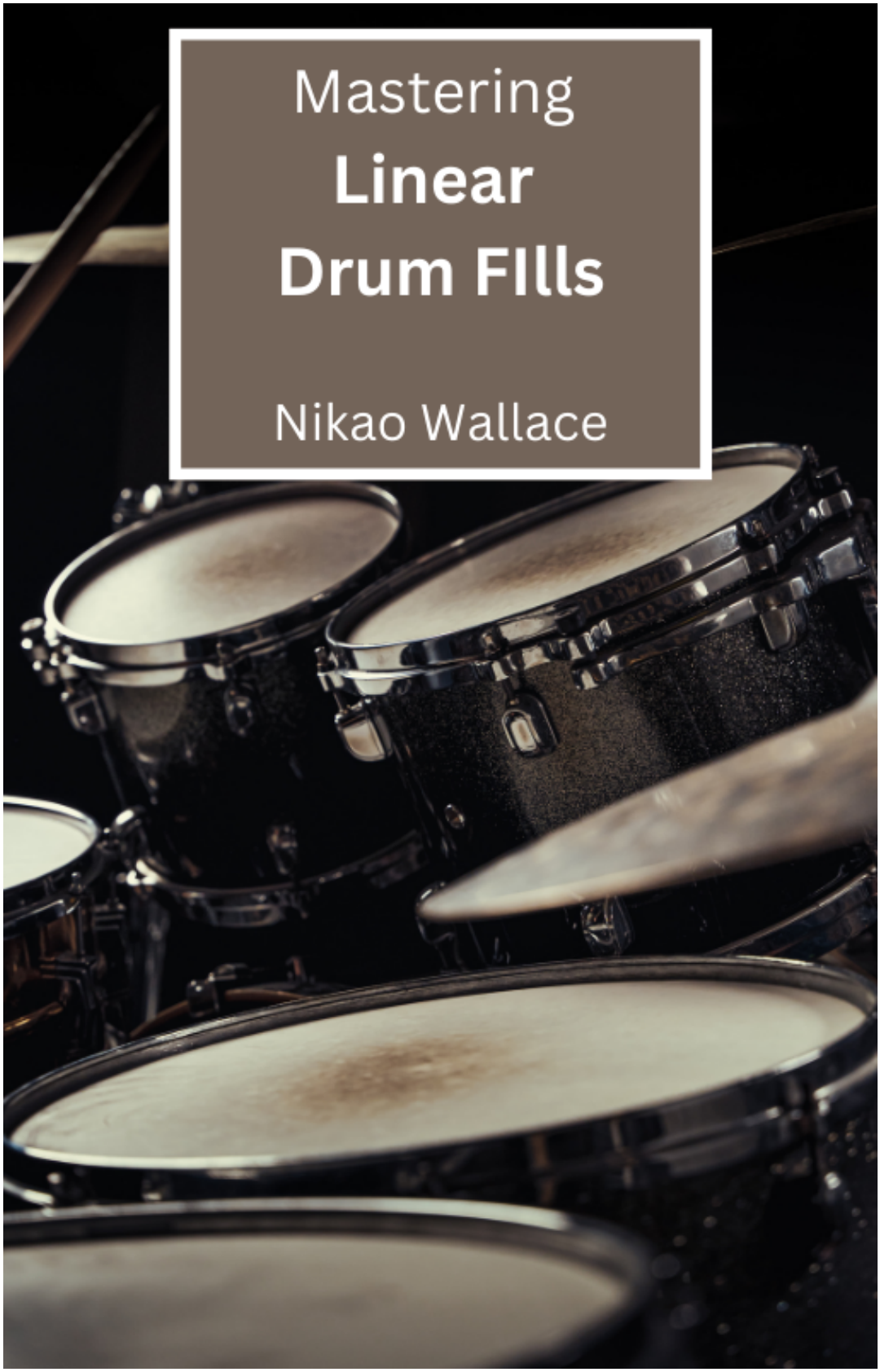

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Mastering Linear Drum Fills

Nikao Wallace

What's up you guys! Thank you for downloading this guide!

Linear drumming is one of those things that sound super complicated and hard to get a grasp on… It almost sounds like magic around the drum kit.

I used to spend hours watching videos of guys like Vinnie Colaiuta, Thomas Pridgen, and Aaron Spears and wonder how the heck they were pulling off those fills. I didn't even know where to begin.

