

❖ Instruments: Drums

When you teach percussion instruments it's important to make a distinction between the technique of an instrument from a particular culture and the use of that instrument for improv. When you learn a cultural song or rhythm, the highest priority is to play with precision and accuracy and using proper technique. When you engage in improv, the highest priority is creative exploration, however you will want to use the instrument's technique as a base.

Djembe is one of the most widely used hand drums in the world and the most commonly taught in North American schools. Below are the three fundamental notes of the djembe and some creative possibilities:

	Low/Bass	Medium/Tone	High/Slap	Textures
				Knock, scratch, flick, side, chop, rub, swirl, rumble, rain

Transferability: There are thousands of different hand drums and different techniques associated with them. Most have some form of low or high, or low, medium, and high notes. Anything with a low, mid, and high range can be used to replace the drums, such as language, body percussion, and other instruments. On the [Instrument: Drums 2](#) and [Instrument: Percussion](#) Facilitator Cards there is list of suggested instruments with high, medium, and low notes.

What to say: “When we play a cultural song, proper technique is the most important. When we improvise you are limited only by your imagination.”

NUGGETS:

HITTING OR PLAYING? When we *hit* the drum we are using power to force sounds out of the drum. When we *play* the drum we are in a relationship with gravity and the drum. When you let your hands bounce and control your force, you can unlock an enormous amount of sounds, protect your hands, and conserve your energy.

MATCHING THE MUSIC: When students explore the creative range of their instruments, have them take note of what music the notes and textures would pair well with. If the music is loud and fast, raindrops on the drum might get lost. If the music is soft and spacious, a bunch of slaps might drown out the other players.

“MY HANDS HURT”: Are you hitting or playing?