

Prep Strokes

Prep Strokes — Having the sticks in proper position, both before and after you play a note, with concerns to dynamics and the *next* time that stick plays.

Types of “preparation” strokes:

Full Stroke (F) — Stick starts high, ends high.

Down Stroke (D) — Stick starts high, ends low.

Tap Stroke (T) — Stick starts low, stays low.

Up Stroke (U) — Stick starts low, ends high.

Dynamics:

Full — Loud. Used when there are two accents in a row on the same hand.

Down — Loud. Used when there is an accented note, followed by an unaccented note.

Tap — Soft. Used when there are two unaccented notes in a row on the same hand.

Up — Soft. Used when there is an unaccented note, followed by an accented note.

Technique:

Full — Return to start position should be one fluid motion; don’t draw the stick back.

Down — After initial hit keep stick down close to the drum.

Tap — Don’t lift up first; just tap the drum and remain close to the head.

Up — Don’t lift up first; tap drum and wait until next hand hits, then raise stick in time.

Practice:

- Play each prep stroke in the right hand, then play each in the left hand.
- Play all four prep strokes in alternating fashion, i.e., full on right, full on left, etc.
- Plug into rudiments and measures from rudimental snare drum solos.
- Be mindful of prep strokes when playing drum set: ghost notes/backbeats, comping with accents in jazz & Latin styles.

Recognize the importance of these seemingly simple strokes. On the surface, prep strokes seem rather elementary, like a drummer would naturally play them. However, most drummers play full strokes all the time and work harder than necessary. Our goal is to play *efficiently*. It’s amazing the speed, accuracy, ease, and sound quality you will achieve by employing the basic concept of being prepared and having the sticks in proper position.