After hours of trial and error, I finally began to make some progress and figure out how to practice linear patterns and flow with them effectively.

Linear drumming is not as hard as you may think, and you CAN get to the point where you can incorporate them in your playing effortlessly!

In this guide, I've outlined thirteen linear patterns that every drummer looking to get into linear playing should get comfortable with. I then mixed and matched these patterns to give you some practical examples of how you can orchestrate them around the drum set.

If you can commit to working on these patterns a few minutes a day, you'll be cooking up some killer linear fills sooner than you think.

If you're up for the challenge… Let's break it down!

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What is a linear fill?

A linear drum fill is just a pattern where no two limbs hit together at the same time and is usually played between the hands and kick drum.

When you break these fills down, however, they may not be as complicated as you think.

Most of the time, linear fills are just a series of single-stroke 16th notes or triplets interrupted by one or two bass drum hits.

If you can get comfortable substituting one or two hits on the kick drum while playing single strokes, you can master linear fills.

In this guide, I will introduce you to 13 patterns that will help you do just that!

Two things before diving in, though….

First, I'm making a HUGE assumption with these exercises. **The assumption is that you know how to read and understand subdivisions.**

In other words, you know the difference between quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes, and eighth note triplets and can count them out loud. If you can't do this, I highly recommend getting with a good teacher and learning to read and count rhythms; it will help your playing out tremendously!

Second, these patterns are meant to be practiced **SLOWLY**.

I know from experience how tempting it is to want to sound impressive as quickly as possible. In doing this, we develop bad habits and mess up so frequently that we get frustrated and feel like drumming is too hard to grasp or that we're just not cut out for it.

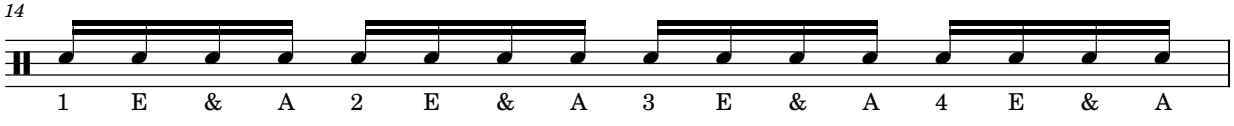
Speed is a by-product of control.

Take your time, be consistent, and get comfortable. It's impossible to do something over and over again and not get better!

The Grid

The patterns I will show you are based on the grid concept. The grid is a system where you take a group of sixteenth notes or triplets, play them for one or more measures, and emphasize each part.

If we take sixteenth notes, for example



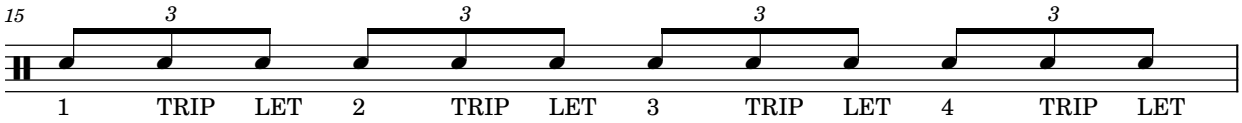
You'd play one or more measures and emphasize all of the numbers, then do the same with the E's, then the AND'S, and then the A's.

You'll probably notice this pattern as you go through these exercises. I start off with sixteenth-note singles and work through the possibilities of replacing one of the four notes with a kick drum.

We'll then replace two of the four sixteenth notes with the kick drum. After that, we'll do the same thing with eighth-note triplets.

It may be a good idea to take a minute to count sixteenth notes out loud and practice clapping your hands every time you say a number, then go back and clap on every "E," then every "AND" and "A."

Do the same with triplets.



Go through and clap every time you say a number, then every time you say TRIP, and then every time you say LET.

How To Practice

It's very important to count out loud while playing these patterns. Some of these patterns will probably feel a little weird at first, making it easy to lose track of where you are. One of the primary roles of a drummer is to keep consistent time. Knowing where beat one is at all times is a skill that needs to become second nature. Take your time, count out loud, and ensure that every hit you play lines up with a syllable you speak.

Practice slowly with your snare and kick, and follow the hand stickings provided. Starting patterns comfortably on any hand will help your ideas flow effortlessly. When you're comfortable with the patterns, you can move your hands around the drum set and experiment with different sounds.

