HOW TO CHOOSE DRUMSTICKS

If you want to drum, you need drumsticks. But which kind? There are a variety of factors that go into choosing a good set of drumsticks. Consider the following when you're shopping.

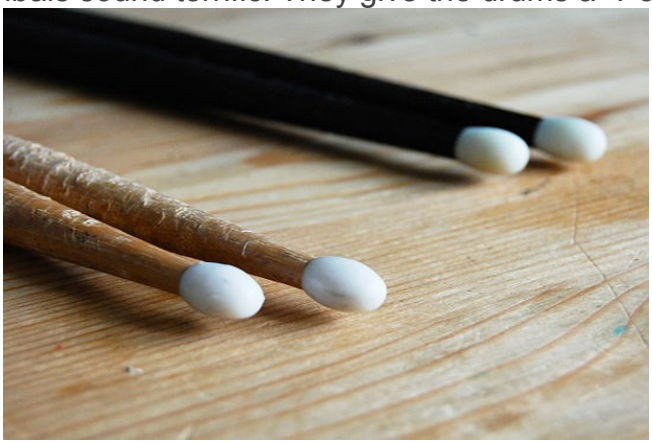
Choose the right wood.
Drumsticks are usually made of either maple, hickory, or oak. Each has a slightly different feel. The feel has to do with how the stick transmits or absorbs vibration and how much it flexes.



Choose the right tips.
The tips of drumsticks change the sound.



- Plastic tips make cymbals sound terrific. They give the drums a "Pow!" sound.



- Wooden tips (the most common), give drums a deeper, more traditional sound fit for jazz and older rock styles. These don't make the cymbals ring as much, or are considered not as bright.



Choose the thickness.
The thickness also changes the sound. Higher numbers represent thinner sticks, but thickness is not completely consistent between brands.



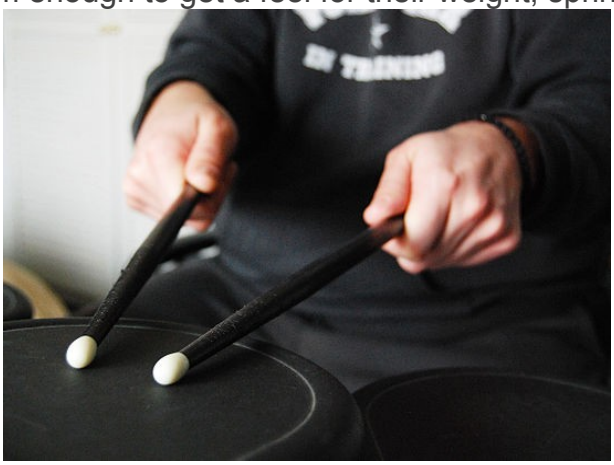
7As are thinner and lighter. They give more of a marching band sound on trap kit, although they would rarely be used for drum chops, which would favor a much heavier stick. They are often used by beginning jazz students.

•5As are slightly thicker than the 7A. They're good for Hard Rock & Heavy Metal, but are versatile enough to be used in just about any style of music.
•5Bs are thicker, more intense drumsticks. Often Used in Rock.
•2Bs are especially thick. Often used in Heavy Metal.

Choose your Brand.
There are many brands of good drumsticks to compare, maybe you could think about your favorite artist's preference in sticks when choosing your own. Here are the top brands with some of their endorsers.

- Ahead (Lars Ulrich, Rick Allen)
- Promark (Joey Jordison, Mike Portnoy)
- Vater (Chad Smith, David Silveria)
- Vic Firth (John Dolmayan, Vinnie Paul)
- Zildjian (Dave Grohl, Travis Barker)

Try them.
Especially if you're choosing a new kind of drumstick or a brand or size you haven't used before, ask if you can try them. Try them gently on a practice pad so that if you choose something else, the store can still sell them, but try them enough to get a feel for their weight, springiness, and balance.



TIPS

If you want to give your drumming a more orchestral or "epic" sound, you may try wrapping hockey tape around the part of the stick used to crash the cymbal. This gives the cymbal less attack, but more or less the same amount of sustain resulting in a crescendo-like sound. The difference in how you affect the envelope (that is, the attack and sustain), depends on how much you tape it up.

•Chances are you'll go through multiple pairs of sticks as you play. If you're on the fence about which kind you want, try a few different kinds along the way. You'll discover what's right for you.

•Always have some spare sticks to hand. Most companies that sell drumsticks will also provide handy storage devices that clip to most hardware. Get a few to fit on different parts of your kit, so you can keep sticks within arm's reach at all times.

•As always when playing drums, wear protection such as ear plugs. Snares in particular were designed to be extremely loud (to carry across entire battlefields), but are played very near YOUR head and ears. You want still to be able to hear music and conversations when you are 80! Many drummers start noticing hearing loss in their 50s and belatedly start wearing protection then. Don't let this happen to you!

•If you're in a band or about to be, ask your instructor, director, or section leader if there is a certain size or type of sticks you should have to be consistent with others in your group.

•Once you know what you want, buy a big pack of drumsticks. It really pays for itself.

•If you're wondering how some jazz drummers get that swishy sound on the snare drum and ride cymbal, you'll want to buy a pair of brushes. Brushes have retractable thin metal wires that are mainly used to provide a quiet backbeat, and sound completely different from a stick.

•If you play metal, you might want to get the 5Bs.

•Also, start out with a really fat pair of sticks (2a or larger) to build up wrist strength then drop down to a lighter pair when doing a gig. Eventually you can do away with the heavy pair.

•You may want to use different sizes or types for different styles of playing.

•When playing an intimate acoustic gig, you may want to try rods make from bundles of birch dowel or bamboo cane. They project better than brushes without being overwhemingly loud. Though they come in various thicknesses for this reason, don't play too hard with them or they'll splinter & eventually become unusable.

•Don't limit yourself to just wood. If you are a power player and break sticks frequently, first check your playing style to make sure your form is correct, then go check out graphite sticks. They aren't for everyone and they also have a different sound.

•Beware than when playing heavy music that the sticks will callus & blister your hands. Buy some special non-stick tape from your chosen brand that reduces the shock vibrations, & you can play for much longer without injury.

•Try out new innovations from time to time. Zildjian now offers a shock-absorbing rubber core, for instance.