

30 Days to Better Shime

A month-long guide to small-drum practice

Kristofer Bergstrom
Ōn Ensemble

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Introduction

Welcome to *30 Days to Better Shime*¹, a series of focused exercises for improving hand coordination and speed. Each of the exercise sets in this workbook is intended to take an average of 20 minutes, to be completed on a daily basis. This workbook is accompanied by the *30 Days to Better Shime* companion CD. Printed sets are also available; see page 45.

This program is intended for participants with at least some taiko experience (or other stick-based drumming experience), and does not provide detailed information on basic technique. For players new to small-drum taiko, On Ensemble offers introductory, hands-on workshops with personal feedback that teach the basics in preparation for the *30 Days to Better Shime* course; see page 46.

To complete the course, you will need the following.

- This booklet and a pen or pencil
- The *30 Days to Better Shime* CD (or MP3/OGG² audio files)
- A CD player (or MP3/OGG player or computer)
- A pair of batchi³
- A drum or practice pad

This booklet is intended to be printed double-sided. Color printing is not necessary, though the notation system benefits slightly from color. Color densities have been controlled to minimize printing cost.⁴ A metronome will come in handy if available, but a series of recorded metronome tracks is also provided. Use a pair of batchi that bounce well on your playing surface, whether it is a drum, practice pad, or the floor. Light batchi are the most unforgiving and demanding of good form. Heavy batchi tend to move properly but mask problems. Ideally, experiment with a variety of batchi throughout the course.

30 Days to Better Shime attempts to provide enough repetition for effective practice, but remain engaging by moving through concepts quickly. Suggested time allotments are provided with each drill but you may adjust the time spent on any part to suit your own needs and interests. Participants often practice too long, and burn out early in the program; be careful not to force yourself to remain on a particular drill to the detriment of your interest or concentration.

The program also attempts to suggest tempos and challenges that are at a suitable level for most taiko players. If at any point in the course you feel the

¹Pronounced “she-may”, short for *tsukeshime-daiko*; a two-sided, high-tension Japanese drum similar in size to the western snare drum.

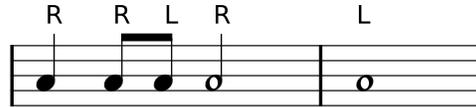
²For more information on the OGG format, see <http://onensemble.org/2008/12/what-is-ogg/>

³Japanese for drum stick(s).

⁴For gnu/linux help on double-sided printing, see <http://onensemble.org/2008/10/debian-gnulinux-knowledge-base/>

exercises are too easy or too hard, adjust them to suit your level. Don't be bored, nor overwhelmed!

30 Days to Better Shime uses a simple music notation system. Rhythms are represented by dots placed on a line, read from left to right. The following rhythm in "western" notation



will be written



Whereas western notation indicates timing by the shape of the symbols (whole-note = hollow dot, half-note = hollow dot with stem, etc), the *30 Days to Better Shime* notation represents timing by the distance between dots, measured in ticks along the horizontal line. Dots touching the line represent right-hand hits, and raised dots, left-hand hits.⁵ Red circles along the horizontal line will be used to indicate metronome clicks. For example,



would indicate four hits (RLRL) between clicks, and hits 1 and 5 should coincide with the metronome.

Completing 30 consecutive days of practice is a very difficult task. The average completion rate for previous participants has been approximately 7 days. Here are a few tricks to staying on track that have helped me and others.

- Do the program with a buddy, or group of players.
- Leave the program materials (batchi, practice pad, CD player, etc) out and accessible, and in a visible location.
- Know that it's okay to move on without perfecting a particular drill; the concepts come up repeatedly, so you'll have additional chances.
- Ask me for weekly email check-ins to keep you on track (contact information at the end of this workbook).

For motivation and more guidance, I have an essay on practice at On Ensemble's website:

<http://onensemble.org/2008/10/essay-thoughts-on-practice/>

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly with questions. I am always happy to talk taiko. Good luck and happy practicing!

⁵This program emphasizes left-hand practice, under the assumption that most taiko music is right-hand dominant. If you are left handed *and* you are not already playing right-hand-dominant taiko rhythms elsewhere, you may invert the sticking for any or all of the rhythms in the program, replacing all right-hand hits with left-hand hits and vice versa.



Day 1

Here we go!

The following two challenges are designed to measure speed and rhythmic dexterity.⁶ A few of the numbers will be used later in the program for practice tempos. You will do these challenges again on Day 30.

I have misgivings about tests and measurements. They are imprecise; they can push players to practice too fast; and they are often administered too frequently, so that instead of elucidating progress, they make the naturally slow pace of improvement frustrating. I am confident, however, that you will show significant improvement after 30 days of practice, and hope these tests will make that improvement obvious.

With the above caveats in mind, complete the following tests.

Single stroke rolls⁷ – 10 min

Listen and play along with the audio tracks indicated. The recordings feature a metronome click, speeding up in steps over the course of each track. Play along until you begin to feel tense, lose control, or miss hits, then write down the last BPM speed you were able to play. Be strict with yourself and err on the side of giving yourself a lower score.

	1st try	2nd try
Start L hand, Use CD track #1 	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Start R hand, Use CD track #1 	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Write the average of the two circled scores below. This is your personal SSR MAX speed.		
SSR MAX: <input type="text"/>		

(Day 1 exercises continued next page)

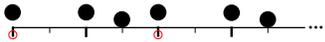
⁶“Rhythmic dexterity” is one’s ability to play a variety of patterns in time without hiccups.

⁷A “single stroke roll” is simply alternating sticking, RLRRLR etc.



Ten tsuku – 10 min

Use the indicated track to measure your maximum speed with the *ten tsuku* pattern. The rhythms should be played with the particular sticking indicated (L LRL LR, and R RLR RL).

	1st try	2nd try
	(circle your best score)	
Start L hand, Use CD track #2 	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Start R hand, Use CD track #2 	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Write the average of the two circled scores below. This is your personal TTK MAX speed and this number will be used again later.		
TTK MAX:		<input type="text"/>

Rhythmic Dexterity – 4 min

Listen to track #3 for instructions and the test.

Rhythmic Dexterity Test	
Have a pen ready. After each set of four, write your score in the box.	
Num. correct (0-4):	<input type="text"/>
DEXTERITY SCORE (0-20):	<input type="text"/>

Good work! Put a satisfying, large “X” through Day 1 on the front of your workbook, or if you purchased a printed set, pop the Day 1 bubble! See you tomorrow!



Hand coordination – 10 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.⁸

Call and answer practice – 5 min

Play along with track #4. Right hand stays on “ka” and left hand stays on “ten”. When you miss a particular rhythm two times, pause the track and spend a few moments practicing that pattern at a slower speed. This slower practice is the most useful part of today’s work!

For advanced players, try playing the response double-time, playing the phrase twice in the gap provided.

⁸There are also a number of useful online metronomes, including webmetronome.com .





Day 3

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Hand coordination – 10 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

Call and answer practice – 5 min

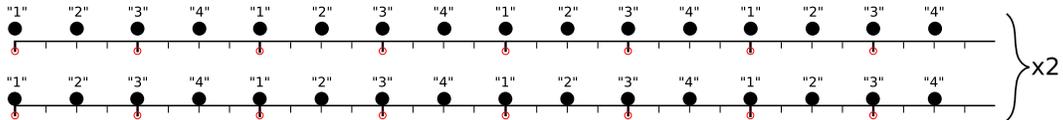
Play along with track #5.



