



# Asymmetrical Warm-Up

A 3-Bar Exercise to Awaken the Hands and Mind

by Robert Brian

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	✗
T.T.	✗
S.D.	●
F.T.	●
B.D.	●

**W**arming up before a show is extremely important, whether you're about to play to 30,000 people or thirty. An effective warm-up routine gets the blood flowing to your hands and wrists and allows you to feel supple before playing for long periods of time.

Sometimes when I play without warming up, it's a little like not driving a car for several months—when you finally get back behind the wheel, it all feels familiar, but you're a bit rusty. A proper warm-up gets you in the zone, so you can concentrate on playing the music without worrying about whether you're at your best.

What I've included here is a three-bar warm-up that I use before every show. I came up with it because I wanted an exercise that would get not only my hands but also my mind ready to perform. When I tried playing the usual one- or two-bar patterns, my hands would get loose, but my mind wouldn't be as focused as I wanted it to be. The warm-up routine I devised is in 4/4 and involves a three-bar loop that includes single strokes, double strokes, and accents, and the lead hand switches, which helps get my brain working.

## THE PATTERNS

The first bar of the warm-up involves playing a measure of 8th notes with one hand, with an accent on every other stroke.

R R R R R R R R  
L L L L L L L L

The second bar starts with the same lead hand, but now you add the remaining 16th notes with the other hand. Keep the accents in the same spots (now the third stroke of each 16th-note grouping). This 16th-note accent pattern is often used to play a traditional country train beat.

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L  
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

The third bar involves a run of two paradiddle-diddles followed by a single paradiddle. Add an accent on the first note of each paradiddle-diddle and the first note of the sin-

gle paradiddle. This pattern shifts the sticking so that you can start the exercise again, leading with the opposite hand.

R L R R L L R L R R L L R L R R  
L R L L R R L R L L R R L R L L

Work on each bar individually first. Try to match the different stick heights of the accents and the unaccented notes, and make sure each stroke is relaxed and not forced. Once you have the individual bars looking and sounding good, play through the entire sequence a few times, again making sure that it's being executed well.

I suggest starting with your metronome at 80 bpm and moving up in small increments as the exercise gets more comfortable. Keep a record of your progress. The idea isn't to sit down and play this warm-up as fast as you can; you want to play through it slowly at first, to get your hands to loosen up gradually. If you can shoot video, try recording yourself as you practice, in order to check your execution visually.

## FUTURE WORK

As with all basic hand exercises, you should feel free to experiment with ways to apply this warm-up to the drumkit. You could try adding the bass drum underneath the accented notes, or you could step quarters or 8th notes on your hi-hat. There are many options. For instance, you could play the first bar on the hi-hat with a regular 4/4 groove on the snare and bass drum.

The same idea could be used with the 16th-note pattern in the second bar of the exercise.

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L  
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R