



Measures in Groups of 4 or 8

One of the keys to learning where to play fills (and where not to) is understanding how songs are organized and constructed. It is extremely common to see music organized in groups of 4, 8 and even 16 measures. First, we will focus on groups of 4 measures and then expand this concept into groups of 8 measures a bit later.

4-Measure Pattern - "3 + 1" Pattern

A common practice in drumming, is to play a beat for 3 measures and then play a fill in the 4th measure. This is a guaranteed, safe pattern to follow that will have great results. The fill can be short or long and may or may not take up the entire measure (all 4 counts).

You will notice that I have created an illustration of 4 rectangular boxes. Each box represents a measure, with the count for that measure shown on top of each.

"3 + 1" Pattern

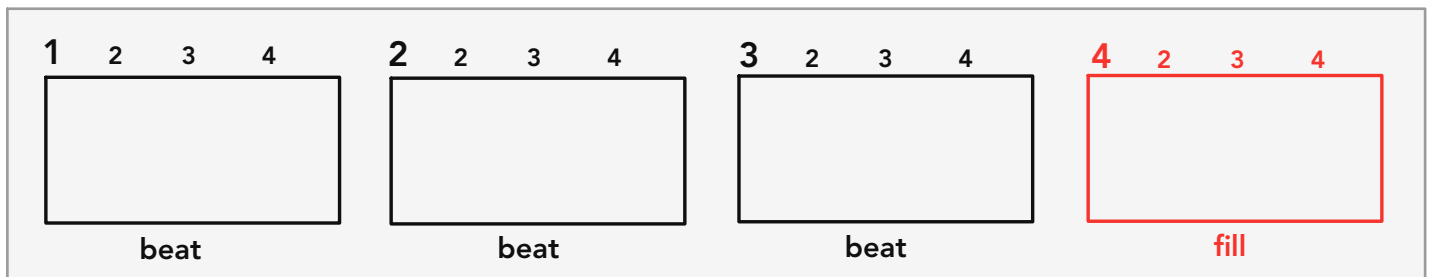


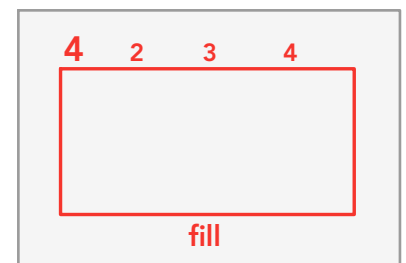
Figure 12-1

Count Along

At first, it will be important that you count along to yourself as you are playing the beat and inserting fills, however, pretty soon the pattern will become so natural that you will just "feel" when it is time to put a fill and you won't have to count constantly.

The "Fill Zone"

The 4th measure, colored red, is where the fill will be played (the "Fill Zone"). Soon we will learn different types of fills that will fit inside a measure, but for now, let's just learn how the pattern works.





15 minutes per day

Lesson 12 - "Hands On" Exercises

- Play the "3 + 1" pattern using an 8th note beat (Figure 5-2) and the two fills from Lesson 9. Be sure to put the fills in the "fill zone." Each time you play the pattern, try a different fill, alternating between the two. Be sure to count the measures as you learned in Lesson 11.
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Why It Matters

This pattern is extremely common in drumming. Putting some type of break or fill in every 4th measure creates a natural flow and progression, helping to understand "where you are" in the music. When playing with other musicians, it will help instill a confidence that things are in the right place and everyone is "on the same page."

Soon we will learn that groupings of 8 and even 16 measures are common in music. Adding some form of "placeholder" every 4th measure is a great habit to have.

Common Mistakes To Avoid

It is very common for beginners to start a fill before the 4th measure and throw off the pattern, creating confusion for the other musicians. Be sure to count the measures as you are playing, putting the fill in the 4th measure ("fill zone.").