

The Technical Commandments

A step by step guide towards successful basic playing on almost any percussion instrument

The Grip – Proper placement of the stick/mallet in the hand (general use)

- 1) Primary control is achieved with the thumb and 1st knuckle of the index finger (aka the 'Fulcrum')
 - Ø The fulcrum is placed 1/3 of the way from the base of the stick/mallet
 - Ø The thumb is pointed towards the tip and centered on the stick
- 2) The rest of the fingers should curl gently around the stick so that the finger tips point back towards the palm. Allow a tiny bit of space for the stick to 'play' within the palm.

Playing Position – How to set yourself up to play (i.e. 'set position')

- A) Ensure proper grip. One could think of grip as part of position.
- B) Center the body on the instrument (or range to be played)
- C) Space the feet approximately shoulder width apart. For snare drum, stagger one foot slightly forward for added stability.
- D) Upper body, shoulders, and forearms should remain 'athletically relaxed' and in a natural position.
- E) Keep the forearms and palms (not for Stevens' technique) low and approximately parallel to the playing surface. Keep yourself close to your target.
- F) The mallet/stick should be a natural extension of the curve created by the shoulder, upper arm, and forearm. The point at which the hand transitions to the stick is another 'joint' of sorts.
- G) 'Set Position' includes all of the positioning and grip check points with the mallets/sticks above the starting pitch and at the appropriate starting height. With two (as opposed to four) implements, if the two fulcrum points are connected by a third line, one sees a capital letter 'A'.

The Stroke – A method to moving the stick

- I) Make sure the correct grip and the set position are intact.
- II) Stay Relaxed! Tension will only impede development
- III) Each stroke should initiate from the wrist (for non-roll strokes)
 - ü Make sure the tip of the stick moves first, followed by the hand
 - ü The wrist will 'pop' up slightly when the stick goes down.
- IV) Don't waste motion by prepping or lifting past the starting height. Pick a starting height and stick with it!
- V) For Keyboards: The stick should follow a straight path down and recover or 'shift' back up, in a curved path over the next pitch, using the momentum of the stroke.
 - ü Use a stroke with a quick velocity that remains quick at any tempo
 - ü With marimba and xylophone, strike the naturals half way between the center and the node (towards the accidentals) and the accidentals on the very edge of the bar, avoiding the node. Split the mallet in half.

