

The Metronome

Incorporate a metronome into your practice routine!

Remember, the metronome serves to give you an awareness of the time, but a true mastery of time comes from inside.

BPM

The tempo (speed) of the metronome is defined as “beats per minute” and is written “bpm”.

So, 50 bpm means it will click/beep 50 times each minute.

At 60 bpm, it’s clicking once a second.

Generally, you will set the metronome so that it’s clicking on every beat.

Start slow

When using the metronome, make sure you can play comfortably and accurately at a particular tempo before you try and increase the speed. This may mean you have to start very slowly, but remember it is not a competition.

The most important thing is to play accurately in time without mistakes.

Oh, and don’t look at the screen – this is not helpful! Instead, focus very hard on **listening** to the metronome’s click.

For each of the following exercises, I would suggest a progressive way of practising it:

- 1) Start by just clapping or tapping where the notes are played.
- 2) Then try playing on guitar on an open string or any other single note.
- 3) Strum a chord.
- 4) Play a series of notes (scale/melody/riff) or chords.

Exercise One (The Prequel) – The Clapping Game

Set your metronome to 80bpm and try to clap exactly when the metronome sounds. If you get it spot on, the metronome will be masked by your clapping and will seem to disappear. See how many times you can make it disappear in a row.

EXERCISE ONE

Pick a moderate tempo on your metronome (say 60bpm) and imagine the click (or beep, if it beeps) is representing beats 1, 2, 3 and 4 of a bar of 4/4 time.

Try playing **semibreves** along with the click. Each note will last for 4 clicks. Count the beats out loud: “1, 2, 3, 4”... Listen hard to the click, trying to line up your notes with beat 1 every time.

EXERCISE TWO

Then try this with **minims**. Each note lasts for 2 beats - now your notes will be played on beats 1 and 3 (count them this way, not 1,2 then 1,2 again).

EXERCISE THREE

Then, **crotchets**. Now you're playing on every beat: the trick here is to focus on the metronome more than anything else (even what you're playing!) You are trying to land your notes right on top of the metronome click.

If you find that the metronome seems to be clicking too fast for you to keep, then slow it down. It's not a race!

EXERCISE FOUR

Finally, a trickier one.

Quavers last for half a beat, meaning you will be playing 2 notes for each click.

Count the whole bar of quavers as “1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and”. The “ands” (upbeats) should be exactly halfway between each click.

You might want to try using downstrokes for the downbeats (notes on the beat) and upstrokes for upbeats.

Keep concentrating on making the downbeats line up with the click...

You should aim to work with a metronome as much as possible. To start with, always assume that each click represents a beat (later on, you can use it in other ways).

More advanced metronome

Watch accompanying video.

Pat Metheny exercise (1min each) – Centre of beat, Ahead of beat, Behind beat, Centre of beat

Using the metronome on beats 1 and 3 or beats 2 and 4.

Assignments

1. Clapping on click(1-2mins)
2. Pat Metheny exercise(4mins)
3. Workon current material with metronome. Try on every beat first, then click just on beats 1 and 3 (or 2 and 4).

Beyond the Metronome

Playing in time with the metronome is Step 1.

Then the real fun starts ☺

We want to go beyond just playing in time to making the music to FEEL good – this means we want to develop our ability to play “in the pocket” and to “groove”.

This is all about taking the music beyond sounding like a computer and giving it that human element.

It involves adding to rhythm, all the other elements of music – dynamics, your sound, ghost notes, pushing/pulling the beat.

Some ways to work on this at home:

- ⇒ Play rhythm guitar for long periods of time
- ⇒ Consider groove when soloing
- ⇒ Play along with recordings

The best way to work on this:

- ⇒ Play regularly with people who have good time

And remember... in a band, it's not the drummer's responsibility to keep everyone in time – it's everyone's individual responsibility!