

Rudiment Development

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Flams

A flam is a grace note added to the beginning of a single stroke, which gives more emphasis to that stroke. From the tacit position, the stroke will have no upward motion. Simply drop the stroke lightly and allow it to rebound one inch (a pianissimo full stroke).

Mentally one must think of a flam as a single entity, and not two separate strokes. We will begin with a right flam. Raise the right stick to accent height (12 inches? in preparation for a down stroke), and keep the left stick at tacit height (1 inch?). Next, simultaneously send the signal for both hands to strike the drum. The left stick has a much shorter distance to travel and thus will strike the drumhead before the right stick. Repeat this many times with both the right and the left.



Right flam position



Left flam position

EXERCISE: Basic Consecutive Flams

The grace note should be played very close to the down stroke to create a “tight” sounding flam. As rudimental drumming evolved and playing tempos accelerated dramatically, tight flams became necessary. If a single stroke sounds like “bam”, then historically, flammed notes sounded like “flam”. In modern times, these notes should sound like “cham”. Be careful however to not have both sticks striking at the same time. This results in “popped flams”, and the desired effect is lost.

EXERCISE: Eighth Note Flam Development

(consecutive flams measures 1-4, alternating flams measures 5-8)

What do these mean?

4

6

A good experiment is to play the grace note by lightly tapping your fingernail on the playing surface. This will help you to understand how gently a grace note should be stroked.

FULL ENSEMBLE: Eighth Note Flam Development

Measures 1-3 of the eighth note flam development. The score is in 4/4 time. The Snare and Tenor parts feature eighth note patterns with specific stroke order notations (R, L, IR, rL). The Bass part plays a steady eighth note accompaniment. The Cymbals part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with accents.

Snare: R L R L IR IR IR IR | L R L R rL rL rL rL | R L R L R L R L

Tenor: R L R L IR IR IR IR | L R L R rL rL rL rL | R L R L R L R L

Bass: [Musical notation]

Cymbals: [Musical notation]

Measures 4-5 of the eighth note flam development. The Snare and Tenor parts continue with their eighth note patterns. The Bass part maintains its accompaniment. The Cymbals part continues with its rhythmic accompaniment.

S. IR IR IR IR rL rL rL rL | R L R L IR rL IR rL

T. IR IR IR IR rL rL rL rL | R L R L IR rL IR rL

B. [Musical notation]

C. [Musical notation]

Measures 6-8 of the eighth note flam development. The Snare and Tenor parts continue with their eighth note patterns. The Bass part maintains its accompaniment. The Cymbals part continues with its rhythmic accompaniment.

S. R L R L IR rL IR rL | R L R L R L R L | IR rL IR rL IR rL IR rL

T. R L R L IR rL IR rL | R L R L R L R L | IR rL IR rL IR rL IR rL

B. [Musical notation]

C. [Musical notation]

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