



Traditional Grip

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As the Drumline Instructor for the University of Minnesota, the most frequently asked question I get is how to play traditional grip.

Right Hand

Only grip the stick tightly enough so that it does not slip out of your hand. Pinch the stick with your thumb and index finger at the point of the stick where you get the most rebound. This is the fulcrum or pivot point. Holding the stick like a hammer, throw the stick down in a hammer motion. Let the weight of the stick and the height of the beginning of the stroke determine the volume of your strokes. Do not use more force or energy than you need to manipulate the stick to strike the playing surface for the sound you are trying to make. Your wrist and fingers move with the stick much in the same manner you would use their muscles and movements to dribble a basketball. The weight and velocity of the stick will accomplish the dynamic.

Left Hand

Reach out as if you are going to shake someone's left hand. Hold the stick in the "webbing" at the base of your thumb between your thumb and your pointer finger near the same fulcrum as the right hand stick. Only grip the stick tightly enough with your thumb so that it doesn't slip out of your hand. Keeping your fingers relaxed, play some strokes by rotating the two bones of your forearm on their axis in the same motion you would use to turn a door knob. Meanwhile, regulate the stick motion with your thumb.

After you can play smoothly with just your "thumb grip" and arm rotation, keep your hand relaxed as it is when naturally hanging at your side, and let the stick rest on the side of your ring finger just after your last finger joint and below the cuticle. Then, rest your index finger on the top of the stick in the same manner (all

without curling your hand in a fist). The stick should move freely between these fingers, so DO NOT grip the stick with those fingers. They are for regulating and controlling the sticks motion (lifting and pushing). The middle finger should NOT push on the stick, and your pinky should be relaxed and naturally support the ring finger.

Once again, play by rotating your arm in the door opening motion and play comfortably. To start, play loud full strokes (*f*) throwing the stick down at the surface you are hitting and move up with the stick with it's natural rebound. The sticks rebound off of the playing surface will do most of the work for you on louder strokes.

Make sure to stretch and warm up your hands and wrists before you play any music. If you play too much at once when you're just beginning to learn traditional grip you'll feel sore in your left hand, wrist, and arm. Practice for short periods of time and gradually practice more as the days pass. If you do feel pain, allow some time until the soreness subsides and continue later (it could be a day or two if you've been playing too much or too hard).

Also, you'll develop a callus on your ring and index fingers. If you do too much at once after not having played with this technique before, you'll get a blister on one or both of your fingers which will take a week or more to heal. So again, don't do too much at once until building up endurance in your muscles, tendons, and the surface of your fingers' skin.

Have Fun and Good Luck!