

Playing Drums: The Ultimate Super Tips Handbook

By Danny Brown

The Drummer's Edge e-Letter

<http://www.dbdrumtips.com/freenewsletter.html>

The Ultimate Drums and Cymbals Guide

<http://www.drumsandcymbalsguide.com>

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Introduction

The Importance of the Drummer

Because of the fact that the drummer is the backbone of most bands other musicians rely very heavily on him or her to provide a strong beat that will keep a song together. A drummer who is off beat, or off tempo, will lead the entire band astray. Therefore, if the drummer is weak the whole band will be weak.

Since the drummer provides the foundation for the other musicians to follow, the drummer is the anchor of the band. Being the anchor of the band, the drummer must have confidence.

Confidence is what makes a good drummer a great drummer. When you have confidence in your ability to play and confidence in your instrument, success for the band is much more likely to occur.

If you are a drummer in a band, then you are the anchor of the band. The other musicians are relying heavily on you to provide a strong beat that will keep everything together. Other musicians may be able to cover their flaws when playing their instruments as a group, but not you. Everything you do behind your set will not only be heard, but felt. There is simply no way to hide or cover up poor drumming skills!

The drummer is vital to a band, and a great drummer can make up somewhat for other musicians who may not be at the same level of expertise. The reason is because your listeners will notice more of what is in your band's music than what is NOT in it.

For instance, let's say your guitarist is not real creative. He may play well enough to keep up with the pace of the song, but as far as adding anything flashy, he's just not able at his current skill level. But, there you are, with your solid sense of rhythm and timing. That's what people are going to notice! They simply will not notice something that the guitarist does NOT do.

People who are not musically inclined just want to be moved by the music. They do not evaluate it like musicians do. Now, if the guitarist seriously flubs something up, then that's a different story all together. Not being creative and not adding to the music is one thing, but making critical mistakes is another. Musician, or not, people know what is, or is not, pleasing to the ear.

So, as a drummer, the anchor of the band, be solid, strong and confident. Continue to practice regularly and never be satisfied with your level of progress.

Part 1

How to Not Be "Just a Drummer"

How can you expand your opportunities to be the best drummer you can be? Most drummers will say by practicing... and by practicing a lot.

While it is true that practice is essential, the key to expanding your capabilities is by developing your versatility. It's all about using the skills that you already possess and channeling them towards related fields.

Since your most basic skill is playing the drums you will find that there are other instruments that you can easily adapt your skill to because you already possess musical ability. For example, instead of limiting yourself to just the drums, why not expand your talents to include the guitar, bass, or keyboard?

Why would you want to do this? Because you can increase your musical scope and be able to come to a greater understanding of music for one reason. Another reason is to develop greater communication among your band mates.

You may think you may not have the time to become an excellent guitarist, or anything else, but that's not true. It's not true because you don't have to become excellent at anything else. You just need to develop a little understanding, that's all.

In my earlier days of drumming I was very frustrated with my band mates. I was full of ideas concerning the structure of our music, but I just couldn't get them across. I didn't "know" their instrument, or the language they used for their particular instrument in order to get my ideas understood.

If I had taken the time back then to get a little understanding of the instruments they were playing I could have eliminated quite a bit of my frustrations. I may have been able to deliver my ideas and had them implemented without any problem, therefore, improving our songs.

In my opinion it is very important to get a little acquainted with other instruments in order to be the best drummer you can be. Others may disagree! But, that's okay, it's just my opinion.

There is an old joke that goes like this...

Question: "What do you call someone who travels around with musicians?"

Answer: "A drummer!"

Ha! Ha! Ha! Very funny! I hate that joke, but unfortunately, for the most part, it's true.

But, this doesn't have to be you. It's your choice, are you going to be "just a drummer" or a quality musician?

An argument could be made that a drummer should solely focus on just being that... a drummer. I agree completely! I believe part of focusing on being a great drummer is expanding his or her knowledge of music, not just their "playing" of the drums.

I could go on and on about how you, as a drummer, can become more versatile. You must simply start with your most basic skill, which is playing the drums, and then expand on it by getting a little acquainted with some other musical instruments. This is an excellent way of ensuring that you develop your musicianship to it's fullest potential.

The world is a very competitive place and we must continue to be competitive. We don't want to put all our eggs in one basket so take a little time to get to know some other instruments.

If we take our drumming skills and add some variety to it like learning a little guitar, bass, or keyboard we will be surprised at how much more rounded we will become and not be classified as "just a drummer."

Are You Organized?

What does it mean to be an "organized" drummer?

When your band plays a song, do you play that song the same way every time? If not, you should. Here's why... It can all be summed up into one word called "predictability."

