

Drum Set Foundation:

Time Feel:

- Grooves (repetition of a pattern)
- Styles (swing, rock, hip hop, Latin {Afro-Cuban, Brazilian}, etc.)
- Even feel (feel the subdivisions)
- Balance of drum set (bass drum volume vs. snare, hi hat, ride cymbal)
- Dynamics (where do you fit in the ensemble: during solos, shout choruses, crescendos & decrescendos)

Know the Form of the tune:

- Mark sections: different colors or feels for different sections, small fills to cue sections.

Set up ensemble figures:

- Learn exact ensemble figures (accurate rhythm and phrasing). What are the horn players playing? Can you copy their phrasing?
- What is the proper balance or volume? Are you supporting the band? Too loud or too quiet. Playing quietly should not detriment the intensity of the time feel.

Interaction with soloist (comping, accompanying):

- Mark the form (small fills to end phrases)
- Dynamics (stay under the soloist. Can you hear them?)
- Intensity (no matter what volume, keep the groove and your attention going)
- Conversation (is there space for interaction?)

As soon as you can, get out of the reading of the music! Be observant of what everyone is doing in the band. How does your part relate? What can you do to support the band?

Ed Soph (famous Jazz Drum Instructor from NTSU):

As a drummer it's very important that you get past listening primarily to the drums on recordings because you will train yourself to listen primarily to yourself when you play. Listen to a recording until you hear the hook-up between the drummer and the rest of the rhythm section. Listen to how the drummer interacts and accompanies soloists. The deeper your listening, the deeper your playing. That's why it's important that you get the fundamentals (a wide range of tempo and dynamics, and stylistic elements) so you are free to immerse yourself in the music and not worry about yourself. That means practicing musically. And, for me, the best way to do that is to play along with the recording not to emulate the drummer necessarily, but to find your own pocket with the recorded bassist, pianist, etc.

Roy Haynes: don't play at people, play with people.

Band Directors:

Provide recordings of charts if possible. Grooves & feel are not always notated on music. Ensemble figures are not optional for drummers. Accurate articulation of phrases should be directed by drummer also. Dynamics need to be strictly expressed by the whole rhythm section. The proximity of your rhythm section set up is important. Take the time to set up close. What do you want from your rhythm section?