When you can play each individual exercise, the fun part is mixing and matching the different exercises in different orders. After each section, I'll give you some drum fills I've come up with to help get your juices flowing.

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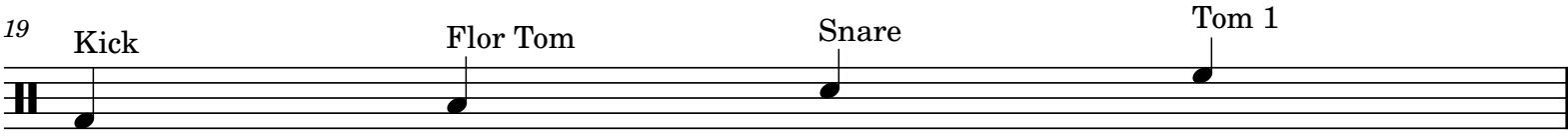
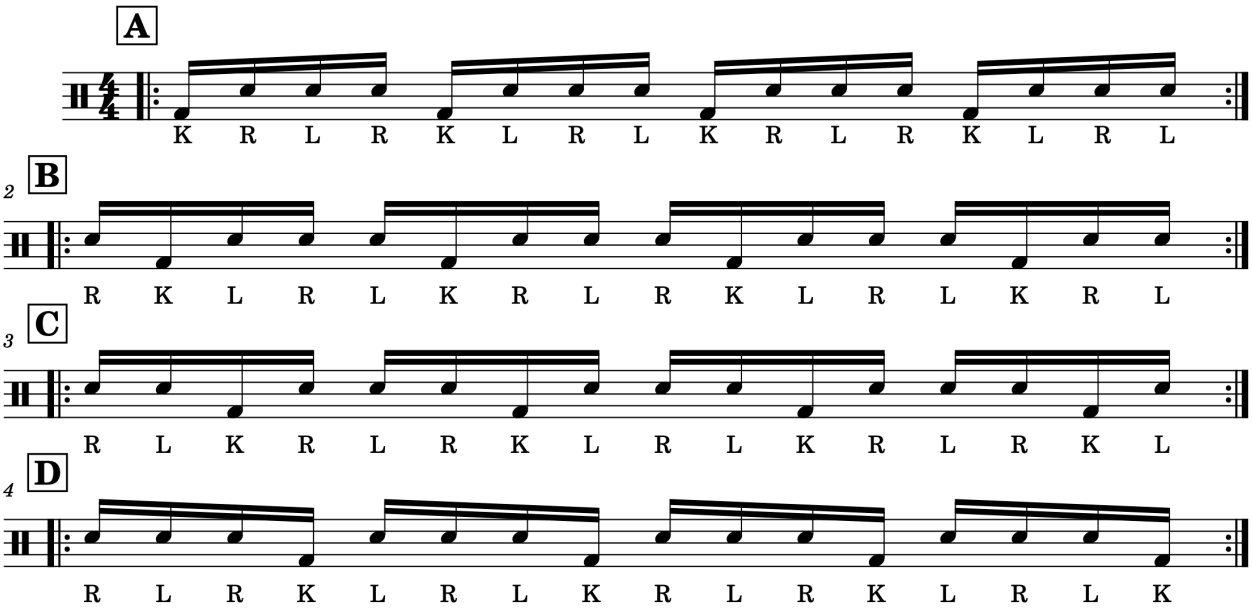


