

SETTING UP THE DRUMS

A much overlooked aspect of a good player is their setup and how they make use of it. As you would already know, a player's setup is as definitive and unique as the person playing it - From small, four piece kits to mammoth double bass villages with tons of extras - That's great for them, but how do we setup a kit such that it benefits our own playing? Is it enough to merely setup like our favourite players and expect results?

The biggest factors to consider when determining how to best set up your kit are comfort and practicality. Most of the time as drummers we are going to be asked to play a variety of styles. (particularly those of us who are going to be doing the 'covers scene', playing songs from other artists) You don't want to have an extra kick drum or three extra toms just because you've 'always wanted them'. Its tempting, I know, but in that space we could have things that we genuinely *need* in our setup. You must aim for what you need - No more, no less. If you aren't sure what your musical direction is going to be just yet, I would suggest a standard five piece setup, consisting of a single kick drum, a snare, two rack toms and one floor tom. It doesn't really matter what the sizes of your toms should be (10, 12, 14 kits are just as popular as 12, 13, 16 kits these days) unless you feel physically restricted with bigger toms.

Placement of the drums is extremely important. It directly effects your comfort when you play. I have a rule:

Never change your posture to suit your drums or cymbals

Always change the location of your drums/cymbals to make them accessible to you. That's what all those adjustments on the stands are for!

THE BASS DRUM

Setup the bass drum and stool, placing the drum in a position you feel comfortable with. The front (resonant/logo side) of the bass drum should be slightly off the ground so that when the pedal is placed on the batter side, none of the bass drum will be touching the ground.

THE SNARE DRUM

Next, place the snare drum between your legs at a height that allows your stick to come down flat while playing with your back straight. Closing your eyes and getting someone to place the drum is a good way of finding the right height. I usually try to set it up so that I will consistently and naturally hit a rimshot. (a rimshot is where you purposely hit the skin and rim simultaneously) Usually, the snare will end up around navel height. I also keep the snare flat and level, but some people angle it forward or backwards – Ill let you decide what feels best for you.

THE RIDE

With your snare and bass drum now setup, go for the ride and hi-hats next. By moving your right arm outwards from the elbow, you should be playing over the bow of the ride cymbal, which the ride bell within easy reach. I keep the ride level as I believe it protects both the cymbal and the stand from damage by doing so. Structurally speaking though, it may be more accessible by angling it, so again I suggest experimenting, with comfort being the key.

THE HIHATS

The hi-hats are a little different. There is both the height and the position of the footplate to deal with. Keeping in mind where your bass drum is placed, sit on your stool and widen your legs to see where your feet naturally want to be. With the right foot on the bass drum, try to setup the hihat stand in a position that accommodates your natural foot placement. As far as height is concerned, you should be setting up the hihat cymbals so that standard playing will be striking the bow of the top cymbal and accents will use the shoulder of the stick on the edge of the cymbal. I normally have my hihats open around 1cm, but depending on your playing situation you may opt for more.

Now start to fill in the remaining gaps with your toms and extras. Everything should be in easy reach according to what gets used most.