

The Hot Stove Exercise

Fundamental Focus on Wrist Turn

M. Lemieux

This exercise should be played with hands before trying it with sticks. The purpose is to work on the wrist turn motion (described in further detail on the attached pages).

Imagine when a child touches a hot stove; the child's instinct is to pull his hand away as quickly as possible. Likewise, one element of the hot stove exercise will be to pull your hand away as quickly as possible. This short exercise will prepare you for the motions involved in throwing a stick into a drum, and it will also prepare you for the motions involved in utilizing the rebound after the stick hits the drum.

After a stick hits a drum, it will tend to leave the drum at the same speed at which it struck. Your hand, knocking, will not have this tendency. If you are playing with a drum stick, then your hand (holding the stick) will get in the way of the stick rebounding. Allowing the stick to rebound is more efficient than using your own energy to pull it up after every stroke; however, in order for the stick to rebound, you have to get "out of its way." With *The Hot Stove Exercise*, you can practice getting your hand "out of the way" after hitting the surface.

The first time through, you are just practicing the knocking motion. On the repeat, you will pretend that your hand *does* rebound, and that it rebounds very quickly.

♩ = 144–288

First time through, just wrist turn motion. Second time through, add "hot stove" rebound motion.



The Hot Stove Exercise: Matching Volume

Revisit this exercise, but now strive to achieve the same volume whether you are leaving your hand on the surface after knocking, or rapidly pulling out from the surface. As you match the volume, you may find that your "rebound" becomes less aggressive. Your mission now is to strive for both results: the "hot stove" effect of pulling your hand out, as well as a consistent sound between the two halves of the exercise.

The Hot Stove Exercise: Changing Dynamics

The demand of suddenly lifting your hand will tend to change how hard you knock, and from what height you knock. In order to get a consistent volume, you probably settled on a *height* and *velocity* that you found appropriate. Now that your ears are more aware of what is happening, try to play the exercise at different volumes in order to build a better awareness of what your *muscles* have to do. Experiment with using different heights and velocities to achieve a given volume

Description of Wrist Turn Motion

Adapted from *Quality Control For Rudimental Drummers*

Demonstration: The Basic Motion

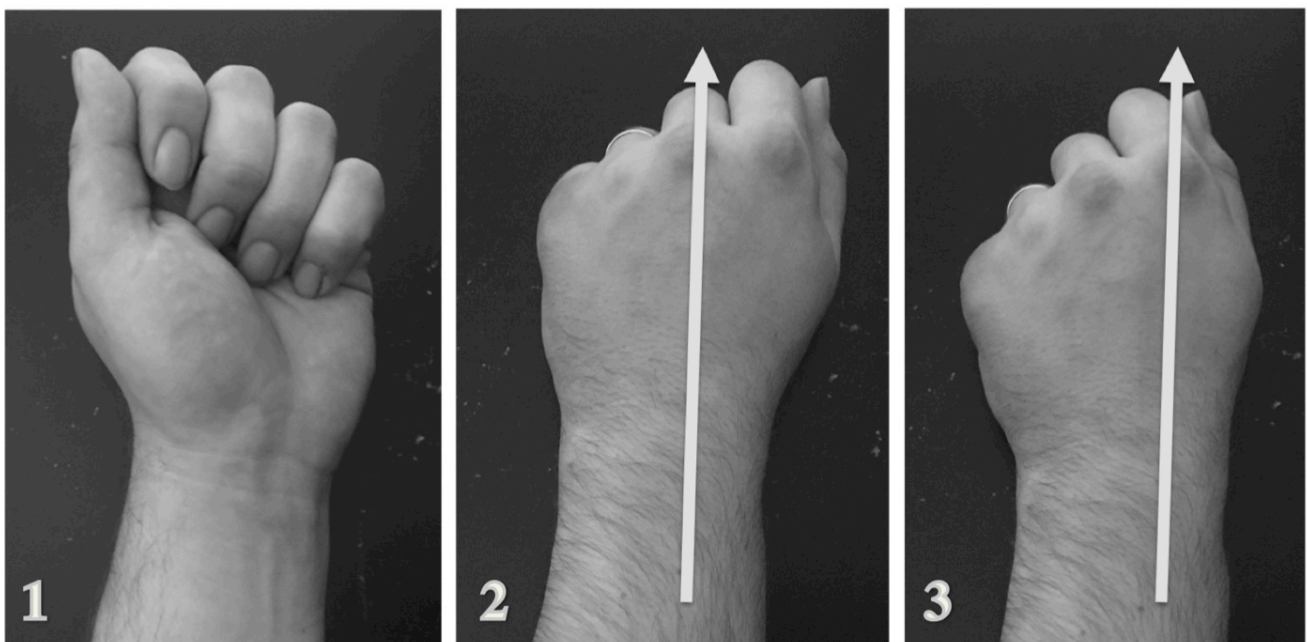
First, we are going to start *without any sticks*. Once we build a basic understanding of the motion of the hands, we can build a grip that efficiently transfers that motion to the stick.

