

HINGESTIX

PRACTICE DRUMSTICKS

Review by Chap Ostrander • Photo by Rob Mazzella

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I often find that the most challenging part of working with beginning drum students is figuring out how to get them started. It's very important to get students to hold drumsticks in a way that promotes a clean hand motion. I've seen the death grip from some beginners, while others' grips are too loose. And some students hold the sticks too close to the middle, which limits natural rebound.

To combat these early technique issues, educator Sam Ruttenberg developed HingeStix practice drumsticks. HingeStix have three holes drilled right around the sweet spot where the sticks will rebound most naturally. Then a plastic axle is affixed to the stick through one of these

holes. (Three holes are used so you can custom fit the axle.) Round grip pads for the thumb and forefinger are added on both ends of the axle; when you hold on to the pads, the stick pivots freely, producing the feeling of proper rebound.

I tested the HingeStix with my students and had great success. I also shared them with several colleagues, who loved them right away. I found that the sticks worked best when addressing the technique of a student's weaker hand. The non-dominant hand always takes longer to develop and often holds the stick too tightly, which can lead to tendonitis and other joint problems. HingeStix can also help drummers develop the Moeller stroke, as they move

comfortably in the hand when you work on that technique's flowing three-part motion (downstroke, tap, upstroke). The unencumbered rebound action of the sticks lets you practice finger technique quite easily.

HingeStix have garnered recommendations from legendary drumset players Bernard Purdie, Joe Morello, and Hal Blaine, as well as from drummer/percussionist Richie Gajate-Garcia and orchestral greats Jonathan Haas and Al Payson. That's quite a list. Teachers and beginners should certainly check out this handy practice tool. The list price is \$24.95.

hingestix.com

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