

Wire Brush Technique

Practicing brushes is excellent for developing strength in your wrist and fingers. It can help develop the muscles and reflexes and also improve your control with sticks. With the exception of the closed roll, any pattern that is played with sticks can be executed with brushes. Of course, you don't have the advantage of a natural rebound with brushes as you do with a stick. Nevertheless, you can develop a clear, crisp tone with brushes and play with surprising volume when using a proper technique.

A brush can produce staccato and legato sounds...

For a staccato sound, snap the brush downward to the head and draw the sound from the drum by striking and lifting the fan immediately.

For a "slappy" staccato sound, press the fan into the drum head.

For a legato approach, sweep the fan across the head in a circular motion producing a "swish" sound. The brush fan pivots across the head with a flowing motion controlled by the fingers, forearm, and wrist.

Right Hand Hold



The right brush is controlled with a combination of wrist and fingers with all four fingers remaining on the handle. To produce a sound, you must lift the fan off the head since a brush will not rebound like a stick.

For the left hand, the index and middle fingers are positioned on top of the brush handle as the ring finger acts as a bumper underneath. The fingers stay in constant contact with the handle at all times.

Left Hand with fingers in the open position (beats 1 and 3)



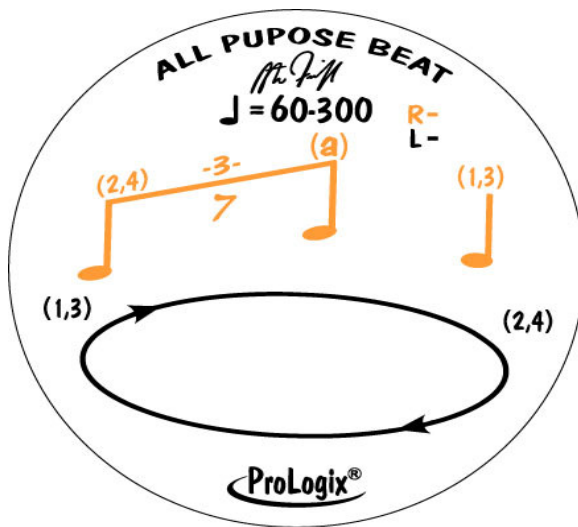
Left Hand with fingers in the closed position (beats 2 and 4)



The open and closed positions in the previous photographs refer to the movement of the fingers when performing legato sweeps on the drum head.

Practice this finger movement playing legato quarter notes in 4/4 time with your left hand. Beats one and three utilize the open position, beats two and four (closed position), close your fingers into your palm.

The most common jazz beat diagram with brushes is notated below. Notice that the right hand plays the jazz ride pattern on the opposite side of the drum staying out of the way of the left hand legato swish. The left hand rotates around the drum in a clockwise motion keeping a smooth and connected pulse with its movement.



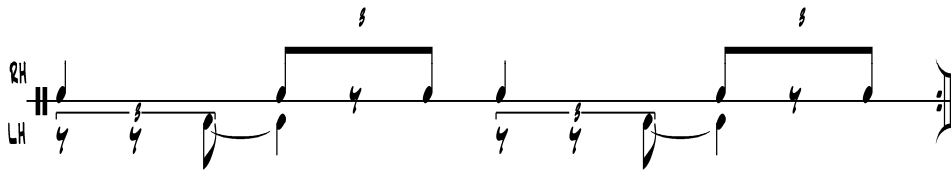
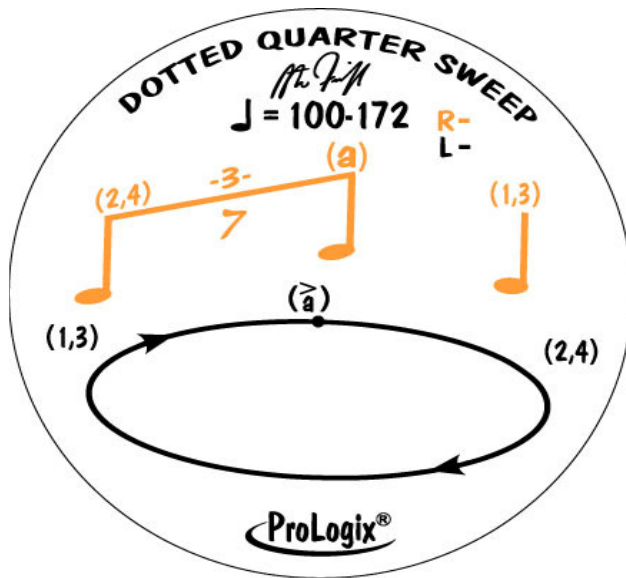
Spending time practicing brush beats with recordings can help you feel confident as you begin creating beats that swing and sound balanced hand to hand. My overall brush concept is based on moves that my teacher Joe Morello showed me. I also listen to drummers Jeff Hamilton, Ed Thigpen, Shelly Manne and Philly Joe Jones and try to emulate the sound and feel they produce.

Below are several brush patterns for practice in varying styles with tempo ranges for each diagram. Please refer to the DVD to view a performance of each brush diagram notated below. Visit www.prologixpercussion.com for more info.

The fast swing brush beat combines two sounds: The staccato tap in the right hand with the left hand swish technique.

