

Marching Snare Technique Packet

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To have perfect clarity of articulation is not good enough. We must also perfect expression, explore dynamic range, strengthen our quality of sound, exude confidence in everything that we do, and force everyone that sees or hears us at any time to be impressed by everything we do. To be perfect, or flawless is not good enough. We must be able to focus on being more than that. We must be able to present ourselves as an image of undeniable excellence. This is the only way we will get any credit for what we do. But before we can be more than perfect, first we have to be flawless.

To be flawless we must first define, and achieve all the details of our technique. Through the details explained in this packet, we will achieve a flawless uniform technique, and therefore achieve an undeniable uniformity of sound. We must make sure our critics see and hear only perfection.

The details in this packet must be achieved at an individual level by February, and must be uniform as a line by April camp. There are 375,804 minutes in a drum corps season starting from November camp and going to finals night. April camp is more than half way through our drum corps season together. At sub-sectional move- ins we will be focusing on applying our technique to the book, Therefore, our uniformity of approach and sound must be achieved with the entire exercise packet by April camp. In this way, we will be able to have from the moment we move in until finals to focus on being more than perfect. In order to make this happen we must put forth a superior effort into not only achieving these details at camps as individuals, but by preparing all of these details at home, so that we can focus on the uniformity of these details at camps.

The best way to seem exceptional is by being exceptional. Therefore, we will not first consume ourselves with image. We will never tell you to "make sure you look confident". We will not tell you to shift your weight forward on your toes, or contort your body in ways that will make you seem more confident. We will make sure you have a reason to be confident. This is why you will look confident. We will focus first on perfecting our sound, so that when we play we achieve a sound that inspires awe. In this way you will not only seem excellent, but you will be excellent.

We will start with grip.

Right hand grip

- Pinch the stick 5 and ½ inches from the butt of the stick using the pad of the thumb and the middle bone of the first finger (the part of the finger **between** the two knuckles closest to the finger tip). This is the Fulcrum. Do not pinch with the finger tip (or distal bone), but with the section in between the two knuckles.
- Wrap the tip of the first finger to the stick so that it does not point out from the stick. (see fig. 1a)
- Wrap the remaining fingers around the stick so the pads of the fingers are always in contact with the stick (see fig. 1a)
- There will be no gap in the webbing of the right hand. The space between the thumb and first finger is closed (see fig. 1b)
- Because you do not grip the stick at the butt, the back end of the stick will be visible from both the front of the grip, and the back of the grip as well. The front of the stick will obviously become visible at the fulcrum. From the back of the grip, the stick should become visible directly between the back pinkie knuckle and the bone on the outer side of your wrist. When these two criteria are met the stick will lay across the palm in the correct position. (see fig. 1c)
- The stick will cut across the center of the palm when the grip is closed (see fig. 1a)
- There should be very little pressure, and no tension to your grip

Left hand grip

- Making sure that your hand is maintaining its natural curvature, place the stick in the webbing between the first finger and thumb. This is the Fulcrum. Hold the stick in the Fulcrum 4 ½ inches from the butt. (see fig. 2a)
- The thumb pad makes contact with the first finger at the middle bone of the first finger (the part of the finger **between** the two knuckles closest to the finger tip). This contact point will be on top of the stick. The thumb should be relaxed and straight. There should be no curve in the thumb (no hitch hikers please). (see fig 2b)
- The first finger will make contact with the stick on the middle bone on top of the stick. (see figs 2b, 2c)
- The middle finger will follow the natural curvature of the first finger and sit on top of the stick (see fig 2c)
- The stick will rest on the ring finger at the base of the finger nail cuticle. (see fig 2c)
- The pinkie finger will follow the natural curvature of the ring finger and will sit directly below the ring finger. There are no gaps between the ring and pinkie finger. (see fig 2c)
- The shape of the left hand should create an open cup. The tips of the fingers should never touch the palm, closing this cup. (see fig 2c)
- There should be very little pressure, and no tension to your grip.

Playing position

Playing position is the uniform position that we will assume when the sticks are out and ready to play, but this is not a resting position. This is the position that your hands should be in while you are playing. **It is very important that everyone understand that every time you strike the drumhead, for an instant, this is the position that hand will be in.** We cannot play together or with the same sound if we strike the drum from different positions. To ensure uniformity of sound and approach we must all make sure:

