

Lesson 1: The Basics

About

This first lesson is designed to get the student beatboxing. It teaches the three basic sounds (kick, hi-hat and snare) used to make a beatboxing beat and combines these three sounds into a simple beat pattern. The student is introduced to SBN (Standard Beatbox Notation), a simple way of writing beatboxing for students unfamiliar with music theory.

Lesson Aims

At the end of this lesson the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate the difference between plosives and fricatives.
- Demonstrate the difference between an unforced and forced plosive.
- Make a simple beat pattern with a kick { B }, Hi-hat { t } and Snare { Psh } sounds.

How to use the material

Video Title: **Lesson 1: The Basics**

Video Duration: **20 minutes**

Link: <http://www.beatboxbible.com/learn/lesson-1/>

The video is divided into 9 sections. The whole lesson can be played continuously or paused after each section. The sections can also be played individually from the submenu.

For example: One idea for a lesson might be to play the whole video through, then play each subsection followed by the activities. This would take approximately 1.5 hours.

1. What is a phonetic approach?

Time 7 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58886085>

Summary Phonetics is the study of human speech sounds and primarily their physiological production – i.e. how they are made. We are going to look at how humans make sounds and apply this knowledge to how human beatboxers make sounds.

Activity 1.1 Think about how humans make when we speak? What different parts of the body (not just the obvious bits) do we use when we make sounds? How many can you name?

(Answer: Tongue, Teeth, Vocal Tract, Vocal Chords, Lips, Soft Palate (soft bit on roof of mouth), **Hard Palate** (hard bit on roof of mouth), **Alveolar Ridge** - the bony sticking out bit above top front teeth, **Uvular** - the dangly bit at back of mouth sometimes used in snoring, (epi)**Glottis** – the soft bit used to say 'q', **Nose**)

Note: You may wish to show a picture of the anatomy of the mouth and vocal tract (there are plenty available on the Internet).

2. The four types of sound

Time 7 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58886086>

Summary In phonetics, we use lots of different sounds to make speech. In human beatboxing we use four major types of sound:

1. Plosives
2. Fricatives
3. Clicks
4. Oscillations

Activity 2.1 For each of the following sounds, have a go at writing down what parts of the anatomy are used, e.g. teeth, tongue, soft palate, etc.

1. t (as in top)
2. p (as in pig)
3. b (as in bat)
4. sh (as in shop)

3. Plosives

Time 6 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58871089>

Summary Plosives are sounds made by stopping the sound and then letting it out. Hence, plosives are sometimes called 'stops'.

Activity 3.1 Describe the difference between b (as in bat) and p (as in pig)?

(Answer: Tightness of lips)

Activity 3.2 Other than b, p, g, k and t – can you think of two other plosives and how are they made?

(Answer: q as in quick, d as in dog)

4. Hi-hat { t }

Time 3 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58844719>

Summary The first beatboxing sound we are going to learn is the hi-hat { t } sound.

Activity 4.1 There is a very slight difference between the t (as in tennis) and the sound we make for a hi-hat { t }. Can you spot what it is?

(**Answer:** The sound we usually make for speech is made with the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge. But in beatboxing, to make it sound more like a closed hi-hat, we use the tip of the tongue against the top teeth.)

5. Forced and Unforced Plosives

Time 3 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58871084>

Summary Plosives come in two types – forced and unforced. An unforced b (for boy) is notated in SBN (Standard Beatbox Notation) as { **b** } using lowercase letters. A forced b (for boy) is notated in SBN as { **B** } using uppercase letters.

Activity 5.1 How would you write (not sound) the forced plosive 'g' ?

(**Answer:** { **G** })

6. Classic Kick { B }

Time 6 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58842182>

Summary This is the first kick drum that we are going to learn. It is called the Classic Kick because it was one of the first sounds made by beatboxers in the early 1980s. It is a forced b (for boy) – { B }.

Activity 6.1 To practice the classic kick { B }, try alternating between a { B } and a { b } like this:

{ B b B b B b B b }

At first you will find it quite difficult to go between the two similar sounds, but practicing this pattern will help you learn to shape your mouth quickly and make the two sounds distinct.

7. Fricatives

Time 8 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58871085>

Summary Fricatives are continuous sounds such as { **sh** }, { **f** }, { **s** }, and { **h** }.

Activity 7.1 We can shape the mouth and hold the tongue in different positions, usually associated with vowel sounds. Mouth positions help change the timbre or tone of beatboxing sounds, and it is because every person has a different shaped mouth that no two beatboxers sound exactly the same. Here are some different mouth shapes:

Mouth positions:

- aa
- ee
- oo

Tongue positions:

- rr
- ll

Try making the fricatives { **sh** }, { **f** }, { **s** } and { **h** } using different mouth and tongue positions. Note any interesting combinations you come up with! For example:

{ **sh** } + oo + rr = sounds like?

8. Classic Snare { Psh }

Time 10 mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58871081>

Summary The Classic Snare { **Psh** }, so called because it was one of the first snare sounds to be made by beatboxers in the early 1980s, is made by combining a forced p (for pig) – { **P** } and the fricative { **sh** }. All snare sounds are combinations of a plosive and a fricative.

Activity 8.1 You were shown how the classic snare drum sound is created by combining { **P** } and { **sh** } to make { **Psh** }. Make three other snare drum sounds using the fricatives { **f** }, { **s** } and { **h** }.

1. How will you write them?
2. What will they sound like?

Activity 8.2 What would the following plosive and fricative combinations (affricates) sound like?

1. { **B** } + { **sh** } = { ? }
2. { **B** } + { **f** } = { ? }
3. { **B** } + { **s** } = { ? }
4. { **B** } + { **h** } = { ? }
5. { **t** } + { **sh** } = { ? }
6. { **t** } + { **f** } = { ? }
7. { **t** } + { **s** } = { ? }
8. { **t** } + { **h** } = { ? }

9. A simple beat

Time 5½ mins

Video <https://vimeo.com/58869425>

Summary We are going to combine the Classic Kick { B }, Hi-hat { t } and Classic Snare { Psh } into a simple beat: { B t Psh t / B B Psh t }

Note: The SBN describes both the rhythm and the sounds. Also, note how, to aid learning, the SBN divides the bar into two four-quaver sections.

Activity 9.1 (for music students)

Re-write the SBN beat pattern on sheet music with drum clef and time signature.

Answer:

{ B t Psh t / B B Psh t }

Activity 9.2 Come up with your own 8-beat pattern using SBN (Standard Beatbox Notation). Note: You may wish to use the sounds you created in a previous activity.

e.g. { B t Psh B / B B Psh B }