So many drummers will never play a song the same way twice. This, many times, throws the other musicians off, potentially causing a drag in timing or increasing the chances of a mislead cue.

As the drummer in a band it is your responsibility to provide the foundation for the music. This meaning that everything you do behind the drum kit is vital. Anything you do out of the ordinary, or something the other musicians are not used to hearing you play in a particular song really has the potential to screw things up.

Experimenting is definitely a good thing, and that's why we practice, but there just comes a time when experimenting is over. You must decide what you're gonna do and then stick to it. Never throw in something that the other musicians are not expecting or you can end up with some serious chaos.

Predictability is a must! The other musicians must know what you're going to do before you do it. An outstanding drummer is predictable! Never slack, sloppy, or impulsive.

An outstanding drummer is also prepared and organized, ready to bring his or her goods to the table.

Now, what does being prepared and organized entail? When you go to your regular band practice sessions, are you ready? Did you do your homework from the previous band practice? If so, do you have it nailed? Do you know exactly what you want to accomplish this time around?

Now, what does being prepared and organized for your next band practice session include? Do you have your tape recorder, note pad, pen, and questions for the other band members written down, and did you bring everything you were supposed to bring?

It has always bugged me terribly when a band mate would come to play and he or she would just not be prepared. Situations like that are just not fair to everyone else who is prepared.

It's been said that when preparedness and opportunity meet, success occurs. I don't know what kind of "success" your hoping for, but one thing is for sure, you will more likely meet with it by being organized when opportunity knocks.

Playing With Other Musicians

I remember when I first started playing the drums back in 1976. I was just ten years old, and the thought of being an awesome drummer in a band just consumed me.

I remember dreaming about playing drums in front of hundreds, or even thousands of people someday. But, I really never considered how difficult it would be to finally get to that point.

Now, after thirty years of drumming, and playing with dozens of different musicians with various personalities, I can clearly see why most drummers and other musicians cannot play together for very long.

The three biggest reasons are... personality conflicts, ego, and just life in general.

Some people may think personality conflicts occur all because of ego. Even though sometimes that is true, personality conflicts can result from simply just not liking another person for whatever reasons.

As far as ego is concerned, there is nothing wrong with a good healthy ego. It's when that ego gets distorted and someone begins to think he or she is something they're really not. That is when it gets ugly.

I remember playing drums in a band back in 1985. The lead guitarist was so arrogant no one could hardly stand him. He was definitely a great guitarist, the only problem was, he knew it... if you know what I mean.

There is simply one way to get along with someone with a totally distorted view of themselves, and that is to let them continue to think the way they want to think.

A person with an over-inflated ego is so sickening that most people cannot bear it for long. And one person with an ego problem usually cannot work with another person with an ego problem because then it becomes a battle of the wills. That's one of the biggest reasons bands break up.

Anything with more than one head is a freak and will not function properly unless everyone involved willingly agrees on any particular topic.

Another reason why drummers and other musicians cannot play together for very long is because of the things "life" throws in the way.

People get married, people change jobs and move away, people have babies, people get sick, and the list is endless.

The only thing that controls your future as a drummer is you. Will you decide to have a likable personality? Will you keep your ego in check? Will you keep a good attitude and stay focused when "life" throws it's fiery darts at you? It's all up to you.

Don't Play Drums According to Your Personality!

After having played music with many different musicians on many different skill levels I have noticed something interesting among most of them. Each one will usually play his or her instrument according to his or her respective personality.

When this concept comes to drumming it is really noticeable.

I've noticed that drummers who are a relaxed type often play relaxed. A drummer who is a more bold person usually plays the same way... bold. A drummer who lives his or her life a little sloppy and wreckless will often play the same way. Likewise, a drummer who is a very organized individual will play rather consistently.

All this is okay to an extent. But, we just can't let our drumming be subject to our personality, feelings, or mood at any given moment.

Our instrument, the drums, are our expression in the band. It's our voice. And, many times, we must drum in a manner that does not line up with our personality, feelings, or mood.

Being an outstanding drummer requires becoming a bit of an actor. What I mean by that is, sometimes we have to play drums a certain way despite our true personality, or how we may feel at any given moment. That's what a good actor does, he temporarily forgets who he is and becomes someone else for a time so that he can pull off what he needs to pull off in order to get the job done.

As you know, sometimes we have to drum a little harder than we may feel like drumming. And then at other times we may have to drum a bit softer when what we really want to do is rock out.

In order to be an outstanding drummer we have to be able to put out what is required of us at any given moment. For example, sometimes a certain song needs to convey a certain message, feeling, or mood. But, your particular mood at the time does not jive with it at all.

