

# Troubleshooting and Solving Drumset Coordination Problems

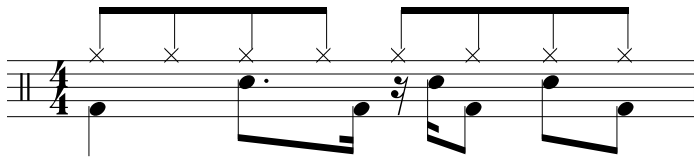
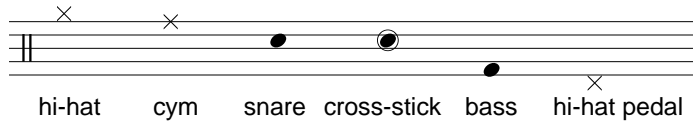
BY FRANK DERRICK

**A**s in all educational areas, teaching gives us the opportunity to recognize reoccurring problems and streamline methods of overcoming them. I have come across a few patterns that occur frequently at different stages of development, and this is how I solved them.

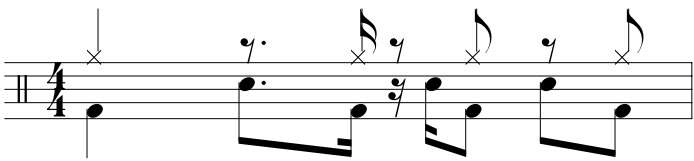
## BEGINNING STUDENTS

Sometimes it seems that the same beat has inspired most of my beginners to play drums.

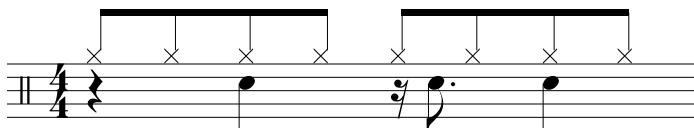
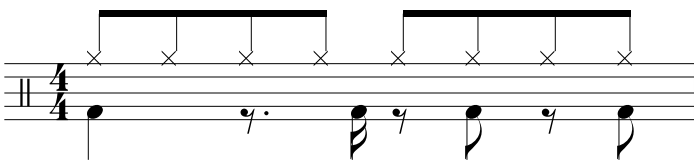
### Notation key



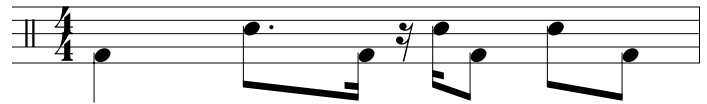
Invariably they will play it like this, allowing the hi-hat to play only with the bass.



When I've asked them to play the beat against straight eighths on the hi-hat, they usually run into difficulty separating the hi-hat from the bass drum. This is how I've usually broken it down for them and found that, in most cases, it corrects the problem.



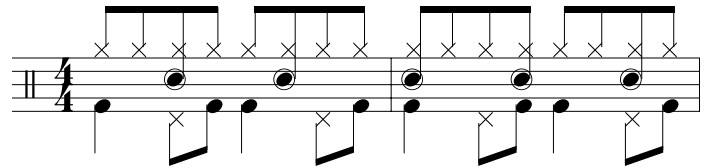
At this point I have the student play only the bass and snare to get the feel.



We now try to put the beat together. On occasions when the students are still having difficulty, I will play the beat with them on another drumset, taking turns at different parts, starting with me playing the hi-hat part while the student plays the bass and snare drum. If necessary we will repeat all of the previous patterns, with the end result being a student proud of his or her accomplishment.

## INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

My intermediate students seem to regularly get stuck when we learn the bossa nova. Although they have learned to use the bass drum more freely against an eighth-note line, when the snare hand moves between off- and on-the-beat notes, the bass drum usually falters. In most instances, the problem occurs in the second measure when the "1" and the "& of 2" with the cross-stick plays with the bass drum.



First, I have the student play the cross-stick rhythm while I play the entire beat. This is done to help the student get the feel of the rhythm along with the pattern.



