

# Our First Percussion Lesson

The purpose of this page is to show you what we learned today in our lesson and to provide a daily reminder to the students. All points are explained in the order they were introduced to your child. They are also listed on page 2 in their lesson book. We are asking the students to practice this lesson **15 minutes a day** for at least 5 days in the next week. Please mark your practice times in the front of your lesson book on the **PRACTICE RECORD** (inside of front cover).

1. **POSTURE:** Good playing is the result of good posture. Proper posture will allow our muscles to perform without tension.

## **What to look for?**

\* *The student should stand up with back straight and head parallel to the ground. Most percussion instruments (except Drum Set, and sometimes Timpani) are played from a standing position.*

2. **BREATHING:** Although we do not need to blow air to play our instrument, it is a good idea to learn how a wind play breathes. This will help us play more accurately with them. First, check your posture. Our lungs expand from the bottom to the top. We can see that because our stomachs move outwards and our shoulders stay down as we breathe. Here is our check-list on proper breathing.

\* *Good Posture: Stand up straight, head up!*

\* *Take air in only from the mouth. You should feel cool air as you inhale....listen for the open throat "AHH" sound.*

\* *Don't lift the shoulders, allow the air to flow down to the stomach expanding it. It may feel like you are sipping air through a straw.*

\* *Control the release of the air.*

3. **FOOT TAP:** To play together as a group we must all agree on a steady beat. Anytime you play tap your left foot. Try to keep the foot tap consistent and steady. This is the most important item when playing percussion!!!!

4. **CORRECT PERFORMANCE HEIGHT FOR YOUR DRUM PAD AND BELLS:** The DVD in the book sets the drum a little low for the students. Here is our way to judge.

\* *Set up your drum or bells so they are about your waist level.*

\* *Place your thumb over your belly button. Extend the fingers down.*

\* *The fingers should just touch the head of the drum pad (or Bells)*

5. **MATCHED GRIP:** At Lakeview, we will be playing only with the matched grip. Instructions to review this grip can be found on page 2 in the Percussion Book.

6. **THE PERCUSSION BOOK:** Your spiral bound Percussion Book is actually two books in one. The Drum Studies Portion is at the Beginning and the Bells/Keyboard section is at the end. Once we have a good start on each, we will be working with both instruments in a week. All drum lessons will be marked with the page # and the letter B. All bells/keyboard lessons are marked only marked with the page number. Students should have a paper clip on the lesson page.

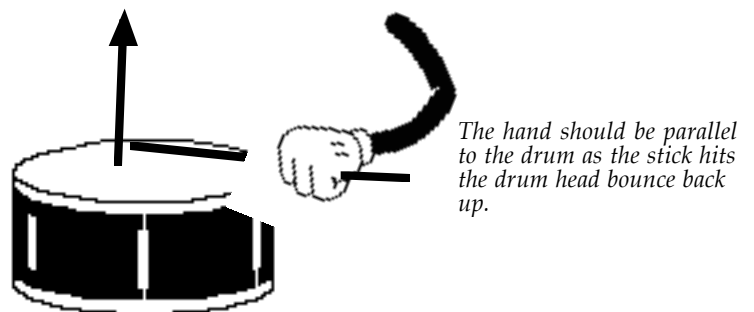
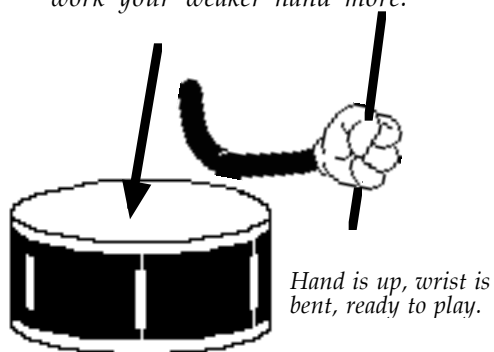
## 7. CHECK LIST FOR PROPER PLAYING POSITION:

1. **DRUM HEIGHT:** Place the thumb over the naval, extend your fingers so they just touch the drum.
2. **JELLO:** Think that your arms are floating on waist-high jello. The arms should be relaxed, with minimum movement as your play(not rigid or absolutely fixed). All motions come from the wrist and hands. The Arms should not move up and down more than 1".
3. **FLAP:** Your elbows should be away from the body in a relaxed, bent position, like a bird's wings. Again, don't lock your elbows in. Stay relaxed.
4. **The "PINCH"** Pickup the stick with your thumb and index finger about 1/3 from the end of the stick. Curve your index finger's top knuckle and hold the stick in place. Curve the other fingers gently around the stick keeping it in the palm of your hand.
5. **PIZZA:** On snare drum remember to play in the center of the head with the sticks in an even position on the drum head. (One stick should not be in front of the other). It should look like a 1/4 slice of pizza, with the big end of the slice facing you.
6. **THUMBS:** Your thumbnails should face each other when your hands are in the proper playing position. The top of your hands should be parallel to the ground. Remember to keep the hands are relaxed. Don't try to hold the stick very tight this only creates tension and that hurts your playing.
7. **THREE "V's":** With your sticks in this position you are almost ready to play. You should be able to see three "V's" when you play. The first is the Pizza (#4). The second & third "V's" are formed by the angle between your hand and the butt of each snare stick as it comes from the back of your hand
8. **WAVE:** Double check that the wrist is bent up before the stroke begins. As you drop the wrist towards the drum the hand should stop in the neutral position. In neutral position the wrist is not bent but straight allowing the stick to rebound back to the up position. The stroke should move like a waving hand but the wave stops as the hand is parallel to the floor. The entire movement is very flexible and loose. This is also called a piston strike.

Finally you are ready to play, but just one more thing!!!!

9. **BASKETBALL:** There is only one motion when playing percussion: DOWN. The stick should return to the up position with bounce. (Piston stroke) Remember not to drive the stick down. Just let it drop.

*\*\* Think of dribbling a basketball. You push the ball down and the bounce returns it to you. You don't drop the ball and then reach down and pick it up. Your wrist drops and then rises to meet the ball. Always work your weaker hand more.*



*As you play with one hand watch the stick blur carefully. Where does the stick seem to be more solid. If the stick is more solid on the bottom of the stroke you are playing with too much force and not letting the stick rebound. If the stick is more solid on top, then you are doing great!!!!*

*Always listen for a good sound on the drum pad. Avoid loud "pop" sounds. If all else fails, practice bounding a basketball! This works great for building your weaker hand. We want both hands to be equal.*