If we want the song to do what it's supposed to do, we can't expect the song to submit to how we feel right then. We have to submit to the song and forget about ourselves by becoming a part of the song.

The bottom line is this... don't play your drums according to your personality. Play your drums according to each individual *song's* personality. Only then will your songs truly come to life.

6 Common Traits Among Great Drummers

How does one become a truly great drummer? Even though drummers are as diverse as anyone else, the truly great ones share some things in common. Here are six common traits that all great people who play drums have...

1. Great drummers know themselves. They understand their talents and strengths, and they know how to use them to their advantage.
2. Great drummers are open to feedback. They learn from the opinions of other who play drums. Even the opinions of less accomplished drummers.
3. Great drummers are eager to learn and improve on the drums. They have a thirst for knowledge and ask questions. As they are lifelong students of the drums who continuously reinvent themselves, they adapt to the ideas they consistently learn. They know by acquiring new information they keeps themselves improving.
4. Great drummers are curious and not afraid to take risks on the drums. They push the envelope, looking for adventure. They explore new options, not fearing mistakes. They know that success depends upon pushing forward toward improvement. They embrace errors because they believe mistakes offer a valuable learning experience.
5. Great drummers learn from criticism. They are students of the drums, and adversity builds their character. Every great drummer can point to a significant critic that affected his or her development.

6. Great drummers serve as a role model or mentor for other people who play drums. They coach others, helping them focus on improvement, teaching, mentoring and empowering them.

Do you see yourself in any of these six points? If not, there is a quick fix... The answer lies in a simple change of attitude. An attitude that says, "I am confident!"

If you noticed, the six characteristics listed above have not even a hint of arrogance in them. Now, there is huge line dividing confidence and arrogance. How to distinguish between the two can be clarified in the following points...

~ A drummer of confidence says that he or she can play something on drums and others also can, whereas a drummer of arrogance says that he alone can do it and nobody else can.

~ A drummer of confidence always tries to encourage and help others in building their confidence on the drums, where as a drummer of arrogance tries to discourage other drummers.

~ A drummer of confidence attracts other drummers who feel confident and elevated in his or her presence and gets inspiration in his or her company, whereas an arrogant drummer creates repulsion in the mind of other drummers who try to avoid him or her because of his or her boastful nature.

~ A drummer of confidence appreciates the success of other people who play drums and shares his or her happiness with them, whereas a drummer of arrogance discourages and tries to humiliate other drummers and feels jealous of their success.

~ There is joy in being around drummers of confidence because they are cheerful and can mix freely with everyone else. In the presence of arrogant drummers, even confident drummers may tend to feel a bit inferior on the drum kit.

Conclusion

Truly great drummers share common traits... traits such as a high degree of confidence, an openness to criticism, a willingness to teach, a great desire to expand their playing skills, and the ability to remain humble.

Part 2

Why Practice Drums with a Metronome?

Practicing with a metronome will improve your time keeping dramatically! What... you say you can already keep time? Try to keep time with a metronome for about twenty seconds. It will show you how good you really can keep time. If you have never tried it...try it! You will see there is room for improvement.

In order to be an outstanding drummer you'll need to keep good time, and practicing with a metronome can help you do that. A metronome can improve your time keeping almost by magic. And, we know how important time keeping is, particularly for a drummer.

You may wonder what the big deal is and think, "No one is gonna be able to distinguish any small changes in tempo in the middle of a song." Well, that may be true, but the major importance of keeping good time is at three different places in a song...

- 1) The times when you break away for a fill and come back to the original rhythm.
- 2) If the song contains pauses and later returns to the original rhythm.
- 3) If the song contains different tempos and returns to the original rhythm.

A metronome is such a vital tool in music education that most teachers of guitar, piano, and violin all utilize the power of metronomes within their lessons. How then, even more important for the time keeper of a band to practice with a metronome.

I can't stress enough the importance of practicing with a metronome. Once you go out and invest in one, start out by setting it at 80 beats per minute and play along with a standard 4/4 disco beat. This is a good pace to begin. It will give you enough time between beats to concentrate and land your beat in sync with the beat of the metronome.

You will see that when you first start practicing with a metronome it can become very discouraging, but then you will eventually get the hang of it and keep pretty good time. Then it may become a little boring. It's at that point where you must challenge yourself a little bit more.

Adjust your metronome to a few more beats and increase your speed. Not so much where you will sacrifice your form, though. You don't want to become sloppy. Once you feel like you are really getting good at staying in sync with the metronome using a 4/4 beat and at various speeds you should begin to practice a variety of different rhythms, also at various speeds.

