

# 2007 JMU Tenor Line Technique Packet



## Welcome to the JMU Tenor Line!!

The James Madison University Tenor Line is a select group of individuals who strive to play the best music that any drumline has ever heard. It is comprised of 5 spots awarded to certain individuals after the audition. Tenor drumming is one of the hardest art forms to master in the percussive world. Everybody wants to learn all the cool scrape and sweep patterns before they establish a good fundamental base. This packet will give you all tips, techniques, and tools of the trade we use to become better. Enjoy and Happy Drumming!!

## Grip

The way we hold the sticks is the most important tool we as drummers and percussionists have. At JMU, we like to utilize a very relaxed grip with the stick. It should rest between the thumb and forefinger and sit in this fulcrum very comfortably. The other fingers should wrap around the stick and rest on the back of it. There should not be any daylight visible between the thumb and first finger. The left hand should mirror the right hand in this same fashion. The sticks should have a slight angle along with your arm when they are in set position and the top of your hand should be slightly tilted (About a 45 degree angle between horizontal and vertical). Here is where you will learn the most important lesson any percussionist should know: **TENSION IS YOUR ENEMY!!!!** There should never be any tension in your grip, hands, arms, body at any point in time. This can lead to bad playing and even worse, injuries.

## Stroke

There are 2 main stroke types that we utilize at JMU. The first is called a legato stroke. This is a very open flowing stroke allow the stick to fully rebound off of the drum head. This creates a very open and big sound. The legato stroke is most often utilized in 8 on a hand exercises and double beat exercises. The second stroke type is called a staccato stroke. This is a stroke where its initially the same as the legato stroke but instead of letting the stick fully rebound, we control it so that it comes back to set position. This staccato stroke is most often utilized in accent tap exercises where you need to play an accent at forte and then immediately a tap at piano. Being able to play both types of these strokes are essential to good rudimental drumming. All strokes should be relaxed and more importantly should flow.

## Motion

There is a lot of motion involved in the playing of tenors. It's very important to understand what motions we use and when we use them. Tenor drumming is a very interesting art form because unlike a snare drum or bass drum we are playing on 2 axes the whole time, the X and Y axes. A good starting point for obtaining the motion we want is having a good base playing position. One way to achieve is to put both your arms down by your side. From

here bring your arms to “set position” in front of you (set position is usually your right hand over drum 1 and your left over drum 2). This should be the most relaxed position you have ever felt. Your arms will naturally have a slight downward angle and the sticks should follow this. From this position everything should flow seamlessly together. The sticks will use what we call the Y axis. They will always go up vertical and should come down vertical. If they do not have this vertical motion then the stick will slice and good technique and good quality of sound will be sacrificed. Your arms will follow the X axis. This means that your arms will be doing the horizontal movement for your hands. Often times the movement horizontally is compared to if you were moving your hands about an 1” above a glass surface across the drums. Only at select parts where more strength and sound is needed will your arms switch to using the vertical Y axis. When you look at the playing zones page this will help you to better learn the motion we use to move around the drums. **FLOW** is the key to good tenor drumming. **PLAYING ON ONE DRUM MUST BE MASTERED BEFORE MOVING AROUND THE DRUMS!!**

## Practice Tips

Practice how you perform. It’s as simple as that. When you start practicing, try to set a goal for yourself that you can accomplish during that time. Whether it be learning a hard part in a new piece of music or just concentrating on your stroke while playing 8 on a Hand, use your practice time to your advantage. When learning new things, **START SLOW!!** Too many people learn things too fast and then when they need to play it slow they can’t. One tool musicians have to aid us with this problem is a metronome. **USE IT!!!!** If you don’t own one, buy one. If you have one, use it effectively. Set relatively easy tempos for yourself to where you can play the music perfect at least a minimum of 15 times. Then bump it up a few clicks. Metronomes should help your playing not hinder it.

