

# The Three Keys

The three keys are the most basic concepts which define our playing style. These ideas should be observed and carefully checked as a student is practicing.

1. **Use a fulcrum based grip:** That is to say that you are holding the stick with your index finger and thumb at all times. This increases control over the stick and allows the student to control the quality of sound. All instruments that use mallets in this group use a fulcrum based grip (bass drums, four-mallet marimba, snares, etc). All of these instruments also rely on having a natural curve to the hand and relaxed fingers. Specific grips will be further detailed in the Grip Guidelines and Setup Guidelines sections.
2. **Play from the wrist:** While maintaining the proper grip, lift the stick by turning from the wrist. Your forearm and fingers should not remain rigid, but at the same time, they should not contribute to the stroke. Finger strokes will be added later for more advanced fast passages and arm strokes will be added for visual effect. However, 95% of your playing will involve playing from the wrist.
3. **Use the Natural Rebound:** All drumheads (snare, bass, tenor, timpani, etc.) provide a tremendous amount of natural rebound when struck with a stick. To use this rebound to its maximum potential it is important that you relax and “let the stick do the work”. This concept is crucial as it will allow you to increase your fluidity, speed, and tone quality. Although keyboard instrument do not have a natural rebound, it is imperative that keyboard players practice with sticks on a pad so they develop a rebounded stroke. They can then apply this look and feel to the keyboard. Again, this will help to increase fluidity, speed, tone quality, and most of all, accuracy.