- The sticks will make a 90° angle. This angle will be centered on your body so that each stick makes a 45° angle from the center of your body.
- The heads will be ¼ of an inch from the drumhead (a pinkie width) and ¼ of an inch from each other directly in the center of the head.
- The angle of incline of the sticks will be 12 °, which we measure by placing 2 fingers between the stick and the rim of the drum. This angle will ensure playing on the meaty part of the head for the best sound production.
- **Make sure to maintain the right hand grip as previously defined.**
- Rotate the right arm ¼ turn so that the thumb pad is not directly on the side of the stick, nor on top of the stick, but directly between the two. This allows for more finger usage, creating a fuller sound.
- There is no bend in the right wrist in any direction
- From the tip of the head to the tip of your right elbow will make a straight line
- There will be a significant open space between your body and your right arm
- **Maintain the left hand grip as previously defined**
- The “cup” of the left hand is facing directly to the right so that the thumb and first finger are directly on top of the stick
- There is no bend in the left wrist in any direction. The left thumb should run directly in line with the radius bone in your left arm.
- The left shoulder should stay relaxed allowing your left arm to hang. There will not be a significant amount of space between your left arm and your body. Do not pinch the left arm to your body, but let it hang.
- The hands should be directly across from one another. There is a symmetry to the sticks in this position.

There is no fidgeting at playing position. The sticks will snap out with confidence creating an overwhelming presence of greatness.

***Note- See figs 3a, 3b for the above page**

Set Position

Simply put, set position is the position that we find ourselves in when our sticks are together in both hands.

The following is a list we must all adhere to in order to insure the uniformity of our set position.

- Make sure that the sticks are parallel to the rim of the drum so that the sticks are not leaning from left to right
- Make sure that the beads and butts of the sticks are aligned
- Make sure that the right stick is directly in front of the left stick (not rolled forward).
- The right hand will maintain the defined grip, but the left stick fits between the right stick, and right thumb.
- Make sure that the right thumb is directly behind, and in line with, the left stick (not wrapped under the sticks).
- Make sure that all the fingers of the right hand wrap under and make contact with the sticks.
- Make sure that the Back of the right hand is facing directly upward (not rolled in any direction)
- Make sure that there is no angle in the either wrist in any direction
- Make sure there is enough space between your body and your arm to put a softball in your right armpit. The right arm will assume an aggressive position and angle.
- The left hand maintains the defined grip, and the right stick fits in front of the left stick in the left hand
- Make sure that the first and middle finger of the left hand curve and wrap over the right stick
- Make sure that in the left hand, the thumb maintains contact with the first finger. The thumb pad will touch the first finger at the last knuckle (the knuckle between the middle and distal bones of the first phalange). The thumb is closer to the finger tip than in the defined left hand grip position in order for the right stick to fit.
- Make sure that the knuckle at the base of the left pinkie finger touches the rim of the drum at 7:00
- Make sure that the palm or “cup” of the left hand is facing the right hand, and not upward towards your face.
- Make sure that your left shoulder is relaxed. Your left humerus will hang comfortably.

Once you go to set there is no extraneous movement thereafter. We will not fidget or re-grip the sticks when set.

Legato stroke

Legato is an Italian word meaning “long”. For musical purposes, Legato means “smooth and connected” or “without breaks between notes”. Make sure to use a continuous and efficient motion when playing legato. Allowing the stick to rebound is absolutely key to this technique.

Right hand

Initiation of Motion

All motion starts from the bead of the stick, and the hand and arm will follow that motion. Turn the wrist up lifting the bead making sure not to whip the motion. Do not lift the arm first and then start to turn the wrist.

Once the stick is at a 45° angle (12 inches from the drumhead) the arm will start to follow, and the wrist will continue to turn until the stick is vertical (or until it has reached the desired height for that particular exercise). There will be a space between the stick and the palm at all points during this motion, but the finger pads will always be on the stick.

Execution of Force

Once the stick has achieved the intended height, the stick is thrown back down through the head. The technique we use maximizes Force. $\text{Force} = \text{Mass} \times \text{Acceleration}$. We will pull with the back fingers, turning the wrist and pushing down with the forearm all in tandem. The back fingers, and wrist will generate the Acceleration, and the arm will follow the motion, supporting the Mass. in order for physics to be allowed to work, the stick must travel directly over itself. Make sure to play through the drumhead, not just to it. We will Maximize Acceleration into the drumhead.

Impact

It is very important that on the point of contact between the stick and the drumhead, the hand must be totally relaxed, allowing the stick to rebound back up. When playing legato the stick will not touch the palm. There will be a slight space maintained between the stick and the palm, allowing the stick to rebound and ring. At slower tempos the stick will hang at vertical before being thrown back down. Make sure that on the point of contact the **playing position** is achieved.

The pads of the middle, ring, and pinkie finger will maintain contact with the stick at all times during this motion. Upon point of impact, the fingers must be relaxed. The space between the stick and the palm will open as the stick rebounds from impact. When the stick is thrown back into the head you will close that space by pulling with the back fingers.

When the stick rebounds the right wrist and arm will follow the same continuous motion that it initiated.

In order to ensure that your motion is efficient as possible, the path of the stick must be straight into the drumhead. Also, the stick must travel directly over itself when rebounding from the head. Make sure that the stick is cutting one plane, and that the motion is not slicing.