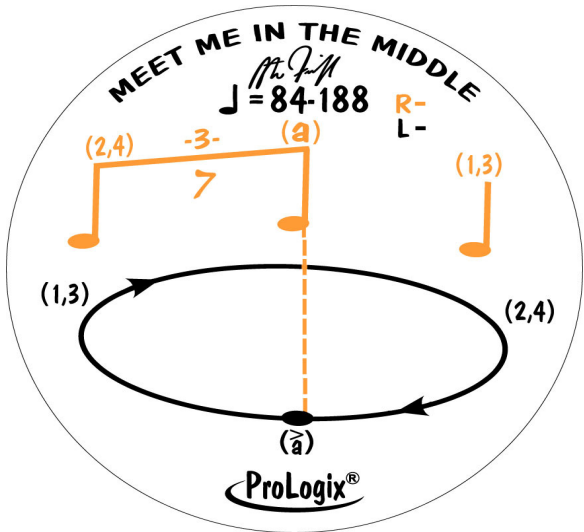
Since this beat is played at tempos of 300 beats per minute or faster, relax and breathe...

Also, focus on blending the staccato tap sound with the left swish brush pattern so the beat sounds complete hand to hand.



With the quarter note sweep beat, the left hand creates a sweep accent on the “a” of beats 1 and 3 by closing the fingers into the palm of the left hand.

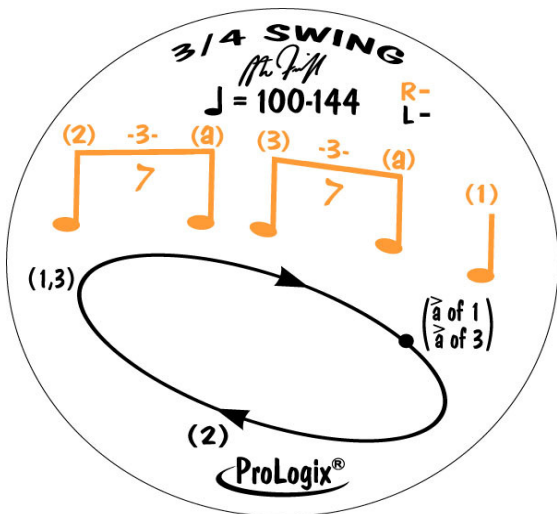
As you practice combining both hands, notice that the composite rhythm is a shuffle.



Musical notation for the right hand (RH) and left hand (LH). The RH part consists of a series of eighth notes: quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth. The LH part consists of a series of eighth notes: quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth. There are two fermatas above the RH part.

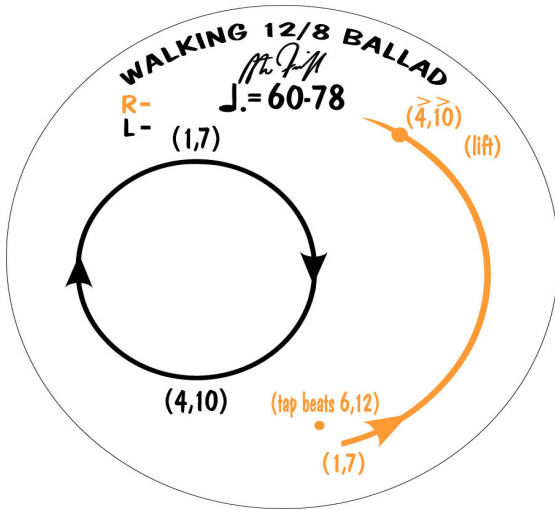
Meet me in the middle is a beat that is similar to a pattern I've seen the legendary Joe Morello play. You can hear this groove on many classic recordings he did with the Dave Brubeck Quartet from the 1950's and 60's.

As you practice, focus on coordinating the left hand sweep accent on the "a" of 2 and 4 in perfect unison with the right hand swing beat.

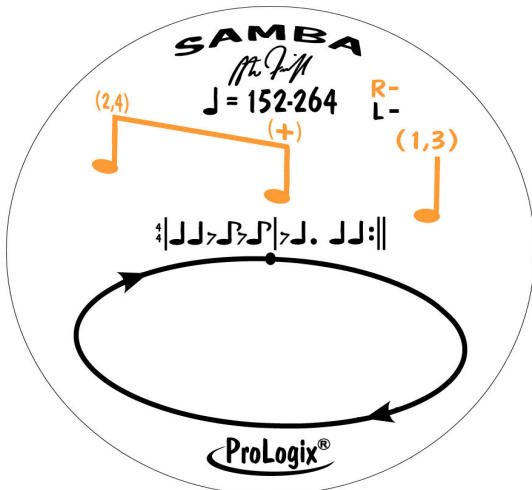


Musical notation for the right hand (RH) and left hand (LH). The RH part consists of a series of eighth notes: quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth. The LH part consists of a series of eighth notes: quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth. There are two fermatas above the RH part.

With this 3/4 brush beat, the left hand creates a sweep accent on the "a" of beats 1 and 3 by closing the fingers into the palm of the left hand.



As you practice this walking ballad beat, concentrate on the right hand as it sweeps, lifts, and taps. Subdivide each eighth note as you coordinate both hands.



The samba brush beat features this Brazilian ground rhythm in the left hand. As you sweep, your fingers close into the palm of your hand for each note value within this two measure pattern. The dot located on the left hand diagram is the point where the brush fan crosses the head as it accents the samba rhythm.