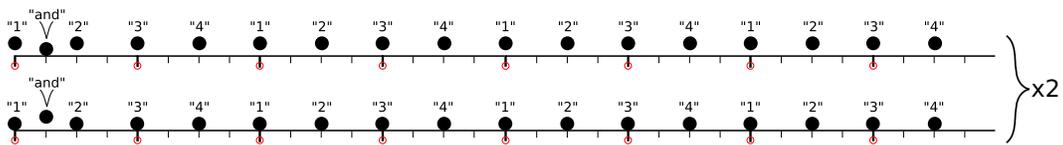


Learn the “16’s drill” – 10 min

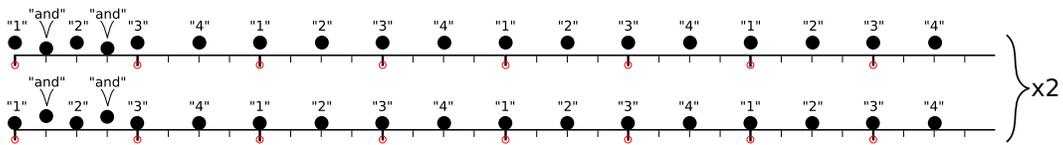
Hit 16 times with the left hand. Then 16 times with the right. Repeat. This 4 × 16 hits represents one “set”. Count “1,2,3,4” out loud with your hits as you play. The first set (16 left, 16 right, repeat) looks like this:



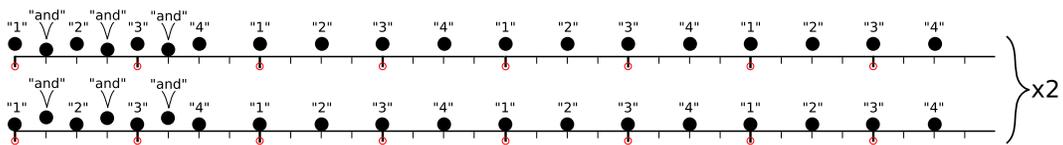
For the next set, add the first “inbetween” hit, between hits 1 and 2. It should be played by the hand not hitting the 16 continuous hits. Say “and” as you play it. The second set looks like this:



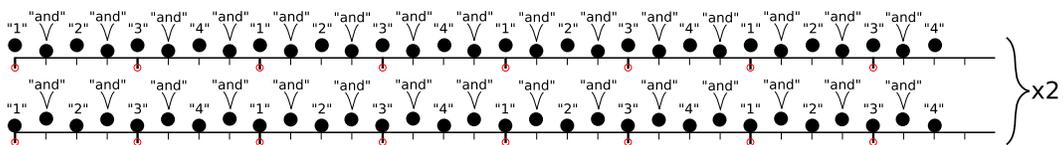
The next set has two “inbetween” hits:



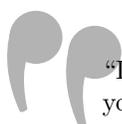
Then three:



And so on, until there are 15 “inbetween” hits. The final set looks like this:



Listen to track #6 to hear the whole drill – 6 min





Day 5

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Warmup – 7 min

Do the 16's drill one time through with a metronome at about 70-80bpm. Use track #36 or #37 if no metronome is available.

Hand coordination – 9 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #7.



“If you practice an art, be proud of it and make it proud of you. It may break your heart, but it will fill your heart before it breaks it; it will make you a person in your own right.” — Maxwell Anderson



Warmup – 7 min

Do the 16's drill one time through with a metronome at about 70-80bpm. Use track #36 or #37 if no metronome is available.

Hand coordination – 9 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

A series of 12 horizontal lines for a hand coordination drill. Each line is a staff with a red clef at the beginning. The notation consists of black dots placed on the staff lines, representing notes. The dots are arranged in a sequence that moves across the staff from left to right, with some dots appearing on the same line. The pattern of dots is consistent across all 12 lines, representing a rhythmic exercise.

Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #8.





Day 7

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Warmup – 12 min

Do the 16's drill three times through, slow-medium-fast. Slow should be approximately 70bpm (track #36), medium should be 80-90bpm (track #37 or #38), and fast should be your SSR MAX speed from Day 1, minus 10bpm. This will be true for all "fast" references for the rest of the program.

Pay attention to the hand hitting the 16 hits in a row. Make sure its strikes do not change in any way when the other hand starts or stops playing along.

Hand coordination – 8 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

The image shows 12 musical staves, each containing a sequence of 16 notes. The notes are represented by black dots on a horizontal line with vertical tick marks. The notes are arranged in a specific rhythmic pattern across the staves. The first staff has notes at positions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15. The second staff has notes at positions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16. This pattern repeats for the remaining staves, alternating between odd and even positions.

Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #9.





Warmup – 6 min

Play through the 16's drill one time. Try to make the hands mirror images of each other. Note each hand's distance from the drum, and the angle of the sticks. Do the batchi come up to the same height? Compare how the wrists and elbows are moving. Also pay close attention to how the batchi feel in the hands and fingers, comparing the contact points in each hand.

Hand coordination – 8 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #10.

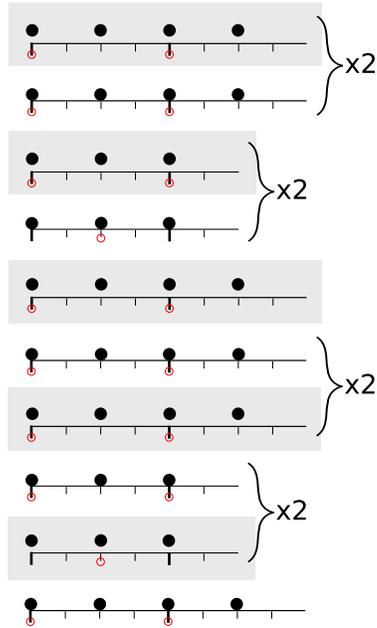
(day 8 exercises continued next page)



Start learning “Ice Skater” – 2 min

This rhythm is based on a drill from Johnny Rabb’s instructional DVD, *30 Days to Better Hands*, the inspiration for this course.

Practice the following rhythm without a metronome for a few minutes, until it can be easily played without looking at the written version. Four hits left hand, four hits right hand, repeat. Then three hits left, three hits right, repeat. Lastly, an extra four hits with the left. The sequence begins again, starting with the right hand. These two sequences back to back constitute “set A”.





Warmup – 12 min

Three times through 16's drill, slow-medium-fast.

Hand coordination – 7 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

A series of ten musical staves for hand coordination practice. Each staff contains a sequence of rhythmic patterns. The patterns are: 1. Quarter note, quarter note. 2. Quarter note, quarter note. 3. Quarter note, quarter note. 4. Quarter note, quarter note. 5. Quarter note, quarter note. 6. Quarter note, quarter note. 7. Quarter note, quarter note. 8. Quarter note, quarter note. 9. Quarter note, quarter note. 10. Quarter note, quarter note. Each note has a red circle below it with a number indicating the finger to use (1-5).

Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #11.

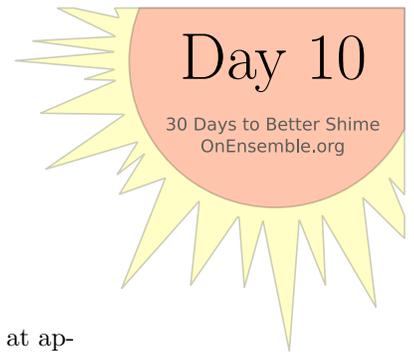
(day 9 exercises continued next page)



Continue learning “Ice Skater” – 2 min

Next we learn “set B”. An “inbetween” hit is added to each line.

The image displays musical notation for the piece "Ice Skater". It consists of several lines of music on a five-line staff. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests. Some notes are marked with a red 'b' below them, indicating a flat. The notation is organized into groups, with some groups enclosed in grey boxes and others in white boxes. Brackets on the right side of the notation indicate that certain groups are repeated twice (x2). The notation shows a progression of rhythmic patterns, with an "inbetween" hit (a note between two other notes) being added to each line.