Practicing with a metronome will improve your drumming dramatically, so if you don't have one... get one! You will be amazed at how much it will increase your level of playing.

4 Things to Do in Every Practice Session

If you want to increase your level of drumming fast you obviously need to practice as regularly as possible.

Since many drummers find it difficult to find time to practice for long periods of time, they don't practice at all. This is "all or nothing" thinking and leads to failure in everything it's applied to.

Here's a fact: It's better to practice your drums for 5-20 minutes everyday than one or two hours on just one day per week. The key is getting into a habit of quick, regular drum practice sessions. It's the repetition of these short practice sessions that will propel your drumming to new levels rather than the infrequent, marathon sessions.

So, be encouraged if you feel like you don't have enough time to practice your drums. Just carve out 5-20 minutes three, four, or more days per week! That's all. Once you do that, you can get down to business.

Here's four things you should include in every one of your short drum practice sessions...

1. Practice two or three drum fills that you have heard and really liked.

Practice these drum fills over and over and try not to stray from them and go off on something else. The temptation to do so is definitely there because practicing fills is a lot of fun. Stay focused until this part of your practice session is through!

2. Work on memorizing one of your favorite songs.

It's amazing to me why so many drummers do not do this. Maybe they think they are copying someone else's style and they feel guilty, I don't know. What I do know is, memorizing your favorite songs is a great tool that most drummers should utilize for three reasons...

- a) it helps you to continue to be a good time keeper,
- b) it helps you to get a feel for where to put fills and where not to put them in your *own* songs,
- c) and it's just plain fun.

3. Practice with your metronome.

This part of your drum practice session is the most intense and requires the most discipline simply because it tends to not be much fun. Even though it may not be much fun, it is definitely necessary and shouldn't be left out!

Set your metronome to 60 beats per minute and play your bass drum to it. Then add the hi-hat by alternating three beats per bass drum beat, then four, and then six. After practicing that at 60 beats per minute, increase your metronome to 80 beats and do the same thing, then again at 100.

Drumming along with a metronome will improve your time keeping dramatically.

One thing that helps you get past the unpleasantness of practicing with your metronome is to do this exercise first and get it over with. But, whether you choose to do it first or not, just do it!

4. Work on your known weaknesses.

Whether you feel your left hand is holding you back, or your left leg is a problem, get them up to speed with everything else so your whole body functions as one.

For example... if you're right handed practice riding your hi-hat with your left hand for a while. Also, practice crashing your cymbals with your left hand. If you have a double bass drum set or a double kick pedal invest some time just using your weak foot.

Conclusion...

When you organize your drum practice sessions by breaking things down into small bite sized pieces it becomes do-able and fun. Just remember, "all or nothing" thinking leads to failure! Simply carve out 5-20 minutes three, four, or more days per week.

Here's another tip, if you find it difficult to find enough time to practice all four things I have mentioned in this article in any one session, split them up by alternating two of them in alternate sessions.

3 Keys to Maximizing Your Drumming Skills

There are many ways to increase the quality of your drumming and they can all be summarized into these 3 vital keys...

1. Develop Confidence

Many wanna-be musicians will choose the drums because they are shy and want to remain in the background (that's where I was when I started drumming back in 1976).

The truth is your body may be in the background, but your musical presence will definitely be noticed!

If you are going to be the drummer in a band, then you will be the anchor of the band. The other musicians will be relying on you to provide strong beats that will keep everything together. Everything you do behind your drum set will not only be heard, but felt, simply because you will be the all-important time keeper.

This notion of wanting to be a drummer so you can hide behind a drum set is ridiculous. You're gonna hide from no one! That's why it is imperative to develop confidence in your drumming, and the first way to do that is to forget about the notion that you are hidden. Your mind set should be to establish your place in the band. Know who you are and why you're there. The rest will then fall into place.

Please don't mistake confidence for arrogance. Confidence is what makes a good drummer a great drummer. Arrogance is what makes a good drummer a lonely drummer! I don't know about you, but I certainly don't want to play music with some cocky jerk who thinks he or she is better than everyone else.

2. Love Your Instrument

If any musician really wants to master their instrument they must absolutely love it. What do I mean "love it?" The best way to understand this is to relate loving your drums to loving a person.

Many people think "love" is a feeling, but it's not a feeling. For example; I love my wife, but I don't always like her (I suppose she can probably say the same thing about me).

Love is an action word. It means to adore, care for, learn about, edify, be loyal to, be devoted to, be committed to, support, protect, and promote. When you do these things the feeling of love automatically comes.

So, how can you tell if you really love your drums? You can tell if you love your drums by the priority you put on them. They must have some priority in your life, otherwise your drums are just a little hobby that you will only be mediocre at.

