



# YAMAHA

## Educator Series

PERCUSSION



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## From Stone to Samba

*By Michael Kingan*

I developed the following practice routine to solve technical deficiencies encountered while working on samba patterns. I was going about it in the typical way, using the suggested beats found in many fine method books, but my hands and feet were not aligned, and I was not satisfied with the balance or overall sound I was getting. As I started breaking things down, I found a methodical way to apply George Lawrence Stone's Stick Control exercises to various standard foot patterns. I have shared this approach with all levels of players with much success.

These exercises require playing singles and doubles on the bass drum and consistent 2 and 4 on the hi-hat. Since there are a variety of techniques for either foot, such as flatfoot or heel-up, decide (with the help of your teacher) which technique is appropriate for you and then stay with it. Avoid changing techniques from exercise to exercise, or from one stage to the next, just because your first attempts feel awkward. Also, volume control is important, so I recommend that the bass drum beater comes off of the head after each stroke, and that you use a hi-hat technique that produces a solid, crisp sound.

If you've worked out of the Stick Control book, you know to strive for consistency, avoiding the "inflections" of one predominant hand. However, some of these exercises groove more when inflections are allowed. So, first play all stickings as evenly as possible with no accents in order to develop technique; then allow some natural inflections and slight accents that make the patterns sound more Latin-like and musical. Practice with a metronome, start slowly, and gradually gain speed.

### Primary Sticking Components

Example 1 shows six right-hand-lead Stick Control patterns, which I call the Primary Sticking Components. Repeat each sticking pattern one to two minutes until mastered. Play them first at a medium volume without accents and then with inflections. It is more important to play the repetitions with consistency than to go from one pattern to the next.

Example 1:



- |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | L |
| 2. | R | R | L | L | R | R | L | L |
| 3. | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | L |
| 4. | R | L | L | R | L | R | R | L |
| 5. | R | R | L | R | L | L | R | L |
| 6. | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R |



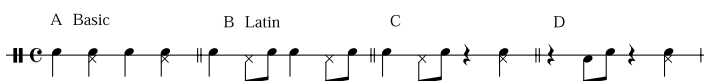
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### Foot Patterns

Once you are comfortable with the sticking patterns, begin to incorporate the foot patterns shown in Example 2. Start with Basic pattern A. Add this to each sticking pattern at a comfortable tempo, medium volume, while constantly evaluating the alignment between your hands and feet. For balance, your hi-hat should be strong and crisp, and your bass drum should be medium soft. Play each pattern over and over; don't go from one sticking to the next.

After you are confident and comfortable with these combinations, try the primary sticking components with the Latin foot pattern B. Always check your hands-to-feet alignment, not only with the hands as they match each of the bass drum strokes, but with the hi-hat beat, too. This fundamental point will determine if your samba sounds good, so develop this foundation at a comfortable bossa nova speed before accelerating to a faster samba tempo. Eventually, after you complete some of the following steps, you should go back to the basic sticking components and play them with foot patterns C and D.

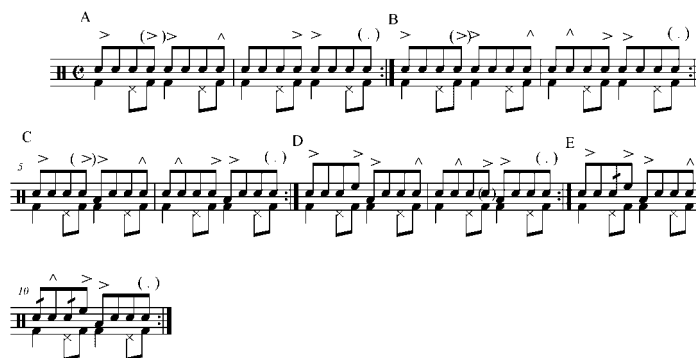
Example 2:



### Street Beat Groove and Improvisation

A samba was once described to me as "a two-bar phrase with a 'push' or an anticipation accent to the second bar." Keeping this in mind, let's break with the technical exercises and start working on two-bar grooves. Remember to constantly monitor hands/feet alignment and don't let the bass drum volume over-balance the rest of the kit. Playing with appropriate inflections and accents is now encouraged. I have suggested and notated these inflections with different types of accents, staccato dots, and parenthesis (slight or optional).

