

# Drum Kit Coordination Patterns

*Funk and Rock*



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## Preface

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**T**his book presents a collection of patterns that are functional within a rock, funk, and similar context. The patterns are presented in systematic collections that allow the student to see precisely where each limb is placed, and how the patterns fit together.

This book aims to fill a certain hole left by many coordination books that require the student to mentally combine and visualise the different voices as a coherent pattern. Many books that tackle coordination rely on presenting the different voices separately to avoid writing out pages and pages of similar combinations. The student is then instructed to combine a certain cymbal pattern with a certain bass drum and snare drum pattern to produce the combined pattern to be practised. For new students especially, this creates an insurmountable challenge because they lack the experience required to mentally link the separate voices (and their limbs) in such an abstract way.

When teaching from such books, I often found myself writing out the finished pattern for the student to practise. Other students would likewise write them out for themselves so that they could ensure accuracy. For this reason, I decided to bite the bullet and write out the pages and pages of patterns once and for all. The results, of course, are much closer to a reference guide – a dictionary – than a book of concept, hence this book's title. Nevertheless, having something like this to hand in the studio has proven immensely useful for guiding students through new coordination patterns without either of us having to write them out from abstract instructions.

This book is not an attempt to create a comprehensive and complete guide to total four-way coordination. Firstly, such attempts already exist, and secondly, such books are generally more conceptual than practical. Four-way coordination does exist, and it is somewhat necessary within most aspects of drumming, but it is not something to be gained by simply working through endless permutations and ticking off every possibility. In my book *Broken Time Drumming*, I tackled four-way coordination in a very specific way, linking the coordination to musical motifs within a jazz context. For a similar reason, the coordination patterns presented here are done so within a groove context, practical within the eponymous styles of music. This is not a book of four-way coordination, but a reference book for coordination *within a timekeeping context* and, as such, as practical as such a book could possibly be.

It is my hope that teachers and students alike will find benefit from having these reference sets readily available for them to study. It is also my hope that this book will provide players of all levels with new vocabulary and timekeeping ideas in a practical and applicable way.

I am grateful to Colin Stump, Alan Hackney, and James Miller for their feedback and suggestions.

- Jonathan Curtis, August 2022

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# Introduction

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**T**his book fulfils one very simple role: it provides a categorised selection of reference patterns for drum kit coordination in a timekeeping context. In simple terms, these patterns provide a specific route for developing coordination for different types of drum grooves.

This book is not an attempt to provide stylistic, conceptual, or musical analysis, and for this reason it should be tackled with a competent teacher who can apply this material in its correct context. Instead, this book is a centralised reference for the common patterns used when playing music of a certain style. This allows the student (and teacher) to quickly address issues of coordination, and provide structured practice material for the student to use in a simple and easily accessible manner.

This volume covers the fundamental binary patterns for use in funk, rock, and related styles of drumming. This means that these patterns are based on the quarter note, comprising groups of 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> notes within a common meter. Furthermore, these patterns are characterised by maintaining a strong downbeat on the snare drum, which should be emphasised by default.

Though these sets in no way cover the entirety of possibilities within this musical context, they represent the fundamental coordination patterns required to produce timekeeping patterns of a more advanced nature. In studying the fundamentals as presented here, the student will learn a stronger grasp of the instrument, and with it an insight into how the more complex patterns are created.

Students should begin by reading the following section that details this book's intended usage. On a basic level, the sets can be tackled individually, either in order or in isolation. The beginning of each set features a brief explanation of how the pattern has been derived, presents it leading with either hand, and suggests a possible accent interpretation or variation. Students are encouraged to go beyond this first step and apply the ideas from the following section to each of the sets, exploring the pattern by varying the position of accents and ghost notes, playing with either hand leading, and creating combinations both within the same set and with patterns from different sets.

Ultimately, the incorporation of vocabulary results from a deep and familiar knowledge of fundamental patterns, and more importantly, a working knowledge of how they can be applied, combined, varied, and expanded. These sets provide a reference guide for coordination patterns fundamental to many styles of drumming, but they can also provide the basis for a deep and comprehensive vocabulary, should the student delve deep enough into their application.