3. Remain Humble

To become successful in anything, you must absolutely be confident in what you're doing, and knowledge can make you confident. But, be careful, knowledge can also make you think more highly of yourself than you should.

If you really want to increase your level of drumming it is critical to always see yourself as a student and remain open minded.

The mind is like a parachute, it only functions when it is open. That's why it is so important to remain humble. Arrogant drummers never grow beyond their current level of drumming because they don't think there is any more they can learn. How foolish! There is always more to learn... and any advanced drummer can learn from an intermediate, or even a beginner!

It's critical to *want* to learn if you are going to increase your level of drumming, and remaining humble is the only avenue through which you can do this.

If you continue to learn you will then be able to teach. When you begin teaching, you will be amazed at the additional things you will learn (if you are currently teaching you will understand).

Conclusion

When you develop confidence in your purpose as a drummer, learn to love your drums by giving them some priority in your life, altogether with remaining humble, your level of drumming will increase considerably.

How to Get Focused

Remember the times when you knew you should practice your drums, but just didn't feel like messing with it? It's at those times you lacked focus.

There was a time when I had a studio session to attend to lay down some drum tracks and I simply was not in the mood at all. Hey, I was tired! It was Friday afternoon, it was a long, hard week, and I was done! While driving to the studio that day my mind was consumed with pretty much just wanting to watch television.

Anyway, I remember driving up to the drum studio and thinking, "Man, I don't want to be doing this right now." But, I decided I better get focused on my drumming because time is money in the studio. If you have ever bought studio time you know what I mean.

Well, on the way to the drum studio I began thinking about the songs I was about to lay down the drum tracks for. I also began thinking about the fact that my drum tracks will be permanent. People will hear them and I want my tracks to be as close to perfection as I can get them. I knew I had to somehow get focused and get in the mood - right NOW!

So many people will use any excuse for not doing something because they are simply not in the mood. When it comes to responsibility, whether a person is in the mood or not, it doesn't matter. If you have booked studio drum time and paid good money for it you better be in the mood, or at least get in the mood!

The best way I have found to change my mood at any given time about something is to simply begin thinking in a different manner. Feelings follow thoughts, and given that fact, I basically just changed my thinking.

I decided to clear my mind of all the noise in my head and only mentally listen to the songs I was laying drum tracks for. I tapped on my steering wheel as I drove along, and honestly, it wasn't even just a few short minutes until I was starting to "feel it." By the time I arrived at the drum studio I was more than ready to play my drums.

The next time you have an appointment with your drum set, but just don't feel like drumming, you are not focused. Just know you can change your focus at any given time. Because your feelings follow your thoughts, you can change your thinking and automatically change your mood.

How to Overcome Your Weaknesses

As for beginning drummers, the whole concept of drumming is coordination. It's learning to do more than one thing at a time. As a child, do you remember trying to pat your head and rub your tummy at the same time? That was pretty difficult at first, but then you eventually got the hang of it.

Just like patting your head and rubbing your tummy, once you get the hang of doing multiple things at once on your drum set, it then only becomes a matter of practicing to develop your skills.

Once new drummers begin to get a little coordination they will inevitably begin to favor one hand and foot over the other. It's unavoidable, but as they progress they need to be conscious of trying to develop all four limbs to their max.

If you have been playing drums for any length of time you may have already developed one hand or foot way beyond the other, leaving you some weak spots that you can improve on. For example, if you're right handed, which most of us are, our left hand and foot are obviously less inclined to do as much. Therefore, leaving them underdeveloped.

These underdeveloped hands and feet are a real menace to your skills as a great drummer more so than you may think. The fact is, once you feel free to use any hand or any foot the coordination to do something new becomes much less of a challenge.

Even though it's not realistic to expect your weaker hand and foot to ever be as developed as your dominant hand and foot (because your brain is programmed for you to be right handed, or left handed), you can still make a special, concentrated effort to specifically practice and develop these weaker parts. By doing so will make a huge impact on your overall drumming skills and abilities.

What I did was put on a tape of my favorite songs and simply played with my left foot on my left bass pedal. In the same way, I would use my left hand to play the hi-hat instead of my right. Also, many drummers only use their dominant hand to crash cymbals, but in practice, you should use both hands.

Practicing this way can be frustrating, a little boring, and not much fun, but well worth the investment of your time. When you develop your drumming skills with your weak hand and foot to the point where they are almost as loose as your dominant hand and foot you will really excel at your drumming.

The whole idea is to develop your drumming skills completely. This way, you're ready for anything... and you will have more fun. So, where there's a weak spot... fix it. Don't run from frustration, embrace it! Frustration is your friend. It is showing you where you need work.

