

I Want To Play Drums!

The drum is a member of the percussion group, technically classified as a membranophone. They consist of at least one membrane, called a drumhead or drum skin, that is stretched over a shell and struck. It is struck directly with a player's hands or with some sort of implement such as a drumstick to produce sound.

Drums are the world's oldest and most widely used musical instrument. The basic design has remained pretty much unchanged for thousands of years. Most drums are considered "untuned instruments," however many modern musicians are beginning to tune drums to songs. A few such as the timpani, are always tuned to a certain pitch. Often, several drums are arranged together to create a drum set, which can be played by a musician.

The shell almost always has a circular opening over which the drumhead is stretched, but the shape of the remainder of the shell varies widely. In the western musical tradition, the most usual shape is a cylinder. Although, the timpani, for example, use bowl shaped shells. Other

shapes include a frame design, shortened cones like bongo drums, goblet shaped, and joined cones (talking drum).

Several factors determine the sound a



drum produces, including the type of shell the drum has, the type of drumheads it has, and the tension of the drumheads. Different drum sounds have different uses in music. For example, a jazz drummer may want drums that sound crisp, clean and a little on the soft side. A rock and roll drummer may prefer drums that sound loud and deep. Because these drummers want different sounds, their drums will be constructed differently.

In many traditional cultures, drums have a symbolic function and are often used in religious ceremonies. In the past, drums have been used not only for their musical qualities, but also as a means of communication through signals. The talking drums of Africa can imitate the inflections and pitch variations of a spoken language and are used for communicating over great distances. Throughout Sri Lankan history, drums have been used for communication between the state and the community. Sri Lankan drums have a history stretching back over 2500 years. Japanese troops used Taiko drums to motivate troops, to help set a marching pace, and to call out orders or announcements. Fife-and-drum corps of Swiss mercenary foot soldiers also used drums. They used an early version of the snare drum, carried over the player's right shoulder, suspended by a strap and typically played with one hand. The oldest known drums are from 6000 B.C.

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