

Drum Patterns

I would like to learn how to create and compose music without any hassle. Many music theory books are targeted for specific instruments and they often use music notation as a means of explaining the theory. Since I am not so good at either music notation or a specific instrument these explanations become confusing for me so I decided to create my own brief explanation of music theory. Here in this document I will summarize common drum patterns.

The Pace of Music

In [A Brief Explanation of Music Theory](#) I explained how frequencies are put together to produce music. Much of the music has to do with the notes but the pace of the music is also important. The pace is measured in beats per minute. In music notation the beat is often indicated with a vertical bar. In popular music it is common to play four notes in a bar.

Drums

A traditional drum is often constructed as a tube called shell. At one end of the shell you find a membrane called head. When a drummer hit the drum the head vibrates and the sound bounces around in the shell. This makes the shell vibrate too. All the sound is then spreading out of the opening in the drum and from the shell. If this sound is recorded and put in a Digital Audio Workstation then we can use it to indicate the pace of music.

There exist a number of different drums in a typical drum set:

- Snare Drum
- Bass Drum, also called Kick Drum
- Hi hat

The Hi hat is made by two plates of messing. It can be played by lifting up the upper plate and letting it fall down on the other. It is also possible to hit the hi-hat with a stick. It can be open and closed. In the patterns here it is played closed.

Eighth-note feel

It is possible to organize music in many patterns and each pattern has its own feeling. Here are common drum patterns for two bars of 4 notes each. Usually these patterns are used for faster types of music. The table below has an extra thick line to indicate the bars. In the first column it is written which drum to play at that note. For each note you see a letter if that drum is played.

Brief summary of Common Drum Patterns

Bar number	1				2			
Quarter note number	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Pattern 1								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b				b			
Pattern 2								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b			b				
Pattern 3								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b			b	b			
Pattern 4								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b			b		b		
Pattern 5								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b				b	b		
Pattern 6								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b			b	b			b
Pattern 7								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b	b			b	b		
Pattern 8								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b	b			b			
Pattern 9								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b				b	b		b
Pattern 10								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b	b	b		b	b	b		
Pattern 11								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s			s				s	
Bass drum, b								

Sixteenth-note feel

When using four bars it is possible to put variations at the end of the pattern. Four bars are sixteen 4/4 notes. The sixteenth note feel is common for slower types of music.

Bar number	1				2				3				4			
Quarter note number	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Pattern 1																
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s								s			
Bass drum, b	b								b							
Pattern 2																
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s								s			
Bass drum, b	b						b		b							
Pattern 3																
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s								s			
Bass drum, b	b								b		b					
Pattern 4																
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s								s			
Bass drum, b	b		b				b		b							
Pattern 5																
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s								s			
Bass drum, b	b						b				b					
Pattern 6																
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	C	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s								s			
Bass drum, b	b								b		b				b	

Half time eighths note feel

It is also possible to leave out the snare drum and rearrange the pattern so that it sounds as if the rhythm goes slower. Often this is used for verses.

Bar number	1				2			
Quarter note number	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Pattern 1								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s			
Bass drum, b	b			b				
Pattern 2								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s			
Bass drum, b	b						b	
Pattern 3								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s			
Bass drum, b	b		b					
Pattern 4								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s					s			
Bass drum, b	b		b				b	
Pattern 5								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s							s	
Bass drum, b	b			b	b			
Pattern 6								
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s							s	
Bass drum, b	b			b		b		

Half time sixteenth note feel

Bar number	1				2				3				4				
Quarter note number	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
Pattern 1																	
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s									s								
Bass drum, b	b																
Pattern 2																	
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s									s								
Bass drum, b	b						b										
Pattern 3																	
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s									s								
Bass drum, b	b		b				b										
Pattern 4																	
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s													s				
Bass drum, b	b						b		b								
Pattern 5																	
Closed hi-hat, c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
Snare drum, s													s				
Bass drum, b	b		b				b				b						