Hand coordination – 7 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

Eight horizontal musical staves arranged vertically. Each staff contains a sequence of black dots on a horizontal line, with red stems extending downwards from the line. The dots are placed at regular intervals along the line, and the stems are positioned at the bottom of the line. The sequence of dots and stems is identical on all eight staves.

Call and answer practice – 4 min

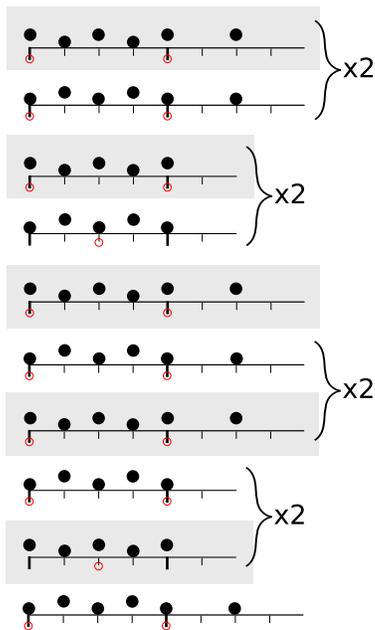
Play along with track #12.

(day 10 exercises continued next page)



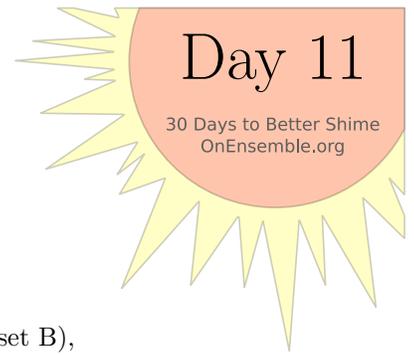
Continue learning “Ice Skater” – 2 min

The final section of Ice Skater is “set C”, with two “inbetweens” added to each line.



Play full Ice Skater with recording – 2 min

Using track #13, play one time through the whole Ice Skater drill: set A once, set B once, set C once, then set B once again.

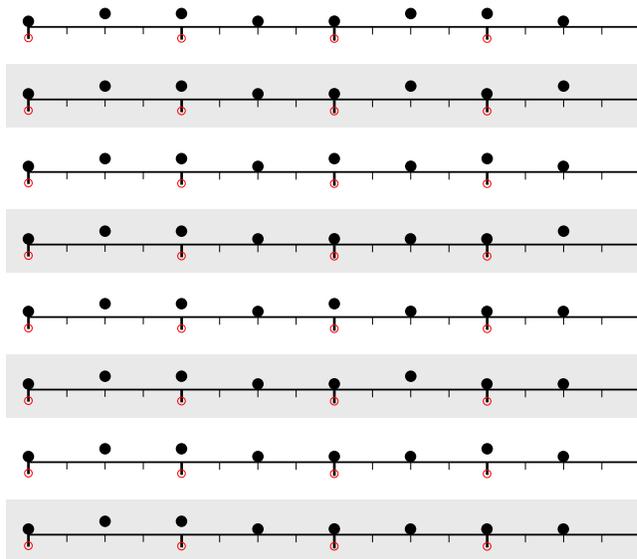


Warmup – 5 min

Three times through full Ice Skater (one time = set A, set B, set C, set B), slow-medium-fast.

Hand coordination – 6 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.



Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #14.

(day 11 exercises continued next page)



Timing practice: Hearing the click – 3 min

The ability to precisely hear one's own hits in relation to the metronome click is critical to improving one's timing. Track #15 and the box below provide a test of this ability. For each trial, you'll hear a four click intro, then four drum hits. Judge the position of each drum hit with respect to the click and write your judgements in the small boxes. If a hit comes before the click, write "e" for early. Write "o" for on, and "l" for late. You'll have a pause after four hits to write your answers. Listen to the trials as many times as you like. Answers are on the bottom of day 15 (page 24). After checking the answers, listen again, paying particular attention to the hits you misjudged.

EOL Listening Test				
Trial 1:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Trial 2:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Trial 3:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Trial 4:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Timing practice: Judging your own hits – 2 min

Set the metronome to 50bpm (or use track #34). For 60 seconds, practice hitting ahead of the click. Start by hitting very early, so that your hits are clearly coming before the click. Then edge closer and closer to the click. Get a sense for how close you can get before you can't judge the position of your hits anymore. Then try to hit after the click, for another 60 seconds.

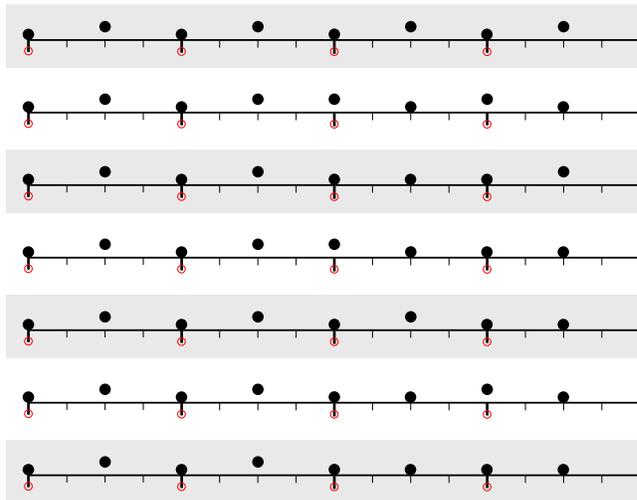


Warmup – 5 min

Three times through full Ice Skater, slow-medium-fast. Pay close attention that the batchi come up the same height for all hits.

Hand coordination – 6 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.



Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #16.

Timing practice: Hearing the click – 2 min

For 60 seconds, play quarter-note hits (four hits per click) along with the metronome at 50bpm, starting with the left hand. Focus closely on how every other left hand hit lines up with the click. Judge those hits in the same way you practiced yesterday.



Repeat another 60 seconds, this time starting with the right hand.

Timing practice: “Diminishing Clicks” – 6 min

Using track #17, again play quarter notes with the click. Over the course of the track, the frequency of the clicks decreases, at first giving you a click for every four of your hits, and then only every eighth hit, then every twelfth, etc. The longer and longer gaps between clicks will compound your timing errors. Try different ways of subdividing the click in your head. See how long you can last!



“I learned real fast because I was always practicing. I would go into English class and sit in the back of the room with a Remo practice pad and practice double-stroke rolls and get kicked out of class.” — Vinnie Colaiuta



Day 13

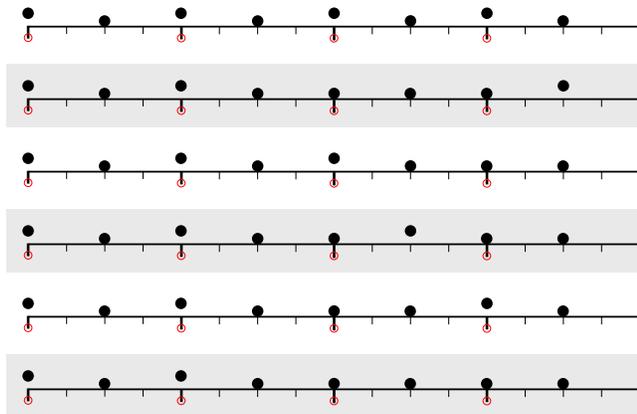
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Warmup – 5 min

Three times through full Ice Skater, slow-med-fast. Pay close attention to the similarity of your hands. Do the drill in front of a mirror if possible. Match the movements of your weaker hand to your dominant hand.

