

Innovative Techniques for Making Practice Fun and Productive Using the Rhythm Coach

• Charting Progress

Practicing without specific goals is not very profitable. The Rhythm Coach is an excellent tool to improve the quality of practice time. Here are some ideas:

- Choose a rudiment to work on, let's say we want to work on the paradiddle.
- Decide on your goal, something like "I want to work on my accuracy and speed when playing the paradiddle"
- Determine the speed that you can currently accurately play the paradiddle. (Use the metronome function on the Rhythm Coach)
- Practice the paradiddle at increasing speeds during each practice session. Make a chart to help you record your tempos.
- Use the **ACCURACY SCORE** function on the Rhythm Coach during your practice to be sure that you are maintaining your accuracy as you increase your tempos. Start with the "**A-4**" **setting**. (This is the initial setting) This setting checks your timing over 4 measures, and is a good place to start. Don't try to use the higher settings (checking 8, 16, or 32 measures until you have shown improvement at the 4 measure setting.) Don't get frustrated by trying to move too quickly. Remember that tension is the enemy of speed and accuracy; so also approach this type of practice with as much relaxed motion as possible.

Using feedback from the Rhythm Coach helps you to see your progress and provides you with an accurate account of your practice. Seeing actual progress is a great motivator.

• Using the "Mix In"

It is always fun to play along with recordings. Even if you are just practicing your rudiments, doing so with a recording helps work on accuracy, tempo control and endurance. Here is a tip for newer players: Many beginning books now come with CDs with audio or MP3 files. You can plug your computer or MP3 player into the Rhythm Coach and play along with the accompaniments. More advanced musicians can create their own loops or accompaniments with accompaniment /recording software to make practice more fun.

• Recording yourself and the Rhythm Coach

There are easy ways to make recordings of your practice sessions with the Rhythm Coach. Why record your practice? First, it is easier to critique your performance when listening to it, rather than while playing. You can also keep multiple recordings to track your progress. Making multiple recordings until you get the best one to share with your teacher is also very effective. Here is a quick way you can set up for recording using the Rhythm Coach: Simply plug a pair of powered computer speakers into the **OUTPUT** jack of the Rhythm Coach. You can adjust the volume using the Rhythm Coach **VOLUME KNOB** and the speakers to get a good level. Now you are ready to record your session using your computer or a portable recorder like the **Roland R-05**.

- **Linking Your Drumming Practice to Mallet Keyboard Practice**

Drummers who want to work on their mallet keyboard skills often need special motivation to practice. Here is one way you can make your “cross over” practice more productive.

Practice a sticking pattern on the Rhythm Coach at various speeds and dynamic levels. Use the **ACCURACY SCORE** function to be sure of your accuracy. When you are happy with a tempo, go to your mallet keyboard instrument and try the same pattern there. Use the **METRONOME** function on the Rhythm Coach to check your tempo. You can use headphones or plug the Rhythm Coach into speakers or an amp for this type of practice.

- **Practice in Front of a Mirror**

Don't forget that the Rhythm Coach is portable! Now there is no excuse for not practicing in front of a mirror. If you don't have a mirror in your practice room, take the Rhythm Coach to a room that does have one.

- **Use the materials you have**

Use your favorite books with the Rhythm Coach. For example, you can take the exercises from classic books like George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control*, or Joe Morello's *Master Studies*. Try practicing the exercises using the **QUIET COUNT** function. This technique will enhance your use of these important exercises.

- **Improving Stamina**

It is never too early to start working on stamina in your playing. Once a player can maintain a proper stance, grip and stroke, they can begin to work on stamina. Many beginners often don't include stamina development as a part of their practice. The Rhythm Coach is an easy way to work on this aspect of your playing. Use the **AUTO UP/DOWN** function. Here is one way to get started:

- Choose an eight measure pattern.
- Set the Rhythm Coach to **8-2**. The Rhythm Coach will increase/decrease by 2 BPM (beats per minute) every eight measures. This is a good place to start. After you are comfortable with this setting, you can experiment with other settings in the **AUTO UP/DOWN** function.

- **Use the RHYTHM Function in the Metronome.**

Once you have mastered an exercise, try playing it with other rhythms. We often just set the metronome to play quarter notes or eighth notes to play with. Experiment with the various rhythms found on the Rhythm Coach. Playing an exercise with a 3-2 son clave is a completely different experience than using a “plain” quarter note rhythm.

- **Use the Owner Manual**

One last tip - read the **OWNER MANUAL** to get the full potential of the Rhythm Coach. Check out the “Sample Practice Patterns” found at the end. This is a great way to become familiar with this exciting practice tool.

Don't forget to add your own creativity when using the Rhythm Coach. Take it with you, so you can use any spare time for productive practice.