

# Cajon Made Simple Cheatsheet

## Proper Form

- Don't sit on an angle or slouch your back.
- If you're large enough, have both legs on each side.
- If you're right handed, you'll want to put your right foot behind and vice versa.
- If you're someone who wears a skirt, try sitting on an angle to compensate and reach the front of the cajon. It's not ideal, but will work to get you through a few songs.
- Your hands, contrary to what you might think, only play the upper quarter of the front of your Cajon.

## 3 Main Sounds Of a Cajon

1. Kick - low sound - upper centre
2. Snare - high sound - edges
3. Ghost Notes - light tap - corners

## 3 Basic Beats

### Basic Beat 1

The first beat is a downbeat or "four on the floor". It's only involves the kick:

1. Use your dominate hand
2. Following a metronome, play a kick sound to every count

### Basic Beat 2

The second basic beat is a kick snare. It's sounds similar to four on the floor:

1. Us your dominant hand for the kick and your other hand for the snare
2. Following a metronome, alternate playing a kick and snare on every count

### Basic Beat 3

The third basic beat is very similar to basic beat 2, only it adds one extra kick:

1. Use your dominant hand for the kick and snare; use your other hand for the ghost notes
2. Following the metronome, play the pattern: 2 kicks, 1 snare, 1 kick, 1 snare
3. Add eighth note ghosts notes with your other hand

## Improving Your Timing

- A modern digital metronome has two settings to adjust: the tempo and time signature.
- Tempo is the speed of the song; the time signature is the feel of how the notes are played together (rhythm).
- The most common time signatures are 4/4 and 6/8 timing.

### **Remember:**

Playing to the metronome will take practice.

## The Game of 10

**Goal:** To clap perfectly on each metronome beat without messing up.

**What You Need:** a metronome and your hands.

**How To Play:** Start the first round with the metronome at around 60bpm and set the time signature to 4/4. Clap to the beat for 1-2 minutes, then increase the metronome to 70bpm. Repeat until you reach a high number like 150bpm or until you can't keep up with the metronome speed.

There are four main different patterns you can practice on the cajon for the game of 10.

The first is a simple right left pattern sometimes known as the watermelon or caterpillar pattern... left right left right left right...

The second is a right right left left pattern...

The third is a triple right triple left pattern...

The fourth is called the right left right right left right left left pattern...

In total, if you play four rounds of the game 10, one round with each pattern, this exercise only takes about 10 to 15 minutes.

If you play the Game of 10 everyday for 30 days, you'll drastically improve your rhythm guaranteed.

## How To Take Good Cajon Notes

- Beats of any song are divided up into subdivisions.
- Subdivisions are a simple way to break up the exact timing of a beat.
- In most cases, you will only be dealing with three main types of subdivisions.

### 1st Type of Subdivision

Simply count the time signature: "1,2,3,4..."

### 2nd Type of Subdivision

For more complicated beats that needs to be broken up even further into a smaller amount of timing, we use a "+" in between the numbers: "1+2+3+4+..." (said as "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and...")

### 3rd Type of Subdivision

To further break up the beat if the kick or snare is still not captured, add an "e" and "a" between the numbers; "1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a..."

## How To Map Out a Song

Mapping out a song is simple:

1. Listen to the music
2. Note the arrangement (i.e. Intro, Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, etc.)
3. Write out the beats using subdivisions

## Your Role Playing Cajon

There is two needs that a cajon player solves and controls for everyone else: timing and dynamics.

- You control how fast or slow a song will be because, especially if your using a metronome, you become the single source of truth for the timing for whole band.
- Practice and prepare ahead of time.
- Know your songs really well.
- Take good notes.
- Always have your notes with you.
- Use a metronome.
- Have a lot of humility to listen to your band or worship leader for direction.
- Percussion is what draws people into the music; you drive the bus, but you don't own the bus.
- If you aren't locking into the rhythm of the song, you'll sound messy.
- Keep practicing, and you'll improve.



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