A book like this necessarily deals with a vast number of combinations and permutations. Realistically, it cannot hope to include every possible combination involving every possible permutation for each voice. A balance must be struck between practicality and completion. By necessity of practicality, certain permutation and combination possibilities have been excluded.

The choice of which possibilities to exclude has been made based on their idiosyncrasy in application. In other words, possible combinations that rarely feature in the actual playing of drum grooves have been excluded.

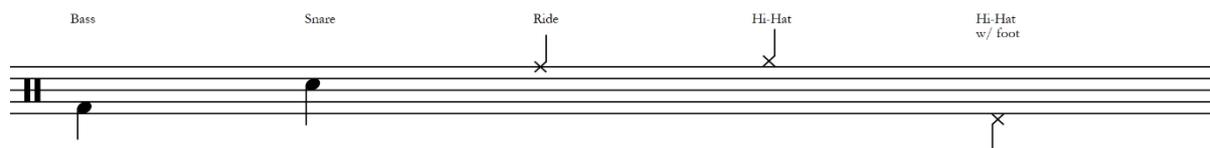
In **Set 1**, two-beat combinations are presented based on a specific hi-hat pattern. This hi-hat pattern changes across the ten sets, representing the possible ways in which it can be employed during a groove. Eagle-eyed students will notice that not every possible hi-hat placement is included; individual hi-hat strokes on the off-beat 16<sup>th</sup> notes, for example, have been omitted. This

is an example of practicality being favoured over a completionist approach, as such hi-hat placements are very rarely used in actual playing.

**Sets 1.1 – 1.5** each contain a sub-set entitled **Fat Back**. These are combination sets that combine every possible 16<sup>th</sup> note bass drum permutation before and after a snare drum downbeat on the second beat. Students will further notice that these sub-sets have been omitted from **Sets 1.6 – 1.10**, again for the sake of practicality. While such combinations are possible, they are remarkably uncommon, and as such, impractical for inclusion here.

**Set 2** presents a series of patterns based on single strokes and paradiddle permutations. Though not accents are written, it is expected that the downbeat is accented by default. Likewise, the student may explore various accent applications on the hi-hat (or ride bell) within the paradiddles themselves.

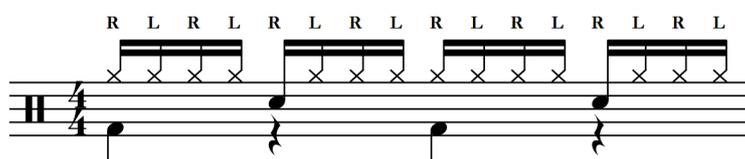
# How to Use This Book



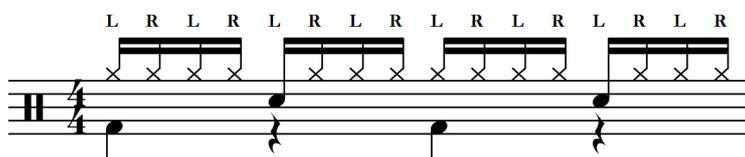
The pattern sets in this book present the typical combinations found in contemporary drum kit playing. Though the sets are extensive in their coordination permutations, they are intentionally devoid of accents, ghost notes, and stickings. This is for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the student is encouraged to practise each set with either hand, meaning each set should be practised with their non-dominant hand playing the hi-hat part, as well as with their dominant. In patterns which require patterns played between the hands, such as the 16<sup>th</sup> note pattern in **Set 2.1**, and the paradiddle variations which follow it, each set should be played with both the dominant and non-dominant hands leading:

### Pattern 2.1, right-hand lead:



### Pattern 2.1, left-hand lead:



Secondly, the position of accents and ghost notes is left up to the student, who is encouraged to experiment with typical and atypical placements of each. Typically, the downbeats on beats 2 and 4 are accented, but this need not be the case.