Hand coordination – 5 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

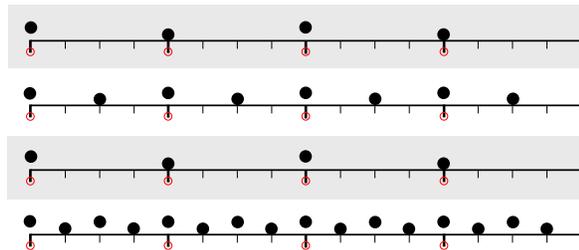


Call and answer practice – 3 min

Play along with track #18. (On track #18, please disregard my statement of playing each rhythm “four times”. As with all the other call and answer recordings, each rhythm is played twice.)

Timing practice: “Straight hit stability” – 5 min

Practice the following challenge pattern with a metronome at 80bpm (track #37). For increased difficulty, try the pattern with the Diminishing Clicks challenge, (track #17).



Repeat, starting with right hand, all hits above inverted.



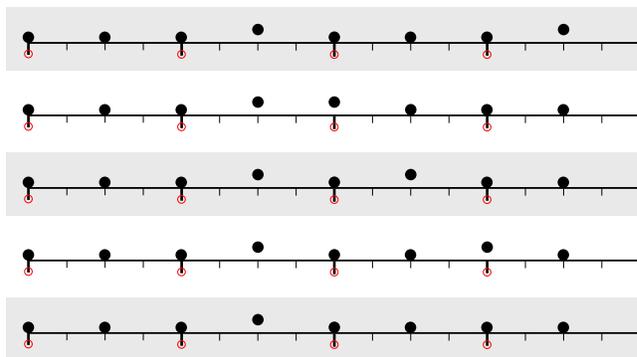


Warmup – 6 min

Three times through full Ice Skater, slow-med-fast. Pay close attention to the similarity of your hands. Do the drill in front of a mirror if possible. Watch and match the path of the batchi tips as they travel through the air.

Hand coordination – 5 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.

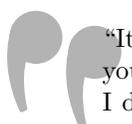
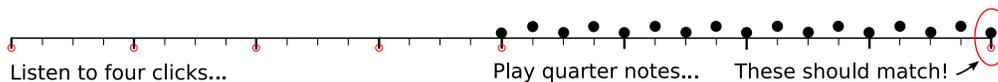


Call and answer practice – 3 min

Play along with track #19.

Timing practice: “Hard Starts” drill – 4 min

Use track #20 to practice quickly internalizing tempo. You’ll be given four clicks for tempo, and then be challenged to play at an even tempo through a silence of the same length. You’ll be given a click at the beginning and end of this silence, and when done properly, your last hit should line up precisely with the final click.



“It’s all about practice. . . We don’t have buttons to push and make it like magicians, you know? Some magic tricks that you can buy. . . push buttons and it works. Here, I don’t have a secret. . . It’s all about time, all about practice. Years and years of practice. . .” — Sergey Ignatov Jr., juggler



Day 15

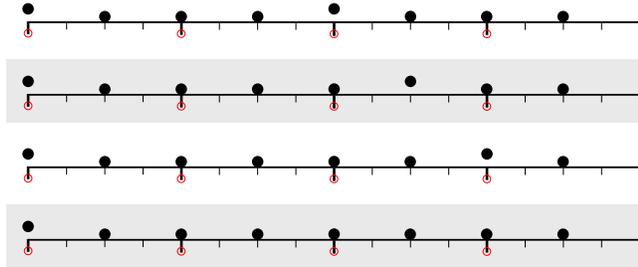
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Warmup – 6 min

16's drill review. One time through, slow.

Hand coordination – 4 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.



Call and answer practice – 3 min

Play along with track #21.

Timing practice review – 13 min

Go through the Diminishing Clicks and Hard Starts drills one time each (tracks #17 and #20), starting with the left hand. Repeat the tracks again, starting with the right hand.

Celebrate

You're halfway through!

Trial 4: all four could probably be classified as "o" but see if you can hear the difference between just slightly ahead and just slightly behind the click.

Trial 4:	l	o	l	e
Trial 3:	o	l	e	e
Trial 2:	e	e	l	e
Trial 1:	l	e	e	o

EOL Listening Test Answers



“Music is not a standard, it’s fluid and it either grows or it dies. We have to keep nurturing it, keep pushing it further ahead into new dimensions. We just can’t be satisfied with playing 4/4 with an accent on 2 and 4 for the rest of our lives.” — Gary Chaffee

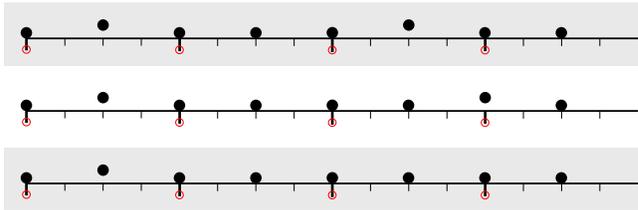


Warmup – 5 min

Three times through full Ice Skater, slow-medium-fast.

Hand coordination... last one! – 4 min

Practice each line on its own until you can play it four times through at approximately 90bpm with no mistakes or tension. Use track #38 if no metronome is available.



Call and answer practice – 4 min

Play along with track #22.

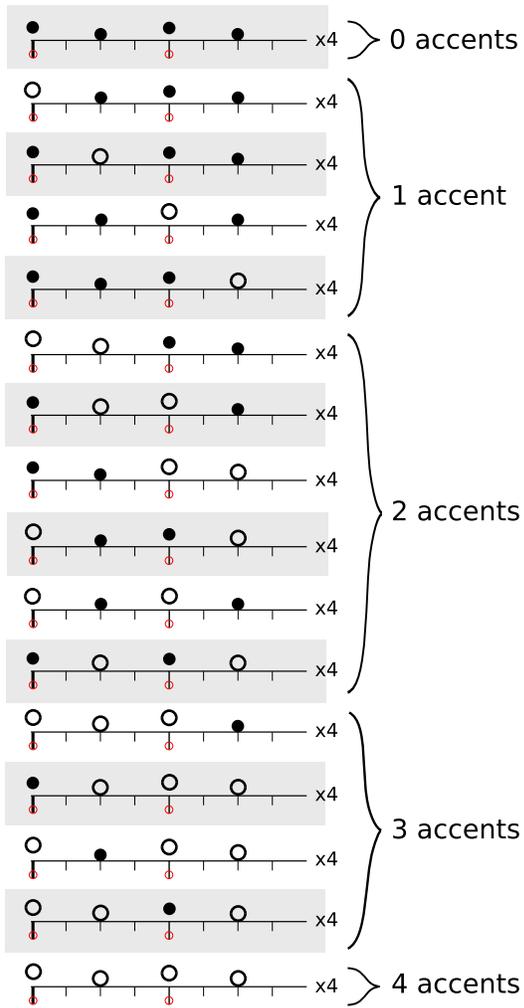
Learn “1234” drill structure – 6 min

In its most basic version, the 1234 drill combines accented hits with non-accented hits in every possible combination (with a 4/4 framework). Play along to track #23 two times, following along with the guide on the following page. (Accented hits are represented by hollow dots.) Then play along two more times without looking at the written version.

(Day 16 exercises continued next page)



“I say play your own way. Don’t play what the public wants. You play what you want and let the public pick up on what you’re doing; even if it does take them fifteen, twenty years.” — Thelonious Monk





Warmup – 6 min

Four times through the 1234 drill, two starting with the left hand, two starting with the right, at approximately 72bpm (track #36).

Introduction to doubles

Double-stroke rolls, or simply “doubles”, are pairs of hits with each hand, RRLLRLL. They generally have a faster maximum speed than single stroke rolls, and are particularly empowering when playing multiple drums. Beyond performance utility, the practice of doubles illuminates inconsistencies and errors in basic strike form.

