



As you improve on the drums you'll see that the hi-hat is not only used to keep the time, but also to help create dynamic tension. It is one of the most versatile and widely overlooked tools in the whole drum kit. We will discuss two very useful techniques you can use on the hi-hat to instantly sound better!

Technique #1 - The "Sizzle"

The hi-hat can be used to increase the volume of a drum beat, which can signal an increase in energy as the song moves into a new section. There is a world of options (and volume) between keeping the hi-hat cymbals closed and wide open. The more you open them as you play, the more exciting the drum part sounds.

One popular hi-hat position is called a "sizzle" and it is performed by allowing a small amount of the hats to be open, but still touching somewhat. The two hats still are almost completely closed together, but there is a tiny gap between them that creates a sloshy, "sizzle" when the hats are played. All that is required to achieve this is just to release a tiny amount of tension on the hi-hat pedal.

This is an effective trick to use as you are finishing a verse, preparing to do a fill into the chorus. As stated, it raises the tension and excitement and it tells the listener that "something is coming!"

Technique #2 - Hi-Hat "Bark"

Probably the most common thing to do on the hi-hat is to periodically allow the top and bottom cymbals to open briefly and then close, creating a unique sound that the hi-hat is known for. You may not realize it but you hear this technique in drum beats every day. Using this trick adds interest to your drum part and gives it some character, rather than just keeping a tight beat the entire time.

How To Perform A Hi-Hat "Bark"

Step 1: Raise the pedal and allow the cymbals to open briefly. Strike the hi-hat with the cymbals open. This produces a louder, open sound.

Step 2: Strike the hi-hat again but close the cymbals by lowering the pedal just as the stick is making contact with the cymbal. This produces the normal "tick" sound that is heard when the two cymbals are closed together.



The example below is a great pattern to start working the “bark” into your playing. On the “and” count after the “4,” notice the \textcircled{H} symbol. This symbol means that the hi-hat cymbals are open. The normal “H” symbol means the hi-hat cymbals are closed together. The technique finishes on the “1” count of the next measure. This pattern should be practiced and repeated over and over until you feel comfortable.

Hi-Hat “Bark” - Example Pattern

\textcircled{H} - Hi-hat is open

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
H	H	H	H	H	H	H	\textcircled{H}
		SN				SN	
K				K			



Play a “3 + 1” pattern and add the “bark” at the end of measure 2. Use whatever fills you like or make up your own. Repeat this pattern several times.



Play a “3 + 1” pattern and add the “sizzle” to the 3rd measure (to raise energy before the fill). Use whatever fills you like or make up your own. Repeat this pattern several times.



Common Mistakes To Avoid

When performing the “bark,” be sure to hit the hi-hat when you close the cymbals together during step 2 of the process. While the effect can be achieved by simply closing the cymbals back together, it is a good practice to keep to the normal pattern of striking the hi-hat as you play.



“Play Along” Songs” - Hi-Hat “Bark”

Listed below are just some of the songs that have a hi-hat “bark” on display. Trying to mimic the drum parts on these songs is a great way to improve your playing and expand your skills.

“Everything She Wants” - Wham

“Just A Girl” - No Doubt

“Magnificent” - U2

“Sir Duke” - Stevie Wonder

“Do Ya Think I’m Sexy” - Rod Stewart

“Hellagood” - No Doubt

“Never Satisfied” - Living Colour

“Tom Sawyer” - Rush

“Take The Money And Run” - Steve
Miller Band

“Emotional Rescue” - The Rolling Stones

“Off The Wall” - Michael Jackson

“Sultans of Swing” - Dire Straits

“Eyesight To The Blind” - Eric Clapton

“Heart Of Glass” - Blondie

“Baby Hold On” - Eddie Money

“Use Me” - Bill Withers

“Boys Are Back In Town” - Thin Lizzy

“Rock With You” - Michael Jackson

“Uptown Funk” - Bruno Mars



Play through each exercise slowly and get familiar with the hi-hat "bark" effect and motions. This WILL challenge to your coordination so take it slowly and be patient with yourself - you will get it!

Exercise 1

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
H	H	H	H	H	Ⓜ	H	Ⓜ
		SN				SN	
K				K			

Exercise 2

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
H	H	H	H	Ⓜ	H	Ⓜ	H
		SN				SN	
K				K			

Exercise 3

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
H	Ⓜ	H	H	H	Ⓜ	H	H
		SN				SN	
K	K			K			

Exercise 4

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
H	Ⓜ	H	Ⓜ	H	Ⓜ	H	Ⓜ
		SN				SN	
K				K			