

Drums: Keep the Beat

Voices do amazing things. They shout. They talk. They sing. Voices were probably the first way people made music. To make other kinds of music, people used objects around them. One of the oldest musical instruments found is a drum. This drum, which was made of clay, is more than 8,000 years old!

Most drums have a shell made of wood, metal, or clay. The shell is

covered on one or both ends with something that can be stretched tight. Early people used animal skins. Today, some drums have plastic coverings. When a covering is hit with a hand or a stick, it vibrates and makes a sound.

Some drums have additional parts that give them a particular sound. For example, the bottom covering of snare drums has strings stretched across it. The strings vibrate when the drum is struck, making a sound like metal balls bouncing.

The size of a drum changes the drum's sound. Large drums produce low sounds, like booms. Small drums

produce high sounds, like bops. The drum's sound can be changed by making the covering tighter or looser. Tight coverings make higher sounds. Loose coverings make lower sounds. When they are tuned to different notes, drums can actually play a tune.

Drums are used for many reasons. They provide rhythms for singing and dancing. Marching bands use them to help people step in time. Some religions also use drums.

Drums were often used by armies as well. Drums could be heard over long distances, so they kept an army together. Certain drum beats told soldiers when it was time to move. Their booming sound could also make enemies afraid.

Like early people, you can make a drum out of objects around you. You can bang on a can with a stick or bang your hands on a piece of wood. Soon, you may notice that people are dancing or singing along with the beat you create.

