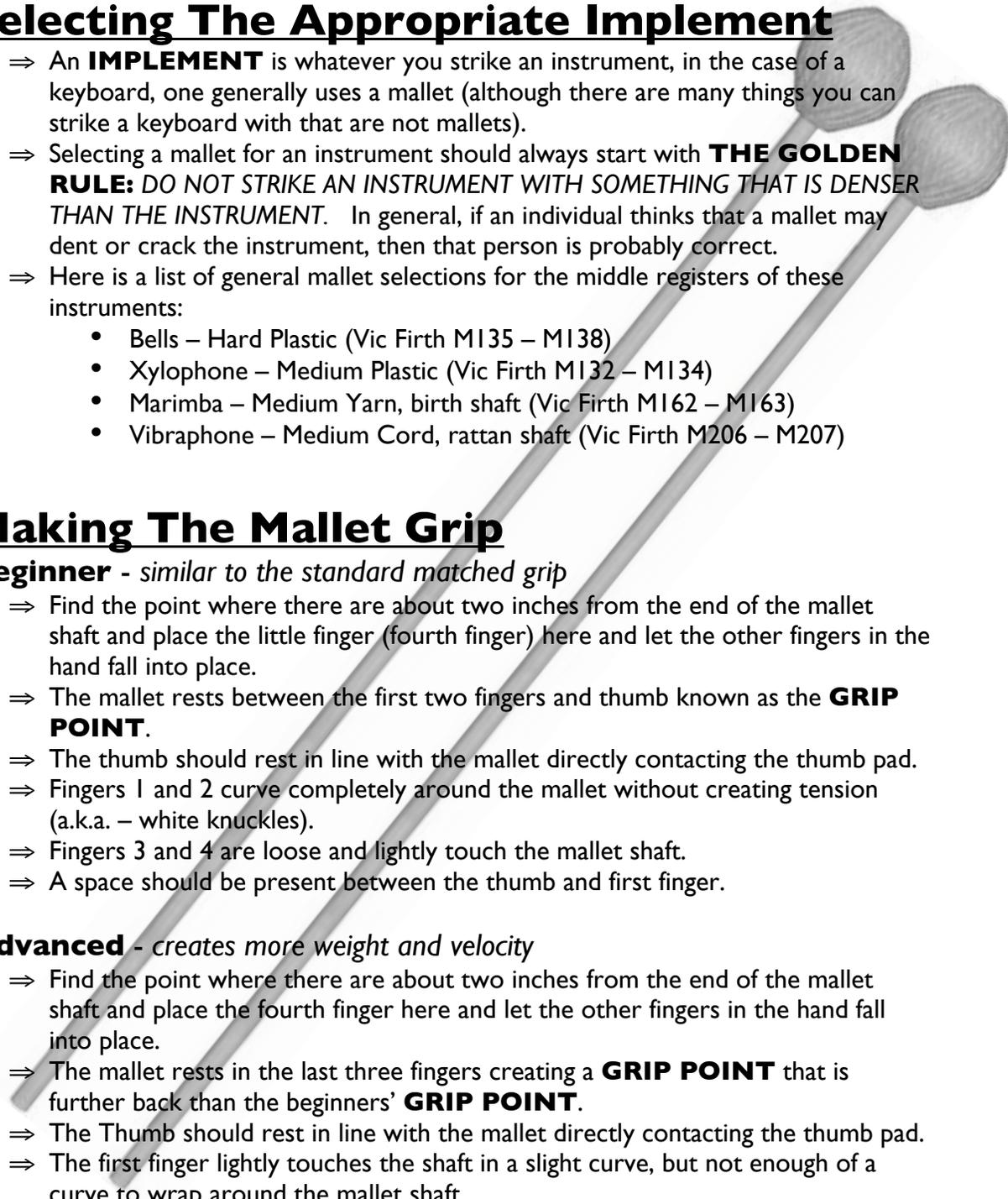


# MALLET FUNDAMENTALS!

WITH BRAD MEYER

## Selecting The Appropriate Implement

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- ⇒ An **IMPLEMENT** is whatever you strike an instrument, in the case of a keyboard, one generally uses a mallet (although there are many things you can strike a keyboard with that are not mallets).
  - ⇒ Selecting a mallet for an instrument should always start with **THE GOLDEN RULE: DO NOT STRIKE AN INSTRUMENT WITH SOMETHING THAT IS DENSER THAN THE INSTRUMENT.** In general, if an individual thinks that a mallet may dent or crack the instrument, then that person is probably correct.
  - ⇒ Here is a list of general mallet selections for the middle registers of these instruments:
    - Bells – Hard Plastic (Vic Firth M135 – M138)
    - Xylophone – Medium Plastic (Vic Firth M132 – M134)
    - Marimba – Medium Yarn, birth shaft (Vic Firth M162 – M163)
    - Vibraphone – Medium Cord, rattan shaft (Vic Firth M206 – M207)

## Making The Mallet Grip

### **Beginner** - *similar to the standard matched grip*

- ⇒ Find the point where there are about two inches from the end of the mallet shaft and place the little finger (fourth finger) here and let the other fingers in the hand fall into place.
- ⇒ The mallet rests between the first two fingers and thumb known as the **GRIP POINT.**
- ⇒ The thumb should rest in line with the mallet directly contacting the thumb pad.
- ⇒ Fingers 1 and 2 curve completely around the mallet without creating tension (a.k.a. – white knuckles).
- ⇒ Fingers 3 and 4 are loose and lightly touch the mallet shaft.
- ⇒ A space should be present between the thumb and first finger.

### **Advanced** - *creates more weight and velocity*

- ⇒ Find the point where there are about two inches from the end of the mallet shaft and place the fourth finger here and let the other fingers in the hand fall into place.
- ⇒ The mallet rests in the last three fingers creating a **GRIP POINT** that is further back than the beginners' **GRIP POINT.**
- ⇒ The Thumb should rest in line with the mallet directly contacting the thumb pad.
- ⇒ The first finger lightly touches the shaft in a slight curve, but not enough of a curve to wrap around the mallet shaft.

