

Steps for Learning Drums Faster

By Michael Burris www.TeachMeToDrum.com 1/16/2017

1. **You can't cram in drumming skill like you can for school classes before a test!** You'll learn faster if you practice 15-30 min. a day rather than 1-2 hours every 3-4 days, because the mind-body muscles and coordination for drumming require daily practice. We all get 168 hours in a week and you only need 1-2% to be a good drummer. Use time others waste and you'll be a success! Also, it's best to plan a practice schedule so nothing will interfere with your priceless appointment with yourself for your drumming dreams, and remember that it only takes 21 days in a row to create such a great habit! Most people don't plan to fail, they just fail to plan. So first have a target, and then ready, aim, and fire!
2. **Stay mentally sharp and motivated.** Don't spend more than 10-15 min. on any one thing, because your brain will start drifting off. When you learn something, find a way to play it to music or a metronome: to improve your timing, to make it more practical, and to have so much more fun! Watch yourself in a mirror or video-tape yourself and you'll fix so much of your playing – you will be your own best teacher! Surf my website www.TeachMeToDrum.com for a great digital and video library, gallery, and tips.
3. **The fastest way to get faster is to practice slowly.** Patience is the only path to improvement! If you go too fast too soon, your brain will short-circuit and you will make a mistake. Then your brain has to take the time, time you don't have, to undo the memory of that mistake or you will create it again! If you continue at the same speed that you made the mistake, you'll most likely make the same mistake again or make new ones. Don't practice mistakes to drill them in deeper! Einstein said, "It's insanity to think you can solve problems doing the same things that caused the problem in the first place." So, if you make a mistake, practice more slowly to prevent another mistake! Always play something 8 times without a mistake before increasing the tempo just a notch; play again for another 8 times; then go up another notch, and continue this process to give your body a chance to memorize each step your mind takes.
4. **The more senses and body parts you involve, the more of your brain is used**, so try these ideas:
 - a. **Reading and writing music is such a vital skill!** If you have music, **writing out the counting or singing** can help you think of one less thing while reading the music. If you are writing out your music in a drum journal, bigger is better to make the picture stick in your mind!
 - b. **Develop photographic memory and play the image in your mind** - don't just stare aimlessly into space or at your music stand. Instead, stare at the measure you're learning, then close your eyes and try to keep the picture in your mind. If you start to lose it, repeat the process. Now open your eyes and while still "seeing" the picture in your mind's eye, play what you "see" there instead of what's on the music stand. If you lose the image, repeat the process until you don't. This is important so you can instead focus: on your drums and limbs for better technique, on what you're hearing for better musicality, and on the audience for better connection and showmanship.
 - c. **Refer to the "Counting and Singing Method" document for details.** Using your mouth to loudly count what to play (with accents even louder) will pre-program your left-brain (the logical, math side). Raise the pitch on the Pickup Notes ("+" or "a" of Count 4), just like a conductor raises their baton. Loudly sing your parts to pre-program your right-brain (the creative, music side). Counting and singing **focuses your mind** past distracting thoughts and gets you **mentally coordinated first** to then be physically coordinated. Do this first without music to develop a phonographic (sound) memory so you

won't lose the groove when you **next sing/count with a metronome or music** for better timing. If you can't do it at their tempo without a mistake, stop! Set your metronome slower or use a "slow-downer" music app until you can play without mistakes.

- d. **Now "air drum"** so you don't cover up the metronome or music as you focus on your listening, singing and counting. Line up what you're saying and air-drumming to what you're hearing.
 - e. **Now play what you're saying as you continue to say it**, making sure you play softer than the music so that you are always "locking in" to what you are hearing.
5. **If you struggle with a particular spot in your music**, just work on that "bottleneck in your assembly line" or "weak link in the chain" until you can go into and out of this spot smoothly at slower speeds, gradually increasing it until you are at tempo. Remember, if you make a mistake, go more slowly!
6. **Play one Note, Count, or Phrase at a time and combine!** What is hard by the yard is cinch by the inch! Learn one Note well slowly then faster; learn the next Note slowly then faster; combine these Notes slowly then faster; finally continue to learn each Note and combine with the previous Notes. Or learn Count 1's rhythm slowly then faster; learn Count 2 slowly then faster; combine these Counts slowly then faster; finally repeat the process until all Counts have been combined. Or learn a larger Phrase of uninterrupted notes slowly then faster; learn the next Phrase slowly then faster; combine the Phrases with their dividing rests slowly then faster; finally repeat the process until all Phrases are combined.
7. **Sometimes, it's too difficult to play all your limbs all at once, even at slow tempos.** The way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time! First, learn each limb separately, counting/singing/playing in Time. Then try every **combo of 2 limbs**, always counting/singing **louder** what you plan on adding in, like: While counting/singing/playing the RH Ride "1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +" **softly**, count/sing/play **louder** the next easiest limb: LH Snare "2 4" backbeats. Then RH Ride + LF Hi-Hat on "1 2 3 4" Counts. Then LH SD + LF HH. Then to RH Ride + harder RF Bass Drum "1 + 3 +," and LH SD + RF BD, and LF HH + RF BD. **Then to 3 limbs:** RH Ride + LH SD + RF BD, and LH SD + LF HH + RF BD, and RH Ride + LF HH + RF BD, and RH Ride + LH SD + LF HH. **Finally to 4 limbs:** RH Ride + LH SD + RF BD + LF HH.