

# Sticking With A Plan

## The Hybrid Sticking System

BY JEFF HOKE

The following approach to sticking will create the consistency, accuracy, comfort, and improved dexterity crucial to the developing snare drummer. There are two primary sticking systems used today: the alternate system and the Straight system.

The alternate system is rather straight-forward in that the performer begins with either hand and then alternates the hands regardless of rests or extended note values. This approach can serve as an effective tool in the development of dexterity.

The Straight system, named after its creator, Edward B. Straight, was developed on the premise that using the preferred hand (the right if the player is right-handed) as often as possible will produce a more rhythmically and dynamically consistent sound. This approach holds true to its premise.

The Straight system is based on the following principles:

1. Begin every measure with the preferred hand.
2. Place the preferred hand on the count in every measure.
3. Execute the fundamental note of a flam with the preferred hand.
4. Initiate all rolls with the preferred hand.
5. Always stick the same rhythmic figures the same way.

While both of these systems have positive attributes, when these attributes are combined, a system emerges that is even more advantageous to the developing snare drummer. The resulting system, the Hybrid Sticking System, addresses the following issues:

**Consistency**—a certain “predictability” that comes from sticking a rhythm the same way each time it is encountered;

**Accuracy and Comfort**—resulting from the consistent use of the preferred hand on the pulse;

**Improved Dexterity**—brought about by the playing opportunities presented for the weaker hand.

The principles of the Hybrid Sticking System, as it relates to duple-based rhythms, are as follows:

1. Begin every measure with the preferred hand.
2. Place the preferred hand on the count, with the exception of successive half and quarter notes, which should be alternated.

3. In the case of rests or extended note values, apply a sticking to the space created and resume playing with the appropriate stick. The exception to this is off-beat eighth notes, which are alternated.

4. The sticking of grace notes, or groups of grace notes, are determined after first establishing the sticking of the main note they accompany.

5. Rolls are to be initiated with the preferred hand unless the nature of the roll or the tempo dictates otherwise.

### Exceptions

The principles of the Hybrid Sticking System as it relates to triplets and triplet-based time signatures are identical to those used in duple time, with the exception of the second principle. Successive triplets, or three-note groupings in triplet-based eighth time signatures, are to be alternated, thereby creating an alternate lead hand on each downbeat or principle pulse.

As issues of phrasing at specific tempos, odd time signatures, etc. are encountered, the Hybrid Sticking System will allow one to arrive at the most beneficial sticking sequence. Teacher and student alike will appreciate the physical habits that this system establishes, as they are instrumental to future development.

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The following is an excerpt from a snare drum solo I wrote called "Beats Workin'." This solo is written for the grade school snare drummer and demonstrates how the Hybrid Sticking System can be put to practical use.

**Andante**