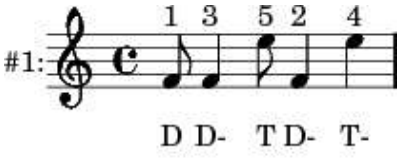
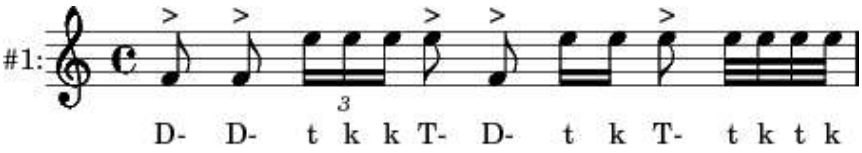
Varying Rhythms

1) Figure out what the main accent pattern or 'skeleton' of the rhythm is. If the main accent notes stand out most of the time, it will sound like that rhythm.



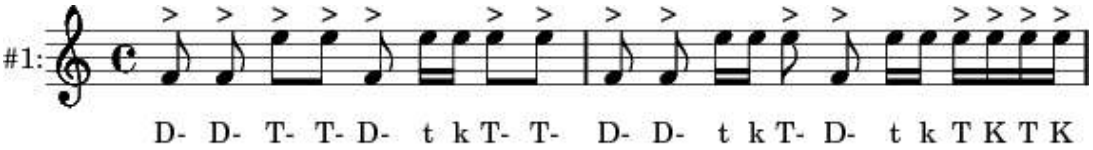
In beledi, the accents are numbered in rough order of importance. e.g. I can leave out 4 and 5 and it still sounds like beledi. I could play just 1 and 2, or even 1 for a few measures, and still keep a continuous beledi flow going.

2) **Add extra 'fill' notes** between or before the main accents - usually not right after a main accent, to let that note stand out.

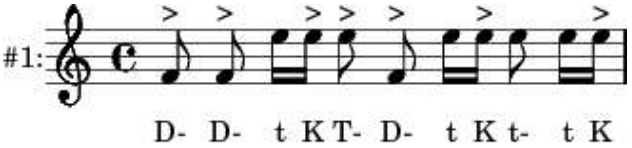


One common way is to add a triplet or roll before an accent.

3) **Add extra accented notes** between main accents. These can fall before or between main accents, but rarely right after.

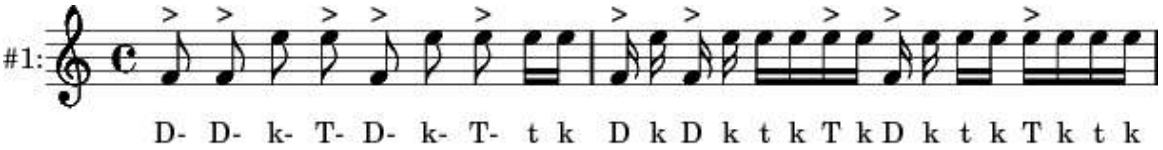


4) **Accent pickup notes.** The note right before an accent is called a pickup note; accenting a pickup gives a 'funky' feel, and makes the following accent stronger.

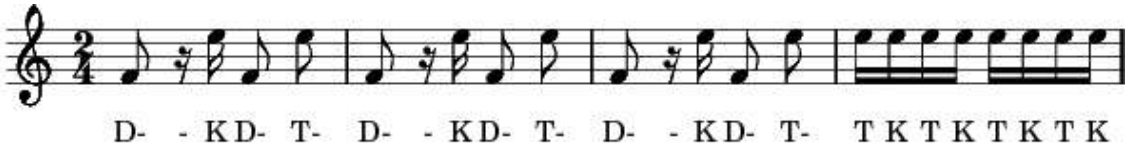


The pickup accent can replace the accent following, or be used with it.

5) **Switch between Open and Filled** forms of rhythms.



6) **The Law of Four** - every four repeats of a rhythm, add extra roll notes or a variant rhythm. (This example uses ayub.)



7) **Vary gradually** - keep the pattern you play mostly consistent, and change one or two things rather than changing everything at once. (**most** of the time!)

8) **Take patterns from others** - if you hear a pattern you like, **write it down**, memorize it, practice and learn it.

9) **Practice your variations beforehand** - have several memorized.