4 Tips to Overcome Frustration

Learning to play the drums is extremely frustrating if you have never played drums before. That's why most newbies begin to play and then soon quit. Their attitude becomes, "What's the point? I'm never going to learn to play drums."

It's true that some people take to the drums faster than others, but that is definitely no reason to quit. A person must be patient with themselves in anything new they set out to accomplish. It just isn't realistic to expect to play drums well overnight.

Remember, frustration is a natural occurrence in anything new you set out to do. But, it's only temporary, if you can outlast it.

There are four main points to learning to play the drums. And, not only learning to play, but also getting better and developing new skills.

1. Be Patient!

It isn't realistic to expect perfection overnight. It takes time to develop drum skills. Since it's a combination of coordination and timing, it will not come natural to you. That's why you must develop it. Sure, it's frustrating, but try to keep your cool. It will come with more practice.

Think about all the things you do everyday that take coordination, like walking, talking, and eating. These things were all learned. You couldn't do any of these things very well when you were a baby. But, you developed them. Sure you got frustrated, but you still learned them because you had to. There was no choice in the matter if you were going to survive as a human being.

Do you have a choice when it comes to your drumming? Sure you do. The question is, how bad do you want to survive as a drummer?

2. Practice, Man, Practice!

Like I said, quality drumming skills require a combination of coordination and timing, and they will surely come with practice. The question is, will you endure the frustration you must go through while you develop them?

A key thing to remember is, when you feel yourself beginning to get really irritated... stop. Come back and try again later. Sometimes the more you try to practice through your frustration the worse you get. The best thing to do is go take a break, come back, and try again.

Another thing to remember about practicing your drums is, don't think you must practice for any certain amount of time. There really is a sort of magic that takes place if you can somehow manage to just drum for only a few minutes per day. And, if you are able to get a little drum practice session in everyday it will be easy to monitor how you are progressing because your improvements will be noticeable. That will definitely keep you inspired!

3. Don't Compare Yourself!

For some reason drummers will always compare their own weaknesses with another drummer's strengths. There is really no way to feel good about yourself if you do that. It's just not fair, and there's no logic in it. So, just be aware of that.

Your style of drumming is your own, and you must develop it the best you can. You don't need to drum like anyone else. Sure, it's good if you can learn another drummer's cool tricks, but there are some cool tricks of your own that may be just lying dormant. Maybe if you stop concentrating so hard on being like your favorite drummer you can bring your own cool tricks alive.

Be your own best friend and realize you have something special the world needs to hear.

4. Keep Your Passion Stirred Up!

If you keep your dream of becoming a great drummer in front of you it will keep you on the road to where you want to go. It's when you get sidetracked by looking at the obstacles in your path is when you get discouraged, and then eventually give up.

Work, family, and responsibilities of all kinds manage to distract you from your drum time. Just become a good manager of your time and schedule yourself. Don't let the tail wag the dog! Stay in control.

There you have it, four tips to overcome frustration with your drumming. If you apply these four tips you can take your drumming anywhere you want to go.

Drum Practice Cheat Sheet

A lot of drummers don't really sit down to practice their instrument, but rather just sit down to "play." Just sitting down to play what you already know is fun and can be great for maintaining certain techniques, but little progress will be made.

If you are into drumming only for a hobby, then making progress is probably not really a great priority for you. If that's the case keep doing what you are doing and enjoy it.

On the other hand, if you want to progress as a great drummer, you will have to focus. You just can't expect to sit down at your drum kit every once in a while and just beat around the skins. You need to be clear what it is you need work on, and then apply it.

Each one of your drum practice sessions should create a challenge for you to accomplish something not previously mastered.

When you sit down at your drum set do you know what you should be practicing? Many drummers don't have a clue what they need to be practicing to become better. This lack of information can kill your potential to really excel at your instrument.

Sometimes, even if we know *what* to practice, our drum practice sessions can still be weak simply because of a lack of focus.

If you have ever caught yourself saying, "I don't know what to practice" or, "What did I forget to practice" when you get on your drums, this cheat sheet will do you good. Hang it up on your wall and pick which exercises you want to work on before you begin your practice session.