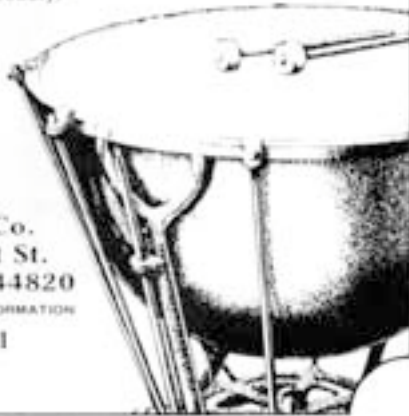
In the next exercise, I have them try the cross-stick pattern with the bass drum pattern, which is the root of the problem. In some situations I have sent students home with this exercise to practice for their next lesson.



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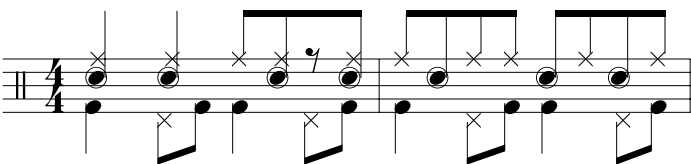
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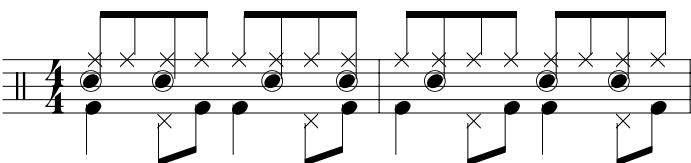
Once the feeling is comfortable with the cross-stick and bass drum, the eighth-note line is added, followed with the hi-hat on "2" and "4." If the students still have difficulty, I have had them play just the cross-stick and bass drum patterns while I play the eighth notes on the cymbal and hi-hat pedal. Then I have them add the missing ingredients to their part while I'm still playing. The final step is to drop my part.

#### ADVANCED/PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

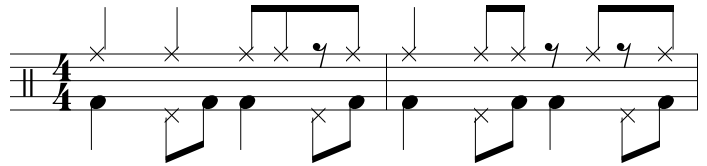
In a similar Latin feel, I have had advanced and professional players get hung up playing a samba variation against a Cascara pattern.



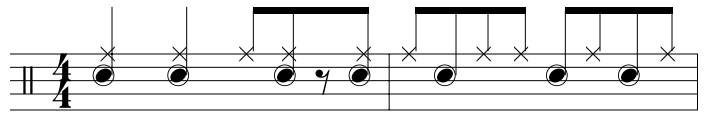
To get the feel of the beat, I have the student play straight eighths against the samba beat.



After that we dissect the beat, starting with the Cascara against the bass drum and hi-hat.



Since this represents 3/4 of the beat, this should become automatic before adding the cross-stick. Depending on the player's agility, we usually are able to add the cross-stick to complete the rhythm. In situations where the student still has difficulty, I zero in on the hands.



While the hands are vamping, the bass drum and hi-hat are added to complete the rhythm.

I take the same approach when I learn new material that I use with my students. On many occasions, students have brought in material that requires me to do my own problem solving in class as part of the student's lesson. This is beneficial to the student as he or she gets to see the method being applied. It is beneficial to the instructor because it enhances troubleshooting techniques, and in some instances, the student will suggest a way to solve the problem that the teacher hadn't considered.

Frank Derrick, a member of the PAS Drumset Committee, has performed on Broadway in *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *The Wiz*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Big River*, and *Catskills*. He was Cab Calloway's drummer for ten years and the drummer for *The David Letterman Show* on NBC. His current activities include working as assistant conductor and drummer for the Palm Beach Pops and appearances with Maureen McGovern, the Louis Armstrong Legacy Band, the Hi-De-Ho Orchestra, and as a solo guest artist. He is also the author of "Focus On Technique For Drummers." PN

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