Although there are many specialized techniques for high-speed doubles, good doubles start with the simple ability to do two normal hits of equal volume, back to back. The rebound after the first hit should be accomplished by the batchi’s bounce alone, without the need for any additional lifting force from the hands or fingers.

Dribbling the batchi – 7 min

Starting with your right hand, hold the stick as though paused at the highest point in the strike, so that it points up over your right shoulder. Your wrist should be loosely cocked upward, and the fingers relatively open. This is the starting position. From here, do a normal strike but allow the stick to bounce all the way back up to this position again on its own. Make sure you aren’t subtly lifting the stick. This is challenging for most taiko players since we have learned to stop the batchi in the down position. The ideal strike will feel like dribbling a basketball; pushing the stick down and gently following it back up after the bounce. Heavier sticks and a springy playing surface will emphasize the rebound. Experiment for a few minutes and then switch to the left hand.

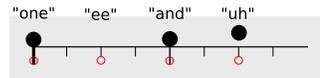
Once you get the basic feel of starting from the highest position and allowing the batchi to rebound on its own, spend another 2 minutes practicing two hits in a row with each hand. When not hitting, the hands should always be in the up position. Start very, very slowly, with pauses between each and every hit. Gradually speed up, paying attention to the sensation that you’re simply pushing the stick down twice, allowing the batchi to bounce back up freely. Speed up near the point where you lose this sensation and back off.

(Day 17 exercises continued next page)



Jiuchi⁹ practice: *ten tsuku* – 3 min

The “ten tsuku” jiuchi has three hits, (“ten” “tsu” and “ku”, or RRL), usually with the first hit slightly accented. Set the metronome to 160bpm (track #44), and count out loud along with the clicks as shown below. Play the jiuchi while counting until comfortable. Continue playing and focus your attention on the first hit. Concentrate on judging that first hit against the click for 60 seconds. Each time it comes around, try to discern whether your first hit is early, on, or late, with respect to the click. Then move to the second hit for 60 seconds. And finally, concentrate on the third hit.



⁹“Jiuchi” means base-beat in Japanese. “Ji” comes from the character for “ground”, and “uchi” from the verb, “to hit”.



Warmup – 6 min

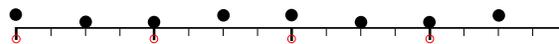
Four times through the 1234 drill, two starting with the left hand, two starting with the right. Concentrate on keeping the quiet hits quiet.

Doubles practice – 5 min

For 5 minutes, practice double hits, starting very, very slowly, hitting along with the clicks at 40bpm (track #33) and gradually speeding up. Never lose the sense of two distinct pushes and the batchi bouncing. Search for the speed where the hits seem effortless. Try and edge the tempo up while keeping this sensation.

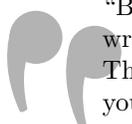
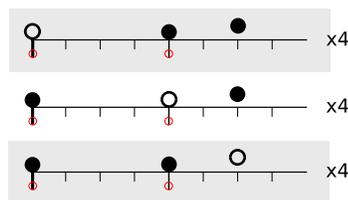
Offset doubles – 6 min

As speed increases, it is harder to maintain two even hits with each hand. The first hit of each pair has a tendency to be accented, both because the hand has more prep time for the first hit, and because the first hit falls on the downbeat. To counteract this latter cause, practice “offset doubles” at 50bpm for 3 minutes starting with the left hand (notated below), followed by 3 minutes starting with the right hand. As you become comfortable, practice saying “don” where the clicks are notated, forcing your brain to feel the downbeat on the second hit of each double.



Jiuchi practice: ten tsuku – 3 min

Spend a few moments playing the jiuchi at a slow tempo, accenting the first hit. Then spend about 60 seconds accenting only the second hit. And finally accent only the third hit for 60 seconds. Invert the sticking and repeat. Keep the hands relaxed and in control. Once you are comfortable with accenting each of the three hits, try the challenge pattern below.



“But the way practice normally works, the ‘punishment’ for getting something wrong is repeating it; the ‘reward’ for getting something right is you can stop. This simple version allows you to stop after you get it right once, which means that you’ve played it wrong far more often than you’ve played it right. A more demanding version allows you to stop only when you’ve played it right as many times as you’ve played it wrong...” — Sheila & Richard Veryard



Day 19

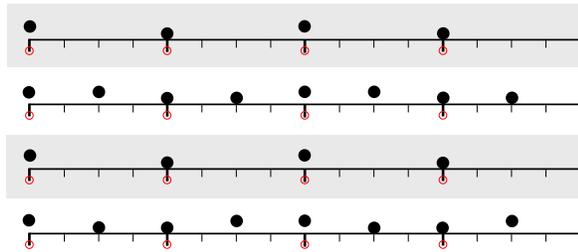
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Warmup – 6 min

Two times through the 1234 drill starting with the left, first time slow, then medium. Two times with the right, first time medium, then fast.

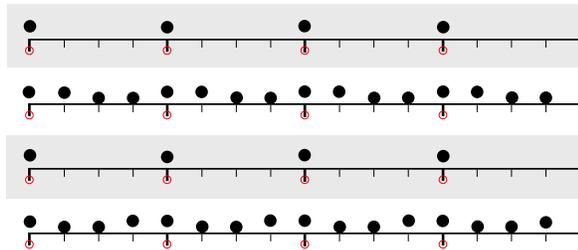
Doubles practice: offset doubles challenge – 4 min

Spend a few minutes reviewing offset doubles then try the challenge pattern below.



Doubles practice: “Doubly” drill intro – 6 min

Practice the following drill until it is possible to play it at approximately 80bpm (track #37). After becoming comfortable with the left hand leading as written below, invert all sticking to lead with the right.



Jiuchi practice: ten tsuku – 10 min

Use track #17 to practice maintaining tempo with the jiuchi as the metronome frequency decreases. Do two trials with each hand leading.





Warmup – 14 min

One time slow through 16’s drill, left hand leading.

Two times through Ice Skater, right hand leading, first time slow, then medium.

Two times through 1234 drill, left hand leading.

Full “Doubly” drill – 6 min

Practice the following drill until you can play it at approximately 70bpm (track #36). After becoming comfortable with the left hand leading as written below, invert all sticking to lead with the right.

Jiuchi practice: ten tsuku – 4 min

With the metronome at 120bpm (track #41), practice maintaining constant tempo while doubling and halving the jiuchi speed (see below). Practice for a few minutes, leading with the left hand as indicated below, then invert all the sticking and repeat.





Day 21

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Warmup – 11 min

One time through 16's drill, left hand leading.

Three times through Ice Skater, right hand leading, slow-medium-fast.

Doubles practice: “1234 Doubles” – 8 min

Use the 1234 drill structure to combine single and double-strokes in every possible 4/4 combination. Accents from the original 1234 drill are replaced by double hits. All hits should be the same volume.

0 doubles

1 double

2 doubles

3 doubles

4 doubles

Jiuchi practice: Hard Starts with ten tsuku – 4 min

Use track #20 to practice quickly internalizing the tempo with *ten tsuku*. Disregard the straight-hits playing example at the beginning of the track. You should play the *ten tsuku* jiuchi as written below.

Listen to four clicks... Play ten tsuku... These should match! →



“If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music...I get most joy in life out of music.” — Albert Einstein



Warmup – 10 min

One time slow through 16's drill, left hand leading.

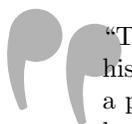
Preferably in front of a mirror, do two sets of the basic 1234 drill (accents versus quiet hits). During the sections with one accent per line and three accents per line (refer to notation on page 26, notice that one hand is playing the same level hits for the duration of each line. Focus on the movement of this hand; the hits should not be affected by the other hand.

