

Top 10 Rudiments

PART 6: HAND-TO-HAND FLAMS

by Bill Bachman

Playing alternating flams demands a certain amount of chops. Fast hand-to-hand flams require whipping Moeller strokes, which is a natural motion that many drumset players use every time they sit down to play. If you can master the technique needed to play hand-to-hand flams, your accent/tap motion will become much stronger and faster while requiring less energy.

A flam is simply a grace note tied to a main stroke. The primary note has metric value and should land exactly in time. The grace note is used to add texture and thickness to the sound and should be placed just before the primary note. If the grace note hits at the same time as the primary note, then you're playing a "flat flam," which is actually a double stop (two notes in unison) and not a flam at all.

A player with good control can play both tight flams, where the grace note is placed very close to the primary note, and wide (or fat) flams, where there's a bigger space between the grace note and the primary stroke. Ultimately, grace note placement is a musical choice based on style, drumhead response, and speed.

Let's look at the technique you'll need to play alternating flams at slow and medium speeds. Each hand plays a high accent stroke followed by a low grace note. Use the downstroke/upstroke technique for these. Be sure to squeeze the stick a bit with your fingers after the accent in order to freeze the stick pointing down toward the drum. Then play a relaxed low grace note as an upstroke, since you'll need to lift the stick for the following accent. Avoid hitting the accents extra hard and with tight strokes, where your fingers are squeezing the stick while you play the grace notes. Other than the split second after the accent, when you stifle the stick's rebound, everything should flow smoothly. Note that the downstroke is also commonly referred to as a staccato stroke. *Staccato* is the musical term meaning short and separated, which in this case refers to the accent's hand motion being short and separate from the following grace note's hand motion.

If you tried playing fast hand-to-hand flams using the above technique, your wrists would tighten up and seize, since there's not enough time to stop the stroke, restart the motion, and then lift up. This is where the Moeller stroke comes in: to replace the wrist motion with a forearm motion. When you use the forearm, the wrist can relax. (To review: A Moeller stroke is a modified downstroke where the stroke is played from the forearm with a whipping arm motion, rather than from the wrist.) Don't stop the stick after the accent. Let the accent stroke's energy flow into the next grace note. This grace note should be played with what I call a Moeller upstroke, where the stick hits the drum as you lift the forearm, with the wrist hanging limp.

The technique behind playing hand-to-hand flams will be easier to understand as you play Example 1, which isolates the motions in each hand. You should feel like you're playing quarter notes with your forearm while a little rebound stroke drops in on the upbeats. This is the key hand motion for fast hand-to-hand flams. (It's similar to the shoulder/tip hi-hat motion that many drummers use when playing 8th-note grooves.)

Practice the following exercises slowly using the downstroke/upstroke technique—stopping the sticks after the accents—as well as the whipping Moeller technique. (A great way to achieve speed with all rudiments is to practice a fast tempo's technique slowly. I've seen many players struggle to achieve high speeds because they practice only the slower tempo's technique.) Be sure to practice the following exercises using the correct stickings; the stickings marked "T" should be played with both hands in unison. Use a metronome or play along with your favorite tunes, and don't go any faster than you can play comfortably. In addition to the exercises provided, practice hand-to-hand flams using the traditional slow-fast-slow breakdown evenly over one minute, gradually changing your technique in correlation with the speed. Good luck!

1

R R R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L L L R L R L R L R L R L

L L L L L L L L L L R R R R R R R R R R L R R R R R R R R R R

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

2

R R R R R R R R T T T T T T T T L L L L L L L L T T T T T T T T
R R R R R R R R T T T T T T T T L L L L L L L L T T T T T T T T

3

R
L
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L L L L L L L L L L L L L R L R L R L R L R L

4

L
R
R L R L R L R L R L L L L L L L L L L L L L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R R R R R R R R R R L R L R L R L R L R L

5

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

6

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

TOP 10 RUDIMENTS

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RLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLR L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

7

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R



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SAME-HAND-FLAMS



A musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music. The first measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The second measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The notes are: G4, F4, E4, D4 in the first measure; and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second measure.

R L R L R L R L R R L L R R L L



A musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music. The first measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The second measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The notes are: G4, F4, E4, D4 in the first measure; and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second measure.

R R R L L L R R R L L L R R R R R L L L L L R R R



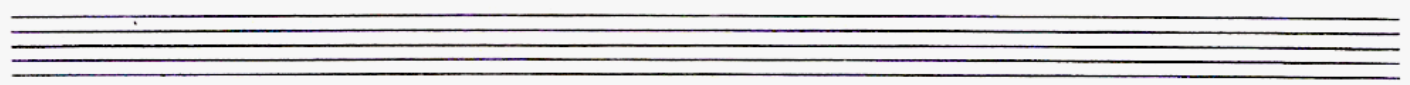
A musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music. The first measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The second measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The notes are: G4, F4, E4, D4 in the first measure; and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second measure.

L L L L L R R R R R L L L R R R R L L L L R R R R R



A musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music. The first measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The second measure has four pairs of eighth notes, each pair consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note with a vertical line above it (flam). The notes are: G4, F4, E4, D4 in the first measure; and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second measure.

L L L L R R R R L L L L R R R R R L L L L R R R L L



Two empty musical staves, one above the other, consisting of five lines each.