## Playing Zones

Playing Zones are the cornerstone of tenor drumming. If you don’t have good zones then you won’t have a good sound and odds are you won’t have a good technique either. Unlike snares and basses which ideal playing zones are in the middle of the drum, tenors act much more like a timpani. The drum speaks more if you play in a zone about an 1 ½” away from the rim. This is where you will get the optimal sound and this is where the drums tone and the heads color will come from. The playing zones have their own flow to them as well and your arms will get used to the motion when you go across from drum to drum. The motion is often compared to that of a pair of windshield wipers moving from side to side across the top of the drums. Once again **Playing on one drum MUST be mastered before moving around the drums.**

# Sweeps, Scrapes, Skanks and more...

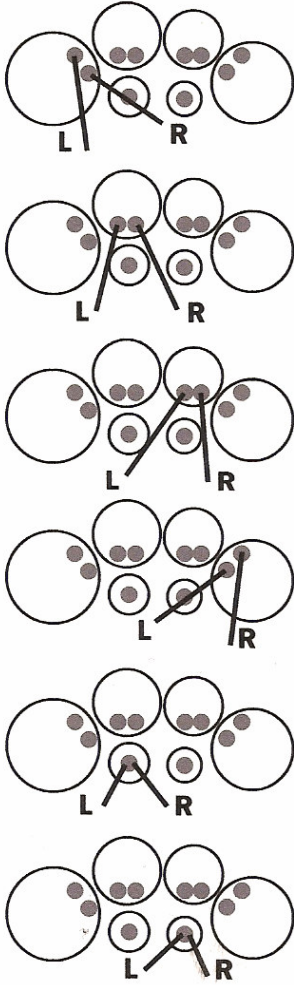
Now the part you've all been waiting for....the fun and crazy stuff. There are many things that make tenor drumming the coolest instrument to play on the drumline. We're flashy, we do crossovers and play cool skank patterns, and we just look good. Period. All of these things are fun to do and are a big part of what playing tenors is about but learn all the basics **BEFORE** this stuff. If not you will have sacrificed becoming a great tenor player. Sweeps, scrapes, and crossovers are all things that are very easy to be self taught. Just remember the proper technique and zones when performing these select movements. Crossovers generally follow this pattern: if you are crossing over on drums next to each other, you cross the sticks. If you are crossing over on drums with 1 drum in between them, you cross your hands and/or wrists on occasion. If you are crossing over on drums with 2 drums in between them you cross your forearms. The same steps can be applied to scrapes and sweep patterns. Always remember though that you must be relaxed. **TENSION IS YOUR ENEMY!!!!**

## Summary

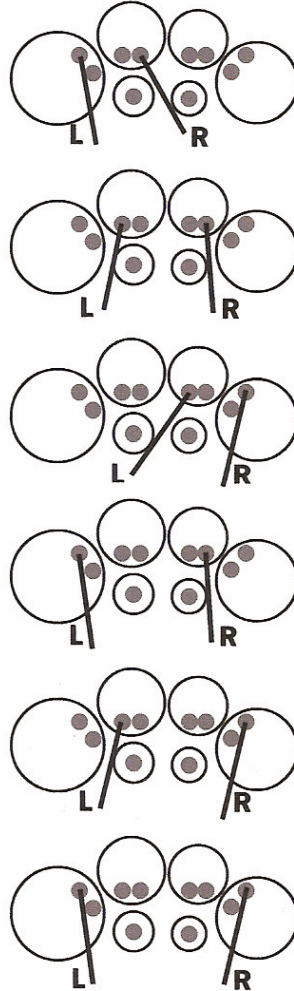
Tenor Drumming is a special art form and those who truly appreciate it become the greatest drummers in the world. Use all of the things that have been put before you and don't get discouraged. Yes the drums are as heavy as you think they are and no they don't get lighter. By learning the basics and utilizing all the things presented in this packet you can go from being a good tenor drummer to becoming a great tenor drummer. Enjoy and Happy Drumming!!

# Playing Zones

**Hands on same drum**



**Hands on different drums**



**Crosses**

