

Snare Info Packet



The STMA Drumline uses top of the line Yamaha SFZ snare drums. These are the same drums used by many top drum corps. Each drum costs around \$500 each. Heads range from \$40 to \$50 each. Besides the guidelines listed below, use common sense when handling or using your drum.

General Care Guidelines

Resting Instrument-

Be extremely careful when setting the drum on an abrasive surface. There are many small parts on a snare drum that can easily be damaged. Additionally, do not set the drum with either of the heads facing down. Objects can easily puncture the thin snare-side head, which are very expensive.

Cleaning-

Be sure to check the drum often for dirt or sand. The many small parts of a snare drum and snare strainer can be damaged or worn out easily due to the abrasive nature of dirt and sand.

Other Notes-

Do not play drum with anything but your snare sticks. Similarly, do not play anything but your drum with your snare sticks. Though snare heads are made of Kevlar, they are easily damaged when struck by a damaged or incorrect stick or mallet.

General Tuning Guidelines

- Tune each snare strand to the same pitch using a bridge (stick or pencil) keeping tension screws mid-range
- Tune each batter-side tension rod to the same pitch while muffling bottom head
- Tune batter heads of each drum to same pitch (F#5)
- Tune each snare-side tension rod to the same pitch
- Tune bottom heads of each drum to same pitch (D5)
- Set collective snare tension adjustments to the threshold between tight and fuzzy

Technique

The following information is borrowed from the Gateway Indoor Snare Packet. While there may be minor tweaks throughout the season, the technique described here is a very good explanation of the technique we are trying to achieve for the STMA Drumline. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions.

Grip

Right Hand- The fulcrum point is located between the thumb and the index finger. This is the point from which the stick pivots in your hand. This pivot point should be located at the optimal balance point of the stick, which is usually found around 1/3 of the length of the stick when measured from the butt end. The rest of the fingers should be wrapped naturally around the stick. They should be loose and relaxed but can never leave the stick. In order to employ the fingers properly, the stick should lay through the fleshy part of your palm opposite your thumb. Lastly, the palm of your hand should not be flat to the drum (German grip) nor should the thumb be completely on top of the stick (French grip). The crease created between the thumb and the index finger should be turned to an approximate 30-degree angle. This offers the best benefits from both the German grip (full wrist turn) and French grip (easy engagement of the fingers).

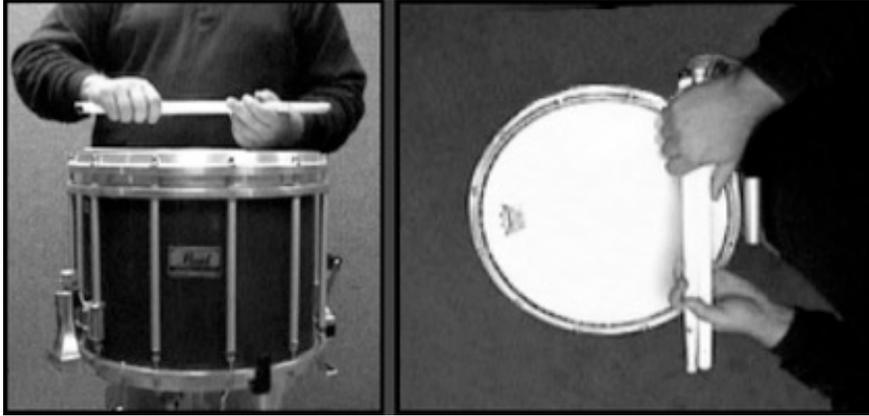


Left Hand- The fulcrum point is again located between the thumb and index finger, with the thumb sitting on top of the index finger between the first and second knuckle. This connection must always be maintained while the thumb and index finger stay relaxed. There are common tendencies to push down or flex up the tip of the thumb – avoid these by keeping the thumb relaxed. The stick will rest on the ring finger just past the first knuckle near the cuticle. The pinky should stay attached to the fourth finger in a relaxed position and the middle finger will rest beside the stick with the fingertip being slightly on top of the stick. Please be aware that the middle finger should simply be “along for the ride” and not used to generate a stroke by applying pressure in any way. All fingers must remain relaxed in a curved position at all times. Any unnatural straightening or flexing of the fingers simply causes unwanted tension that will ultimately inhibit your performance. As in the right hand, the palm should be turned at a slight angle. Mike McIntosh uses a good analogy: Your palm should be turned up enough so that if it were raining, water would hit your palm and drain off. If your palm is turned up too much, the water would collect – not being able to drain off. If your palm is not turned up enough, your thumb would block the water from even touching your palm.



