Collapsed Rudiments

Concepts to Alter Feel and Space

by Stephane Chamberland

Have you ever heard the expression "It's not only the notes, but the distance between the notes that counts?" Understanding the distance between strokes helps you create more natural and precise motions. And the distance between notes determines the music's subdivision. For example, if two equally spaced notes are played over one beat, we get 8th notes. Three notes played over one beat creates triplets, four notes creates 16ths, and so on. Learning all of these subdivisions helps us create different feels.

In all styles of music, we can play with the elasticity of the subdivisions to change the feel. We can create a rounder feel by spacing out the notes, or we can create tension by bringing them closer together. The jazz ride pattern can be played using triplets, 32nd notes, and everything in between. An Afro-Cuban cascara can be stretched to the point where you're nearly playing 8th notes. And in funk or pop music, we can use the same concept to play ahead of or behind the beat.

In this lesson, we'll take a look at a few ways to stretch or tighten up our subdivisions to create different feels.

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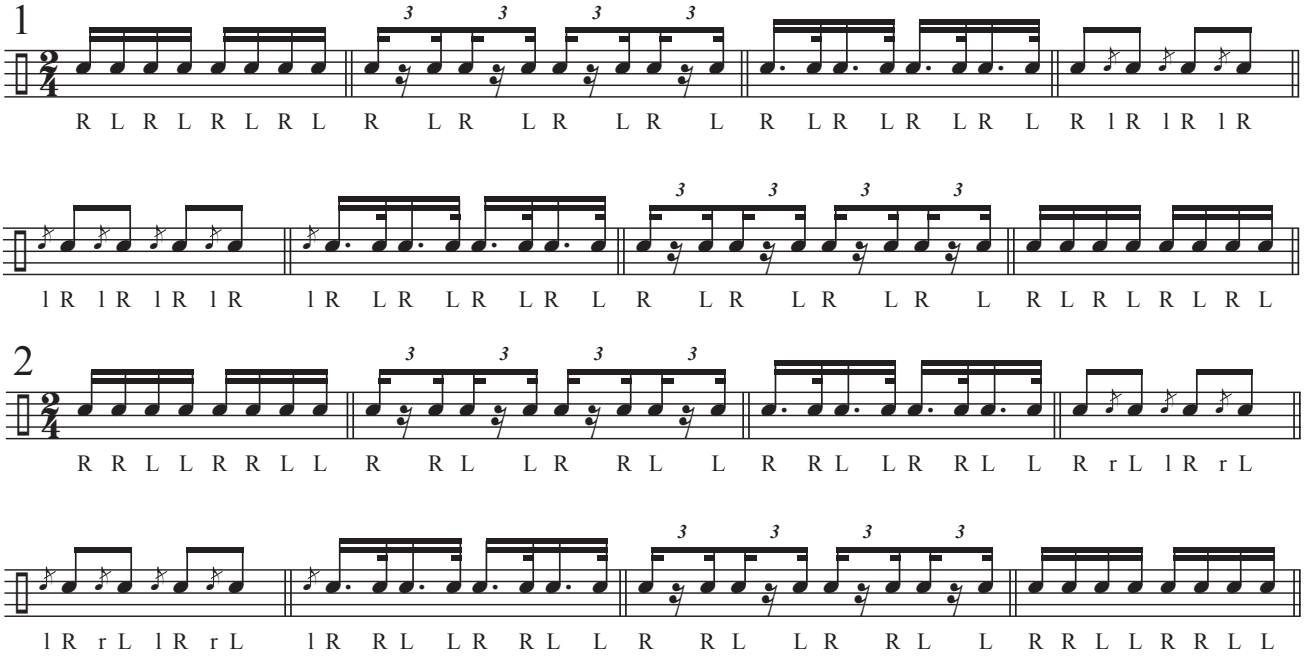
Notes and subdivisions can be collapsed or expanded. The late, great drummer and educator Jim Chapin introduced me to this concept when I studied with him. Jim was working on some interesting concepts that change the distance between notes to create different rudiments.

Let's check out some exercises based on Chapin's concepts. These can be challenging, so take your time. Each exercise starts with a rudiment, gradually collapses the spacing, and ends with a new pattern. When practicing these, don't change your hands' motion—only change the space between the notes.

In Exercise 1, we'll transition slowly between single strokes and non-alternating flams. In Exercise 2, we'll transition between double strokes and alternating flams. Repeat each measure many times before moving on. The flams' grace notes are derived from alternating 16th notes, so they don't necessarily have to be played softly. In measure 6 of both exercises, the grace note should only be played the first time through.



If you want to learn more about collapsed rudiments, check out *Open-Handed Playing, Volume 2* by Claus Hessler with Dom Famularo.

Stephane Chamberland is an internationally recognized drummer, clinician, educator, and author who currently leads the Stephane Chamberland Jazz Quartet. He is the co-author of the books *The Weaker Side*, *Pedal Control*, and *Drumset Duets* (Wizdom Media). For more info, visit stephanechamberland.com.