



One of the best ways to enjoy the drums but also improve at the same time, is to throw on some headphones and play along with recordings. Listening to what other drummers play and then trying to mimic it is a critical tool for developing your drumming.

## It's How I Learned To Play The Drums

I taught myself to play the drums by playing along with the radio and my favorite songs. I would play for an hour or so every day. I wasn't working on rudiments or boring exercises (though a lot of those practices are extremely valuable), I was just having fun and enjoying being able to learn to copy what my favorite drummers were doing. In doing this, I was increasing my skill, but also increasing my knowledge of rhythms, grooves, styles - growing my vocabulary of fills and cool beats!

The drums were FUN and not filled with boring, repetitive exercises that made me want to walk away. Anything that makes you want to stop playing, put it aside, at least for the time being, and find a way to enjoy what you are doing. Play along to YouTube, Spotify, radio stations, etc.

## Playing Along With Recordings Will:

- Increase your knowledge of musical styles
- Increase your understanding of fills and give you a much wider "fill vocabulary"
- Help develop a sense of steady time and meter
- Develop a sense of dynamics, playing quietly and loudly
- Help train your "ear"

## Be Your Own Judge

If you are just playing along with recordings for fun then that's awesome! However if you are playing to have fun AND improve your skills, then you must develop the ability to listen to what you are playing at the same time you are listening to the drums in the song, constantly seeing if you match each other. It helps to ask things like, "Does my snare hit when theirs hits? Are they on the ride cymbal or the hi-hat? Is that two hits on the kick or one?"

You have to become a judge for yourself. I don't mean to be hard on yourself, but do your best to match what is being played... that's how you grow and learn more "chops." Once a new drum part is learned, you've added something new to your "tool box," then you can experiment and try to see what else might fit!



## It's OK To Keep It Simple At First

Most songs you will listen to will probably have more complex beats than what you are ready for as a beginner. THAT'S OK! As long as you can find the count or listen to where the snare and kick are hitting, you can probably play along. Once you find the count, you know what to play! Just try clapping and tapping your foot along to find the basic groove, then hop in! With practice, this will get easier.

## Audio Advice

I recommend using a set of headphones/earbuds, but be sure to set the volume so that you can still hear your drum sound. Another strategy is to not cover one ear completely and to leave a little bit of natural sound coming in one of the ears. This will help make sure that you can match the dynamics and volume of the song you are playing to.

## Things To Pay Special Attention To As You Are Playing:

- What is the pulse (the count) of the song?
- Is the snare on counts "2" and "4" or something else?
- What type of beat is being played in each section?
- Which drums are being used in each beat?
- What is the kick pattern being played?
- Is your playing syncing with the drummer on the recording?
- Are the drums louder or softer in certain parts of the song?
- How long is each section of the song?