Set Position

The set position is one of the most important yet underrated parts of playing in a competitive marching drumline. It is the first position the audience will see you in. For snare players, the set position is right stick in front of left, using the knuckles of your left pinky finger as a guide. The sticks should be in perfect alignment with each other, centered to your body and the snare drum and level with the ground.



Playing Position

A proper playing position begins with finding an appropriate drum height. This can be done using the left hand as a starting point. With your arms relaxed by your sides, raise your left hand from the elbow until your forearm is parallel to the ground. With your stick in your hand and the bead of the stick in the center of your drum, put the width of two fingers between the rim of the drum and your stick to establish the proper drum height. This will give the stick a slight downward angle with your wrist being higher than the bead, yet still allow the meaty part of the bead to make contact with the drum. Next, simply raise your right hand to the drum, matching the fulcrum point of the right hand to the fulcrum point of the left hand, making sure the stick angles down to the drum are the same. Be careful to match the actual fulcrum points and not the hands in elevation. When playing traditional grip, most of the right hand is on top of the stick and most of the left hand is under the stick so you will actually hold your right hand higher than your left to match the fulcrum points. Simply put, to generate the same sound from each hand, first each stick must strike the drum from the same pivot point.



The beads will always remain in the center of the head, resting a ½ inch apart and a ½ inch off of the head. It is absolutely essential for the beads to remain in the exact center of the drum at all times. If your sticks are not striking in the same location of the drum they will not produce the same sound hand to hand.

Looking down at the drum, the “V” created by the sticks should be approximately a 90degree angle. The same concept of symmetry used earlier to match angles will be used here as well. Again, the left hand makes a good starting point. Think of your left hand as a natural extension of your arm by keeping **a straight line from the tip of your thumb through to your elbow**, with your elbow hanging a few inches from your side. The half of the “V” your left stick creates should be mirrored by the right stick. Avoid any awkward bends in your right wrist by keeping your fulcrum point on a straight line through to your elbow as well. Please note that matching the right stick angle to the left will push your right elbow farther out from your body than your left elbow. Don’t take this too far however – you don’t want unnecessary tension in your shoulder and/or upper arm.

Basic Strokes

The following are the three basic types of strokes that you will use when playing snare. All combinations found in your music are built off of these basic strokes. Additionally, the last two strokes mentioned are really just rebound strokes, except for the starting and ending points are different—either high to low or low to high.

A. Rebound Stroke- Strokes that start at a given height and end at the same height

The player makes the initial effort to throw the stick toward the head with the drum naturally rebounding the stick back to the upstroke position. The key to playing this stroke is not restricting the rebound of the stick. The motion of the stick should never stop – it is always moving either toward or away from the drumhead. All fingers should remain on the stick at all times, but one should not hold the stick against the palm inhibiting the rebound. The arms, hands, and fingers remain relaxed, naturally moving with the motion of the stick. These will be further delineated into a full stroke (up to 24 inches) and a tap stroke (1-3 inches). The height of the rebound is controlled by carefully applying pressure with the back fingers.

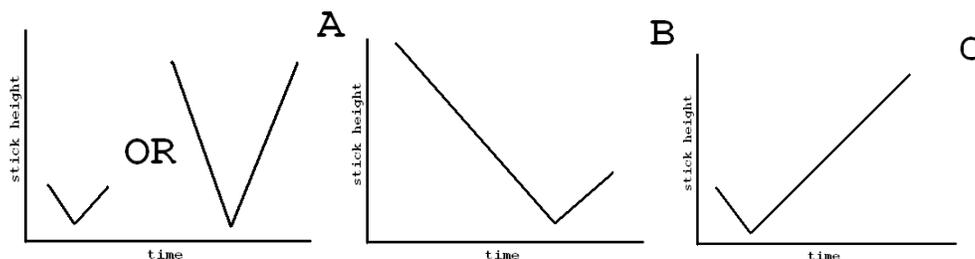
B. Down Stroke- A stroke that starts higher and ends lower

The player again makes the initial effort, but a split second after the stick impacts the drum, the player squeezes the stick slightly, thus constricting the rebound. It is important to release this tension immediately! If the player uses just a little bit of pressure with the back two fingers, it will be enough to stop the stick down in most cases.

