

Learning the Scottish Tenor: The Basics

Basic Spins

These are the 4 core spins that any learner will attempt and should be learned in the order below. Until one spin is mastered, a tenor should move on to the next.

Each spin is a development of range of motion, understanding of how a stick 'moves' and muscle memory. Once your hand adapts to a certain spin, it develops the range of control to attempt the next spin on the list. Trying to learn spins 'prematurely' will result in bad muscle memory and bad technique.

GOAL: Aim for fluid motions, even spinning speed, minimal movement in the hand, wrist and arm. Clean catches.

Note: It takes 3 times longer to un-learn bad technique/bad spins than it does to learn it in the first place. Learn it right the first time so you don't end up with bad habits you cant undo :)

Right Single & Left Single

This spin is the practical application of the "Outside Backwards" movement. The stick is spun on a single hand (right or left), and the drummer should attempt one complete and clean 'rotation' with a catch. Once a single rotation is mastered, go for 2 rotations in the same space of time as you previously did 1.

A 'single' spin is typically done at a slight angle (roughly 45 degrees) at a height just above your forehead and held out from your body (approx. 1') to avoid hitting your head/hat.

With practice comes profficiency - BUT the drummer should focus on 'slow and steady' to develop control and a "pretty" spin, not aim for speed as this will become messy without the appropriate development of control and technique. Once the drummer learns good control, then an increase speed in rotations can be applied.

Feather

("split the feather", "Face Feather")

The "Feather" Spin is a two handed spin (both sticks moving at once) and is the combination of the single spins on both hands.

This spin requires the drummer to have developed sufficient control, but also some level of 'hand independence' (a.k.a you can be doing two slightly different thing at once).

The spin involves the two 'single' spins to be rotating at a slight stagger - this means the left single will be rotating slightly after the right single (so the sticks dont collide). The position/angle is the same as a single spin, and when both sticks are spinning it will create a / \ shape.

The drummer should aim to hold the sticks with the width between the wrists (that are facing slightly inwards) to be about 1' apart. As the control and proficiency develops, the drummer can bring the wrists closer together and 'tighten' the spin.

Follow the same rotation/speed guidance as outlined in "Single Spins".

Flat (uncommonly known as a "helicopter")

This spin is essentially the same motion/principle as the "single" but instead of the stick/spin being at a 45 degrees angle, a flat will be spun parallel with the ground but at approximately the same height as a single.

The angle is achieved by lifting the elbow higher while spinning to tip the hand further inwards and achieve the parallel stick angle.

It is uncommon to combine these spins like we would a feather, so the drummer should practice them hand to hand.

The Catch (incorporated with spins)

Good catching technique is critical to these spins as a drummer needs to know how to stop the motion and catch the stick cleanly.

Refer to the previous guide on catches. A correct "catch" after each spin is critical to a drummers technique and being able to re-capture a stick to then play on the drum.