### Pattern 1.1 combination, typical accents:



### Pattern 1.1 combination, accent variation:

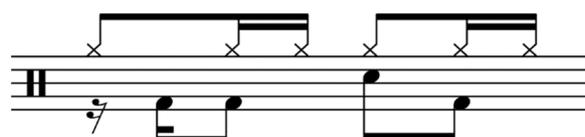


## Foot Substitution

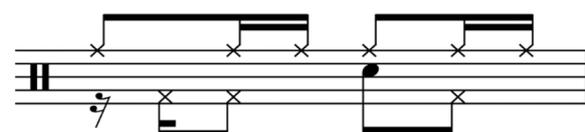
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This is a simple process that involves substituting one foot for the other. In their basic form, these sets are written in a way which combines both hands and the bass drum. However, the student may benefit from substituting the bass drum for the left-foot hi-hat, allowing them to improve their coordination in this manner. Any given pattern can be played in this manner; the foot-operated hi-hat simply plays every bass drum note instead of the bass drum foot. When enacting this process, the student may choose to voice the hi-hat part on the ride cymbal instead.

For this process, the following pattern...



...can be played as follows, with the bass drum substituted for the foot-operated hi-hat:

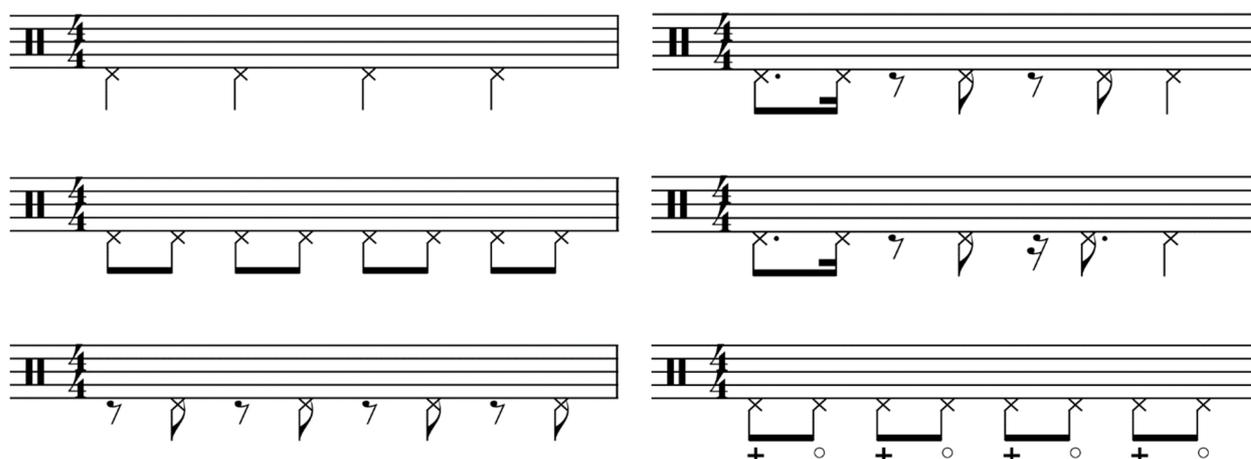


## Further Coordination

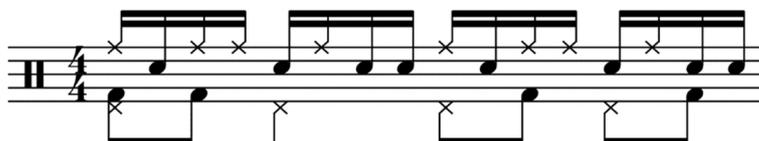
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Once a set has been completed, the student may wish to apply a further layer of coordination with the introduction of the foot-operated hi-hat, though it should be noted that this will require a degree of abstract visualisation. Whilst this is regrettable, presenting every one of these hi-hat patterns against every pattern in this book would require well over 800 pages!

