you're happy with the arrangement of your drums, it's time to set up the cymbals. As with the drums, you need to make sure you can reach each cymbal without having to stretch. Refer to the diagram on page 34 for the common placement of cymbals in relation to the drum set.

Especially if you'll be playing Rock or Heavy Metal, you'll want to invest in good, heavy duty, double-braced hardware. This goes for your drum throne, snare stand, hi-hat stand, cymbal stands, and tom stands if you'll be using those instead of mounting your toms on the bass drum. Especially important is your bass drum pedal. Make sure to get a chain-drive (preferably double chain-drive) pedal. Since this piece of hardware gets so much use, and abuse, it has to be able to handle the task.

You'll be really glad you've paid attention here--there's nothing more embarrassing as a drummer than to have your cymbals fall over or your throne to collapse under your weight right in the middle of a performance!

## Taking Good Care of Your Drums

As you should know by now, a decent drum set certainly isn't cheap. Now that you've made this investment, you need to know how to take good care of your kit. When you do so, your drums will last for years and years.

A drum's worst enemy is moisture. Moisture and humidity will soften the wood and cause a drum to warp. Never, ever leave your kit in a humid environment.

If you have gigs to play then you'll want a set of bags or hard cases to keep them dry should it be raining or damp outside. These will also protect your drums from dings and scratches which are fairly inevitable when they're moved around a lot.

For cleaning it's enough to just use a soft, dry, lint-free cloth to dust them off and put a little shine to the finish. Especially if the finish is lacquered you want to be careful of putting any type of cleaning solution on them.

The same goes for your cymbals. They'll tarnish much quicker and even grow mold if they're kept in a moist environment. Just a dusting is all that's generally needed. Cymbal polish is available, but it's rarely necessary to use it. Cymbals are like fine wine, they tend to get better with age, so try not to interfere with their natural aging process.

## Finding Some Good Lessons

It used to be a lot harder to learn to play the drums well. The choices were to either: pay for lessons, join the school band and “crawl” your way to a percussion education, or just turn on the record player (yes, I’m that old) and play along with songs.

These days you can find lessons all over the internet. Many are free but most of these lack any kind of substance to them. Plus, it can be really confusing if you don’t know just what it is you need to learn next. It’s kind of hit and miss, and easy to get frustrated.

The best way to advance your skills properly besides taking expensive

lessons is to lay out a little cash for a complete method that teaches the techniques you need to know, in the order that you need to know them. Another perk is that you can advance at your own pace. One learning system I highly recommend is [Mike Michalkow’s Drumming System](#)



## Appendix

### *How to Tune Your Drums*

This is best left to video demonstration. I can explain it to you here but unless you see it in action, it won't have much meaning to you.

- ✦ *An excellent video that shows you step-by-step how to properly tune your drums is [The Drum Tuning System](#)*

### *Video Sites with Drum Lessons*

- ✦ [YouTube.com](#) - Of course we can't leave out YouTube!
- ✦ [drumcast.tv](#) - Video podcast drum lessons with Darren Matthes
- ✦ [5Minutes.com](#) - Over 1,100 drumming videos at last count.
- ✦ [eHow.com](#) - How to do everything, including play the drums.

### *Other Drum Sites with Drum Lessons*

- ✦ [Free Drum Lessons](#)
- ✦ [Drum Bum](#)
- ✦ [Modern Drummer](#)
- ✦ [Vic Firth](#)



## About the Author



Karen Denning is a work at home wife and mother of 4. She is also a web designer, professional writer, singer, and of course, a drummer.

