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Snare Drum Technique

Holding the Sticks by Eric Starr g+1 0

The first step in developing stick control is learning how to properly hold a pair of sticks. In this book, you will learn how to play matched grip. Many students and teachers think that your match-grip grasp should be fixed or unmovable. This is incorrect, at least from the perspective of a drum set player. Your grasp should indeed change based on what you're playing. As you will learn, there are two Fulcrums, and the skillful drummer knows how to toggle back and forth between these two grasps with ease.

Figures 3-1 and 3-2 show you what matched and traditional grips look like, respectively. You can see that traditional grip is very different in the left hand.

Below are the steps you need to take to learn how to play matched grip:

- Stand with your arms at your side in a natural, comfortable position. Notice how your fingers curl slightly upward.
- Lift your arms at the elbows (not the shoulders) until your arms each form a right angle.
- Turn your wrists so that you can see the four knuckles of your index, middle, ring, and pinky fingers. In other words, your palm should face the floor. This hand position is known as palm flat, and it is similar to the German timpani grip.

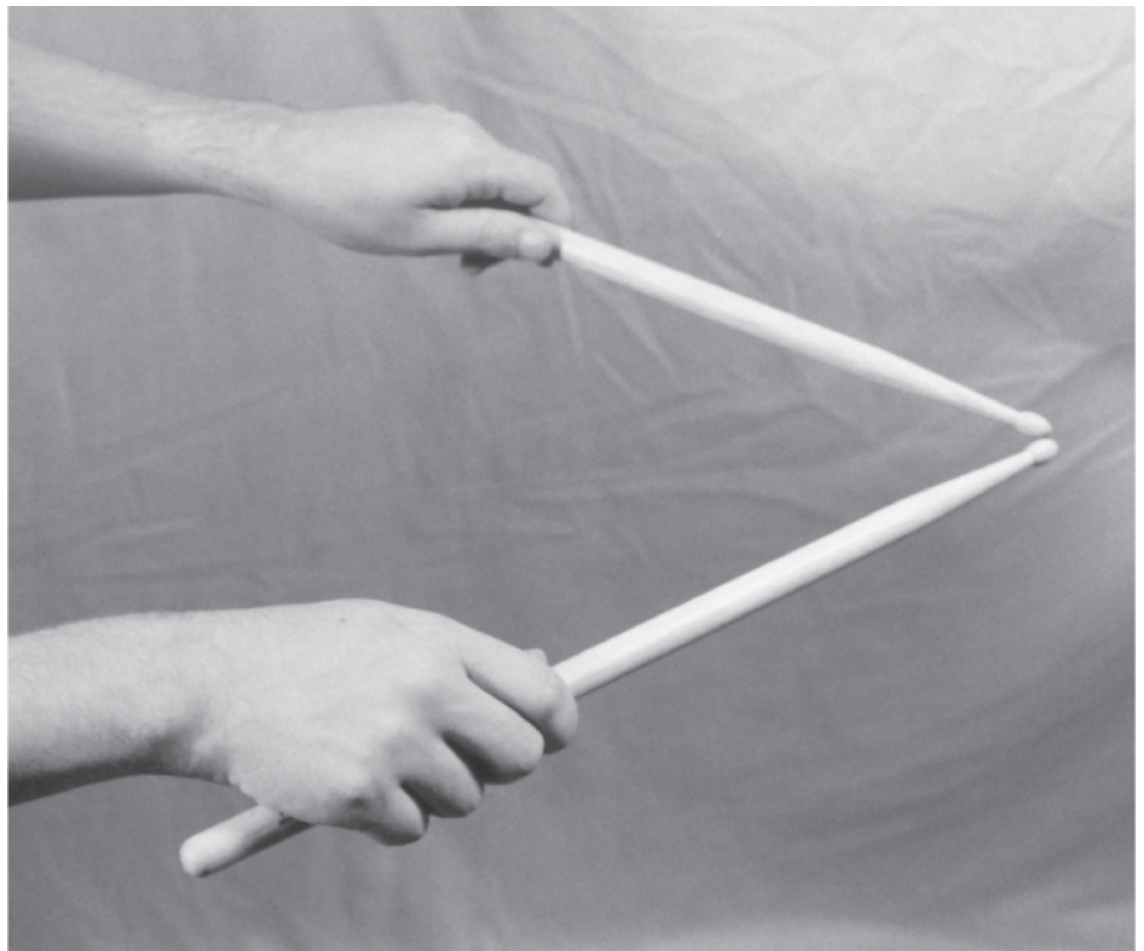


Figure 3-1: Matched grip

You will use this

position to play on the snare drum and the rack tom positioned just above the snare. When riding on your cymbal and hi-hat, playing your floor tom-tom, or when playing very fast single-stroke rolls, it's common to turn your thumb upward. This hand position is known as thumbs up, and it is similar to French timpani grip.

- Once your hand is positioned, pick up the drumsticks and hold them between the pad of your thumb and the first joint nearer your fingertip. This book will refer to this grasp as Fulcrum #1.

When in this position, the middle, ring, and pinky fingers should rest gently on the sticks. Additionally, the middle finger is used to subtly balance each stick. Also, when holding the sticks, never let your pinky finger point outward. This afternoon teatime pose is a common error.