Make a fist. No, wait... make something that's *like* a fist, but more relaxed, with the thumb comfortably alongside the forefinger as shown in the figure below (1). Imagine you are gently holding a drum stick that is thinner than a human hair; that is the kind of fist you want to make.

Now, imagine a straight line is passing through your forearm and intersecting with the major knuckle of your middle finger, as shown in the figure below (2).

Turn your “fist” slightly outward (within the plane of your forearm), so that this same imaginary line is now passing through the major knuckle of your forefinger, as shown in the figure below (3). This sets up the angle that your hand will have with your forearm when we start drumming.

Now, by moving your hand (but not your arm) up and down, use this “fist” to start knocking... on the table, the drum, the practice pad, etc. This knocking is the “wrist turn” motion that will be the primary motivator of almost every stroke that you play.



Demonstration: The Basic Motion in Traditional Grip

In traditional grip, the left hand motion is different from the aforementioned “knocking” motion. Whereas the knocking motion was created by up-and-down motion of the hand (rotating at the wrist), the left hand motion is created by *pronation* and *supination* of the left forearm. While it is still referred to as “wrist turn” in common parlance, this motion is technically a rotation of the forearm at the elbow.

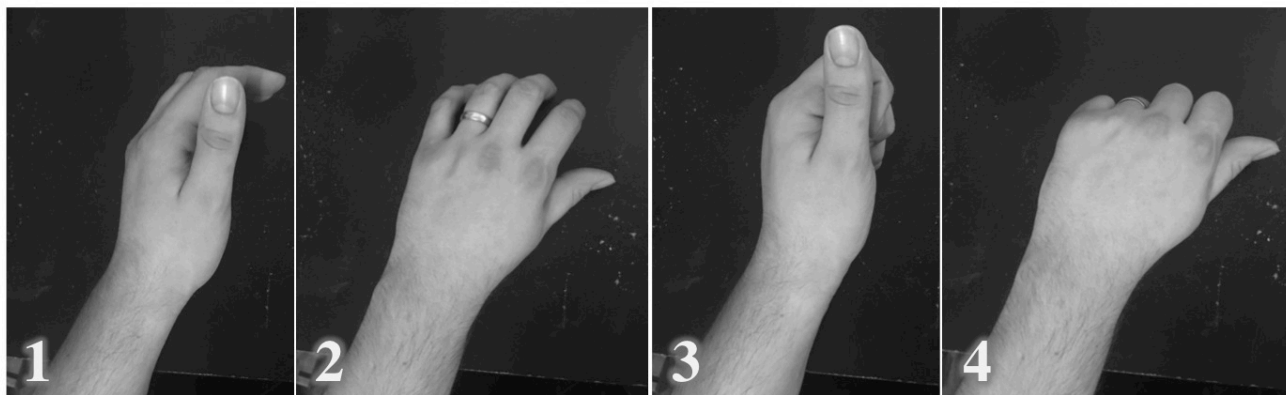
To demonstrate this motion to yourself, keep your hand relaxed, and rotate your forearm as though you were trying to turn a doorknob. Rotate fast, and rotate slow, and become aware of how it feels. Now, experiment with different positions of your hand while continuing the rotation. Try a tight fist. Try a wide and open hand. Try a “knife” hand (like you are going to karate chop someone). Try bending your hand inward to form a roughly 90° angle with the forearm; it will look like you are doing some sort of gang sign. Try making a loose fist and then stick the pinky finger out. Continue the rotation throughout these changes in your hand’s position.

