

Common Comping Rhythms Sheet: How to Use

1. Loop each measure as its own continuous idea until hand coordination is established, the goal being that the quarter notes on the ride cymbal remain consistently swinging without getting faster, slower, louder, or softer when the left hand plays.
2. You should be able to play the one measure idea at least 4 times without messing up before moving on to the next. Choose a slower tempo until you can accomplish this.
3. Count out loud “one, two, three, four” in time while playing. This will enhance your reading skills and let you know for sure if you are placing the snare hits on the correct beats/off-beats.
4. Practice both with the metronome and without it.
5. After hand coordination is established, practice exercises again with the hi hat closing on beats 2+4. This “chick” sound on the hi hat should be crisp and authoritative, matching the intensity and dynamic level of the ride cymbal. *Take time to work out left hand coordination with hi hat by taking out the ride cymbal completely when you cannot play them all together at once. Slow it down. Be able to play it at least 4 times without messing up. Then add the ride cymbal back. Then increase the tempo.
6. After the hi hat no longer interferes with the hand coordination and feels good, play through the exercises while feathering the bass drum on beats 1, 2, 3, and 4 (four on the floor). The bass drum should be felt, not heard. The beater of the kick pedal should never go more than a centimeter or two from bass drum head. If you can hear it, then the bass drum is too loud for feathering. Don’t let your ride cymbal quarter notes get softer or sound weaker, as your right hand will be tempted to follow your right foot.
7. Now play the exercises on the bass drum instead of the snare drum. Play with the ride and bass drum alone first, then add the hi hat on 2 and 4.
8. Add feathered quarter notes on the snare drum (beats 1, 2, 3, and 4) while playing the comping rhythms on the bass drum. The ride should be louder than the snare, but both should be played at their own consistent dynamic, just like when you feathered the bass drum. Check in with the metronome to make sure you are not slowing down the tempo.
9. Starting at measure 9, play quarter notes on the ride cymbal with hi hat on two and four. This time alternate every note in the comping rhythms between the bass drum and snare drum. I.E. on measure 9, play beat “one” on the snare and then the “and of two” on the bass drum. Flip it and play beat “one” on the bass drum and the “and of two” on the snare drum. Take out the hi hat on two and four as needed if coordination issues ever cause the ride cymbal quarter notes to stop swinging.
10. Play along to records that have very steady time keeping and insert some of your favorite comping ideas from the exercises. Also listen closely to the piano, guitar, and other comping instruments to see how they use these rhythms and others while accentuating certain parts of the beat to make the music swing harder.

Have fun and keep it swinging! -Kevin