Fulcrums are simply pressure points. Pressure refers to the amount of weight you pinch between the thumb and index fingers. Like a door hinge, Fulcrums keep the sticks in a stationary playing position. An alternate Fulcrum—used primarily for slower and less complex rhythms—is created between the second joint (moving away from your fingertip) and the pad of the thumb. In this book, this grasp will be called Fulcrum #2. In a drum set context, you will need to switch often between Fulcrums #1 and #2 depending on what you're playing.

If you're having a hard time determining when to use Fulcrum #1 versus Fulcrum #2, remember that Fulcrum #1 is used for sharp, articulated rhythms; Fulcrum #2 is used for less intricate, slow rhythms. Also, Fulcrum #1 is always used to play a buzz roll (see Figure 3-7).

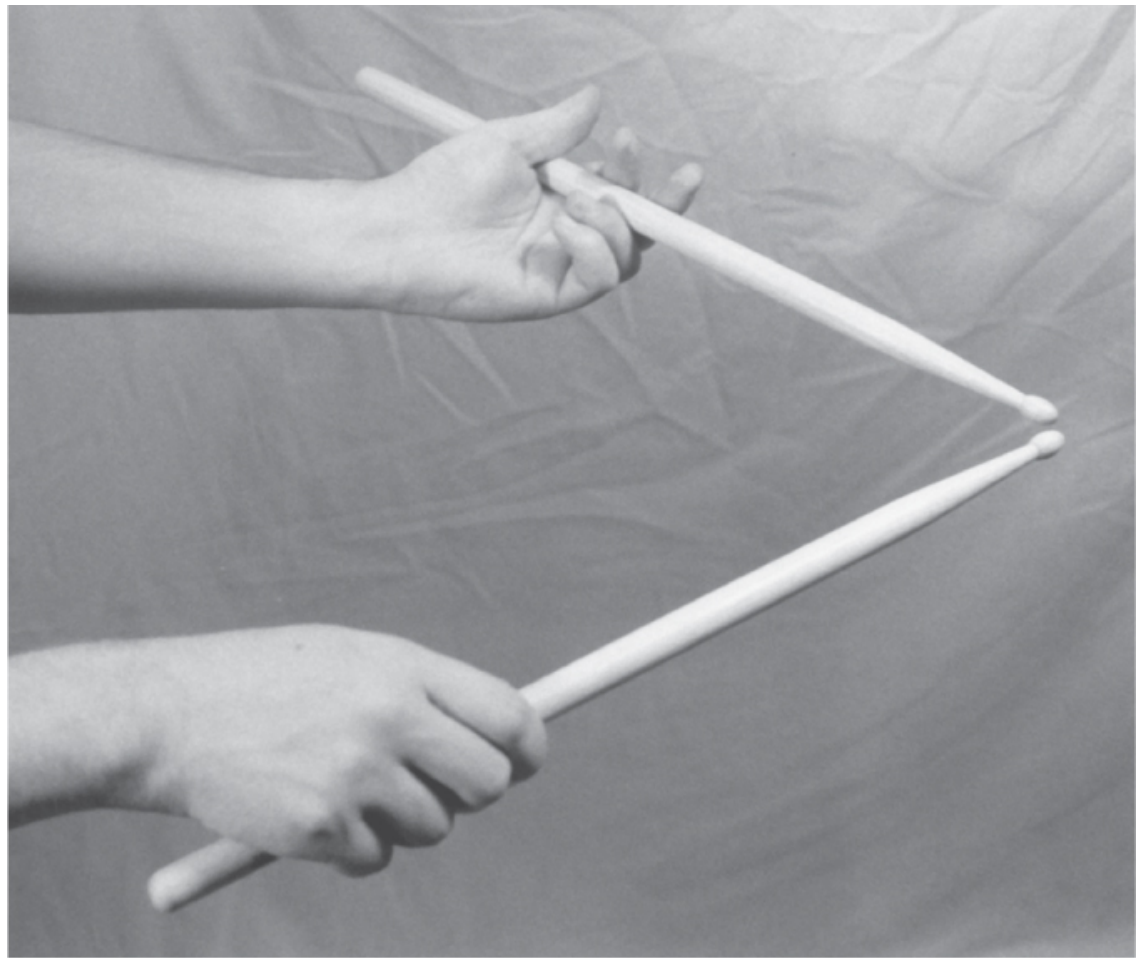


FIGURE 3-2: Traditional grip

This book will not concentrate on traditional grip since it's harder to learn and less popular among contemporary drummers and percussionists. However, drummers such as Stewart Copeland, Vinnie Colaiuta, and newcomer Keith Carlock continue to keep this grip alive. Also, many jazz drummers play "trad," since it's very nuance oriented.

You must always use a proper Fulcrum when you play. Never let the sticks fall back into the third joint of the fingers or the web of the hand. When this occurs, the sticks sit

Figure 3-3 shows you what Fulcrum #1 looks like. For now, this is the only Fulcrum you should use. Later on, you will learn where to apply Fulcrum #2.

in your hand like a club and stick control is impossible. Likewise, if your index finger and thumb touch, your Fulcrum has come undone.



FIGURE 3-3: Fulcrum #1



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