Doubles practice – 6 min

Two times through the 1234 Doubles drill, leading with the left hand. Two more times, leading with the right.

Jiuchi practice: the Uncertain Soloist – 2 min

Use track #24 to practice maintaining a steady *ten tsuku* jiuchi even as another player wavers in time. A companion *ten tsuku* jiuchi starts the track and then diminishes.



“Thus, if a composer wants to produce music that is relevant to his contemporaries, his chief problem is not really musical, though it may seem to him to be so; it is a problem of attitude to contemporary society and culture in relation to the basic human problem of learning to be human.” — John Blacking



Day 23

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Warmup – 6 min

Three times through the 1234 Doubles drill, leading with the left, slow-medium-fast. Do not speed up in the middle of a set, instead making tempo jumps between sets. Be careful not to start the last set too fast; the last line will likely be the hardest.

“1234 Inbetweens” drill – 8 min

This variation of the 1234 drill focuses on “inbetween hits”. Play through the drill slowly, leading with each hand until comfortable. Stop the drill to tackle particularly challenging lines.

The diagram illustrates the "1234 Inbetweens" drill with five categories of patterns, each repeated 4 times (x4):

- 0 inbetweens:** A single line with four black dots on a staff, representing a 1234 sequence.
- 1 inbetween:** Four lines, each with four black dots. The second dot of each line is shifted to the right, creating a staggered pattern.
- 2 inbetweens:** Four lines, each with four black dots. The second and third dots of each line are shifted to the right.
- 3 inbetweens:** Four lines, each with four black dots. The second, third, and fourth dots of each line are shifted to the right.
- 4 inbetweens:** A single line with four black dots, representing a 4321 sequence.

(Day 23 exercises continued next page)



Creativity – 3 min

In addition to practicing “ready-made” drills that come to us from a teacher, we must also be able to create our own drills on the fly, to tackle personal challenges. Starting today, you will work toward developing an original jiuchi, and apply what we’ve learned thus far toward practicing and refining it. If you feel intimidated by composition, keep in mind that our primary goal is to learn how to apply drills and practice to new rhythms. You are practicing practice, not composition.

The first step is to choose a new hitting technique to tackle. If you are using a practice pad, you likely have fewer possible tones than an actual drum. There are still, however, many options. One of my favorites is a “slap hit”; a normal strike but with a very low angle to the batchi, so that the batchi makes contact flat against the hitting surface. A related technique is the “side stick”, often seen in drumset snare. The stick is laid on the drum surface and the front end raised, the back still touching, and slapped down to produce the sound. Another technique is the “press hit”, where the tip of the batchi is pushed into the hitting surface. A higher batchi angle and “poking” motion keep the batchi from bouncing and produce a muted tone.

Spend a few minutes exploring a variety of different hitting techniques. Pick one that you want to tackle in the coming days. Any technique that produces a different sound is fair game, but start imagining how it might be used in a rhythm. Listen to track #25 to hear the sound I will be tackling.



Day 24

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Warmup: Simplified “Stone Killer” drill – 4 min

At a very comfortable tempo (and err on the side of playing slowly), do four hits left, four hits right. Repeat 16 times. Then do eight hits left, eight hits right. Repeat 16 times. Finally, 16 hits left, 16 hits right. Repeat 16 times.

1234 variations review – 9 min

Do the original 1234 drill (accents versus quiet hits) two times, each hand leading once. Do the same for the 1234 Doubles drill and the 1234 Inbetweens drill.

Creativity – 8 min

The 1234 drill is well suited to customization. At its core, it is a structure for arranging two elements in sets of four, in every possible combination.

```

A A A A
B A A A
A B A A
A A B A
A A A B
B B A A
A B B A
A A B B
B A A B
B A B A
A B A B
B B B A
A B B B
B A B B
B B A B
B B B B

```

Spend the next few minutes finding a way to apply the 1234 structure to the new technique you chose yesterday. Play through the drill, inserting your sound in all the “B” locations above. It often makes sense to simply use quiet hits for the “A” locations, but that is up to you.

It may not be immediately apparent how to shoehorn your new technique into the 1234 structure. The technique I have chosen, for example, proved to be a bit tricky. Listen to track #26 to hear more.



“I would advise you to keep your overhead down; avoid a major drug habit; play everyday, and take it in front of other people. They need to hear it, and you need them to hear it.” — James Taylor



Warmup – 10 min

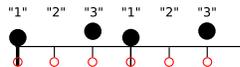
16’s drill one time through, leading with the left.

“1234 your new technique” drill, one left leading, one right leading.

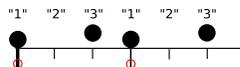
Jiuchi practice: tekke – 3 min

The common swung jiuchi, “tekke tekke tekke”, sometimes called the “horse beat”, is deceptively difficult. Perhaps because it is so unadorned, minor inconsistencies are immediately apparent. The pattern is prone to wild tempo swings and uncertain stops and starts. When played confidently, however, this simple jiuchi can be gut-wrenchingly powerful, or airy and light-hearted. The pattern demands confidence and technical facility.

Set the metronome to about 120bpm (or track #41) and count along with the clicks, “1,2,3,1,2,3...” To play the jiuchi, hit along with counts one and three.



Once you have a feel for this, switch the metronome to 40bpm (track #33) and play at the same tempo. Continue counting the “1,2,3”, now with only your “1” landing with the click.



Creativity – 5 min

It’s time to write your own jiuchi! Anything goes, as long as you incorporate the new technique you’ve been practicing.

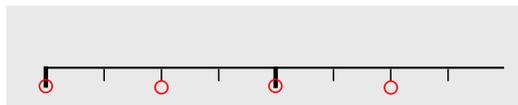
Below is a template for a “two-bar” jiuchi (two counts of four). Feel free to make yours longer or shorter, if necessary. Feel free to use “western” notation or your own system, as long as you’ll recognize it tomorrow. You’ll eventually be playing this jiuchi to a 92bpm click.

Write your jiuchi below. We will refer to this pattern as “A”.

If you feel stuck or intimidated by writing your own jiuchi, I’ve created a magical “Rhythm Maker” that will help. Use the last page of this workbook (some assembly required).

Your jiuchi here!

(A)



“The world needs more of the kind of harmony and understanding that drums bring to people, and if everyone plays it and everybody hears it, hopefully they’ll understand the kind of world, the kind of harmony, that’s within a drum.” — Mark Miyoshi



Day 26

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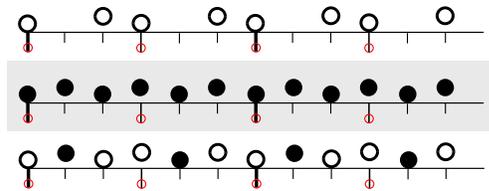
Warmup – 9 min

Ice Skater, three times through, slow-medium-fast, leading with left.

“1234 your new technique” drill, once leading with left, once leading with right.

Jiuchi practice: tekke – 4 min

Practice the following challenge pattern for 3 minutes or until you can play it at both 50bpm and 90bpm (tracks #34 and #38). Pay particular attention to keeping the non-accented hits quiet. Switch to left hand leading when comfortable.



Creativity – 7 min

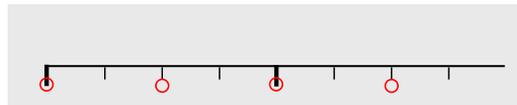
Spend a few minutes reviewing the jiuchi you wrote yesterday. Feel free to make changes if you have new ideas, but by the end of this short time, you should be able to play and loop the pattern.

