

Head Care and Breaking in a Head

The drum builder will probably provide instructions on care and how to break in a head. Follow those directions.

Natural heads are skin. During dry winters drum heads can suffer just as humans do. You MAY wish to apply a small amount of a good quality moisturizer to the exterior of the head. The operative words are “small amount” and “good quality.” Don’t use a cheap watery product. Many players use a product called “Dubbin”. It’s a leather conditioner. It’s not all that easy to find outside of the western states. It is available through Amazon.com. Visit the Dubbin website for more information: <http://www.pappysdubbin.com/products.html>. I use a skin care product called Eucerine. That’s available in most drug stores.

The interior of the drum can benefit by the occasional application of a small amount of talcum powder. This helps your hand to slide around and reduces the noise of movement.

If your drum is new and has a natural head, the exterior may seem rough and scratchy. If that is the case, lightly sand the head using sandpaper of no less than 220 grit. Finer is better. A final sanding with 400 grit sand paper will polish the head. Then apply a small amount of moisturizers. If you have a custom made drum, this is probably NOT a problem.

If the drum has a bleached and treated head, it’s ready to play. DO NOT sand the head or apply any conditioner. Follow the instructions of the manufacturer.

If the drum is tunable, don’t over tension the head. A bodhran is supposed to have a low voice. Get the high pitches by momentarily applying pressure to the head with the hand inside the drum.