

andy thurston | drum tuition

Creating Drum Fills

There are a number of tools that we can use when creating drum fills. The key elements are **rhythm** (the rhythmic pattern), **arrangement** (which sound sources we use) and **dynamics** (quiet to loud). Although this sounds very simple, the number of combinations is vast, so have fun with your creativity and don't be afraid to experiment.

In these first six examples, we take a simple 16th note rhythmic pattern and develop it to a more complex combination of 16th and 8th notes. Remember, more complex does not mean better, just different; play what is best for the music!

The first six examples show rhythmic patterns in two time signatures: 4/4 and 6/8. Each example consists of two staves: a top staff for the snare drum (marked with 'x' for notes) and a bottom staff for the bass drum (marked with 'r' for notes).
Example 1 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a. Bass drum pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a.
Example 2 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &. Bass drum pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &.
Example 3 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e & 4 e &. Bass drum pattern: 3 e & 4 e &.
Example 4 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & 5 6. Bass drum pattern: 4 & 5 6.
Example 5 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e a 4 & a. Bass drum pattern: 3 e a 4 & a.
Example 6 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & & 6. Bass drum pattern: 4 & & 6.

Next, let's try some arrangement variations. The following four examples take our first rhythmic variation and move it around the kit. Bars 9 and 10 introduce the bass drum. The arrangement is bars 5 and 6 from above with the 8th notes filled in with bass drums.

The next four examples show arrangement variations of the first rhythmic pattern. Each example consists of two staves: a top staff for the snare drum and a bottom staff for the bass drum.
Example 7 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a. Bass drum pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a.
Example 8 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &. Bass drum pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &.
Example 9 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a. Bass drum pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a.
Example 10 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &. Bass drum pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &.

Finally, we can get more ambitious with the arrangement. The last two examples introduce flams and multiple sounds (e.g. open hi hat and snare together) to create more unique fills. There are also a few accents, but I have left dynamics to the player's discretion, as any of the fills presented here could be used at any volume level.

The last two examples show more ambitious arrangement variations. Each example consists of two staves: a top staff for the snare drum and a bottom staff for the bass drum.
Example 11 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a. Bass drum pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a.
Example 12 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &. Bass drum pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &.
Example 13 (4/4): Snare pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a. Bass drum pattern: 3 e & a 4 e & a.
Example 14 (6/8): Snare pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &. Bass drum pattern: 4 & 5 & 6 &.