



INTRODUCTION TO HAND DRUMMING

Basic Rhythms and Techniques

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Basic Strokes

I. Bass Stroke:

To make a bass stroke, move your hand up and forward toward the center of the drum, along the imaginary line running through your forearm and middle finger. Then simply bring it down onto the center of the drum and let it **BOUNCE UP**. Keep your fingers relaxed and together. Your thumb can be either pulled against your index finger or extended away from your hand. Most of the bass tone comes from your **PALM**, so that's where you should focus the weight of your hand. You can also let your fingers make contact with the drumhead by keeping your whole hand flat, or you can lift your fingers slightly so that only the palm makes contact. Experiment to see what sounds and feels best to you.

II. Open Stroke: TONE

When you make an open tone, the alignment of your hand in relation to the edge of the drum is critical. Your hand should make contact with the edge of the drumhead at the crease where your fingertips join the palm. The easiest way to get the feel of the open stroke or **TEK** is to pretend you are dribbling a basketball. Raise your fingers a few inches off the end of the drum by flexing your wrist and lifting your forearm slightly. Keep your fingers relaxed and they can be together or slightly apart and keep your thumb extended away from your hand so you don't whack it on the edge of the drum.

Now bring your hand down and bounce your fingers off the drumhead. The part of your palm just below the crease where your fingers join the hand should make only light contact with the edge of the drum. Don't let your fingers linger on the drumhead or you will muffle the tone.

Depending on the drum, the tone can sound dry and muted or round and bright. When you make an open tone, your fingers should make contact with the drumhead between the crease where the fingers join the palm and the last knuckle of each finger. The pads of your fingertips- the fingerprint zone- should touch the drumhead just barely or not at all. And the weight of your hand should be focused as much as possible on the bony joint at the first knuckle away from the palm. A hard **TEK** is an accent and marked as **TEK'**

A variation in tone can be produced by hitting the drum head slightly inside the edge. The sound will be slightly lower than at the edge. This provides a change in tone as we will see when we play the third eye chakra rhythm.

Syllabrics

African: Base - Gun Gun, Tone - Go Do, Slap - Pa, Ta
Mid East: Base - Doum, Tone - Tek Tekka, Slap - Ka.

III. The Slap: (Slap)

The slap has a hard sound like the crack of a whip. It's made by bringing the pads of your fingertips down in a whip-like motion onto the drumhead. In the beginning it is easiest to move your hand slightly forward from the position of the open stroke toward the center of the drum to make the slap. This means the point of contact with the edge of the drum when you make a slap will be a couple of inches lower on your palm than when you make a tone.

To get ready to make a slap, lift your hand an inch or two off the drum by raising your forearm slightly. At the same time, flex your wrist and pull your fingers up until your hand makes a 45-degree angle with the drumhead. Keep your fingers relaxed and together or slightly apart. Your thumb should be away from your hand. When you bring your hand down, only the pad of each fingertip- the fingerprint section- will make contact with the drumhead.

Now you're ready to try the slap stroke. Bring your hand up by raising your forearm and flexing your wrist. Now bring it down in a whip-like motion and bounce your fingertips off the drumhead as if it were red hot. It may help to imagine that you have a lead weight in each fingertip and the rest of each finger is completely weightless. Your palm should make only light contact with the edge of the drum.

Of the basic strokes, the slap is the most difficult to master so don't get discouraged if it takes some time. If your hands hurt you're probably doing something wrong.

IV. Silence (S)

Silence..that is you play nothing but feel the silent beat as you pace the rhythm.

V. Muff (Muffled Slap)

Essentially the same as a slap, but muffled. In effect you do the same stroke but hold your hand on the drum to remove the resonance.

PLAY ONLY AS LOUD AS YOU CAN PLAY COMFORTABLY. VOLUME IS NOT THE ISSUE BUT SMOOTH MOVEMENT OF THE HANDS AND CLARITY OF THE TONE IS. DON'T TRY AND OUT VOLUME YOUR PARTNER AND HOLD THE PACE OF THE RHYTHM.

