

Rhythm Notation Guide

Instrument terms:

Djembe – Standard West African bell-shaped hand drum. In an ensemble, it helps to have djembes of different pitches playing together: djembe 3 lowest, djembe 2 mid-range, djembe 1 highest for lead parts, breaks and solos.

Dunun – Double-headed drum played with sticks. Various combinations are possible. Basic configurations include side-mounting on a stand or chair, or strapped to another dunun. This way it is common to play an attached bell on top, with the weaker hand. Another common setup is to play dununs in combination in the upright position, on a floor or mounted on a stand. In this setup usually sticks are used in both hands and the bell is left out.

Dununba – The largest of the family of dununs.

Sangban – Medium-sized dunun

Kenkeni – Smallest dunun

Basic notation for djembe:

The primary notation in this book, as in *Roots Jam* (1996) and *Roots Jam 2* (2002) is based on the traditional Yoruba "oral notation" terminology as taught by Babatunde Olatunji. It mimics the standard range of sounds produced by the West African djembe.

G: Gun ("Goon") = bass beat with strong hand in center of drum head

D: Dun ("Doon") = bass beat with other hand

g: go = rim tone with strong hand: middle joint of fingers; fingers closed

d: do ("doe") = rim tone with other hand

P: Pa = slap with strong hand: sharp glancing stroke with fingertips

T: Ta = slap with other hand

P or **I** = slap muffled by other hand placed first on head to dampen it

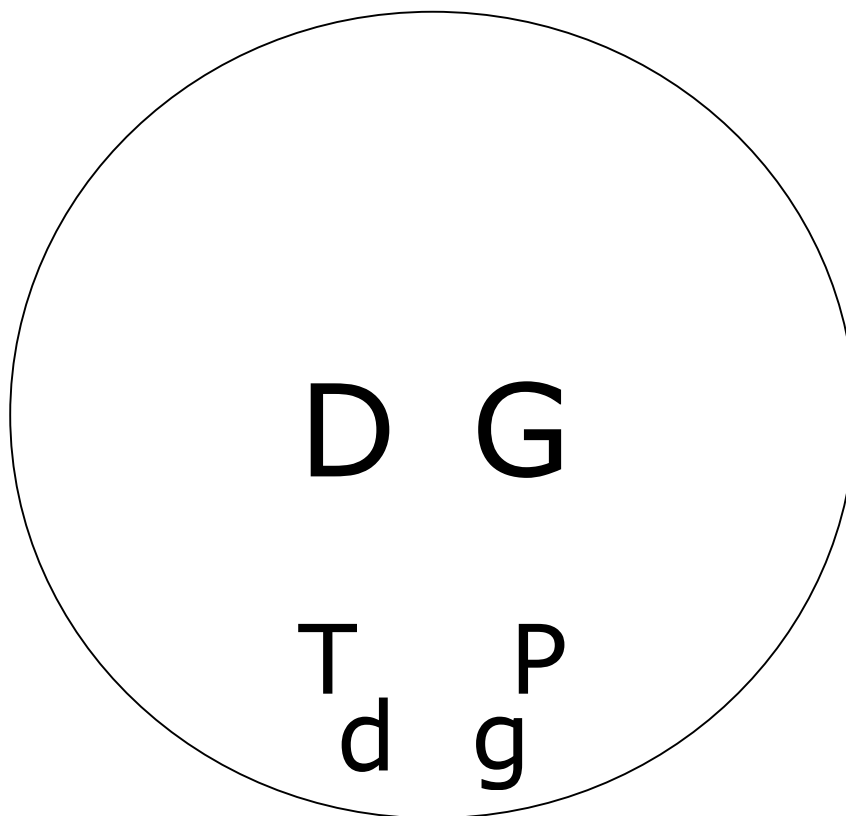
- : = unplayed note, marking a place to feel the underlying pulse or timing

(G) = parentheses indicate optional note

Gt, Dp, Pt, gf = flams. (Gt=GT, Dp=DP, Pt=PT, gf=gd) Play two notes almost as one single beat, in the order written.

gd or **PT** = two notes played at double time, at the beginning of a roll. Similar to a flam; but here there are distinctly two notes played quickly one after the other, whereas the flam notes are closer to being struck simultaneously.

Map of Notes on Drum Head:



Dunun notation

x = dunun bell, usually played with weaker hand

○ = open (stick) beat on any dunun; usually implies bell note struck at same time

○ = note on kenkeni or higher-pitched dunun; usually includes bell

M or **m** = muted note on dunun, with stick pressed to drum head; usually with bell

(○) = parentheses indicate optional note