

This is a summary of a series of lesson and techniques for teaching drumming and notation to students with low literacy abilities and slight behaviour disorders. It has worked very well for me over the years. Most classes have been able to read rhythm very successfully after this.

## **TOPIC: DRUMMING**

**LESSON 1:** Introduction to class behavioural expectations, rules with regard to this activity. Particularly with the Drum sticks. (if students get a little over excited, chop sticks work just as well. Quiet time is also very helpful.) Assign numbered drum sticks to each student (this way they learn responsibility. Make sure they understand that this numbered pair is theirs to use in class and if anything happens to them, then there is no other). Learn to play the "paradiddle" exercise which is LRLR (rpt). Do call and response exercises, learn to stop at the same time after 4 bar phrases.

Paradiddle:	LRLR	RLRL
Double paradiddle:	LRLRLR	RLRLRL
Triple paradiddle:	LRLRLRLR	RLRLRLRL

**LESSON 2:** Demonstration of holding the drum stick properly - like you're riding a Harley Davidson, wrists facing the floor, 2/3 way down the stick in a bouncing motion. Get students to bounce the stick against the desk to understand technique.

Remember to lift the stick and drop it rather than wedge it through your drum skins!

Instrument Spelling test - students will love this one, introduce word bank of percussion instruments, demonstrate a real version of the instrument and get students to label as you talk about each one briefly. Have 10 minutes for them to test run the gear!

**LESSON 3:** Introduction to quarter note, sixteenth notes (in fours), the quarter note rest and the half note. If children struggle with reading fractions, use a name that reflects the symbols.

Crotchet - Golf club

Pair of Quavers - Horses, with the saddle

Minim - mushroom - white with a stem

Crotchet rest - A "z" sitting on top of a "c".

Music maths - There are a variety of ways to do this. Try to avoid the good old worksheet. Aim for more tactile products like flashcards or flashcards with magnets for the white board or a PPT.

**Sight reading, speaking, clapping, dictations** - Get students to sight read these symbols. Introduce the time names - TA, TA-TE, TA-AA and SA. These are great verbal connections for the notes. I also try to have a clapping link as well. TA and TA-TE are easy. With TA-AA, I will always clap the first beat, keep my hands

together and sort of bounce to the second beat. Some of the younger kids have called this a "Squish Fish" because as we get into TA-AA-AA and TA-AA-AA-AA, it looks like a flapping fish. So TA-AA-AA becomes "Super squish fish" and TA-AA-AA-AA becomes "Super squish fish dead".

Try to keep the combinations to bars of 4. Put a time signature at the start and a single barline at the end. The students are less likely to read the barline as a letter that way.

You can do dictations with flash cards that the kids need to place in order. They really love this one.

The previous activities are basically repeated everytime you introduce a new rhythm. Here's a general timeline of how we introduce notes to the students. As the students progress, you can introduce "semiquavers". The great thing about this one is that the word "semiquaver" has four syllables so it is easy for the students to remember it. Time name is TA-FA-TE-FE (Phonetically pronounced ta-far-te-fee). If they struggle with some of these, you can use:

semiquavers - caterpillar

semibreve - great big cheese ball

By this point, there is a lesson teaching students how to read "upside down" notes with the explanation that they mean the same value.

Students label and identify drum parts, for every new drum/percussion they learn about they label and have spelling tests regularly (for low literacy only!)

Return to the Drum sticks with the Left and Right markings. Put rhythmic patterns on the board, overhead or PPT and label them with Left and Right markings. Students are then expected to be able to play them using the correct hand. They find this heaps of fun but remember to only do a couple. They can even try them out on drums as well. (remember the rules though)

**STAVE - Reading drum kit notation.** Do not give them ALL the notes at once. I always introduce the drum kit with three layers - bass drum (its on the floor), snare drum (it's in the middle near your waist) and the High Hat (its at the top or near your shoulder). We learn where the three layers are on the stave and then we practice with a imaginary drum kit - Right foot is the bass drum, hitting your thighs with the drumsticks is the snare drum and hitting the desk is the High Hat. The students will need to move a little further away from the table to play their drum kit. The beautiful thing about this one is that the kids don't hit the snare drum too hard because it hurts their legs and they start to realise how painful drumsticks can be.