SOFTWARE & TECH

4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795581341361234

The Ultimate Guide to 4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set

Every drummer, at some point in their journey, hits a wall. The hands feel coordinated, but the feet lag behind. The groove sounds stiff, and fills feel disconnected from the pulse. For decades, one specific text has been the go-to resource for breaking through this barrier: **4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set**. Written by Marvin "Smitty" Dahlgren and Elliot Fine, this book is not just a collection of exercises; it is a systematic approach to training the brain to control all four limbs independently. For drummers seeking to move beyond basic rock beats and into the realms of jazz, funk, Latin, and advanced fusion, this method book remains an essential part of the modern drummer's library. Understanding how to use this book effectively can transform a player from a timekeeper into a true percussionist.

What Is 4 Way Coordination? Understanding the Core Concept

Before diving into the exercises, it is crucial to understand what "four-way coordination" actually means. In drumming, this term refers to the ability to play three or four different rhythms simultaneously, one with each limb. While a beginner might struggle to play a simple bass drum pattern on beats 1 and 3 while keeping a steady hi-hat on all four beats, a drummer with developed four-way coordination can execute complex, polyrhythmic patterns where no limb is playing the same subdivision.

4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set approaches this challenge methodically. The book is built on a foundation of standard jazz timekeeping, requiring the right hand to play the ride cymbal pattern, the left foot to play the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4, and the left hand and right foot to play independent lines over this steady pulse. The genius of the system is that it builds independence not by ignoring the other limbs, but by locking in the foundation rhythms so deeply that they become automatic.

The Philosophy Behind the Method

Many drummers attempt to learn coordination by playing complicated patterns immediately. This method book takes a different approach. It recognizes that true independence comes from making the timekeeping pattern a subconscious activity. Once the ride cymbal and hi-hat are on autopilot, the mind is free to direct the snare drum and bass drum. This philosophy is the backbone of **4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The**

Development Of Complete Independence And Control over speed.

Who Needs This Book? A Look at the Target Audience

This is not a beginner book. It assumes that the player can already hold a basic rock beat and understands standard musical notation. The target audience is the intermediate to advanced drummer who feels stuck in a rut. If you find that your soloing is limited to the same patterns, or if you struggle to play fills that don't disrupt the groove, this book is for you. It is also highly recommended for drummers transitioning from rock to jazz, as the coordination required for swing feels very different from the straight eighth-note feel of rock music.

- Intermediate drummers looking to break through a plateau.
- Advanced players seeking new vocabulary for soloing and comping.
- Jazz students who need to internalize the ride cymbal pattern.
- Educators searching for a structured curriculum for their students.
- Fusion and funk drummers wanting to add complexity to their grooves.

How to Use 4 Way Coordination Effectively

Simply reading the book or playing through the exercises once will not yield results. This method requires dedication and a specific practice routine. The book is divided into chapters that introduce two-limb coordination, then three-limb coordination, and finally, the full four-limb coordination. Each page presents a new challenge based on the same underlying timekeeping pattern.

Step 1: Master the Foundation

The first step is to lock in the jazz pattern. The right hand plays the standard swing ride pattern: ding-ding-da-ding, ding-ding-da-ding. The left foot plays the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4. You must be able to play this combination for several minutes without thinking before moving forward. This foundation is non-negotiable.

Step 2: Introduce the Snare Drum

Once the foundation is solid, you add the left hand. The book provides specific snare drum patterns to play against the ride and hi-hat. These are not random; they are carefully designed to challenge your independence. Start with the simplest examples, practicing each one until it feels comfortable.

Step 3: Incorporate the Bass Drum

After the left hand is working, the right foot is added. This is where **4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set** really shines. The bass drum patterns often go against the natural pulse, forcing you to separate the foot from the hand independence you have already built.

Step 4: Combine All Four Limbs

Finally, you play all four limbs together. The book provides hundreds of combinations. A sample exercise might have your right hand playing the ride pattern, left foot on 2 and 4, left hand playing a syncopated rhythm, and right foot playing a dotted quarter note pattern. This is the ultimate test of independence.

1. Practice slowly. Use a metronome at a very slow tempo.
2. Isolate problems. If a particular exercise is hard, break it down into two-limb groups.
3. Repeat consistently. Repetition is the only way to build muscle memory.
4. Do not rush the process. Speed will come naturally with accuracy.

The Legacy of Dahlgren and Fine

Published in 1968, **4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence**

On The Drum Set. It is often found on the reading lists of the top music schools, including Berklee College of Music and the Musicians Institute. The book's longevity is a testament to its effectiveness. Unlike many drumming books that focus on fills or licks, this one focuses on the underlying language of coordination that makes those licks possible. It does not teach you what to play; it teaches you how to think.

Common Mistakes Drummers Make With This Book

Many drummers fail to gain the full benefit of the method because they approach it incorrectly. Understanding these common pitfalls will help you get the most out of your practice time.

Skipping the Foundation

The most common mistake is rushing ahead to the four-limb exercises without mastering the simpler chapters. If you cannot hold the ride cymbal and hi-hat pattern flawlessly for five minutes at a slow tempo, you are not ready to add the snare drum. Patience is a virtue with this method.

Playing Without a Metronome

This book is about precision. You must use a metronome. If you play these exercises without a consistent time reference, you are not developing coordination; you are developing bad habits. The metronome is your teacher.

Neglecting the Left Foot

The hi-hat foot is often the weakest link. Because the left foot is usually the least developed limb for most drummers, the exercises can feel awkward. Devote extra time to sitting at the kit with just the ride cymbal and hi-hat before adding anything else.

Focusing on Speed

4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set is not a speed book. It is an independence book. Trying to play these exercises fast will only lead to sloppy playing. The goal is clarity and separation between limbs, not velocity.

Practical Applications in Modern Music

While the book is rooted in the jazz tradition, the skills it develops are universal. Drummers in all genres benefit from the ability to play complex, layered rhythms. A rock drummer who can comp with the snare drum while keeping a driving bass drum pattern sounds more musical. A funk drummer who can play ghost notes on the snare while the feet maintain a solid groove can create much deeper pockets. A Latin drummer relies entirely on four-way coordination to handle the intricate patterns of mambo, samba, and songo. The investment in this book pays dividends across all styles.

Integrating the Book with Other Practice Materials

For best results, use this book as part of a broader practice routine. It does not replace technique books like *Stick Control* or *Syncopation*. Rather, it complements them. A typical practice session might include 15 minutes of rudiments, 30 minutes of coordination exercises from this book, and 15 minutes of creative application, such as improvising a solo using the patterns learned.

Conclusion: Is 4 Way Coordination Right for You?

If you are serious about drumming and are ready to put in the work, **4 Way Coordination A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On The Drum Set** is an indispensable resource. It is not a quick fix, nor is it an easy read. It is a challenging, methodical, and deeply rewarding approach to drum set technique. The independence you develop from this book will unlock a level of creativity and control you may not have known was possible. Whether you are a working professional, a dedicated student, or a passionate

hobbyist, the skills you build by working through this method will stay with you for a lifetime. Pick up the book, set your metronome to a slow tempo, and begin the journey toward complete independence. Your drumming will never be the same.

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