

Crash Cymbal Techniques

By Steve Hearn

Types

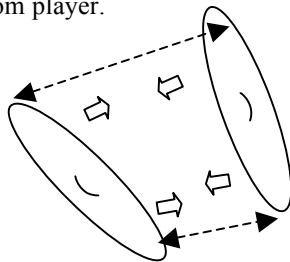
- A standard pair of crash cymbals is 17 or 18 inches in diameter and has a quick response to vibrations. These are generally used when a cymbal part has a combination of loud and soft strokes and rhythmic passages.
- The French style cymbal features a bright/thinner timbre with quick response and fast decay. These cymbals are thin, have a bright attack and higher overtones.
- The German style features a dark/thicker timbre with slower response and decay. These cymbals are thick and heavy.
- A smaller pair of cymbals should be on hand in order to have better control during softer, more delicate passages. However, smaller cymbals create a thinner texture than larger cymbals.

Grip

- The index finger and thumb curl around the strap nearest to the cymbal bell (fulcrum) and either:
 - (1) lay the middle and ring fingers in the strap with the pinky on the outside, or
 - (2) lay the strap in the palm and wrap the other three fingers around the strap similar to a snare drum stick grip.

Crash Cymbal Stroke

- Slow stroke = Dark/full timbre - rich attack
- Fast stroke = Bright/thinner timbre - sharp attack
- Strike each cymbal slightly off center to avoid air pockets (no sound) and to initiate as many overtone vibrations as possible.
- Right and Left cymbals: Tilt near a 45 degree angle, simultaneously, with equal velocity, strike together in a flam motion – edge near player first, then furthest from player.

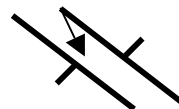


Loud, Fast, Repetitive Crashes

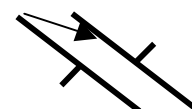
- Keep cymbals closer together with increased impact velocity – faster acceleration to impact.

Soft Crashes

- Keep cymbals very close together to achieve a cymbal angle between 5-15 degrees.
- Separate the cymbals with the edge of the bottom cymbal above the edge of the top cymbal.
- Drop the top cymbal by pushing downward with the thumb and forefinger and let the cymbals slightly sizzle as the top cymbal glides down the bottom cymbal.
- Or
- Drop the bottom cymbal onto the top cymbal and let the cymbals slightly sizzle as the bottom cymbal glides down the top cymbal.
- Vary the sizzle length to create different crashing timbres.



OR



Dampening

- Bring the cymbals into the upper part of the body and arms.



- A forte-piano effect is accomplished by dampening only one cymbal.
- The dampening rules for inconsistent written and sounding note values on bass drum also apply to cymbals. Some parts indicate a need to dampen, although the tempo and note values may not allow for this – listen to the ensemble!