Left hand

Initiation of Motion

Once again, all motion must start from the bead. Make sure to move the bead first, and everything else follows.

The motion of the bead is initiated by the rotation of the wrist. Make sure that you do not lift your arm first.

The contact points- at the cuticle of your ring finger with the stick, and of the thumb pad with the middle bone of the first finger- will be maintained at all points during this motion.

Once the stick is at a 45° angle (12 inches from the drumhead) allow the left arm to follow the motion. The wrist will continue to rotate until the stick is vertical (or until it has reached the desired height for that particular exercise).

Execution of Force

Once the stick has achieved the intended height, the stick is thrown back down by pushing through the stick with the thumb, and rotating the wrist back to playing position. The arm will naturally follow this motion. $\text{Force} = \text{Mass} \times \text{Acceleration}$. The Thumb and wrist generate the Acceleration, and the arm supports the Mass. Make sure to play through the drumhead, not just to it. We will Maximize Acceleration into the drumhead

Impact

It is very important that on the point of contact between the stick and the drumhead, the hand must be totally relaxed, allowing the rebound of the stick to rotate the wrist back to vertical. At slower tempos the stick will hang at vertical before being thrown back down. Make sure that on the point of contact the **playing position** is achieved.

In order to ensure that your motion is efficient as possible, the path of the stick must be straight into the drumhead. Also, the stick must travel directly over itself when rebounding from the head. Make sure that the stick is cutting one plane, and that the motion is not slicing.

Staccato stroke

In a word, Staccato means disconnected. Musically speaking it is the absolute opposite of Legato. For us, the difference between a Staccato and a Legato stroke is that a Legato stroke rebounds, and a staccato stroke does not.

Right hand

Every thing about the initiation of the stroke itself is the same. Upon point of impact of a Staccato stroke you will not let the stick kick your back fingers open. The stick will touch your palm on impact. The weight of your hand will keep the stick in playing position, and will not rebound. There is no tension in your grip. We will simply not allow the stick to kick your hand up when we play Staccato. The stick will stop in perfect playing position.

Left hand

Every thing about the initiation of the stroke itself is the same. Upon point of impact of a Staccato stroke your wrist and thumb will not allow the rebound of the stick to kick your hand back up. The hand will remain in playing position. There is no tension in your grip. The stick will stop in perfect playing position.

Marcato

Simply put, the marcato stroke is a more controlled legato stroke. This is the type of stroke we use when we play the check of a roll. When playing marcato, the stick does not stop down as it would in a staccato, and adversely, the stick does not rebound out of the head with the same amount of velocity as it would if the stroke were legato. Marcato stroke is exactly between legato and staccato. It is very important that the marcato stroke is into the head, and rebounds out, but instead of letting the rebound kick the hand out, the rebound is more controlled and drawn out from the head. The Acceleration will be generated more from the wrists than from the Right hand fingers and Left hand thumb. There will be less space between the right palm and the stick.

Height system

The height system that we use is defined in this manner

- 4 inches- The wrist will turn or rotate from playing position up to where the stick is flat and level with the drumhead.
 - 8 inches- From playing position, the wrist will turn or rotate $\frac{1}{4}$ of a full wrist turn. The head of the stick will be 8 inches from the drum head.
 - 12 inches- From playing position the wrist will turn or rotate $\frac{1}{2}$ of a full turn. The stick will be half way to vertical. The Head of the stick will be 12 inches from the drumhead. Your arms will start to move with the motion at 12 inches.
 - 16 inches- From playing position, the wrist will turn or rotate $\frac{3}{4}$ of a full wrist turn. Your arms will follow the motion. The stick will be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to vertical.
 - 20 inches- Full wrist turn and rotation. Both sticks will be totally vertical.
- Although it is unacceptable for the right hand to go beyond vertical, it is accepted and enjoyed for the left stick to rotate past vertical AS LONG AS THIS IS UNIFORM

Sound Production

Everything that you do when you play can affect your quality of sound. From where you grip the stick, and making sure that you do not squeeze the stick, to your playing position and making sure that your angle of incline is perfect so that you are playing on the correct part of the head. Make sure everything mentioned so far is perfect.

Beyond everything that has been mentioned so far, a very important ingredient to sound production is velocity. With more velocity into the head from the stick comes a more full sound. This is very important. When the stick is thrown into the drumhead it must be done with a high velocity in order to create a full sound. On point of impact the hand must be relaxed on the stick so that the rebound and the ring of the stick are not hindered.

Work to achieve an even quality of sound between both hands by working on the weaker hand. Do not be afraid to work on both hands simultaneously in order to work playing clean with yourself.

