“A Fresh Approach to the Snare Drum” is the most comprehensive method available that simultaneously provides instruction for rhythm reading, technique fundamentals, rudimental training, coordination and musicianship necessary for today’s well rounded percussionist! The accompaniment CDs make practicing FUN by utilizing percussion instruments and grooves from around the world!

Ask for “A Fresh Approach to the Snare Drum” at your local music store, or order online at mwpublications.com
Learn About the Snare Drum and Sticks

Before you grab the sticks and start playing, take a few minutes to learn about your new instrument! There are several free video lessons on YouTube where I describe the parts of the drum, show you how to set up your percussion kit and give you step-by-step instructions on how to tune your drum.

Find the FREE video lessons here: www.youtube.com/user/FreshApproachBooks
The Matched Grip

The matched grip is most commonly used by percussionists because it immediately applies to all other percussion instruments. I recommend that all beginning students start with matched grip because of the relative ease that young students have learning to play with two hands that grip the stick and move in exactly the same manner. Here are the steps to achieving a perfect matched grip.

Grasp the stick between the fleshy part of the thumb and the first joint of the index finger about 5 inches from the butt end of the stick. This point of contact is called the “fulcrum” and acts as a pivot point for the stick. The tip of the index finger gently curves around the stick. Notice that the thumb is horizontally even with the index finger.

Lightly wrap the remaining three fingers around the stick. Avoid squeezing the stick unnecessarily!

The proper playing position can be achieved by first standing without the sticks in your hands. Allow your arms to hang loosely by your sides and your shoulders to relax.

Lift your forearms until they are slightly below parallel to the floor. Notice that the hands are naturally flat (or almost flat) and that the elbows are in a relaxed position, a few inches from your sides. You’ll want to keep this natural space between the hands.

The positioning of your snare drum or practice pad is very important! Adjust the height of the drum so that the top rim is 4 inches below your belly button (about a hand’s width). As you pull the sticks up to playing position, check to see if the forearms are in the correct position (slightly below parallel), then make slight adjustments from there.

Bring both sticks up, placing the tips in the center of the drum. Your hands should be close to flat, and the sticks should be at about a 90° angle. Compare yourself in a mirror to these pictures of the matched grip. If everything looks good, then you are now ready to learn the stroke!
The Traditional Left Hand Grip

The traditional grip was developed many years ago at a time when drummers wore their instruments hanging on the side of the body. With this drum position, it made sense to use this left hand grip – but today, it’s much easier to learn to play with matched grip.

Because the traditional grip involves an entirely different grip from right to left, as well as using different stroke motions with dissimilar muscle groups, I recommend that all beginners start with the matched grip and “switch over” to traditional ONLY after the fundamentals of the matched stroke are developed. If you are just starting out and still wish to learn the traditional grip, be patient and persistent to develop the proper technique.

Start with the arm hanging by your side, shoulder relaxed.

Pick up your forearm, maintaining the relaxed hand position, with the thumbnail facing up. You should always be able to look down and see your thumbnail!

Open your hand as if holding an imaginary tennis ball (fig. A). Lay the stick in the crotch of the hand, about four inches from the butt. The shaft of the stick will rest just above the cuticle of the ring finger – between the knuckle and where the fingernail begins (fig. B). Wrap the index finger around the stick and place the pad of the thumb on the side of the first knuckle (fig. C). The middle finger rests lightly on the stick and the pinky curves under to provide support for the ring finger.

As you move the stick into playing position, remember to point the thumbnail toward the ceiling. Check your grip and playing position in a mirror.
When playing the snare drum, there are 5 types of strokes, or ways that you will strike the drum with the stick. The first stroke you’ll learn is called the REBOUND stroke, named for the way that the stick is allowed to naturally REBOUND when it strikes the drum head.

Bring the stick to the “up” position by bending right wrist up until the stick is perpendicular to the floor. The forearm might raise slightly, but make sure that the elbow stays close to the body. Allow a little space between the palm of the hand and the fingers. Relax the wrists and fingers – don’t squeeze the stick!

The motion that you’ll use to produce the rebound stroke is similar to bouncing a basketball. When you throw a basketball to the floor, it will naturally rebound – no energy is required other than the initial toss. Start with your stick in the up position and “throw” it towards the drum. As the stick strikes the head, allow it to REBOUND naturally – pushing the wrist and hand back to the up position. If you throw the stick with enough velocity (speed), the energy of the rebound push your hand back up. DO NOT PULL THE STICK BACK UP! Let the rebound do all the work!

During the rebound stroke, keep the fulcrum in tact, with the back fingers resting lightly on the stick. Remember to stay as relaxed as possible.

The Rebound Stroke

One Hand Exercise

To master the rebound stroke, you must train your muscles to respond in the same way every time, whether you’re thinking about it or not. We refer to this as “muscle memory.”

To train your muscles to make a perfect rebound stroke, set a metronome on ‘60’ and play right hand strokes for 2 minutes – then repeat the exercise with the metronome set at 80 beats per minute, 100 and 120.

Watch yourself in a mirror to constantly check your grip and path of the stick. Concentrate on feeling the motion of the stick. Allow it to rebound naturally without any tension in your arms, wrists, hands and fingers. Matched grip players should repeat this exercise on the left hand, paying attention to the same details as the right.

Left Hand Traditional Stroke

For the traditional grip player, the left hand stroke is completely different than the right hand, though the concept of the rebound stroke is exactly the same. The “up” position of the left hand is created by “turning the wrist” on the axis of the forearm, similar to turning a doorknob. It is very important to note that the stick motion of the left hand is made BY ROTATING THE WRIST – not by lifting the forearm!

Using the same rebound concept described above, start in the up position and “throw” the stick to the drum. As the stick rebounds, allow the energy to rotate the stick back to the up position – DON’T LIFT IT BACK UP! Stay as relaxed as possible in the wrists and fingers, making sure that the contact point of the thumb and index finger remains in tact. Allow the stick some “wiggle” room between the index finger and middle finger if that helps you to relax the hand (but don’t take the back three fingers completely off the stick)!

Repeat the “One Hand Exercise” on the left hand. This is where patience and discipline is required! The left hand traditional grip is usually very awkward for a length of time because you are working muscle groups that are rarely used in normal day-to-day activity.

A SPECIAL NOTE:
There is no substitute for a professional drum instructor! I highly recommend that you find a teacher in your area, especially early in your drumming career. Call local music stores or the music department at a local university for recommendations.