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By Stephane Chamberland

# Teaching Beginner Students

As drummers, we have all had the calling, when we said to ourselves: "I want to play the drums." Of course, the next step is typically to find a good teacher.

As teachers, our role is especially important in the beginning stages of the student's evolution. Teaching beginners is different than teaching intermediate or advanced students. A good teacher will evaluate the student and create a program that will fit their individual needs.

## Playing Drums

Getting students to play along with music right away is one of the most crucial things because, after all, isn't that why they came to you in the first place? To do that, you will need to work on one or two basic rock beats and rock fills. Make them count and read what they are playing. If the student is not familiar with reading music, you can also use simple letters or colours to explain which limb (right hand, left foot, etc.) hits which drum or cymbal. Ask about their favourite bands and songs. This will give you an idea of what they like and want to learn.

The goal of the first lesson is to inspire and motivate. Keep it simple. Have your student try all surfaces on the kit and ask them to learn the names of its different components. Some coordination exercises between hands and feet are also a great idea. I would recommend the book *Eighth-Note Rock and Beyond* by Dom Famularo and Glen Ceglia, which teaches the student all the basic rock grooves and develops bass drum and hi-hat independence.

## Reading & Technique

Reading and technique are important, but we also know they may be boring or hard to grasp for a student who has never touched a drum set before. It's like asking a kid to eat vegetables. It may not be as good as sweets, but if you slowly introduce some vegetables along with every meal, it's going to become a habit. You can also make it fun along the way. The same principle applies in the teaching studio. Incorporate reading and technique a little bit at a time and make sure it doesn't feel demotivating in the process. Your student will soon feel the need to develop their technical skills further and will probably show greater interest in the

subjects. I recommend books one and two of *Alfred Drum Method* to have fun learning how to read rhythms.

## Drumset & Play-Alongs

The kit is the best source of motivation for your students. Many years ago it was okay to spend all of one's time on a practice pad without touching the drums, but things have changed. I make sure I start playing songs as soon as the student is ready and I slowly start to incorporate technique and reading as we go. Use tons of play-along material and record students playing with the music. When you teach something new, play it in a musical context and your students will want to come back and will enjoy their lessons more and more.

## The Internet

There are many websites that you can consult and use as examples during lessons. You can go to [www.drummerworld.com](http://www.drummerworld.com) to find great examples from the world's top drummers. Expose your student to as many drummers as possible. Many books are also now available in digital versions on the iBooks store and through Amazon's Kindle. Also, check out the Drum Guru app for short examples that you can use during sessions. You want to incorporate as much diversity as possible into your lessons to activate your student's brain and focus. It's also more fun for you as you're not stuck doing the same thing over and over.

## Guilds & Educational Programs

Being part of a guild is a big plus in your role as a teacher. It gives you the chance to share and learn from your peers and also to be part of a family of people that share the same interests as you. The Sabian Education Network ([www.sabianed.com](http://www.sabianed.com)) is a great resource for teachers and it's free to subscribe. Also check out D'Addario's Education Collective pro-program and make sure to subscribe to the Percussive Art Society at [www.pas.org](http://www.pas.org). Their website contains a lot of amazing information, too.