## Why not start with the advanced grip?

- ⇒ The standard matched grip has more **TRANSFER VALUE**, which means, although it may not be the best grip for keyboard, it is easier for a beginner due to their lack in muscle control and dexterity. After sufficient progress has been made in these areas using the beginner's grip, incorporating more advanced techniques can help a player find their musical voice by varying when they use either grip.

## Approaching The Attack

### **The Power Triangle** – start up, end up

- ⇒ Start with the mallets as high as your wrists will allow (beginners will be surprised how much they can raise the mallet with the wrist alone)
- ⇒ After every stroke, try returning the mallets to the original position by lightly touching the mallet that played with the mallet at rest before initiating the next stroke.
- ⇒ Make sure that the mallet doesn't freeze for an instant either on the bar or right above the bar. Look for "floating mallet" an inch above the bar, if that is seen, then the mallet is not rebounding correctly.
- ⇒ It is best to try and move above the next note that is going to be struck by the same hand, this is known as "shifting." This helps with a person's efficiency of motion, which helps players play passages more accurately.
- ⇒ **Practice Tip:** make sure to practice at a full height as a beginning student, and then as one progresses through their education, practice as different heights with the same discipline as at the full height.

## The Better Beating Area

- ⇒ Naturals: strike slightly forward of the center of the bar.  
Accidentals:
  - beginner – strike the bar's front edge, trying to "cut the mallet head in half"
  - advanced – strike slightly behind the center of the bar unless the speed of a passage makes this too difficult, then use the beginners' technique of hitting on the absolute edge of the bar.
- ⇒ **Practice Tip:** attach a shoestring at both ends of a xylophone, where the string lays across the correct beating area. By using a regular soft plastic mallet (Vic Firth M133), the student will be able to hear the difference between the correct and incorrect beating area. When striking the correct area (where the shoestring is located), the student will hear a darker sound with less rebound, whereas if the student does not strike the correct playing area, the sound will be more brittle and have more rebound. This also works on with the accidentals as well on both the edge and off-center playing areas.