

Tuning Your Drums - Comprehensive Guide For Drummers

There are some basic rules of tuning that apply to all drums. If you're putting a new head on a drum, you first want to remove the drum from the kit so that you can work more efficiently and so you don't get a sympathetic ring from the other drums as you tap and listen to the drum's pitch.

Using a drum key, remove the old head, then use a dry rag to wipe off any debris or dust that has accumulated around the inside of the shell and along the drum's bearing edge. Place the drumhead on the shell and spin it to make sure that the lip of the head hangs evenly over the drum. Next, place the counter-hoop or rim over the drumhead and make sure it also sits evenly on top of the drum. If you find that the hoop is warped or bent, you need to buy a new one. Bent hoops cannot fasten a head to a drum very well.

The result is a terrible sound and a great deal of frustration when tuning. After you've placed the hoop on top of the head, screw in the tension rods using your fingers. At this point, the head has been seated properly on the drum and you are ready to begin tuning. Pick any tension rod, and with a drum key turn the rod clockwise two 360-degree rotations. Now go to the rod directly opposite the one you just turned, and twist it also two 360-degree rotations.

Next, go to the tension rod either to the right or left of the original rod and turn it two full revolutions, then move to the rod on its opposite side and twist it two full rotations. Continue this process until each tension rod has been turned two clockwise 360-degree revolutions. Make sure you always tune using opposites, and make certain you turn each rod equally. This is the key to your tuning success.

As you tune, you may hear a crackle noise. Don't worry about this. This is just the sound of the Mylar film being stretched. After you've turned each rod twice around, begin the process again. Only, now you will need to use your judgment. At this point you will start to feel head resistance, so try twisting each rod only one full turn, then evaluate. Strike the drum softly to see where you are in the tuning process. If the head is still quite floppy and has a warbled sound, you need to keep tightening in full rotations. If it's becoming taut, you may only want to use half or quarter rotations. Remember, though, whatever you do to one rod, you must do to all of them.

Once the drum begins to resemble a pitch, you've entered into the subjective phase of tuning and also the stage where drums begin to differ. However, before you start thinking about how high or low you want a drum's pitch to be, you will need to check your tuning accuracy. The only way to do this is to very softly tap around the edges of the drumhead. Tap alongside each rod and listen to the pitch. Sometimes the drum's overtones are distracting when doing this. If you're having trouble discriminating between a pitch and an overtone, press slightly in the middle of the head while tapping. By doing this, you will hear a clearer fundamental pitch. If your taps all have the same pitch, you've done a great job. If you find that your taps produce pitch variations, you need to even them out.

In order to even out a drum's pitch, decide which pitch is most prevalent, then work to make each tuning area an exact match. It's easier to hear higher pitches on a drum, so if anything, tune the drum high at first. You can always detune later. The important thing is to get the drum in tune with itself-to compass it up properly. Once you've done this, you can worry about how high or low the overall pitch should be. If you do have pitch variances, and you are tightening or loosening individual tension rods, make sure you tap in each affected area after each turn. You will need to keep close tabs on what you're doing.

If you find that you cannot even out the pitch by tightening or loosening a certain tension rod, listen to the rod's counterpart. Often that rod may be the culprit. Remember, the head is stretched onto the drum by opposing forces.

About the Author

Before tuning a drum Eric recommends making sure that [Drum Lugs](#) are securely tighten on the drum shel, otherwise, tuning will damage the drum, another advice is to get your self a [Drum Dvd](#) that will show the tuning process step by step. Eric is an active member of [Drum Forum](#) at Drum Solo Artist where he is answering drum related questions, and helping drummers with tips and advices.

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