The following are suggestions for the placement of the foot-operated hi-hat. When being applied to the patterns, the hi-hat parts played by the hand should be moved to the ride cymbal:



The first suggestion comprising four quarter notes should be used as the starting point, as every pattern throughout every set is divided and beamed into quarter notes.



In the above example, the first hi-hat foot pattern has been applied to a paradiddle-based pattern from **Set 2.2**. To accommodate this, the cymbal part has been moved to the ride cymbal.



In the above example, the fifth hi-hat foot pattern has been applied to the same paradiddle pattern, with the cymbal pattern once again moved to the ride cymbal.

## Combinations

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Material from the sets can be combined in various ways. Firstly, lettered exercises within each set can be combined to create longer phrases. For example, within **Set 1.1 – Bass Drum Set**, the student may combine *b* with *c* to create a four-beat combination.

Secondly, material from within the same category can be combined. For example, the student may combine pattern *d* from **1.1 – Bass Drum Set** with *f* from **1.1 – Snare Drum Set** to create a more intricate four-beat combination with two moving parts, namely the bass drum and the snare drum.

Thirdly, material from different sets can be combined, such that the hi-hat pattern or ostinato changes within the combination. For example, the student may combine *c* from **2.2 – Bass Drum Set**, with *d* from **2.4 – Bass Drum Set Extended**. This sort of combination allows for near-limitless variations of new patterns and coordination challenges.

With regards to pattern combinations, it is neither necessary nor productive to attempt to tackle *all possible* combinations using any of the above permutations. The main idea here is to discover new patterns, learn the coordination required, and to apply them to our own playing. Rather than attempting to tackle as many combinations as possible, a more productive approach is to deeply integrate a smaller selection of patterns into our vocabulary.

Likewise, this combinatorial approach can be used to create grooves of different binary time signatures (time signatures with a 4 on the bottom). A pattern can be created in 3/4 time by taking an exercise from a particular set, and half on an exercise from another exercise. For example, we might begin with exercise *a* from **Set 1.1**, and then add the second beat of *b* to make a combination

that is three beats long. We can follow a similar process to create a groove in 5/4, combining two full exercises and half of a third.

Though by no means a hard and fast rule, it generally makes sense to take the second half of an exercise when dealing with 3/4 and 5/4, as this will comprise the downbeat on the snare drum. Typically, bass drum strokes begin a pattern, and the final beat is played as a downbeat on the snare drum. Students should experiment, however, to find other possibilities within the material.

## **Combination Matrix**

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Following each category of sets is a combination matrix. This presents the first half of each pattern aligned vertically, next to the second half of each pattern, also aligned vertically. For each pattern in the matrix, the bass drum and snare drum are shown in their basic positions.

This matrix has been included to allow for compound combinations in which the hi-hat patterns are mixed and matched for further variation. The student may play pattern *a*. from the first column, followed by pattern *c*. from the second, creating a new combination not found in any of the sets.

New combinations can be created by combining any pattern from the first column, with any pattern of the second. The student is encouraged to use this as a tool for discovering new and interesting patterns, rather than something that must be completed for its own sake. They may begin by taking their favourite pattern from the first column, and trying it against various patterns from the second until a particularly interesting combination is found. This new combination can then be practised in the same way as the sets, sequentially moving the bass drum and snare drum and trying different combinations of placements.

## **Vocabulary**

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Despite the title of this book, its ultimate purpose is the acquisition of new vocabulary. Working on coordination patterns like those presented here exposes the student to new ideas, combinations, and applications, which will directly inform and expand their repertoire when it comes to timekeeping and groove playing.

The student is encouraged to spend time truly internalising and memorising the patterns within the sets, such that they are available and ready to be played when called upon in a musical situation.

## **Practice**

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There are many theories and working models that address the concept of practising. Long or short sessions; the frequency of sessions; working on a single idea or rotating a small number of ideas; there are arguments available in the literature for each of these concepts, and it is beyond the scope of this book to address them all here. Suffice it to say that the one thing that links all theories of practice is the necessity of repetition.

