



Keyboard Percussion Basics

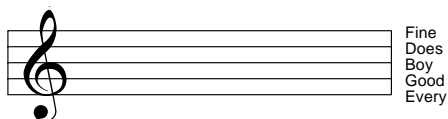
by Rich Holly & James Lambert



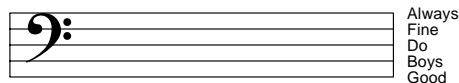
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BASIC THEORY

1. A beginning mallet percussionist must memorize the 12 major scales. These scales relate to other harmonic information that the student will need. With each marimba bar one half step away from the next bar, the major scales are built on a series of half steps and whole steps (w,w,h,w,w,w,h). Below are the note names for the lines of the bass and treble clefs.



Treble Clef Lines E G B D F



Bass Clef Lines G B D F A

2. Learning key signatures for these scales is important. The key signature is indicated at the top of the music with sharps and flats (a sharp will raise a pitch one half step, a flat will lower a tone one half step). Below is the order sharps and flats are used in key signatures, i.e. F major has one flat (B-Flat), B-Flat major has two flats (B-Flat and E-Flat, etc.).

Flats: B E A D G C F

Sharps: F C G D A E B

3. Each key signature has a major and minor scale. To find the relative minor scale from the major scale, go down three half steps from the tonic or "home base."

Examples: C major and "a" minor (no sharps or flats)

F major and "d" minor (one flat)

D Major and "b" minor (two sharps)

4. To find the chord or triad for a given pitch, use the first, third and fifth scale degrees.

Example: Major chord - 1, 3, 5 of major scale

Minor chord - 1, flat-3, 5 of major scale

Augmented chord - 1, 3, sharp-5 of major scale

Diminished chord - 1, flat-3, flat-5 of major scale



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Percussion Keyboard Reading for Beginners

1. Select a passage to read from one of the books recommended on page 8 of this handout or one suggested to you by a percussion teacher.
 - a. Determine the tonality of the composition.
 - b. Review your technique for that key with the suggested exercises..
2. Speak the note names of the selection—in correct rhythm.
3. Touch the keys with your index fingers (without mallets) and also speak the note names in rhythm (attempt to match pitch and keep eyes on the printed music).
4. Play the piece with mallets—slowly—while speaking/singing the note names. Do your best to develop peripheral vision so that you are not looking from the music stand to the keys, but focusing on the printed music with the mallets in your lower peripheral vision.
5. Gradually increase the tempo—with the assistance of a metronome—until the optimum speed and style are achieved.

Practice Habits

1. Find a regular time—dedicated to yourself—every day to develop your abilities.
2. Use a relaxed grip, with your palms facing the floor. The primary fulcrum for two-mallet playing should be between the thumb and forefinger. Be certain that you are not gripping the mallet too tightly! Be relaxed, and use your wrist—not elbow or shoulder movement.
3. A suggested 25–30 minute practice session could include:
 - a. 5-10 minutes for techniques (scales, arpeggios, rolling, movement, etc.)
 - b. 15 minutes preparing assigned material
 - c. 5–10 minutes for sightreading and improvisation
4. Have Fun!



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Key Signatures and Exercises

C Major/a minor F Major/d minor B \flat Major/g minor E \flat Major/c minor A \flat Major/f minor

D \sharp Major/b \flat minor G \sharp Major/e \flat minor C \sharp Major/a \flat minor G Major/e minor D Major/b minor

A Major/f \sharp minor E Major/c \sharp minor B Major/g \sharp minor F \sharp Major/d \sharp minor C \sharp Major/a \sharp minor

Stroke Development

Double Stroke

L L R R L L R R etc.

R R L L R R L L etc.

Single Stroke

L R L R etc.



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Stroke Development (continued)

Oblique Stroke

Musical notation for the first line of the Oblique Stroke exercise. It is written on a single treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth notes with beamed eighth notes, moving in an ascending and then descending pattern. Below the staff, the rhythm is indicated as 'R L R L R L R L etc.'.

R L R L R L R L etc.

Musical notation for the second line of the Oblique Stroke exercise. It continues the pattern from the first line on a single treble clef staff. Below the staff, the rhythm is indicated as 'L R L R L R L R etc.'.

L R L R L R L R etc.

Chromatic Study

Musical notation for the first line of the Chromatic Study exercise. It is written on a single treble clef staff in 2/4 time. The melody consists of eighth notes with sharp signs (#) indicating chromatic movement. The notes are: C4, C#4, D4, D#4, E4, E#4, F4, F#4, G4, G#4, A4, A#4, B4, B#4, C5.

Musical notation for the second line of the Chromatic Study exercise. It continues the chromatic pattern from the first line on a single treble clef staff. The notes are: C5, C#5, D5, D#5, E5, E#5, F5, F#5, G5, G#5, A5, A#5, B5, B#5, C6.

Musical notation for the third line of the Chromatic Study exercise. It continues the chromatic pattern from the second line on a single treble clef staff. The notes are: C6, C#6, D6, D#6, E6, E#6, F6, F#6, G6, G#6, A6, A#6, B6, B#6, C7.