

WORKSHEET TWO – TALA

Tala (or tal), as explained earlier is a rhythmical pattern which goes round in a cyclic motion.

Indian rhythms are taught through spoken words called bols and these words sound like what is played on the tabla, as the previous video on tabla showed these sounds are -

Dha = high and low sound together

Dhin = high and low sound together with higher high sound than Dha

Tin = very high sound by itself

Ta = high sound by itself

Tu = Open high sound

Ghe = open low sound

Ka = closed low sound

Tirekita = a fast pattern of 4

Here are the words written with notation to show the beat values.

1 1 1 1 1 2 1 2 1 1 1

DHA DHIN TIN TA TI RE KI TA GHE KA TU

These are the building blocks of Indian rhythms, and we can combine them to create a tala like Teental which is the most popular. We can see that Teental is divided into 4+4+4+4 and we have a + over beat 1 (+ = Sam) and o over beat 9 (o = Khali)

+ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

DHA DHIN DHIN DHA DHA DHIN DHIN DHA DHA TIN TIN TA TA DHIN DHIN DHA

It's important to remember that this tala will repeat over and over again and generally speeds up over a performance which can last 45 minutes or more! A tabla player would play a solo, which is usually improvised, within this tala and make sure whatever they do they land back on the first beat of the cycle.

Here is another tala called Japtal which is 10 beats long and is divided 2+3+2+3 and note where the sam and khali is.

Now that we know how a tala is created let's try and create our own.

- 1/. Choose a number between 7 & 18
- 2/. Subdivide the number into groups of 2, 3, 4, 5's
- 3/. Add the bols provided to create your own sequence.

Whichever percussion instrument you use see if you can recreate to high/low sounds of the bols described in this worksheet.

Task – 1

Practice playing Teental on your percussion instruments and if grouped in couples perhaps one person can play the low sound and the other the high sound. It can also be played at any speed you feel comfortable with. Share with the rest of the class

Task – 2

Create your own tala pattern with bols, and share with the class.

Extended task

Try improvising while someone in your group keeps the tala, feel free to play whatever you want but try to land back on the first beat of your tala.

Teacher notes

If there are not enough percussion instruments to go around the students without an instrument could speak the bols instead.

It can be played at any speed which could be very slow if wanted.

An extra task could be to have the students sitting in a circle, all of them playing Teental on their percussion instruments. Go around the circle with each student taking a short solo while the rest of the group keep Teental. See if they can finish their solos on beat 1.

It might be a good idea for the students to write down the bol patterns but there is no need to notate the rhythms in standard notation as Indian music is an aural tradition.