

29"
F-C

STRIKE ZONE

if you only
need 2 drums,
these are usually
the ones you'll need

26"
Bb-F

STRIKE ZONE

23"
D-A

STRIKE ZONE

32"
D-A

STRIKE ZONE

A
G
F
E
D
C
B
A
G
F
E
D

Timpani are a
Bass Instrument
and written in
Bass Clef, which
looks like a fancy F
The 2 dots surround
the note F

What are timpani? Timpani (sometimes referred to as Kettledrums) are a set of drums tunable to a pitch. They usually come in sets of two or four, but there can be as many or as few as needed to perform. The most common sizes of timpani and their tuning range are: 32" (D-A), 29" (F-C), 26" (Bb-F), 23" (D-A).

Tuning: There are multiple tuning systems for Timpani, but you most likely have the 'Universal' pedal. It looks a lot like a car's accelerator pedal. In this case if you push the pedal forward, the pitch goes up, if you let the pedal back the pitch goes down.

STEPS TO TUNING:

- 1) **Obtain a reference pitch.** You're going to need to know the pitch you need in order to get the pitch you need. The most common ways to do this are with a bell kit or a pitch pipe. Later on you may learn to do it using a single note from a tuning fork.
- 2) **Match and retain that reference pitch.** Hum it, sing it quietly, do whatever it takes to get that pitch in yo' head.
- 3) **Match Pitch.** Bottom out the drum (drop the pitch as low as it will go) and strike it once. Push the pedal to increase the pitch until you the sound of the drum matches the sound in yo' head.
- 4) **Check against reference pitch.** Listen to your reference pitch again. Make sure it matches the drum's pitch. If it doesn't, make one or maybe two attempts to adjust the pedal to reach the pitch. If you take more than that you need to start over because your brain is dealing with too many different sounds to accurately match pitch.

Tips for tuning:

Always approach the pitch from below, meaning to always find the pitch by tightening the head, not by loosening. This locks the head in to pitch a little more securely and the drum is less likely to detune.

If you sing the pitch into a correctly tuned drum, the head will vibrate and 'sing' back to you. Try it. It's a really weird feeling.

Hitting The Drum: Most of the time you are going to use 'French Grip,' which is just like regular matched grip, but with your wrists turned so that your thumbs face the ceiling. When you strike the drum pretend that the mallet head is a tennis ball and bounce it off of the head so that it returns to the same height it was at. The best sounding strike zone is a few inches away from the rim, not the center like it is for most other drums. Center strikes on timpani will provide a 'dead stroke.'

Damping: Timpani ring, ...a lot. You need to muffle them when you have rests or else they're going to keep going. Get used to using your three bottom fingers to muffle the drum while you are still holding your mallet, and do your best to not make a 'tic' sound when you mute the drum.