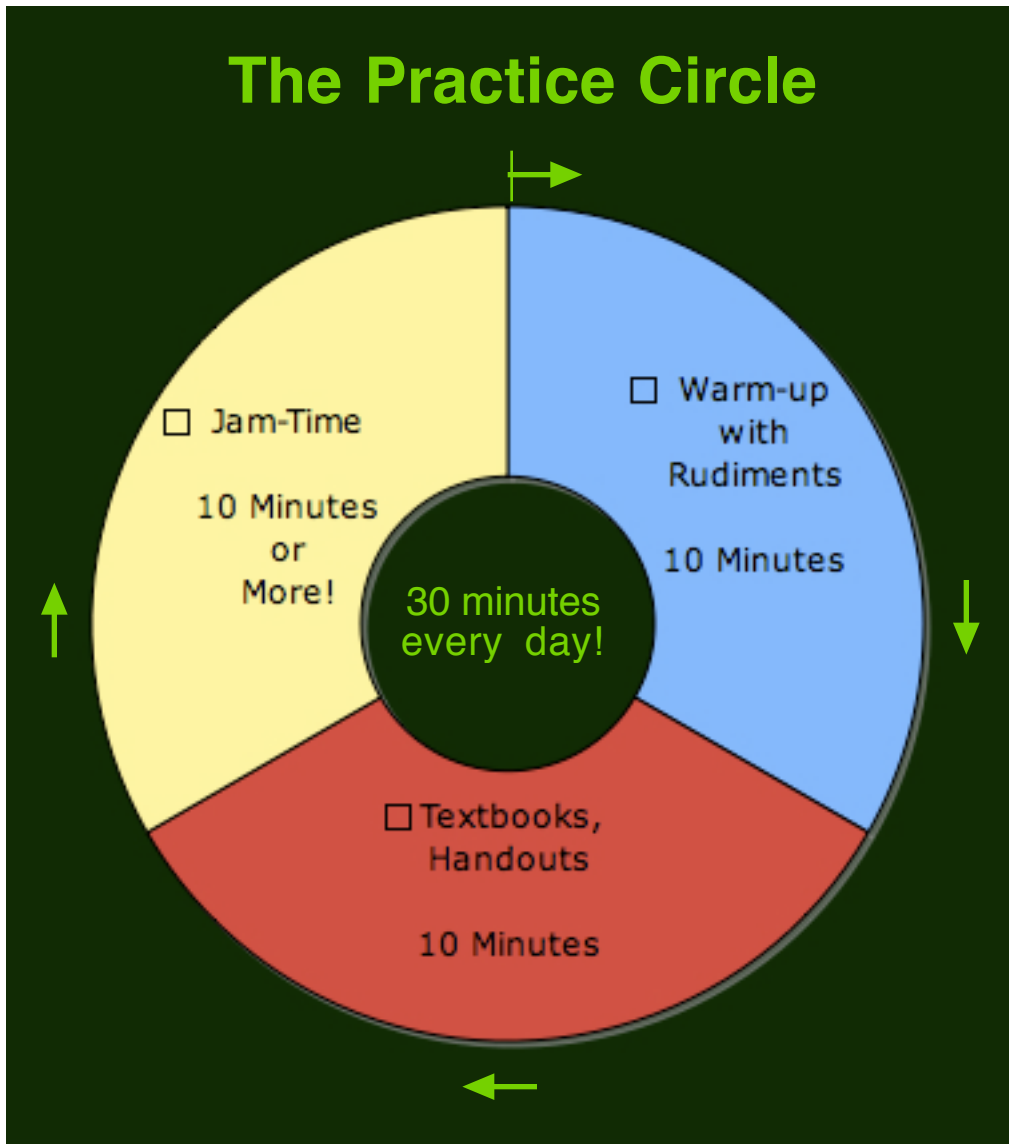


The Practice Circle



Warm-up with Rudiments. Begin each practice by stretching your hands, fingers, wrists and forearms. During your warm-up routine, place the emphasis on proper technique. Are you holding your sticks properly? Are your strokes symmetrical between your right and left hands? Are your wrists doing the work: fingers closed around the sticks at all times? Are your elbows down at your sides? Are the sticks under control, no more than a stick-length off the drum? Are you relaxed? Focus on each rudiment for an unbroken period of time, 60 seconds each. This should feel like a robust workout so get those wrists working.

Textbooks/Handouts. This section focuses on reading, counting and theory issues discussed during your lesson. Count out loud the downbeats (1, 2, 3, 4) as well as the subdivisions (E, &, A) while you play. This is extremely important as it builds your ability to interpret rhythmic spacings. Limb independence is developed during this section. Have patience and remember that frustration is part of the process. If four limbs are too much, experiment with three limbs until you're ready for four. If three is too much, try it with two and work up to three.

The Reward: Jam Time. Here's where you get to have a little fun and demonstrate the skills you've acquired over the course of your lessons. Cue up a song on your CD or MP3 player and play along. Timekeeping skills are emphasized: make sure you adjust your tempo to match the song's. In time these adjustments will be more gradual and undetectable. Listen carefully to the music, particularly the bass, and try to match the phrasing and emotion of the song. Don't forget to give the song your own unique treatment as well: Enjoy yourself!