- Practice getting out of the way and letting the rhythm carry you
- Remember to breathe.
- In a group if you can't hear yourself you're not playing loud enough
- If all you hear is yourself you can't make music with the group
- It's not how hard you hit the drum but how you feel the rhythm and hear the tones as you play

PRACTICE RHYTHMS

2/4

R = RIGHT HAND L = LEFT HAND

1	+	2	+
BASE	TONE TONE	BASE	SLAP
R	R L	R	L

ALTERNATE

BASE	TONE TONE	BASE TONE	SLAP
R	R L	R L	R

SECOND RHYTHM

Play smoothly and pick up pace as you get comfortable

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
Base	Tone Tone	Base	Slap	Base	Base	Tone	Slap
R	R L	R	L	R	L	R	L

BÉLADI
(DANCE-NOMADIC TRIBES –NORTH AFRICA)
DANCE RHYTHM

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
CORE	BASE R	BASE L			BASE R			
FILLED	BASE R	BASE L	TONE TONE R L	SLAP R	BASE R	TONE TONE R L	SLAP R	TONE TONE R L

Fanga Ver. 3 4/4 - (Jonathan Harmor - <https://youtu.be/1bjcjRCSk-E>)

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
Layer 1*	Base	s	s	Tone	s	tone	tone	s	Base	s	Base	s	Tone	Tone	s	s
	R			L		R	L		R		L		R	L		
Layer 2	Base	s	s	Base	Base	s	Tone	Tone	Base	s	s	Base	Base	s	Tone	Tone
	R			R	L		R	L	R			R	L		R	L
Layer 3A	Base	s	s	Tone	Base	s	Tone	s	Base	s	s	Tone	Base	s	Tone	s
Bob M.	R			L	R		L		R			L	R		L	
Layer 3	tone	tone	s	s	tone	tone	s	s	tone	tone	s	s	tone	tone	s	s
	R	L			R	L			R	L			R	L		
DD	DUN								DUN		DUN					
Bell	B				b		b		B			b		b		
Call	FLAM	s	tone	tone	s	tone	s	Tone	Tone	s	Tone	s	TONE	s	s	s
Break	Base	Base	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone	tone

Fanga A Lafayia / Ashé ashé (4x) Ashé, ashé / Ashé, ashé.**
 Ikabo A Lafiya / Ashé ashé (4x) Ashé, ashé / Ashé, ashé.
 Eluga A Lafiya / Ashé, ashé (4x) Ashé, ashé / Ashé, ashé.

* **LAYER ONE** appears in all versions of Fanga
 ** Most folk only know the first verse. It's okay.

Fanga is a rhythm, from Liberia that has been thought by Babatunde Olatunji, a West African Percussion teacher who, with his lessons and personality, inspired many Djembe players in the United States. Fanga was used by traveling tribes upon entering new villages. When a visiting tribe was approaching a village they would sing *Fanga-Alafiya* to indicate that they come in peace. If the villagers welcome them, they reply: *Ashé-Ashé*. Then, the travelers and villagers reverse the lines. The *fanga* song was often the common denominator between tribes that otherwise spoke different languages. Music is a true universal language. The song he used to sing to accompany the rhythm is in the Yoruba language. The song is a fun chant that captures the essence of peace, friendship, conviviality and hospitality. In singing the *fanga* there needs to be a Caller and a Responder. The lyrics are simple but fun. (*Ashé* = so be it) – Source: West-African Percussion Pages

CHIFTATELLI

NORTH AFRICAN-TYPICALLY PLAYED SLOW AND USED AS REST RHYTHM
GREAT DRUM IMPROVISATIONAL PATTERN

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	
BASE	TONE	TONE	TONE	SLAP	S	TONE	SLAP	S
R	L	R	L	R		L	R	
5	+	6	+	7	+	8	+	
BASE	S	BASE	S	TONE	S	TONE	TONE	
L		R		L		R	L	

VAR1

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+		
BASE	TONE	TONE	TONE	SLAP	S	TONE	SLAP	S	
R	L	R	L	R		L	R		
5	+	6	+	7	+	8	+		
BASE	TONE	TONE	BASE	TONE	TONE	SLAP	S	TONE	TONE