

SNARE DRUM FUNDAMENTALS!

WITH BRAD MEYER

Tuning

Putting On A Heads

1. Place the head with on the drum and push the rim down to seat it on the heads hoop.
2. Screw all the tension rods in until each one barely touches the rim.
3. Tighten each tension rod one half turn at a time in a criss-cross fashion (keep track of where you started by keeping one finger on the starting tension rod).
4. Once the head is at a medium tension, use a drum-dial to even out the head further.
5. Slowly and evenly bring the pitch of the head up until the desired pitch is reached.
6. Use your ear to fine-tune each zone of the head, making sure to understand that when you change one zone, you affect the rest of the head.

Top Head vs. Bottom Head

- ⇒ Top head controls feel and rebound; bottom head controls the general pitch
- ⇒ When the top head is too loose, the drum feels “saggy”/“thuddy.” When the drum is too tight, the head will feel stiff (like a table) and will have an uncharacteristic, high-pitched ringing sound (it may also break if it is too tight).
- ⇒ When the bottom head is too loose the drum will sound open/“boomy,” and the snares may ring for too long when engaged.
- ⇒ **Rule of Thumb:** have top head’s pitch around an “A” and the bottom head’s pitch at an “E” that is higher than the top head.

Drum Angle

- ⇒ Level out the drum so it is flat with the floor
- ⇒ Check this by placing a drumstick on the drum. If it stays in place, then the drum is level. If the drumstick rolls to once side, then it is not level. Turn the stick 90° and check the other angle of the drum

Drum Height

- ⇒ Stand tall, raise the wrist from the elbow with a relaxed hand
- ⇒ Forearm should be slightly below parallel with the ground
- ⇒ Stick should be 1” from the drumhead

Matched Grip vs. Traditional Grip

1. Matched grip has more **TRANSFER VALUE**, which means it can be applied to more instruments than traditional grip (timpani, mallets, drum set, etc.).
2. Matched grip is symmetrical, so if you’re right hand is better than your left (or visa versa), then you can mirror the attributes of the better hand to the worse hand.
3. Matched grip utilizes nine arm muscles in a linear motion, versus traditional grip’s arm four muscles in a rotary motion. More muscles and simpler motions (linear is better than rotary) equal better control.
4. Traditional grip is used on snare drum in some high school marching bands and in most drum corps. It can also be used as a technique for playing concert bass drum rolls.

Side-note: drum corps use traditional grip out of tradition (based on the old-style of side-mounted rope drums used in early military groups).

Matched Grip

1. Place the mallet diagonally across your palm with the butt-end of the stick to the side of your hand.
2. Gently wrap your fingers around the stick.
3. Place your thumb so that it is in line with the stick.
4. Turn your hand over and make sure there are no tight fingers that are “wrapped” completely around the stick.
5. The thumb and front two fingers create the **Grip Point**, while the back to fingers act like loose rubber bands.
6. The wrist initiates every stroke while the forearm stays relaxed and moves as a result of the wrist.
7. The arm will move opposite of the stick unless arm weight is needed.

The Power Triangle - Start Up, End Up

1. Start up (touching beads together lightly)
 2. End up (touching beads together lightly)
 3. Bounce the stick like a basketball, with relaxed fingers and a relaxed wrist.
 4. Make sure that the stick does not freeze for an instant either on the head or right above the head. Look for a “floating stick” an inch above the head, if you see this, then the stick is not rebounding correctly.
- ⇒ **Practice Tip:** make sure to **practice at a full height** and then apply these concepts to softer dynamic levels

Three Main Strokes

Full Stroke - starts up and ends up (“taps” are full strokes played at a soft volume)

Down Stroke - starts up and ends down

Up Stroke - starts down and ends up

Dr. Brad Meyer (www.Brad-Meyer.com) is a percussion artist and composer with an extensive and diverse teaching background. Dr. Meyer often tours to universities and high schools throughout the Southern and Midwestern states presenting recitals and workshops on topics such as electro-acoustic percussion, contemporary marimba, marching percussion, and world music. Brad is the Vice President of the Kentucky Chapter of the Percussive Arts Society as well as a member of the PAS's Technology Committee. Dr. Meyer completed his Doctorate of Music in Percussion Performance and Pedagogy of Music Theory certificate in 2011 under James Campbell at the University of Kentucky, where he also graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance in 2006. Brad is a proud endorsee of Vic Firth Stick and Mallets, Evans Drumheads, and Tycoon Percussion.

