

# Drum Maintenance

Your Black Stone drum requires care. This care may be minimal, or may be more extensive, depending upon the style of the drum and the climate in which it is stored. To better understand the differences in care, let's first understand the basics of a wood-frame and rawhide drum.

A: Wood & rawhide are natural materials that expand & contract, but at different rates. Dampness (humidity, rain, etc.) causes the rawhide to expand quite quickly, whereas the wood expands at a much slower rate. This causes the drum to go deeper in tone, or even go out of tune completely (flat). This is a normal occurrence and is actually quite good for the drum (see below). Dryness has the opposite effect. The rawhide tightens (shrinks) quite quickly, with the wood contracting at a faster rate than when it expands due to the pressure(s) exerted on the wood from the shrinking rawhide. The drum goes higher in tone as the skin gets tighter. Being in tune is a good thing, however over-drying can lead to cracked heads (rawhide) and collapsed frames.

***RULE # 1: Do not overcook your drum. Prolonged exposure to hot and dry conditions is a sure way to dry out and crack the rawhide head(s). This does not mean that you can't utilize moderate heat to tune up a damp drum, just don't over do it.***

B: Re-hydration of a drum's heads (rawhide) is critical for its' longevity. We consider water to be the best rawhide hydration agent, as it is natural and does not tend to "break down" the rawhide. As rawhide acts like a sponge and absorbs humidity (moisture) directly from the atmosphere, humid climates are good for a drum. Very little effort is required to care for a drum in humid climates. Arid climates, however, require the owner to re-hydrate their drum on a regular basis.

***Rule # 2: Moisture is good for your drum. If it is flat (damp) and you wish to play it, use moderate heat to tune it up. If you don't want to play it, leave it alone. It will tune up all by itself.***

C: Drums in arid climates need to either be stored in a humid environment, or re-hydrated on a regular basis. Wiping the head(s) with a damp cloth, misting the head(s) with water, or taking the drum into the bathroom while you shower are all good ways to accomplish this task. Single head drums require this attention more often than double head drums.

***Rule # 3: If you live in an arid climate, you must make sure that the head(s) are re-hydrated on a regular basis. Water is the best re-hydrator. If you are unable to water re-hydrate on a regular basis then, and only then, do we recommend you utilize some sort of leather preservative (which is usually oil based). Although we feel that the oil base products will break down the rawhide over time, we also feel that, compared to doing nothing, it will greatly extend the drum's life.***

D: Drum artwork by Vicki Trout is hand painted in acrylics, with a clear acrylic sealer applied atop the artwork as a "wear layer". Being acrylic, both paint and sealer expand and contract with the drum. This system makes the drum artwork resistant to wear. The soft, cloth covered beater provided with your drum is very forgiving to the artwork. Harder or more abrasive beaters are not quite so forgiving. The artwork is not scratch resistant.

***Rule # 4: With or without artwork, the drum is made to be played. If you want to enjoy the drum as artwork, that's fine----just know that you have a drum waiting to be played. If you want to play your painted drum that's perfectly fine also. Just remember that, no matter what type of beater is used, over time the artwork will show some wear. But that just means that the drum is being used for what it is intended, and who says a little character is a bad thing?***