

IT'S YOUR MOVE

Motions and Emotions

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2 TO 50 WARM-UP EXERCISE

The following is a warm-up exercise passed on to me by Joe Morello circa 1975.

To master the Free Stroke and use it in your playing, all the mechanics described in the previous section must become so comfortable and familiar that they need not be thought about when playing. For this to happen, you may need to replace old, inefficient technique habits with new, more efficient and effective ones. This replacement process takes much concentrated practice. The *2 to 50 Warm-Up Exercise* is designed to begin to make the Free Stroke a part of your playing by making it very familiar to the muscle memory of your hands.

The actual exercise involves playing Free Strokes as quarter notes to a metronome. Set the metronome between 80 and 120 BPM. It should be *SLOW* in order for you to really feel the rebound of every stroke, and check your grip and motion to make sure they are correct. It is easiest to reprogram your muscles with good habits when playing slowly. When playing to the metronome, try to feel it as part of what you are playing. I suggest *not* tapping your foot so that you can totally concentrate on the technique and the metronome.

Begin by playing two measures of quarter notes with the left hand followed by two measures with the right. You will then add two measures to each hand as you proceed. Thus you will play two measures left, two measures right, four measures left, four measures right, six measures left, six measures right, eight measures left, eight measures right, and so on, until you reach fifty measures left and fifty measures right.

If you try this at the tempos indicated, you will realize that it is indeed very slow. Relax your whole body, concentrate on the motion and grip, and allow yourself to focus on the quarter-note pulse. If you play the whole exercise, it will take approximately 45-50 minutes. It is not only a Free Stroke exercise but also an exercise in physical and mental discipline. *Try not to become distracted or lose count. If you do, start over!* This will condition you to pay attention! If you are able to get through the whole thing, with correct grip, it will make the Free Stroke part of your normal playing motion and warm you up to maximum playing potential. It is a challenge, but its rewards are great. Completing the 2 to 50 Warm-Up Exercise will strengthen your discipline as well.

One last suggestion: Practice the 2 to 50 Warm-Up Exercise in front of a full-length mirror to analyze your posture and stroke motion. Use the mirror to correct any inconsistencies in your grip. A teacher who is experienced with this technique can help point out the areas in which you need work. Remember, improving your technique is a long-term process that requires tremendous focus. Once you are comfortable with the Free Stroke and have played through the 2 to 50 Warm-Up Exercise, refer to *Stick Control* by George L. Stone. In *Stick Control*, play each exercise on the page for one minute each using Full Strokes at a metronome marking between 40 and 60 BPM. You can proceed through the book, practicing one page per week to condition your muscles with the Free Stroke.

