



# Five For Filling

by John Kerr

This article is about a fill riff using groups of five 16<sup>th</sup> notes that extend *over* the downbeats. This has a unique feel considering we tend to hear even groups (2s, 4s or 6s) in fills when playing a constant 16<sup>th</sup> note flow.

Firstly, make sure you have a fair command of playing and hearing groups of 5/16 over the beat line. To see the big picture, play four groups of 5/16 in a measure of 5/4 with alternate sticking.

[Ex. 1] Accent the beginning of each 5/16 group - which occurs a 16<sup>th</sup> note further into each consecutive beat. Tap the downbeats with a foot, preferably yours, and play slow enough that you can comfortably count aloud *vocally emphasizing* the accented counts:

[Ex 1] count: 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a 5 e + a  
 sticking: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

(As always, southpaws reverse the stickings!)

(I) Okay, let's clip that 5<sup>th</sup> beat leaving a "pick-up" accent at the end of beat 4. Remember you are playing three groups of five 16<sup>th</sup> notes plus one 16<sup>th</sup> note left over [e.g., 5+5+5+1 = 16]. [Ex 2]

[Ex 2] count: 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a  
 sticking: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

(II) Now for some different ideas using this particular 5/16 fill phrasing, let's play a measure of groove opposite one measure of fill. Below is a preliminary orchestration between the snare, high tom and floor tom and a lone snare hit on the "ah" of 4 at the end: [Ex. 3]

[Ex 3]

(III) Here's one I really like: a bass drum substitution for the last two notes (R-L-R-F-F). And then orchestrate the hands similarly – snare, high tom and floor tom. [Ex. 4]

[Ex 4]

For a nicely disjointed variation use only one bass drum substitution on the last note (R-L-R-L-F) [Ex 4b]

[Ex 4B]

(IV) Here's a sticking pattern change that will influence the dynamic contrast of the groupings if you *tap* the double lefts. This results in more of a “fusion”-style sound: [Ex. 5]

[Ex 5]

..and a tricky variation of this with only one bass drum substitution resulting in an inverted paradiddle plus a bd: [Ex. 5B]

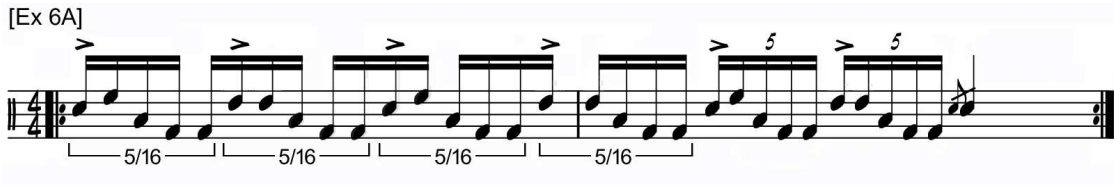
[Ex 5B]

(V) Now for something a little more “out there”. We'll utilize *quintuplets* which are groups of five *within* each beat. So throwing it in the mix with “5/16” phrasing exemplifies a kind of “expand/contract” concept. To help understand this idea, play four groups of 5/16 into a bar of 5/4 opposite four quintuplets in a measure of 4/4. [Ex. 6]

[Ex 6]

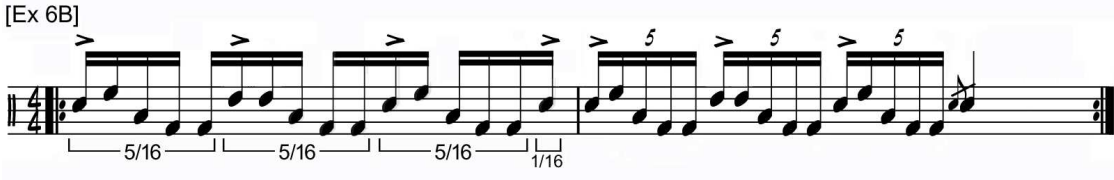
If we apply this mix to a broader two-measure fill in 4/4, you might get the following:

[Ex 6A]



..and if we chop off that 4<sup>th</sup> grouping of 5/16 and play only quintuplets in the second measure:

[Ex 6B]



Finally, here are a few examples - closer to our original one-measure fill phrasing. These utilize orchestrations from examples 4 & 4B with mixtures of “expanded” and “contracted” groups of fives:

[Ex 6C]



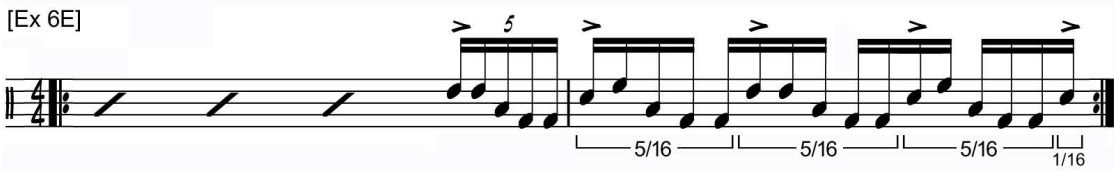
Instead of riding through the whole measures let's apply the brakes on 4+ with a flam:

[Ex 6D]



...and who says you have to start on 1?:

[Ex 6E]



Once you command the Ex. 4 & 4B orchestrations from above, try Ex. 6-6E again but with orchestrations from Ex. 5 & 5B.

You can also use this idea with any number groupings like 3/16 & triplets, or 6/16 & sextuplets.

Hope this article has piqued some interest for your next practice sessions. Feel free to contact me with any questions through my website at [www.johnkerr.net](http://www.johnkerr.net)!

John