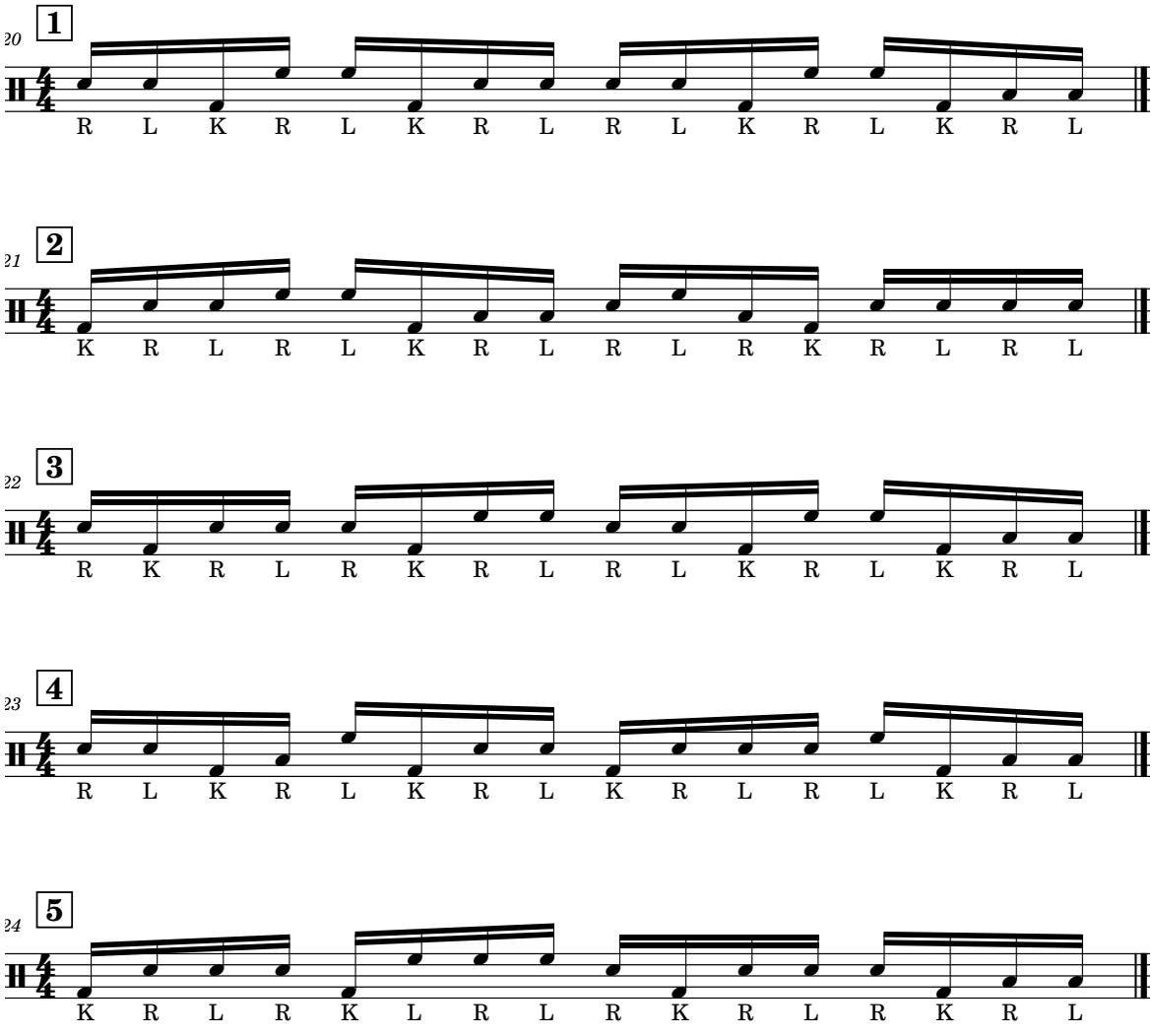
One Kick Patterns

First, we will work on sixteenth-note singles while inserting one kick drum hit on the different positions. Remember to count out loud and follow the stickings.