Sometimes, a short, oft-repeating jiuchi is extremely powerful; like the basic *matsuri* jiuchi. In many instances, however, a longer-phrase jiuchi, repeating in 8, 16, or 32 bars, adds a lot of interest to the backbeat.

The “A” jiuchi you wrote yesterday is two counts of four, or two bars. To stretch this pattern out a bit, you’ll play your current version three times, and then play a variation, “B”. This simple AAAB structure can be surprisingly satisfying.

Write a variation of your jiuchi below. Listen to track #27 hear my variation.

(B)





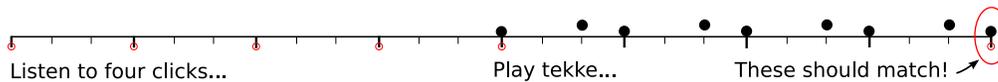
Warmup – 10 min

16’s drill, left hand leading, medium speed.

“1234 your new technique”, once leading with the left, then again leading with the right.

Jiuchi practice: tekke – 6 min

Review yesterday’s challenge pattern. Use track #17 to practice keeping a steady jiuchi as the metronome frequency decreases. Do trials leading with each hand. Then use track #20 to practice Hard Starts with the *tekke* jiuchi. Disregard the straight-hits playing example at the beginning of the track. You should play the *tekke* jiuchi as written below.



Creativity – 4 min

When practicing a brand-new technique, a large percentage of our available brain power is dedicated to coordinating the new physical movements. As we become more comfortable, we can begin to worry about the musicality of our patterns. We can fine-tune the “voicing”, adjusting the volume and tone of each hit to achieve a more interesting pattern. We can fine-tune the timing, making sure that each hit is precisely where it should be. To me, this is the fun practice, and it only starts after we’ve memorized and become familiar with the music.

Today, spend a few minutes working on the voicing of your jiuchi. If you’re currently using a mixture of quiet and loud hits, try exaggerating the difference. How might you sing the pattern? Try and play it like that by subtly adjusting the tones of the hits. Is there a climax in the pattern, or a low point? Make the shape more dramatic. Listen to track #28 to see how my jiuchi is taking shape.



“I practice based on what my biggest problem is that day or that week. Whatever gives me problems, that goes to the top of the list. It changes from week to week.”

— Kenny Burrell



Warmup – 4 min

Simplified Stone Killer drill (see Day 24 warmup, page 36), one time leading with left.

Jiuchi practice: tekke uncertain soloist – 2 min

Use track #29 to practice keeping a steady jiuchi even as another player rushes and slows down. A companion *tekke* jiuchi starts the track and then diminishes.

New jiuchi practice: one-click focus – 5 min

Set the metronome to a fast click (tracks #43–#46) and practice your jiuchi slowly, so that the click aligns with as many hits as feasible. Listen to track #30 as an example.

Playing along with this fast click, focus on one hit in your pattern, comparing it to the metronome. Judge that hit as you did previously in our EOL challenges, constantly trying to line it up perfectly with the click. The practice of listening to a particular hit while playing the whole pattern forces the brain to further commit the rhythm to “muscle memory”. To test how well your brain has internalized the pattern, try adjusting the volume of only that single hit. If your brain “freaks out” and makes a mistake or loses the pattern, you know a significant portion of your brain power is still dedicated to simply coordinating the basic motions.

This is a concentration-intensive drill. I am only able to focus intently on one hit for about 10 seconds. Pay attention to your own attention span and switch to listening to another hit as soon as you lose focus.

New jiuchi practice: Diminishing Clicks – 3 min

Spend a few moments reviewing your full jiuchi pattern (AAAB). Use track #17 to practice maintaining a steady tempo as the frequency of clicks decreases.





Warmup: Jojo Mayer's clapping – 4 min

Put your elbows together in front of you so that your forearms are vertical and your palms are together as though you are praying. Your thumbs should be directly in front of your face. Clap your hands together, keeping the base of your hands touching. Eight claps is one count. Do 100 counts in a row. You can slow down as necessary, but you cannot stop.

You will likely feel a burn in your forearms partway through the drill. This is okay, but don't overdo it. Slow down as necessary to keep the claps relatively controlled. Make a note of the burning sensation; you should never feel it when actually drumming. Drumming requires dexterity, not muscle mass, and when your muscles are burning, the increased tension reduces the connection between the brain and hands. A certain amount of burning is okay in this warmup, as the purpose is literally to warm our arms and make the muscles ready to move.

When you finish, massage your forearms a bit and note how physically warm they are.

New jiuchi practice: Hard Starts – 4 min

Apply track #20 to practicing your own jiuchi. If some of the tempos are impossibly fast for your particular jiuchi, simply skip them.

Coordination review – 4 min

Use track #22 to review the coordination patterns covered this month. Each pattern is repeated two times. Aim to repeat the pattern perfectly the first try but continue on if you make a mistake. If you make a mistake on the second try as well, pause the recording and practice only that pattern for a few moments before continuing.





Warmup – 10 min

16's drill, left hand leading, slow.

Ice Skater, slow-medium-fast, left hand leading.

Ending point: Speed test – 10 min

Listen and play along with the audio tracks indicated. The recordings feature a metronome click, speeding up in steps over the course of each track. Play along until you begin to feel tense, lose control, or miss hits, then write down the last BPM speed you were able to play. Be strict with yourself and err on the side of a lower score.

	1st try	2nd try
Start L hand, Use CD track #1 	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Start R hand, Use CD track #1 	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Write the average of the two circled scores below. Compare this SSR MAX speed to your speed at the beginning of the program.		
SSR MAX:		<input type="text"/>

(Day 30 exercises continued next page)



“The longer I play taiko, the more basic my practice becomes...I start practice with single, slow hits. Then I suddenly realize I’ve spent the whole day doing only that.” — Shoji Kameda

Ten tsuku – 10 min

Use the indicated track to measure your maximum speed with the *ten tsuku* pattern. The rhythms should be played with the particular sticking indicated (L LRL LR, and R RLR RL).

	1st try	2nd try
	(circle your best score)	
Start L hand, Use CD track #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Start R hand, Use CD track #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Write the average of the two circled scores below. Compare your TTK MAX speed to that at the beginning of the program.		
TTK MAX:		<input type="text"/>

Rhythmic Dexterity – 4 min

Listen to track #3 for instructions and the test.

Rhythmic Dexterity Test	
Have a pen ready. After each set of four, write your score in the box.	
Num. correct (0-4):	<input type="text"/>
DEXTERITY SCORE (0-20):	<input type="text"/>

(Day 30 exercises continued next page)

Rock out! – 4 min

Play your new jiuchi along with track #31 for a little jam session. Use my finished jiuchi on track #32 to play your own improvised beats.

Congratulations!

So, how was it? Did the final test show improved numbers? Do you feel your coordination has improved? Are you more confident about your shime playing?

I hope the course was worthwhile and that you feel it has improved your technical abilities. Even more, I hope the challenge of daily practice taught you something about your own practice habits, practice difficulties, and practice interests. Think back over your experience of the course. Was there a moment when you had difficulty finding the energy or the time to complete a session? I've not yet met a participant who hasn't. Was there one time along the way where you found some way to "convince" yourself to practice? Perhaps you promised yourself a reward, "I can't have breakfast until I do today's exercises..." Perhaps you scheduled your day differently to improve your chances of practicing. These discoveries, of small techniques for motivating yourself and making time in your life for practice, are immeasurably valuable. As taiko players, the hardest challenge we face is not taiko technique; any technique can be mastered, by anyone, eventually. The hardest thing is getting ourselves to practice. The difference between great players and mediocre players is the great players' ability to convince themselves to sit down and practice.