Students will find far more benefit – and far faster results – when a smaller number of patterns are practised for greater periods of repetition. Simply put, practising two, three, or four patterns for one hundred repetitions each will produce more effective results than practising the whole set four times each.

Within these repetitions, the student is further encouraged to switch between the selection of patterns frequently. If they are working on *d*, *e*, *f*, and *g* from a particular set, rather than practising

them one hundred times each in order, the student could instead try practising them twenty-five times each, four times, varying the order each time:

1<sup>st</sup> set of 25: *d-e-f-g*

3<sup>rd</sup> set of 25: *g-e-f-d*

2<sup>nd</sup> set of 25: *d-f-e-g*

4<sup>th</sup> set of 25: *e-d-g-f*

The above sets have their orders randomised. The student should not be concerned with the order, but with the act of *transition*. It has been shown through many studies of this nature that the act of transitioning between a small selection of material during repetition is far more beneficial than spending longer periods on the same pattern. In both cases, each exercise will be repeated one hundred times, but in the method given here, the act of randomising the order and transitioning every twenty-five repetitions has been shown to increase recall and speed up the process of retention. In short, each act of transition forces the brain and nervous system to relearn the solution to the problem posed by each pattern.

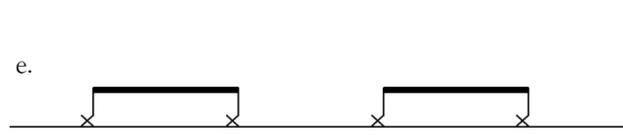
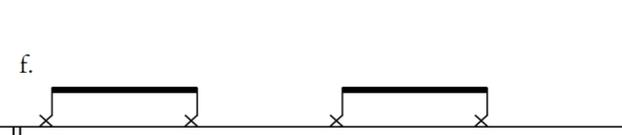
Finally, the student should aim to run through an entire set, both in order, and in a random order, transitioning between patterns without pause. This should only be attempted once the individual patterns have been thoroughly learned and practised in the aforementioned manner. The goal at this stage changes from learning the patterns' execution, to learning and listening to the vocabulary created by combining the patterns in various orders. Once each pattern can be executed confidently, the priority becomes learning and incorporation of new vocabulary.

# 1.1 – Linear Set

---

a.  b.  c. 

c.  d. 

e.  f. 

g.  h. 

i.  j. 

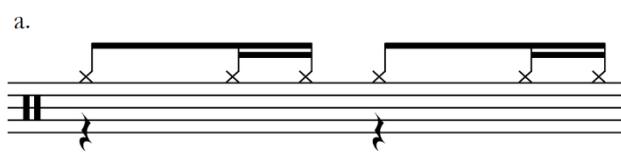
k.  l. 

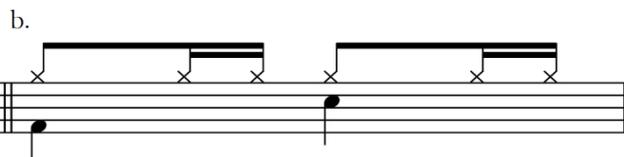
m.  n. 

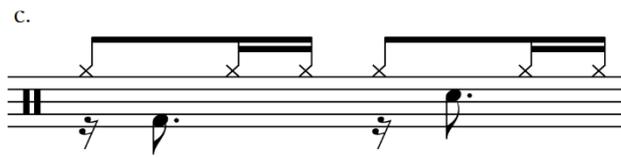
o.  p. 

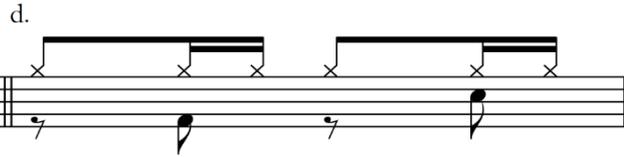
## 1.3 – Combined Set

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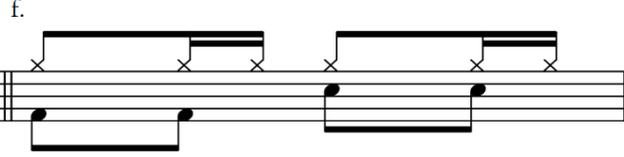
a. 

