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Hi-Hat Technique in Different Styles

The hi-hat is for modern drumset playing what brakes are to a car—very necessary. It adds color and spice, and gives that final touch that makes one style of music distinctive from the next. The preciseness with which you play the hi-hat (exactly when the hi-hat is opened, closed or silent) is becoming more and more a requirement for professional playing. To facilitate its learning, I have written the following twelve patterns. First, play the patterns with only the hand and the foot on the hi-hat.



12 numbered musical patterns for hi-hat technique, each in 4/4 time. The patterns are as follows:

- 1. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 2. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 3. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 4. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 5. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 6. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 7. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 8. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 9. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 10. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 11. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).
- 12. Four groups of eighth notes: (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note), (open hi-hat, eighth note), (closed hi-hat, eighth note).

After you feel comfortable playing the patterns, apply the bass drum as indicated in Example 1 to all twelve patterns.

1. Musical pattern 1 with a bass drum line (B.D.) indicated by 'x' marks on a lower staff.

Now, apply the left hand on the snare drum to reinforce the opened hi-hat as indicated in Example 2 to all twelve patterns.

2. Musical pattern 2 with a snare drum line (S.D.) indicated by 'x' marks on a lower staff.

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Next, mix one bar of bossa nova and one bar of the twelve hi-hat patterns as indicated in Example 3 to apply the technique in a musical context.

To obtain a double-time or half-time feel, the first two patterns are converted to a sixteenth-note feel as indicated in Example A.

To play an open and closed hi-hat in a funky shuffle, the first three quarter notes of Example A are converted into a twelve-eight time feel.

To apply the hi-hat in a jazz context, pattern 1 is converted into a triplet feel.

From examples A, B and C, three variations have been derived for each example by adding the bass drum and snare drum, to allow for a more definitive style with increased independence and coordination.

Variation 1: Written with a Latin-funk feel.

Variation 2: Written for a funky shuffle.

Variation 3: Written in a jazz feel.

For more interesting playing, a bass drum shuffle was added on B and C of all three variations. Note, that in B of Variation 1, a Latin-clave rhythm was added to the snare drum.

For even more insight into hi-hat playing in different styles, try to transpose from the original twelve patterns as demonstrated in the article.