



Warm-Up Exercises

Andy Gleadhill's African Drumming Book 1 contains some warm-up exercises that are great for getting people to find their way around a Djembe simply and confidently. One of the main basics of Djembe Drumming is to maintain a consistent 'right, left, right, left' pattern as this will give the performer an ample amount of fluency. If the performer is left-handed and would prefer to lead with the left, then reverse all of these instructions for them. The important aspect is their timing and their consistency of tone which can be created either way around, so long as they stick with the leading hand that they choose in the first instance.

Technique 1 – Right, left, right, left

Maintaining an even basic flow is a good starting point for all performers and will encourage an understanding of tempo and performing as a unit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

Technique 2 – Altering tempo

Moving from a 'right, left, right, left' pattern to a similar pattern with longer gaps inserted will show the underlying pulse and tempo of a piece of music as well as develop the skill of altering to a different pattern efficiently with no errors.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
R	O	L	O	R	O	L	O	R	O	L	O	R	O	L	O

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.



Double speed is another aspect of tempo altering and on the first few occasions that this descends into racket can provide an excellent discussion point on where things went wrong and what performers can do to avoid this.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video which shows how both of these tempo alterations can be put together as an additional exercise.

Technique 3 – Double tapping

On rare occasions it is more efficient to use the same hand twice in a row and this warm-up does just this. It is not common practise to do this whilst Djembe Drumming but is a valid warm-up exercise.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
R	R	L	L	R	R	L	L	R	R	L	L	R	R	L	L

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

Technique 4 – Paradiddle

A Paradiddle is a constantly altering focus of left and right. There are many variations of a Paradiddle and with a little research you will see just how complex they can become. For now, though, this particular rudiment can be a great warm up for all, especially those unfamiliar with the concept as it gets their brains working.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
R	L	R	R	L	R	L	L	R	L	R	R	L	R	L	L



[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

Technique 5 – Ghost notes

For the more advanced performer you may wish to introduce the concept of ghost notes. For this, you take a rhythm which has some gaps in it and for each gap you play the Djembe as light as possible so as to create a constant rustle underneath. This helps to develop a sense of dynamic awareness as well as create a subtle click-track to keep all of the other players in line. To utilize this in a performance, however, all ghost note players need to ensure that they perform as a tight group with impeccable timing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
R	l	r	L	r	l	R	l	R	l	r	L	r	l	R	l

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

Technique 6 – Highs and Lows

This warm-up exercise begins to explore the Djembe further and has performers playing Low sounds (Bass, 'L') and High sounds (Tone, 'H'). The 'right, left' technique should be retained and is scored here below the tonal information.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H
R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

We can further speed up the rhythm without altering the pulse by playing two Highs and two Lows instead of four.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
LL	HH	LL	HH	LL	HH	LL	HH	LL	HH	LL	HH	LL	HH	LL	HH
RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

We can also bring in the Paradiddle concept for the High and Low tones as well. This one can be a bit tricky at first as the hands are alternating two concepts at once – the tones are altering but the ‘right, left’ hand pattern should remain.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
L	H	L	L	H	L	H	H	L	H	L	L	H	L	H	H
R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

Elements taken from Andy Gleadhill's African Drumming Book 1, pages 12-15

