

Holding the Drum

- Sit in a straight chair without arms.
- Place the drum on the thigh of the leg opposite to the hand that will hold the tipper. For RIGHT-handed players the drum sits on the left thigh. For LEFT-handed players the drums sits on the right thigh. The head of the drum will face to the right for RIGHT-handed players and to the left for LEFT-handed players.
- Pull the drum toward you so that about a quarter of the drum is nestled up against your rib cage. Your non-drumming arm will drape over the drum. This will dampen the sound of the drumhead. This reduces the boominess and helps give the bodhran its characteristic sound. Lightly hug the drum.
- Place your non-drumming hand inside the drum and under any cross bars that may be present. How you rest your hand on the drumhead is a personal choice. That choice WILL affect the tone of the drum. A general position is to form the hand inside the drum into the shape of a “C”. The heel of the hand and fingers are on the drumhead. Many players start playing with only the heel of the hand in contact with the drumhead. You’ll need to experiment with hand position for comfort, dexterity and tone.
- Position your hand under any crossbars so that you can move your hand inside the drum without restriction.
 - For a single crossbar, point the crossbar over your shoulder
 - For a double crossbar, position the crossbar so that it forms an “X”. Do not position the double crossbar so that it form a “+” sign.
- Crossbars can be helpful when making tonal changes in the drum. It is possible to wedge your hand between the crossbar and the head. Use the crossbar as support to push on the drumhead.
- Some players remove the crossbars. For high quality drums, this is not usually a problem. However, less expensive drums may rely upon the crossbar to prevent the rim from warping. Most high quality drums are not equipped with crossbars.
- Standing to Play the Bodhran
Some performing players stand while playing. This requires use of a strap on the rim of the drum or thoughtful use of crossbars. Standing makes it tough to impossible to produce tonal effects in the drum. Standing while playing will limit the available playing techniques. If possible, sit to play.