

The Rudiments of Wisdom

■ Other musicians practice scales and arpeggios, drummers practice rudiments. As the name suggests, rudiments are basic patterns played on a drum. Usually, rudiments are practiced on a snare drum (or practice pad), although they can be played across all the shells of a drum kit.

In fact, one use for rudiments is to create interesting “fills,” utilizing snare, toms, and cymbals, that drummers play to bridge parts of a song. Another important reason to learn at least a few rudiments is for warm-up exercises.

Just as runners warm up before a long race by jogging a little first, drummers should warm and stretch their hands, wrists, arms, and shoulders by playing simple strokes. If you don't, you run the risk of pulling or tearing a muscle or ligament.

Before jamming, spend 10 or 15 minutes playing some “essential” rudiments. If you need to be quiet, play on a practice pad or even a phone book. The best way to warm up is to start slowly, increasing speed until you reach your peak controllable tempo, then return to the original tempo.

Making Music lists six essential rudiments. There are many more, both essential and advanced. The National Association of Rudimental Drummers lists 13 essential rudiments plus 13 advanced rudiments. The Percussive Arts Society adds 14 to this list to make 40 in all. Some have exotic names, such as ratamacue, pataflafla, and dragadiddle. Check out www.pas.org for the complete list.

SIX ESSENTIAL RUDIMENTS

In our examples, the large type R and L signal loud strokes played by the left and right hand, while the small r and l signal the quieter, quicker “grace note” strokes used in the flam and drag rudiments.

1 SINGLE STROKE ROLL

R L R L R L R L

2 DOUBLE STROKE ROLL

RR LL RR LL RR LL RR LL

3 TRIPLE STROKE ROLL

LLL RRR LLL RRR LLL RRR LLL RRR

4 PARADIDDLE

RLRR LRLR RLRR LRLR

5 FLAM

Lr Rl Lr Rl Lr Rl Lr Rl

6 DRAG

LLR RRL LLR RRL LLR RRL LLR RRL

NOTE

Either of two grips are suggested for playing rudiments—the traditional grip or the matched grip. Although different drum teachers might prefer one over the other, a beginning drummer might want to discover which is most comfortable and gives them best control.

