

Terry Longshore
“Jazz Drum Set Fundamentals – Teaching Students to Think Around the Drums”
American Band College
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The following exercises are extensions of **Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer** by Ted Reed (Alfred Publishing) and are helpful for development of reading, timekeeping, independence, fills and set-ups, and overall facility in the jazz idiom.

For all exercises the following apply:

- All eighth-notes swung
- “Ride” = jazz ride pattern
- “HH2/4” = 2 and 4 closed Hi-Hat with foot
- “BD4” = Bass Drum on all quarter notes, feathered
- “Melody” = written figures

These exercises may be applied throughout *Syncopation*, but are most beneficial on Exercises 1-8 found on pages 38-45.

1. Ride, HH2/4, BD4, SD plays melody
2. Ride, HH2/4, SD 2 & 4 rim click, BD plays melody
3. Ride, HH2/4, SD 4 only rim click, BD plays melody
4. Ride, HH2/4, SD eighth-notes, BD quarter-notes +
5. Ride, HH2/4, BD eighth-notes, SD quarter-notes +
6. Play No. 1, accent first note of each bar, other notes low
7. Same as No. 6, but accent second note of each bar
8. Same, but accent last note of each bar
9. HH2/4, BD4, SD plays alternating eighth-note triplets, accenting melody
10. Same as No. 9, buzz accents
11. Same as No. 9, double-stroke accents
12. Same as No. 9, double-stroke unaccented notes
13. Same as No. 9, move accents to toms
14. HH2/4, SD as in No. 9, BD plays melody (lines up with SD accents)
15. Same as No. 11, w/BD melody
16. Same as No. 12, w/BD melody
17. Same as No. 14, move accents to cymbals
18. Same as No. 17, double-stroke unaccented notes
19. Ride, HH2/4, SD plays 2nd and 3rd eighth-note triplet of each beat, BD plays melody
20. Ride, BD4, SD eighth-notes, closed HH quarter-notes, open HH dotted quarter-notes

The following reading extensions can be applied to any of the above exercises and help to reinforce taking “mental snapshots” of measures and reading ahead while playing the previous measure:

1. Start at first measure and read down columns
2. Start at last measure and read up columns, moving left
3. Start at last measure and read each individual measure from left to right, but move from measure to measure from right to left. For example, in a 40-measure exercise one plays: m. 40, m. 39, m. 38, etc.

Also, altered ride patterns may be substituted in any or all of the variations that use the ride cymbal. Possibilities include quarter-notes only, accenting each beat, accenting 2 and 4, accenting the “swing beat” (the last triplet of 2 and 4), etc. Or, substitute playing the ride with the left hand and play the snare drum with the right hand.

These exercises should be practiced under the guidance of a qualified drum-set instructor. They are purposely presented in text format to encourage creative interpretation of drum chart reading and have students think about melody and how to orchestrate that melody in various ways around the drum set. Students should be encouraged to develop their own variations!