Rhythm by the Numbers A Drummer's Guide to Creative Practicing

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ISBN-10: 1-4706-2684-5 ISBN-13: 978-1-4706-2684-6

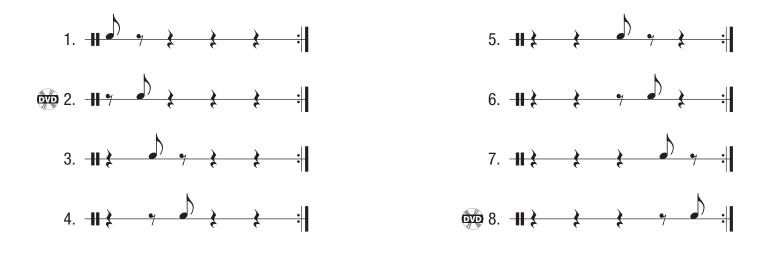
Table of Contents

Introduction
About the Author4
The Method 5
How to Use This Book6
A Word About Rhythm6
Counting6
Stickings6
Developing the Inner Clock
About the Exercises9
Section 1: Even Groups10
Chapter 1: One Note in an Eight-Note Group 11
Chapter 2: One Note in a Four-Note Group
Chapter 3: One Note in a Six-Note Group
Chapter 4: Two Notes in an Eight-Note Group 12
Chapter 5: Two Notes in a Four-Note Group
Chapter 6: Two Notes in a Six-Note Group
Chapter 7: Three Notes in an Eight-Note Group 14
Chapter 8: Three Notes in a Four-Note Group
Chapter 9: Three Notes in a Six-Note Group
Chapter 10: Four Notes in an Eight-Note Group 17
Chapter 11: Four Notes in a Six-Note Group
Chapter 12: Five Notes in an Eight-Note Group 20
Chapter 13: Five Notes in a Six-Note Group21
Chapter 14: Six Notes in an Eight-Note Group22
Chapter 15: Seven Notes in an Eight-Note Group23

Section 2: Odd Groups	24
Chapter 16: One and Two Notes in a Three-Note Group2	<u>2</u> 4
Chapter 17: Two Notes in a Five-Note Group	24
Chapter 18: Two Notes in a Seven-Note Group2	25
Chapter 19: Three Notes in a Five-Note Group2	26
Chapter 20: Three Notes in a Seven-Note Group2	26
Chapter 21: Four Notes in a Five-Note Group2	27
Chapter 22: Four Notes in a Seven-Note Group2	27
Chapter 23: Five Notes in a Seven-Note Group2	29
Chapter 24: Six Notes in a Seven-Note Group2	29
Section 3: All Rhythms Applied in ³ / ₄	60
Section 4: Eighth-Note Triplet Values	31
Section 5: Sixteenth-Note Values	32
Section 6: Other Applications for the Rhythmic Elements	32
All Rhythms Applied in ${f 2}$	32
All Rhythms Applied in $rac{7}{4}$	3
Glossary	35

CHAPTER 1 One Note in an Eight-Note Group

The exercises in this book will start more simply, and then move to more complex rhythms. By beginning with one note in an eight-note group, you will have time to think about how this note will be applied. In addition, you can focus on timekeeping and developing a good feel. Make sure to be aware of whether the note(s) in the rhythmic element is a downbeat note or an upbeat note. This will help you keep track of where you are according to the prevailing beat.



CHAPTER 2 One Note in a Four-Note Group

The next step is to apply a single note in a four-note group. Obviously, there is half as much space between the notes, effectively changing the rhythmic flow of the element and how it moves across the beat and the bar line. Use the application procedures set forth on page 10 of Section 1, Even Groups.

For example, in $\frac{4}{4}$, a three-note melody will resolve in one and a half measures and, if continued, will resolve again after three measures. Two cycles of the melody will have been executed. Some of the rhythmic elements will seem easier than others because their resolution coincides with the beat and the bar. Others pose a greater challenge due to the polyrhythmic or poly-phrase effect. Each note of the rhythmic element can be voiced, or the entire rhythm can be applied to an instrument. The key is to look for new ways to apply the idea.

Start with the time feel in the right hand, and apply the rhythmic element with the left hand and bass drum. Then, perform the second approach (page 10, option B), which uses the rhythmic element as a rhythmic theme, or as target notes while you embellish or fill in around them. You can also create what sounds like a new time feel—in effect, a superimposed metric **modulation**: the secondary feel will sound as if a time modulation has occurred, only to resolve back to the original feel at some point. This is a great way to fool the listener into thinking that the music just took a left turn. Just don't fool yourself in the process. Refer to the DVD for examples of this approach.





Section 2: Odd Groups

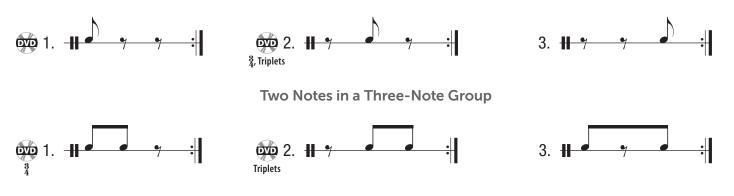
Musicians learn how to syncopate by applying either an odd number to an even-time flow, or an even number to an oddtime flow. Players use the number three as the first step in syncopating the beat. Syncopation creates rhythmic tension, something very crucial in music. Without it, music would sound rather pedantic—dull and lacking in the tension-release effect that is so important to our senses.

You will find the following chapters to be more challenging than the material thus far. But the rewards can be great as you learn to feel the cross-rhythmic effect while maintaining control of **time flow** and **musical phrasing**. Melodic application will enhance the cross-rhythmic effect and also extend the phrase, delaying the release of tension. Start with short phrases, like two measures, and then move to four-measure phrases. And remember, a three-note grouping resolves naturally in three bars of time.

CHAPTER 16 One and Two Notes in a Three-Note Group

This is the first odd group to be explored. The mere fact that the number three is odd adds a whole new dimension to the rhythmic flow and can create syncopation, especially in an even time signature like **4**. As you apply a melodic approach, the syncopated effect is enhanced and can even cause what seems to the ear to be some kind of time modulation. You as the player must learn to control this method and not lose track of the all-important beat 1 of the bar. Don't make syncopation the "Enemy of Your Time."

One Note in a Three-Note Group



CHAPTER 17 Two Notes in a Five-Note Group

You have learned to handle the number three as a way to syncopate the beat. But the number five is a whole new adventure. Most Western music doesn't utilize it due to **rhythmic distortion**, as five is harder to feel and control.

Audiences are historically not used to the tension that it creates, and players find it more difficult to manage this number as well. But using odd numbers, such as 5, 7, 9, 11, etc., has become more common, especially by musicians intent on finding new horizons for their music.

Depending on how you want to hear and employ this rhythmic element, consider subdividing it into groups of two and three. This will help you manage the sequence and its application on the drumset.

Start with one voice, and learn to feel the rhythm in the odd sequence. Keep your phrases short at first (e.g., two measures). Then move to a four-measure phrase. Keep in mind that a natural resolution will take five measures, a phrase length that would be unusual in most musical situations.

