

# LEARNING AND APPLYING STROKE TYPES

BY JOSH GOTTRY

Before we begin applying stroke types to anything, I suppose we should first make sure we all understand what the four stroke types are and how they work. So, here we go!

## FULL STROKE

This stroke starts in an up position (i.e. 6 - 9 inches above the drum head) and after striking the head rebounds to this same up position. Result: a loud stroke preparing for another loud stroke.

## DOWN STROKE

This stroke also starts in an up position, but after striking the head will only rebound to a position approximately 1 inch above the head (the down position). Result: a loud stroke preparing for a soft stroke.

## UP STROKE

This stroke starts in the down position and after striking the head will rebound to the up position. Result: a soft stroke preparing for a loud stroke.

## TAP STROKE

This stroke starts in the down position and after striking the head rebounds only to the same down position. Result: a soft stroke preparing for another soft stroke.

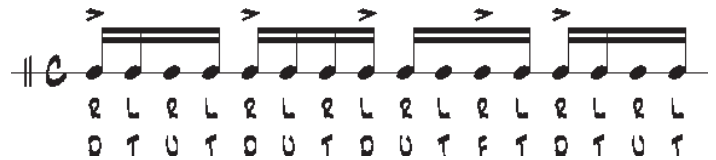
## APPLICATION TO RUDIMENTS

Before applying these to rudiments, practice isolating these strokes and or combining them in various patterns. Once you've mastered the four stroke types independently, you can begin applying them to a rudiments. First, how about a paradiddle. The first note of a paradiddle is accented so it must be either a full or down stroke. Since the next time that hand is used it is not accented, we can label that first stroke a down stroke (loud preparing for soft). The second note is unaccented (tap or up), but prepares for a loud stroke (start of the second paradiddle) and therefore must be an up stroke. The last two notes are unaccented and prepare for unaccented notes so therefore must be tap strokes. The stroke types are labeled below the sticking in the example below.



## APPLICATION TO ACCENT PATTERNS

Stroke types can also be applied to a variety of accent patterns. Take the following example:



Notice that the right hand uses all four stroke types because of the four accented notes and four unaccented notes it must play. Since the left hand is only responsible for one accent within this measure, you can see that the majority of the left hand strokes are tap strokes.

## WHY USE STROKE TYPES

Now that we've covered what stroke types are and how they are applied in various situations, it would be good to mention why all percussionists should use these stroke types in their playing. As percussionists, we are expected to make music by striking something. How we strike that something, whether it be a bass drum, snare drum, marimba, or trash can lid, the stroke we use helps to determine the sound that is produced. If we can take a few brief moments to determine the stroke types that would best apply in the given situation, we can better control the sound that we make. If we can control the sound we make - we can make the music that is expected of us!



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