Observe that you have to work harder to maintain the rotation in some positions. This extra effort is required when more of your hand’s mass is further away from the axis of rotation, in addition to when mass that is further away from the axis of rotation is not counterbalanced by mass on the opposite side of the axis of rotation. The “gang sign” position puts most of your hand on one side of the axis of rotation. The wide open hand has a lot of mass far from the axis of rotation, but the mass is generally counterbalanced by mass on the opposite side of the axis of rotation.

This demonstration may be long-winded, but the point is to feel how different hand positions can make rotation easier or more difficult. In traditional grip, we want a grip that does not necessitate extra effort for rotation; in other words, we want the hand’s mass to be distributed close to the axis of rotation and roughly symmetrically about the axis of rotation, while still allowing effective control of the stick. When you have a stick in your hand, this means that the axis of rotation will probably pass through some part of the first segment of the middle finger (the segment closest to the hand).

For the Hot Stove Exercise, this means that we want to have a relaxed hand. You will be “knocking” by striking the surface with the thumb (like you are thumb-slapping on a bass guitar). This motion will be aggressive, but the aggression should not manifest as tension in your hand.

The figure below shows two ways you might rehearse the hot stove exercise. There is a relaxed and open hand (1) that strikes the table (2), and there is a relaxed and gently closed fist (3) that strikes the table (4). Use this exercise to work on the rotation, but also experiment with different hand shapes so that you can get a clear sense of what orientations might cause unnecessary tension and unnecessary effort for the rotation. This experimentation will pay off when you put a stick in your hand and need to grip it in a way that does not put too much of your hand’s mass off-axis or leave it unbalanced.

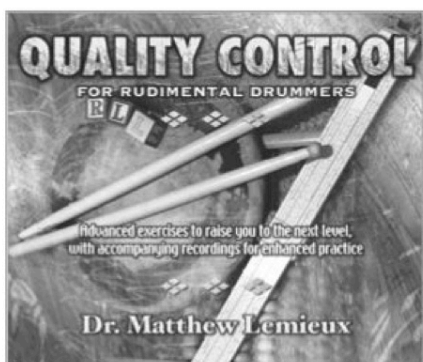


Demonstration: The Relaxed Forearm

Although your forearm does not motivate the stroke, do not think that the forearm must remain stiff, or that you have to avoid moving your arm entirely. To demonstrate, hold your “fist” in front of you, and knock on an imaginary table in the air. Knock very aggressively... notice that your forearm cannot help but wiggle in response to this action. This response will be even more apparent when you have a stick in your hand; your body is a system of levers, and this response is completely natural. Do not fight it; even though rudimental drumming can be very precise, defined, and mechanical, the purpose of a technique is to maximize efficiency of motion: not merely to constrain it to strict definition.

The Hot Stove Exercise: Doublestops

In a matched grip, use doublestops with *The Hot Stove Exercise* to match motions between the hands, and look in a mirror to check consistency of motion. In traditional grip, match timing. In either grip, doublestops will be a great tool for matching stick motions on different rudiments. However, if your hands are poorly-coordinated and the doublestops are dirty, there may be a tendency to rely on larger muscle groups to achieve the strokes (e.g., using a “karate chop”-style forearm motion instead of rotation at the wrist), as these muscle groups are easier to match in order to clean up the sound (in matched grip *and* traditional grip). This is a major pitfall that negates any benefit to rehearsing a pattern as doublestops, so make sure that you are not building such habits.



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