- ~ Stick control
- ~ Playing with a metronome (playing with, behind, and ahead)
- ~ Odd timing
- ~ Finger control
- ~ Left hand lead
- ~ Double bass drumming
- ~ Fast tempos
- ~ Slow tempos
- ~ Odd groupings (3's, 5's, 7's and 9's etc.)
- ~ Polyrhythms
- ~ Beat displacement and/or metric modulation
- ~ Shuffles

- ~ Showmanship (stick twirling, etc)
- ~ Creating your own patterns and ideas
- ~ Filling around accent patterns
- ~ Triplets around the set
- ~ 16th's around the set
- ~ Left hand and foot isolation
- ~ Brush technique on the snare drum
- ~ Crash cymbal technique (which one to hit, when, how hard, etc.)
- ~ Two handed cymbal rides
- ~ Soloing
- ~ Recording yourself and listening back
- ~ All 40 drum rudiments

There are probably many more things you can practice, particularly your own technique and signatures. But just remember, you want to be working on something new at all times.

The main thing is, keep challenging yourself by never being satisfied. Strive to constantly improve during each practice session. Just never say again, "I don't know what to practice."

Part 3

The Benefit of Teaching Others to Play Drums

If you have been playing drums for any length of time at all, then you can teach someone else what you know. You might say, "Yeah, but I don't know enough, or play well enough to teach." You know more than someone who's never picked up a pair of drumsticks!

You never want to pass up an opportunity to teach someone else how to play drums, or even show them a cool groove or fill. Not only will you be robbing them, but you will also be robbing yourself.

"How so?" you may ask.

When you begin teaching someone some of your drumming knowledge and skills, even if you think it's not much, you will be amazed at the additional things you will learn. You will also begin to realize you knew more than you thought you knew about the drums, which will improve your confidence. And, developing confidence is vital to being a great drummer!

Many new drummers lack confidence. I think one of the main reasons is because they tend to compare themselves with other drummers who have been playing longer, are famous, or who have a bigger drum set. Whatever the reason, don't do that! You're not being fair to yourself.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder?" What that means is, what may be impressive to you may not be impressive at all to someone else. For example, you may think highly of a particular musician or singer, but someone else is not going to agree with you. They have their own favorites.

What I'm saying is this, you are a better drummer than you think you are. "Better than who?" you may ask. Again, better than someone who's never picked up a pair of drumsticks! See yourself from someone else's perspective. You play... they don't. And, if you have any drumming skills at all, they may think you're awesome.

Again, teaching what you know will help you to learn even more and will improve your confidence. Besides, teaching someone else how to play an instrument can be a real eye-opening experience for you. Students often bring a whole different perspective to the table and they'll challenge your thinking for sure.

So, find someone who wants to learn to play the drums and then teach them. Finding them is easy. All you have to do is ask. Opportunity abounds for wanna-be drummers!

4 Tips to Keeping Peace With Your Neighbors

If you're like me, when you first started playing the drums you may have been a little concerned that your neighbors would call the police on you. Or worse, your family would stone you to death!

Some people just can't handle the volume, but don't worry, if you're just starting out, your dreams of becoming a great drummer can still come true.

There are some quick fixes to help keep your family, friends, and neighbors at peace while still allowing you to drum. Just follow these four solid drum tips...

1. Communicate

Typically, your family and neighbors are the ones who are most affected by your choice to drum. So, the considerate, and smart thing to do is have a little talk with these people and work out a way for everyone to agree.

Find out if there are better and worse times for you to practice your drums. Just never assume anything! Sometimes people can get really agitated about something, but just never speak up about it. You don't want any "silent enemies." These kind tend to talk behind your back!

2. Invest in Drum and Cymbal Mutes

Personally, I have a full shag carpet in my practice room. I even have it going half way up the walls. It does a great job of keeping the sound right there in my room.

But, if you're not interested in a shag carpet for whatever reason, consider investing in practice pads for your drumset. These drum accessories significantly reduce the amount of sound your drums and cymbals send out.

I'll be the first to admit that playing with pads isn't near as much fun as playing without them, but they sure make you appreciate the sound of your drumset when it's not muted.

3. Soundproof Your Practice Room

You really don't have to spend a lot of money soundproofing your practice room. Like professional drummers do.

You can easily create your own soundproof room with some carpet scraps. I have already mentioned that I have a shag carpet on my floor and walls and it does an excellent job. The only time my neighbors hear me drum is if I open my windows, which I do sometimes on a rare occasion if I'm feeling a little assertive.

Anyway, carpet scraps provide excellent soundproofing! Go to your local carpet store and ask for some free scraps. Then, apply them on the walls and ceiling of your drum practice room. If these carpet scraps are really thin, then layer them.

4. Play Electronic Drums

An electronic drumset is not for everybody. In fact, some drummers just hate them because they say they are not really drums. The theory is, drums are supposed to be an acoustic instrument, and by plugging something in to an electrical outlet, it is no longer acoustic.