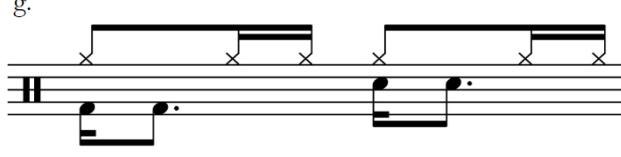
b. 

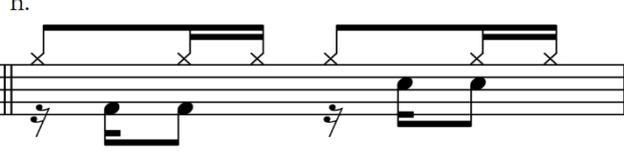
c. 

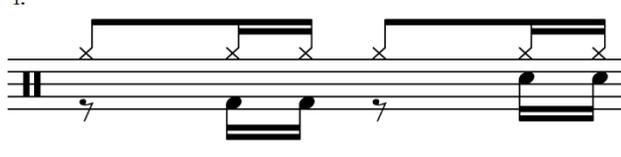
d. 

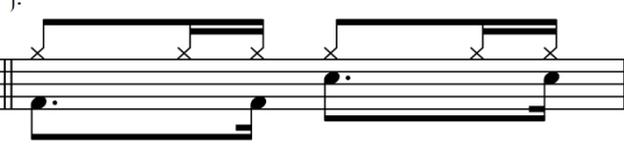
e. 

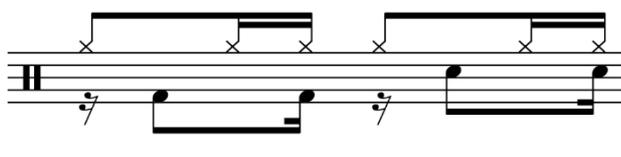
f. 

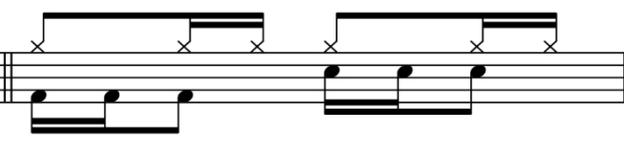
g. 

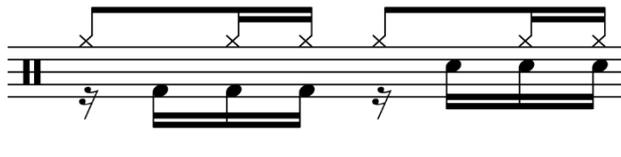
h. 

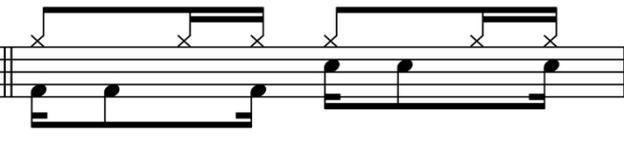
i. 

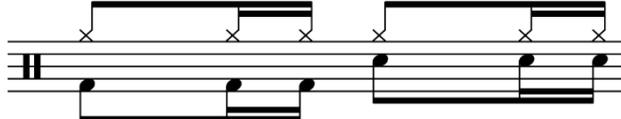
j. 

k. 

l. 

m. 

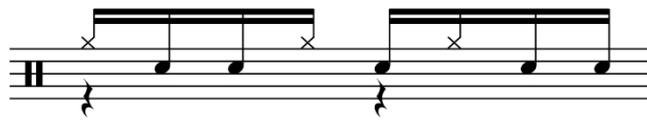
n. 

o. 

p. 

## Set 2.6 – Bass Drum Set Expanded

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a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. 

f. 

g. 

h. 

i. 

j. 

k. 

l. 

m. 

n. 

o. 

p. 