C. Up Stroke- A stroke that starts lower and ends higher

The player deliberately places the stroke from a lower height (often 3 inches) and then pulls up with the wrist to provide a higher height for the next stroke. There is usually not enough rebound to get this stroke up where it needs to be after impact, so the wrist will be used to get the job done.

Here are some examples of these strokes on a graph of time versus stick height.



Special Types of Hits

Rimshots- Rimshots are special effect sounds produced by simultaneously striking the head and rim at the same time. The most common method is to strike the rim with the stick at the lower shoulder area, which is the portion of the stick about where the taper begins or ends. This is usually about the top 1/3 of the stick. A special type of rimshot is the keck. The keck is a rimshot with the bead hitting halfway between the center of the head and the rim, thus creating a higher, thinner sound.

Cross-stick- A cross-stick is a type of hit requiring the drummer to turn his left stick over (virtually a matched grip with the left stick backwards). He then places the bead in about 1.5 inches from the rim and lays the stick across the drum. The stroke is executed by using the bead as a hinge, then clicking the shaft on the rim. The sound produced is similar to a wood block/clave combination.

Listening Responsibilities

The listening situation within a snare ensemble is crucial. The listening duties are assigned throughout the line and each individual has their own responsibilities. In an arc situation, the pulse comes from the snare line and each section listens in to the center to play together as an ensemble. In the "arc," the each player listens in to the center snare. The players closest to the center snare have the responsibility to "listen in" towards the center snare player. This continues down the snare line, with each member "listening in" to the person next to him/her towards the center snare. They then play quality of sound and pulse that matches him/her. The other players in the drum line listen to the player next to them towards the snares, down the line. In certain drill sets on the street, this will change and will be addressed accordingly.

How You Feel When you Drum

As you play, you should always go for a relaxed physical sensation. The stronger a player you are and the more chops you possess, the more efficient you become, hence the more relaxed you are. Physical relaxation also pertains to your brain and state of mind. No matter what the musical or physical responsibility at any given time, and through practicing GOOD habits and utilizing the descriptors above, you are setting yourself up for success by having peace of mind and a strong mental approach to your playing which sets you up to be more consistent in playing clean. When you play, you should also be breathing comfortably. Learning to breathe naturally while playing anything regardless of difficulty will result in a more relaxed, healthy sound and approach.

Common Mistakes

Grip Flaws-

- The most common is the absence of all five right hand fingers on the stick at all times, usually dropping the ring finger and pinky from the stick by either dropping them down or sticking them out, especially when playing diddles. You need to develop finger control to get the auxiliary fingers (ring, pinky) to help with diddles.
- A common problem for left hand is that the index finger loses contact with the thumb. To correct this try putting something (like a penny) between the thumb and index finger and hold it there the whole time you are playing. Remember, there should be NO TENSION here, simply keep the two fingers in contact with each other.
- Tension - Keep the motion of the sticks in the wrists and fingers and out of the arms and upper body. With practice, you must learn to control the playing through finger dexterity, not through tension. Tension will hinder your playing more than help it.

Stroke Flaws-

- The main problem of this genre is that drummers hit the drum at angles other than perpendicular to the head. This is also called "chopping wood." To correct this make sure your palms are facing the ground, which more or less forces you to play the correct stick angles.
- Another flaw a drummer can have is inconsistent rim shots. Most rim shots should be concentrated at the middle or just above middle of the stick. Drawing a small line and trying to hit this line is a good way to develop this as second nature.

General flaws-

- Pulsing on rolls. A pulse is when the roll brings out certain hands commonly pulsing the eighth note, or right hand. Try to strive for evenness in the rolls.
- Another flaw is separation in diddles. A lot of drummers make diddles sound like buzz rolls. To correct this just develop a slow open stroke roll and incorporate the double-stroke into your diddle.
- Tension - Keep your upper body, neck, face, upper and lower arms relaxed at all times. Tension is caused usually while trying to play through difficult passages will only hinder your playing, having the opposite effect that you desire.

