

Approaching the Drum

The Sound:

Our technique in the Illinois Drumline is based on the goal of achieving a full and open sound. This comes from having a relaxed, weighted approach when striking the head, allowing both the stick and drum to resonate as much as possible on every stroke. Creating good sounds individually is imperative for our sound as a full line so that we can balance well and produce equal dynamics at equal heights.

The Feel:

The way we stay the most consistent is by understanding and becoming comfortable with how we feel behind the drum. As listening environments change, we can rely on the fact that we know how it feels to create a good sound.

In order to stay relaxed, we use the wrists as the primary driver for every stroke. Using the wrists to initiate allows the muscles in the hand to relax, and the fingers to only be utilized for pressure control. With less tension in the hand, the stick will be able to resonate and give an open sound on the drum.

In order to create a full sound, we allow the weight of the arm to be behind each stroke. This is created by allowing the arm to move in response to the motion that is driven by the wrists. The impact of this approach can be felt by trying shake water off of your hands, first with relaxed arms and then with locked arms. The locked arms version will likely feel slower or weaker, and overall less efficient.

The Setup:

Being properly prepared behind the drum is just as important as how we feel when we are playing. Striking the wrong part of the head, having tension in the body, or having the drum at the wrong height will all lead to an inconsistent feel or sound - especially if the stand and harness are not set up the same way.

The definitions for where the drum should be in relation to your body and where to play on the head will vary by subsection, however some principles are shared. Bead or mallet placement must be fully consistent both between each individual's hands and between each individual in the section in order to obtain a balanced sound. The body should feel relaxed, especially in the shoulders where tension can change how you carry the drum. Switching between wearing the drum and playing on a stand should not change how you feel while playing. Lastly, your posture should remain aligned, especially when playing on a stand where there is no weight keeping your body engaged.

Our individual goal will always be to make full and open sounds on the drum. The setup and the feel are our way of finding the most consistent success in creating those good sounds. Matching our approach will allow us to find a strong and balanced full battery sound.