

Random Notes about the Bodhran

- If you want to use the cross bar for leverage when making tonal changes but find that it is too far from the head, go to the hardware store. Buy a length of foam insulation used to protect pipes from freezing. Put it over the cross bar. Secure it with electrical tape. Swimming noodles can be used too.
- If when you play a long session, the bone of your middle finger on your tipper hand gets sore, examine your grip. Make sure the tipper is resting where the fingernail joins the skin. If it is only on the side of the finger, the bone may get very sore.
- If you are going to buy a bodhran, but it from a builder or a store that understands Celtic music. If the bodhran on display is wedged in between electric guitars or is stuck somewhere among rock and roll drum kits, this is very probably the wrong store from which to buy your bodhran. The clerks may not know much, or anything, about bodhran quality, options or care.
- If the drum you are considering to purchase has a corporate logo or Celtic knot painted on the head, beware. It may be cool to advertise Guinness Stout or show off an intricately painted Celtic knot. But, do these emblems improve the sound or playability? Mostly these art-head drums are low-end drums. Buy a better drum and ditch the corporate adverts. If you want a pretty picture, buy a pretty picture.
- Having trouble getting the triplets to work? Try using a longer tipper. Try bending your wrist more. Try moving the tipper closer to the head.
- Tipper slipping or creeping in your grip? Put a rubber band on the tipper. Put tennis racket grip or drum stick grip tape on your tipper. Cloth based adhesive tape used in first aid supplies works too. Also handle bar grip for bicycles can work.
- Taping the edge of the drumhead eliminates rim reflections and overtones. Almost all high-end drum have a band of electrical tape around the drum of the drum. This dampens down the volume of the overtones produced in the drum head. It makes for a more concentrated sound. It also lowers the volume of the drum. To do this buy 1-1/2 inch wide electrical tape. Scotch 88 works well. Make two passes around the circumference of the drum. Apply it carefully!
- Drums need to be tuned. That's done by ensuring that the tension on the drumhead is the same all around the rim. Test for uniform tension by tapping on the drumhead near the rim. Tap one side. Then tap directly across the drum. If the tone is not identical in both places, adjust one of the tuners. Go all around the drum until the tension, as indicated by the pitch, is uniform. Drum tuners are available at a cost of around \$50.
- When tuning a bodhran use a crisscross movement. If you start with the 6 o'clock tuner, the next adjustment should be made at 12 o'clock. Then tune, say, 3 o'clock. Follow that by tuning at 9 o'clock. The point is to distribute the new tension on the head. Do not tune as though you were walking around the perimeter of a circle. As you tune, periodically press down on the head to distribute the tension.
- Having trouble with rhythm? Use a metronome and say aloud each beat of the measure: 1 AND 2 AND 3 AND 4 AND. Taping your foot may help too. And don't forget the mnemonics: for reels – watermelon ... for jigs – pineapple, apricot... for slip jigs – pineapple, apricot, tuna fish.