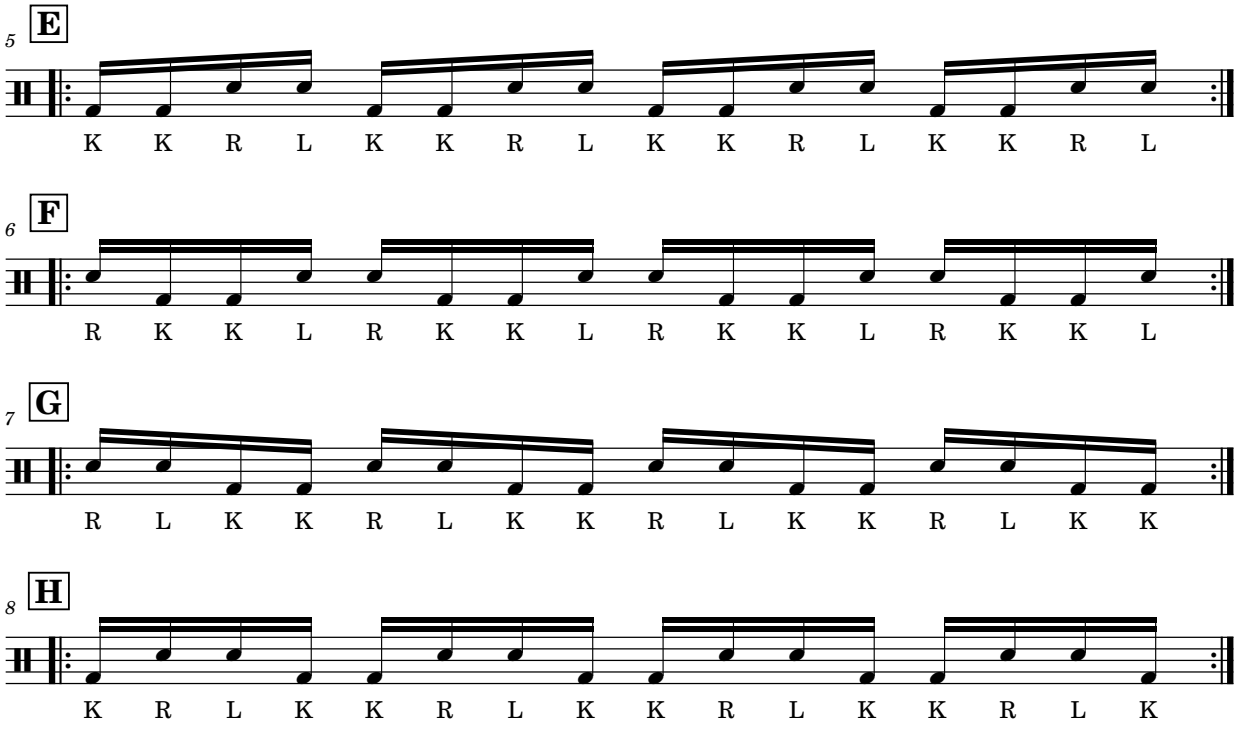


Single Kick Drum Fills

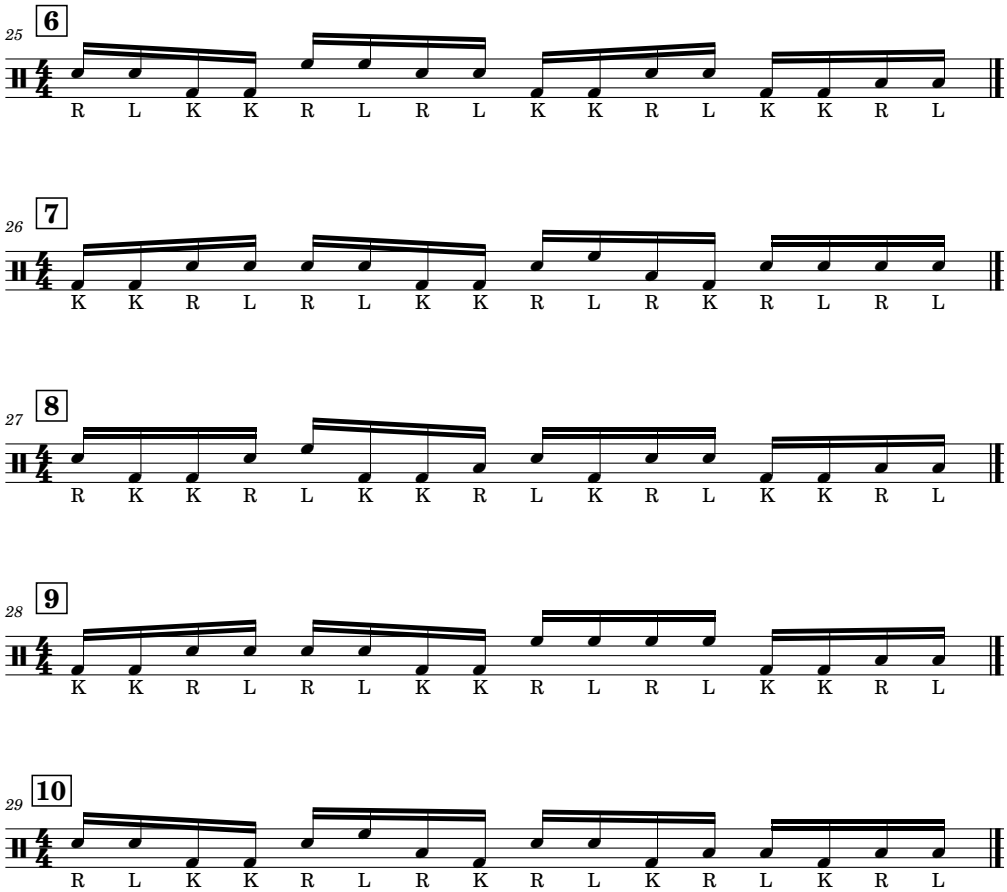
You can mix and match these single-kick exercises to create cool drum fills. Here are a few that I came up with to get you started:



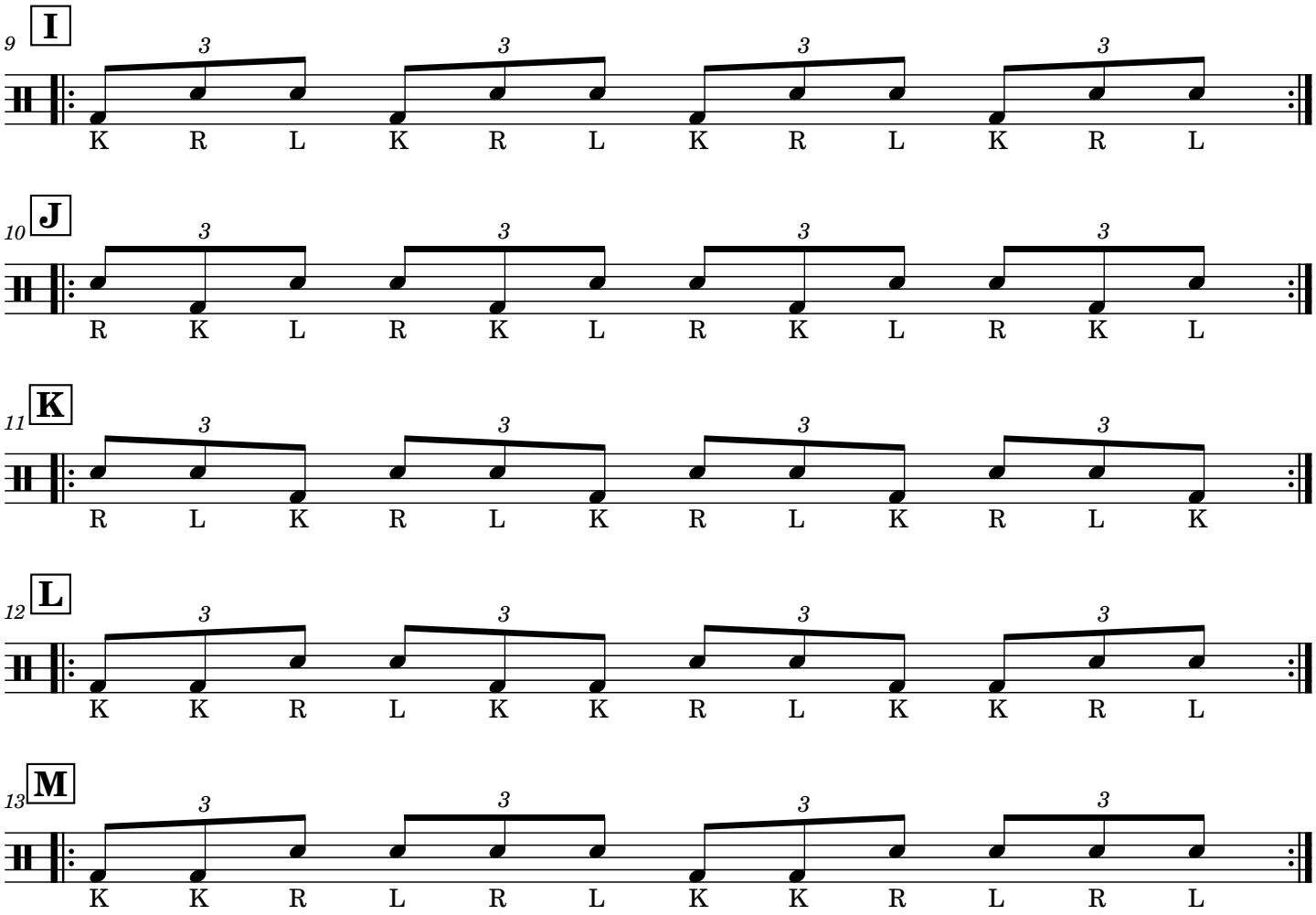
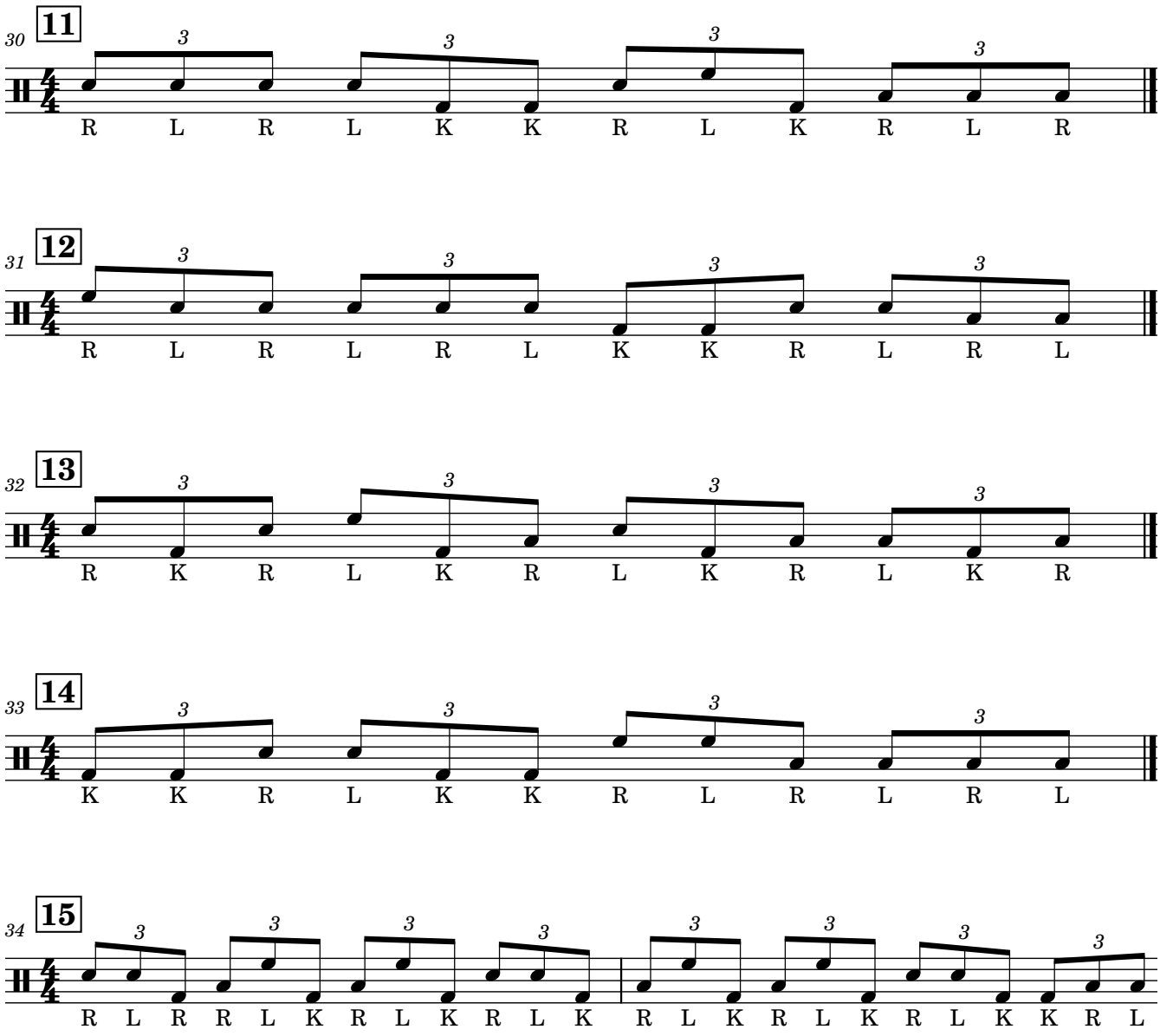
Two Kick Patterns



Two Kick Drum Fills



Triplet Patterns



Triplet Drum Fills