If the *30 Days to Better Shime* program helped you understand your own ability to practice, consider your work a fantastic success! If you made any discoveries toward this end that you think might help others, please share them. As a community, we should strive to improve our understanding of practice and the challenges it poses. The future of taiko rests in our hands, and any contributions we might make to it will undoubtedly involve practice, and a lot of it.

Thank you for participating and great work!

Contact, Feedback

Please feel free to contact me by email at kris at OnEnsemble dot org or by phone at 310-350-8825. I love talking taiko and am happy to answer questions.

I highly value feedback on the *30 Days to Better Shime* program, particularly those aspects you were less fond of. If you have any suggestions at all, and to share your personal practice discoveries, please post comments at On Ensemble's website:

<http://onensemble.org/2008/12/30-days-to-better-shime/>

Ordering Printed *30 Days to Better Shime* Sets

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310-350-8825

At the request of many participants, I am making pre-printed sets of the program available for purchase. The sets include the following.

- **Workbook**
This workbook, color-printed and bound.
- **Daily-Completion Bubble Calendar**
All new and ridiculously satisfying! A *30 Days to Better Shime* desk calendar made from hand-cut bubble wrap. Pop a bubble for each day completed!
- **Companion CD**
All of the companion audio files (including metronome tracks) on a burned CD.
- **30 days of email and phone support**
Choose the month you want to work on the program and you'll receive check-in emails from me twice weekly.

Other than the bubble calendar, the information contained in the for-sale workbook/CD sets is identical to that which is freely available in the downloadable version.

30 Days to Better Shime Workshops



For beginning shime-daiko players, Ōn Ensemble offers a one-of-a-kind, 2.5-hour introductory workshop on shime-daiko technique, focusing on how to hold the sticks and the basic strike. It teaches players specific tools for refining their skills and improving speed and control. The workshop includes 5 printed sets of the *30 Days to Better Shime* course. Please see <http://onensemble.org/workshops/> for more information.

Donations

A surprising number of participants have sent me donations in appreciation for this free program. I am deeply moved by this generosity and feel energized, both emotionally and financially, to continue work on programs which I hope will help the taiko community.

If you feel moved to make a donation, I will be honored to accept it, but please consider whether there are others around you who might benefit even more from your donation. You will absolutely make my day if you donate \$20 to a homeless shelter or relief organization and tell me about it.

Access to Source Files

If you wish to modify or build upon this program, the original source files for this workbook are located at Ōn Ensemble's website:

<http://onensemble.org/2008/12/30-days-to-better-shime/>

The typesetting of this workbook was generated by L^AT_EX, and all the graphics were created with the Inkscape vector graphics program. Both of these applications, and all of the other software used in the production of the course (including the base operating system and audio recording software) are Free Software, meaning you too can use and share them freely. Visit fsf.org to learn more about the Free Software movement.

Changelog

- Jan 2009: minor revisions
 - Fixed typos page 26 and 32 – thanks Vanessa and Margaret!
- Dec 2008: Workbook version 2 release
 - Technical improvements
 - * Re-implemented source files from inkscape to L^AT_EX
 - * Downloadable format now PDF – thanks Judi!
 - * Typeset for two-sided printing – thanks Jon!
 - * Reduced color densities – thanks Carol!
 - * Published blog post on Free Art License – Thanks Anaan!
 - Calendar on cover for progress tracking – thanks Ruth!
 - Rhythm Maker easier to fold with narrower margin – thanks Yuu!
 - Added front and back matter, including fuller notation explanation and suggestions for staying on track
 - Added footnotes for terminology definitions and further info including sticking – thanks Linda!
 - Revised notation system; full dots, wider spaces between lines, color highlighting – thanks Yumiko!
 - Added time required for each exercise
 - Exercises / drill revisions
 - * Removed starting point test “ten tsukutsu ten”; redundant
 - * Shortened warmups, days 10, 15, 18, 19, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30
 - * Added Jojo Mayer clapping warmup, day 29
- Dec 2008: Audio files version 2 release
 - Technical improvements
 - * .zip files provided
 - * Re-encoded .mp3 and .ogg files with VBR for smaller size
 - * Added ID3 tags (metadata) to mp3 and ogg tracks
 - * Howto for ogg use on Mac
 - Exercises / drill revisions
 - * Added metronome to rhythmic dexterity test and the call and answer exercises, tracks 3-5, 7-12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22)
 - * Removed unused track 3 `speed_test_ten_tsukutsu_ten`, renumbered remaining tracks
 - * Re-recorded dexterity test explanation, track 3
- Jun 2008: Workbook original release
- Jun 2008: Audio files original release

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Rhythm Maker

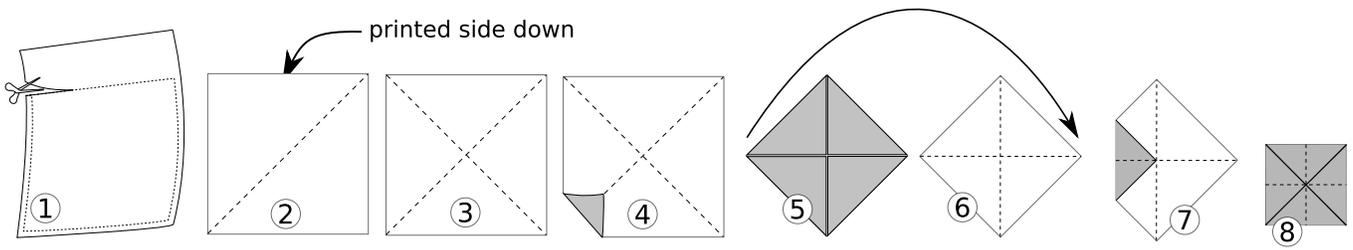
The empty staff on Day 25 (page 37) for your *jiuchi* has 8 subdivisions. Use the Rhythm Maker to randomly assign sounds to subdivision positions on the staff. You can use the Rhythm Maker repeatedly to fill the staff, or pull it out when you're stuck.

Once you have cut and folded the Rhythm Maker, place your thumbs and pointer fingers into the Rhythm Maker's flaps. With the Rhythm Maker closed, pick a sound from the four, colored options. "Your sound" refers to the new technique you've been practicing. If it doesn't have a name, think of one now. Once you've picked a sound, spell that sound as you open and close the Rhythm Maker in opposite directions. For example, if I had chosen the "ten" sound, I would open the Rhythm Maker vertically once saying "T", then horizontally, saying "E", then vertically once saying "N". You should now have a set of playing styles visible, "loud", "soft", "medium", and "voice". Pick from among these and open that flap to reveal the subdivision location for the sound and playing style you have chosen.

Here is an example run. I've got an idea for the first half of the *jiuchi*, but I'm stuck after that. With the assembled Rhythm Maker in hand, I choose "teke", and I alternate openings as I spell T-E-K-E. I now see "VOICE", "SOFT", "VOICE", and "LOUD" options. I choose one of the "VOICE" options. Opening its flap reveals subdivision 8. Going back to my *jiuchi* staff on Day 25, I write "teke (voice)" on subdivision 8 and try it to see how it sounds. I still need more, so I try again and wind up with a loud "ten" on subdivision 6. I try it and it sounds okay, but it'd be better on subdivision 5, so I stick it there. Now we're getting somewhere...

Have fun!

How to assemble your Rhythm Maker



✂

"ka"	VOICE		LOUD	"teke"
MED	subdiv. 1	subdiv. 6	subdiv. 3	SOFT
	subdiv. 7		subdiv. 5	
LOUD	subdiv. 2	subdiv. 8	subdiv. 4	MED
your sounds	SOFT		VOICE	"ten"