

Replacing and Tuning the Snare Head

Terminology:

Tension Rod – a screw-like piece of hardware placed at even intervals around the hoop, allowing the tension of the head to be adjusted

Tension Rod Casing – attached to the shell of the drum, the casing is what the tension rod is screwed into

Drum Key/Ratchet – used to loosen or tighten the tension rods

Snare Head – the bottom head of a snare drum

Rim/Hoop – by adjusting the tension rods, the hoop applies pressure evenly to the batter head, thus tightening or loosening the tension on the head

Snares or Snare Assembly – the coiled wires or synthetic gut located under the snare drum, making direct contact with the snare head and producing the snare sound

Snare Strainer – attached to the outside shell of the snare drum, allows for the fine-tuning of the snares by adjusting the knob (snare strainer adjustment screw)

Snare Strainer Release – part of the snare strainer, this lever releases or engages the snares

Snare Butt – attached to the outside shell of the snare drum, on the side opposite from the snare strainer, and holds the snare assembly in place with a clamp that is tightened or loosened with 2 screws

Snare Gate – 2 narrow openings on the snare hoop (bottom rim) where the snare assembly passes through, allowing the snares to make full contact with the snare head

Tools Needed:

Drum Key or Ratchet

Towel

Petroleum Jelly

Cleaning Cloths

Ruler

Drumsticks

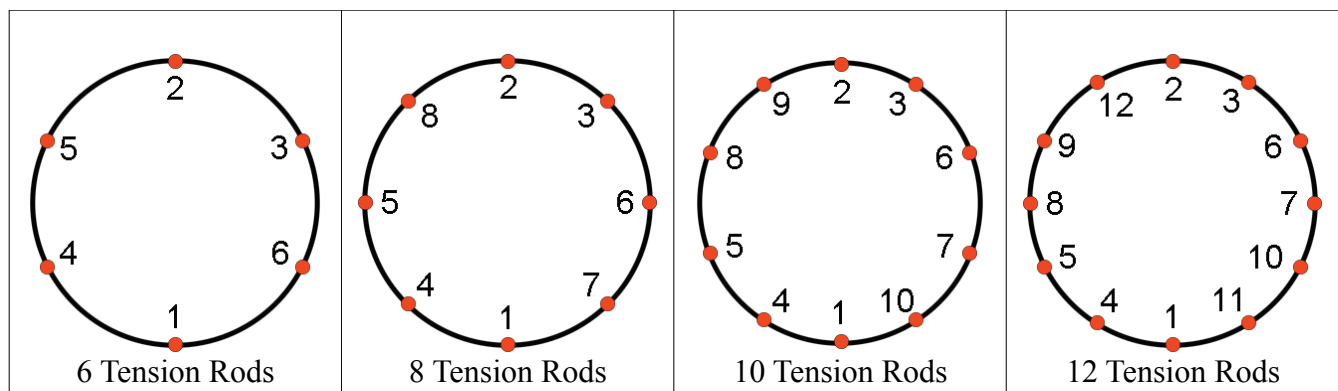
Part 1: Replacing the Snare Head

1. First, loosen the snares with the snare strainer (turn the knob counter-clockwise).
2. Next, disengage the snares with the snare strainer release (move the lever downward) so the snares are no longer in contact with the snare head.
3. Turn the drum upside-down. Loosen the two screws of the snare butt so the snare assembly comes free. There is no need to completely remove these screws.
4. Pull the snare assembly through the snare gate located under the snare strainer.
5. Begin removing the old head using either a drum key or ratchet. This is done by turning each tension rod counter-clockwise until each is free of the tension rod casing.
6. When all tension rods are free of the casing, lift the hoop away from the drum shell and set it on a towel. Remove the old head.
7. This is a good opportunity to wipe the inside of the drum, removing dust and debris. Wipe along the top of the exposed shell as well. For wooden shells, a dry cloth is fine. For aluminum or other metal shells, either a dry cloth or a cloth lightly dampened with water will work nicely.
8. Before going further, some general maintenance is required on the hoop and tension rods. You'll probably notice dust and debris on the inside of the hoop. This accumulates in the space between the head and hoop. Using your cloth, wipe the interior of the hoop clean.
9. Next, you will be lubricating each tension rod. This will ensure the rods turn easily when tuning the head and will prevent them from rusting. To lubricate a tension rod, stick it into a container of petroleum jelly and twist it once. Remove it from the jelly and wipe the excess off using your

- finger. (Be careful where you touch so the jelly isn't transferred to an unwanted surface.)
10. Place the new head onto the drum. If the head has a logo on it, place the head so the logo is located where you want it. Ensure the head is firmly seated over the top of the exposed shell.
 11. With the new head in place, set the hoop with tension rods on the shell over the head. Line each tension rod with the casing so that the tip of the rod sits at the opening of the casing.
 12. Manually tighten each tension rod until each is finger-tight. Ensure the distance between the bottom of the hoop and the top of each tension rod casing is the same. You can verify this using a ruler.

Part 2: Tuning the Snare Head

1. With the new snare head now properly replaced, and the tension rods finger-tight, you can begin tuning the head. To do this, choose a tension rod as your starting point. (I always begin with the tension rod closest to me.)
2. Turn the first tension rod 1 full turn using the drum key or ratchet.
3. Move to the tension rod on the exact opposite side of the hoop, giving it 1 full turn.
4. Next, move clockwise to the next tension rod, give it a full turn, then move across the drum to the opposite rod. Repeat Steps 2-4 until all tension rods have been given 1 full turn with the drum key. (See Diagrams).



5. Verify the distance between the bottom of the hoop and the top of each tension rod casing is the same.
6. Repeat Steps 2-5 one to two more times until any wrinkles at the edge of the snare head are no longer visible and the tension on the rods begins to display resistance when turning with the drum key. (As the tension rods enter the casing, some of the petroleum jelly may begin to accumulate around the point of entry. Wipe this excess off with your cloth.)
7. While applying tension to the snare head, you may hear it crack or even pop as it stretches. Don't panic! This is normal.
8. Using your thumb or fingers, press down on the center of the head to gauge the tension on the head. It should have a slightly loose feel to it. You can increase the tension to a desirable level by repeating Steps 2-4, but only turn the drum key 1/8 to 1/4 turn.
9. As the tension increases, lightly tap the head with a drumstick, listening for a consistent sound at all tension points around the head.
10. Do not over-tighten the snare head! Remember, it is thinner than the batter head and will break more easily if tightened too much.
11. When the desired tension and sound are reached, verify once again the distance between the bottom of the hoop and the top of each tension rod casing is equal.

12. You can fine-tune the head by lightly tapping it directly in front of each tension rod, approximately 1" to 2" from the edge of the head or the hoop. The sound should be very close to the same at each location around the head.
13. Reattach the snare assembly by pulling it through the snare gates, placing the strings or plastic in the clamp of the snare butt, and tightening the screws. Ensure the snare strainer release is upright and the snares are in full contact with the snare head. Don't confuse this with pulling the snare assembly tight across the snare head. You want room to adjust the snares with the snare strainer when tuning the drum.
14. Turn the snare drum over so the batter head is facing up.
15. Finally, begin tapping the batter head with a drumstick while adjusting the snare strainer adjustment screw (the knob on the snare strainer) until the desired sound is reached.
16. It may be necessary to increase the tension of the snare head slightly after a day or two. This is due to the head stretching and settling and is normal.