

Stance and Posture

Whether sitting or standing, posture must be balanced and vertically erect. The head must be balanced above the spine, not collapsed forward. Leaning the head forward tightens the back, and other muscles, and limits the potential stick tip travel distance, resulting in increased effort to compensate for the reduced stick path. Look down with your eyes; do not tilt the neck and back forward. Elbows should be slightly extended out, not crunched inward. Failure to extend the elbows eliminates the shoulder from the playing equation and dramatically reduces your strength and range of motion.

The torso should be positioned square to the drum. The shoulders should be in a natural, laterally extended position, not collapsed forwards. For most people this means there will be a feeling of slightly pulling the shoulders back and expanding the chest horizontally. Feet should be approximately shoulder width apart and pointed straight ahead, no eversion (angled outward) or inversion (angled inward), with the knees slightly bent. The body weight should be placed on the balls of the feet; not the heels. This posture provides stability, freedom of motion, optimal blood flow through the legs, and optimum strength. It promotes tension (firing of muscles) that results from playing, not from long periods of holding yourself in dysfunctional positions.

Optimal body tension is achieved by periodically releasing accumulated muscle tension and breathing in an uninhibited manner. Some drumming is inherently physically stressful, so an acute awareness of tension and the need for releasing tension is critical in avoiding injury.

Drum height. The ideal drum height is determined in consideration of the angles between the upper arm, forearm, wrist, and hand. The point of stick contact should be slightly below the forearm, i.e. a slight downward bend in the wrist. This downward wrist bend helps facilitate the most efficient wrist and finger movements and the greatest range of motion.

Many percussionists are instructed to place the drum at, slightly above, or slightly below waist height. Although a simple instruction, it does not account for crucial factors such as the length of the torso or arms, and how they best function. Generally, I position the drum slightly below the elbow. Sometimes, I prefer to position the drum slightly higher for delicate playing and slightly lower for more aggressive playing. Most players are taught to set the drum parallel to the floor, which I generally prefer, provided it is high enough. If the drum is too low, it causes an upward bend in the wrist, upon stick contact, thus limiting the wrists range of motion.

A concert snare drum stand is necessary for most players if the drum is to be positioned high enough. Drum set stands do not go high enough for most players and a low drum position can create bad technical habits. If a concert snare stand is not available, the drum should be angled away from the player to help minimize excessive wrist bend and the drum stand put on blocks.