Whatever your theory is, if you live in a small space and have really no other way to keep your volume low enough to please everyone, an electronic drumset may be the best solution.

With the option to adjust the volume in your headphones, you can actually drum as loud as you want. It's just that you are the only one who can hear it.

Conclusion

The only thing louder than you on your drums are the people who are screaming at you to knock it off.

People will try to steal your fun on the drumset because they just can't handle the volume, which is understandable. Don't let anyone steal your fun! Bang on your drums all day, but bang on them using some consideration, and you can then bang in peace.

Part 4

4 Tips to Buying New and Used Drums and Cymbals

Buying new drum equipment, whether it is a new or used drum set, new or used cymbals, or any drum accessories, can be a bit challenging, especially if you're not quite sure what to look for. With so many different brands of drums, cymbals, and hardware on the market and so many opinions, it makes the decision process even more difficult.

Here are 4 things you definitely need to do before buying new or used drums or cymbals...

1. Get Knowledge

My advice is to get all the knowledge you can get before you spend a dime on new or used drum equipment. Don't just take the advice of a commissioned paid music store sales rep. Their opinion can be swayed by the price tag... the higher ticketed item they sell you will bring them a higher paycheck. Now of course this isn't true with every music store employee, but why take the chance?

Do your due diligence... Get educated first, know exactly what you are looking for when it comes to drums and cymbals before you go shopping. You could literally save hundreds, or even thousands of dollars, by avoiding the wrong purchase.

2. Know Your Budget

One of the first things you need to consider when contemplating purchasing new or used drums or cymbals is... How much are you able to spend?

This seems obvious, but are you really surprised at how many people end up spending more on drums and cymbals than they expected? This usually happens for two reasons: One: They didn't do their homework first and only relied on a sales reps opinion or recommendation... and Two: They simply got emotional and bought on impulse with no plan. It's as simple as that!

If you're limited on funds, here's an idea... Since drums are unlike most other instruments, you can buy pieces one at a time and build your drum kit as your budget allows.

You can start with as little as a new or used snare drum for your old drum kit, some new or used cymbals, some new or used hardware, and maybe even some new or used drum accessories.

There's no need to make a huge investment into a brand new set of drums right off the bat, especially if you're not ready financially!

3. Get Qualified Opinions

I know, I just said you cannot just rely on the opinions of a commissioned paid store employee. But, what I meant to say is, don't take their opinion as gold. Just hear what they have to say. Once you "get knowledge," which is the first step, then you will be able to tell if the store employee knows what they're talking about or not.

Go to several different music stores or drum shops and get as many opinions as you can from as many different drum sales reps as possible. While you are in the drum shops beat around on the different brands of drum sets that are displayed and listen for which ones are most appealing to your ears.

Since different drum sets and drum manufacturers make their shells out of different types of wood, sounds will vary. Most entry-level drum kits are made of basswood, poplar, or Philippine mahogany, which is cheaper wood that does not produce a high quality sound. Higher-end drums use more expensive wood such as birch or maple, which produce a more rich, more resonant tone, but also require a higher price tag.

4. Test

There is a minor difficulty to overcome about the drum sets on display, and that is, most display drums are not muted, or not muted properly. So, you will have to bring some felt or something with you to the drum shop along with some tape assuming the drum store doesn't have anything you can use.

Also, ask the drum rep if you can remove the front bass drum head so you can insert a pillow, blanket, or your coat as a muffle if there isn't something already in there to muffle it.

Why do you think many drum shops don't have the drum sets already muted? Because they are just assuming you are gonna buy a drum set based on its looks, or its brand name. Unfortunately, this is the way most people spend their money, and needless for me to say, it is the wrong way!

When your shopping for new or used cymbals be sure to bring your own drumsticks with you into the drum shop. You don't want to use drumsticks handed to you by an employee. Those drumsticks could be much lighter, or heavier than the ones you're used to drumming with.

When your crashing the crashes, riding the rides, and splashing the splashes, you want to get a good feel for them, and hear the tone they will produce when you hit them at the same intensity your custom to playing at... and with your own drumsticks.

A quick tip... be sure to write your name on your drumsticks or mark them somehow before you take them into the drum store. Also, inform the drum reps at the store upon entering that you are bringing in your own drumsticks. You don't want them to think you stole them when you leave, particularly if they look new.

Conclusion

There you have them... 4 things you definitely need to do before buying new or used drums or cymbals. By getting educated, knowing your budget, getting qualified opinions, and testing, you are prepared to make the best choices on drum equipment that are right for you!

Conclusion

I hope you've enjoyed reading "Playing Drums: The Ultimate Super Tips Handbook," and found some information in it that will take you to the next level!

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Danny Brown

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