Application of techniques to exercises

16 on a Hand- Make sure that you use a legato stroke when playing Legatos. Every note is legato, excepting the last note of each phrase, which is Staccato. Be able to play this exercise with our technique at will at 20 inches from 80 bpm to 180 bpm, at 16 inches from 144 bpm to 190 bpm, at 12 inches from 144bpm to 200 bpm, at 8 inches from 144 bpm to 210 bpm, and at 4 inches from 144 bpm to 220 bpm.

21-31- is also a legato exercise. Make sure that every double beat is 2 notes of equal height and strength, and every triple beat is 3 notes of equal height and strength. All the notes in this exercise are legato, excepting the last note before every hand change, which is staccato. Be able to play this exercise at will with our technique at 20 inches from 80bpm to 140bpm, at 16 inches from 120bpm to 150bpm, at 12 inches from 130 to 160bpm, at 8 from 140 to 170bpm and at 4 from 150 to 180bpm.

Uno - is a Staccato to legato exercise. The Accents are staccato, and the tap notes are legato. Make sure that every inner beat sounds and is the same. Make sure that the first tap note after every accent is the correct height and volume. Make sure to check yourself for perfect rhythmic accuracy. Be able to play this exercise at will at 20/4 from 80 to 90bpm, at 16/4 from 90 to 100bpm, and at 12/4 from 100 to 110 bpm

Dos - is also a Staccato to legato exercise. The Accents are staccato, and the tap notes are legato. Ditto everything above. Be able to play this exercise at will at 20/4 from 80bpm to 140bpm, a 16/4 from 120 to 160, at 12/4 from 140 to 180.

Triplet Rolls- The hand motion for Triplet Rolls is a Marcato stroke, and the diddles will be legato. Make sure that every diddle is perfectly rhythmically accurate and open. Make sure to play into the head, and allow the diddles to rebound. Be able to play this exercise at will at 20 inches from 80 bpm to 130bpm, at 16 inches from 120 bpm to 140 bpm, at 12 inches from 120 bpm to 160 bpm, at 8 inches from 120bpm to 170bpm and at 4 inches from 120bpm to 180 bpm.



Fig. 1a

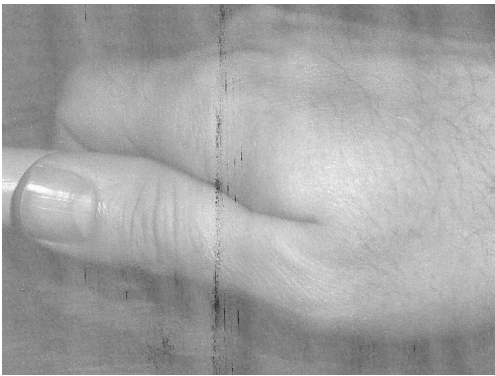


Fig. 1b



Fig. 1c



Fig. 2a

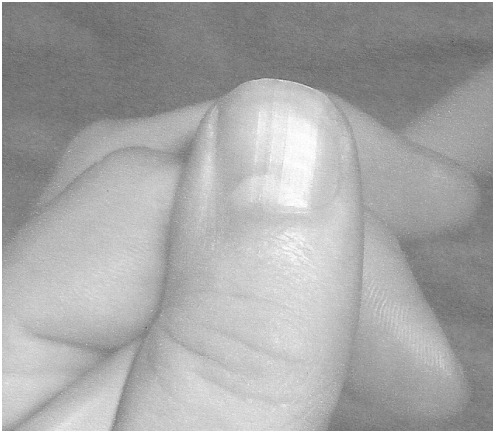


Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b

Summary

There is a direct relationship between how good we are and the amount of importance we put on these fine details. We must all learn and apply these techniques. That is our first step toward achieving a uniform approach and sound. Everyone must do this so that we can achieve the level of greatness we want to. Preparation is Key to greatness, and it is these things that you need to prepare.

The second step is applying these techniques to the exercise packet. Obviously you must be able to play the exercises perfectly rhythmically accurately and in time with a metronome. The earlier you learn the exercises and apply these techniques to exercise packet, the more time we will have to clean and solidify the technique of the line, and the better we will be able to get because we had more time. These are EXERCISES. They are made to make you a stronger player. The more time every individual puts in at home on playing these exercises (with the defined technique) is the stronger every individual in the line will be, and the stronger the line will be because of it. Ask yourself how much time and effort you think it takes to be exceptional, and put in more than that. Refuse to be average.

The third step is applying the exercises to the show music. Once again, the sooner we all apply the same technique to the music, the earlier we will perfect clarity. It is not enough to be perfect. We will then focus our time on presentation and performance, rather than execution. The first step is applying and understanding absolutely everything in this packet. We will succeed if everyone does put forth the time and effort to do this.

If you have a fire and energy that makes you want to be better than the others out there, direct that energy towards perfecting and applying these things, because it is in these details that we will find success.

“If one truly wants to be superior, they must put forth a superior effort to succeed”