Example 3:



Pattern 3A is the basic groove- don't make it sound too technical or "like a textbook." Note the "push" to the second measure (the marcato accent on the last eighth note of measure 1). Pattern 3B is a slight variation. Note the marcato accents that straddle the middle barline and the inflection at the end that makes the pattern roll over onto itself. Pattern 3C uses the floor tom to create a surdo effect. Pattern 3D adds the mounted tom. The note in the second measure in parenthesis indicates that it is optional or could be played softer every other time for variety.

Finally, pattern 3E has a nice samba "street beat" sound. Use it as a starting point to explore your own ideas. Add diddles or buzzes to any or all of the indicated notes. Try bouncing any unaccented note. Use different playing spots on the drumhead or experiment with light rimshots and flams.

### Fills

Next, try pattern 3E in conjunction with the 2-bar fills shown in example 4. Play two bars of street beat and two bars of fill (a 4-bar phrase) or six bars of street beat and two bars of fill (an 8-bar phrase).

Example 4:





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### Triple Rights

The next four sticking patterns in example 5 all have three consecutive right-hand notes in common. At first, they each may feel slightly different, but mechanically they are identical. The three rights should be made with one throw and two open rebounds whether they start on the beat (7) or just after it (10). Likewise, the single left should feel like an easily played half note whether it is on the beat (10) or just before the beat (7). The most common mistake (made with 7-9) is to "poke" the left stroke in place rather than place it correctly with an easy, flowing stroke. Follow the practice advice given earlier for these four patterns, always checking for smooth left-hand strokes and three continuous rights, even if the pattern starts in the middle of the triplet.

Example 5:

7.	R	R	R	L	R	R	R	L
8.	R	R	L	R	R	R	L	R
9.	R	L	R	R	R	L	R	R
10.	L	R	R	R	L	R	R	R

After these are mastered, add the foot patterns for Example 2. Start with foot pattern A and remember to check your alignment and balance (don't play the bass drum too loud). When you are comfortable with this combination, use these same four sticking patterns with foot pattern B.

### Right Hand on Ride

Let's apply this alignment to the samba by moving right-hand sticking pattern 9 to the ride cymbal. (See Example 6.) Your right hand is now playing the samba ride pattern and your left hand is filling up the space on the snare. Do not play on the bell of the cymbal at this time; that will come later. Remember to play your three rights as one throw with two rebounds and don't "poke" the left hand into its spot. Constantly check your hands/feet alignment. In terms of balance, the left hand should be softer than the right, and don't let our bass drum doubles be too loud. Work this at different tempos, starting at bossa nova speed and gradually working toward a samba tempo. This is an important "arrival point."

Example 6:

R L R R R L R R R R R R R R R R

### Left-Hand Variations

The next step is to develop left-hand independence. You can draw from sticking pattern 9 by varying your left hand slightly. Try the next four rhythms with the basic samba ostinato. You can play stick-on -head or cross-stick on rim. You can also play a clave pattern in your left hand. As before, use these patterns as a point of departure to explore your own ideas. Strive to make these grooves feel good and sound authentic at all tempos.

Example 7:

**Clave:**

### Bell Patterns

Another way to produce Latin beats is using what I call "1's and 2's." A former teacher of mine once showed me that having your hands play a unison pattern while your feet plays foot pattern B can sound very rhythmically satisfying. When you examine two standard bell patterns you notice that they are made up of one- and two-note groupings. Play the two patterns shown in Example 8 over and over at different tempos until they groove. Use your right hand on the ride area or the bell of the cymbal, and the left hand plays the snare drum with either snares on, off, or cross-stick.

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Example 8

For keeping time during a song or accompanying a solo, these are great grooves to start with. As the progresses, you can develop your own beat by using combinations of 1's and 2's, with an occasional 3 (or maybe even a 4!).

Try the etude shown in Example 9 with no inflections, then with the suggested ones, and then with your own. Pick any one or two measures you like and make your own groove out of it. Explore- the combinations are endless. As long as your tempo is steady, your alignment and balance are in check, and you can repeat the patterns consistently, you and the musicians you play with will be satisfied.

I hope this approach is an aid to you as you develop your Latin-style playing, and remember to go back and work foot patterns C and D.

(Play with Latin foot pattern B)

**A**

**B**

Example 9:

(Play with Latin foot pattern B)

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