

# “I have percussion 2! Now what?”

## A quick guide to playing accessory percussion.

### Overall guidelines:

The following instruments have a few things in common:

1. They are all, for the most part, considered “hand held” instruments. They are best played while you hold them. Mount them ONLY for specific reasons.
2. They are all “directional” sound instruments, which means the better you can see the instrument, the clearer you can hear it. This works to our advantage in many ways.
3. There are many ways to produce sound on these instruments. Producing the correct or “designed” sound is very important to interpreting music correctly.

### Tambourine

- Hold the instrument with a firm yet flexible grip where there are no jingles.
- Hold the instrument at about chest height. Higher or lower to help create dynamic contrast.
- Right handed players should hold the instrument with their left hand and vice versa.
- There are three holding positions: 45 degree angle (least jingle, most articulate, general playing)  
Flat (more body and clarity, more jingle)  
Vertical (most jingle, less clarity)
- There are a few basic strokes that are commonly used. They are based on the volume and/or speed of the part that you are playing. Three fingers = general playing (pp-mf).  
Four fingers = strong playing (f).  
Closed fist = very aggressive playing (ff-ffff).  
Flat on Knee = fast, soft playing  
Knee/fist technique = loud, fast, aggressive playing  
Extended techniques = using implements or drop/lift technique
- Shake Rolls are played by holding the tambourine vertically and shaking with grip hand. Use your opposite hand to tap the beginning and end of the roll for more articulation.
- Thumb Rolls are created by sliding the pad of the thumb counter clock-wise around the edge of the head. Bees wax or thin sand paper can be applied to the head to aid friction

### Triangle

- The triangle should be mounted on a clip using fishing line or small string preferably.
- Hold the triangle by the clip making a “C” shape with your non-dominant hand so the clip can rest on it.
- Hold the triangle beater with your dominant hand. The opening of the triangle should face to the left if the triangle is held in the left hand.
- Hold the instrument at about eye level.
- Choose the correct size beater according to the volume and texture required by the part.
- The triangle can be played in various areas. Most common is the bottom leg. Struck at an angle pushing away the bottom leg. The top right corner and bottom right corner are also options.
- The three free fingers in the “holding” hand can be used to dampen the triangle as needed.
- There are times when the triangle can be mounted and played with two beaters for faster parts.
- There are times when the triangle can be held in one hand w/o string and played open and closed such as in latin music

## **Suspended Cymbals**

- Suspended cymbals must have a stand that is in great working order.
- Use marimba or vibe mallets or mallets specific to sus. cymbals unless a stick is requested in the part.
- Suggested implements: JC-1SC or JC-2SC (sus. cym. mallet), IP-1M or IP-5AM (stick/mallet combinations)
- Always roll at 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock toward the outer edges of the cymbal.
- 18-20 inch cymbals produce more tone and are recommended for suspended cymbal parts.
- Darker sounding cymbals blend well. Brighter cymbals cut through sound better.
- Slower roll speeds equal darker, purer sounds.
- When doing a crescendo, wait until the last part of the roll to create the biggest swell.

## **Crash Cymbals**

- Crash cymbals must have straps. preferably leather, tied in a square knot.
- Hold the cymbals by the straps like you are grabbing a drumstick with the thumb and large knuckle of each hand firmly against the bell of each cymbal.
- The cymbals should be held at a slight angle (from flat) with the dominant hand cymbal on bottom.
- Hold the cymbals at about stomach height.
- The crash is created by keeping the non-dominant hand stationary and striking it with the dominant hand cymbal.
- The approach of the crash is done with a "flam" concept. The bottom edges of the cymbals should strike slightly before the rest of the cymbals make contact.
- The cymbals should be slightly off-set by an inch or so when struck to keep from creating air pockets when crashing.
- Keep the cymbals close together for soft crashes.
- For loud single crashes open up the cymbals after the initial crash and let them ring.
- Choose the right cymbals for the job. Thicker cymbals are more articulate and have less sustain. Great for marches or parts with a lot of fast crashes. Thinner cymbals have more tone and sustain. Great for dramatic crashes and impacts.
- 18-20 inch cymbals are recommended as standard.
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## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

### **pas.org**

Click the "**Teach**" tab and click on **FUNDamentals** in the column to the left. There are many great clinic hand outs on Accessory Percussion.

### **Ensemble Techniques and Musicianship for Percussionists:**

Volume One: Cymbals, Triangle and Tambourine

By John R. Beck

### **The Complete Percussionist: A Guidebook for the Music Educator**

By Robert Breithaupt

### **The Art of Tambourine and Triangle Playing**

By Grover/Whaley

### **The Techniques of Playing Bass Drum, Cymbals, and Accessories**

By Al Payson

### **Up Front: A Complete Resource for today's pit ensemble**

By Jim Casella and Jim Ancona