

## Roping a drum!



The traditional method of roping a drum is handy for drums that have a conical shape or bowl shaped drums. If you are roping a cylindrical drum, you will need to find a way to attach pegs or fasteners to connect the rope to the sides of the drum.

### *Materials:*

*Natural skin drumhead at least two inches bigger than the drum all the way around.*

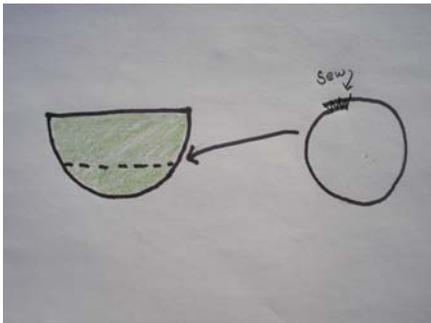
*The drum body*

*Non-stretchable cord/rope*

*Sewing machine or needle and thread.*

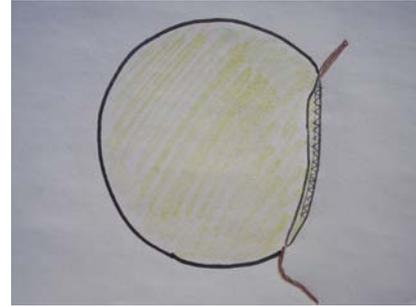
*Hole punch*

1. Sew a circle of rope the right size to fit around the bottom/middle of your drum to lace the drumhead to. There will be considerable tension on this rope, so make sure it is large enough to go around the middle of the drum but not so large as to be pulled up to the drum head.

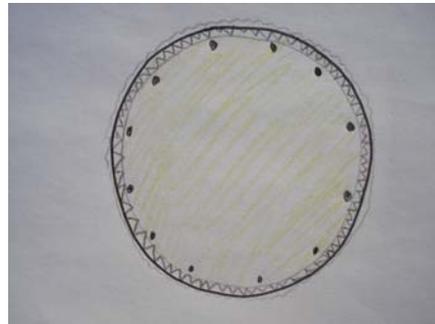


2. Soak the drumhead skin until soft and pliable, this may be only 15 minutes if it is thin skin. I have used thick rawhide that has taken several hours to soften. Always soak the skin in room temperature water, never, never hot. NEVER. You will begin to cook the skin and it will fall apart. Sew a piece of cord or cotton yarn/string into the edge of the drumhead. Fold the edge of the drumhead over a piece of cotton string and sew all the way around. Machine zig zag

stitch is pretty easy, it will sew it in securely. You may sew it by hand as well, use a thin but strong needle as the drumskin is tough stuff. The purpose of this cord is to reinforce the edge of the drumhead so it won't rip under pressure.



3. Use a hole punch to make holes evenly around the edge of the skin inside of and close to the cord reinforcement. You may do this while it is still wet and begin roping immediately. Or, you may let the drumhead dry out and punch the holes when the skin is dry.(if it is not too thick) I think it's easier to punch the holes when the skin is dry, but I've done it both ways. How many holes you ask? Well, that is up to you. More holes means you can really tighten the head, however, it is much more work, and much more time. I prefer to make a hole approximately every  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

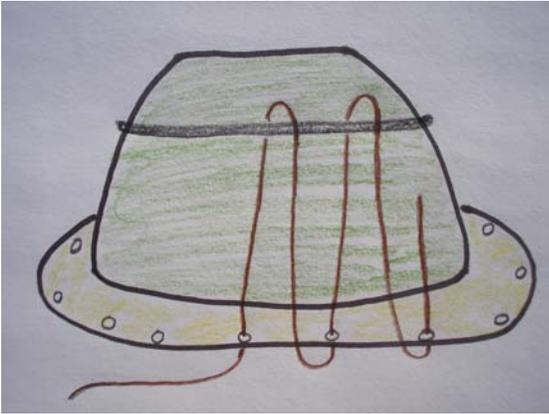


Begin Roping the Drum....

4. When the skin is soaked, soft and pliable, place it down on your table. Place the drum upside down on top of the skin. (As you rope the drum, remember to try to keep the skin centered on the drum.) Place the circle of cord over the bottom of the drum.

5 There are many fancy ways to rope a drum, we will keep it simple. Thread the rope under the drum head and up through a hole to the circle of cord and go under the cord, come up and head back down. The rope will be making a fairly logical overhand casting stitch. Continue all the way around the drum until you've looped through all the holes. Cut the rope so you have 6 to 8 inches of extra rope on both ends.

Fasten the two ends with a Bolen knot. This knot can be loosened and retightened.



6. Go around the drum starting at the knot and going in one direction and carefully and patiently tighten the rope until you get back to the knot. Adjust the knot to absorb the excess rope and retighten. Go around the drum continuing in the same direction and tighten again until you get to the knot again. Adjust the knot and continue going around and around the drum until it is the desired tightness. Using pliers will help you get a good grip on the rope. Be careful to keep the drumhead centered as you work, it can be easy to pull it off to one side if you are not careful.

7. When it is finished, the Bolen knot is just fine to leave it with. It will keep the rope tight. If at sometime in the future you need to retighten the drum head, the knot can be easily loosened so you can resoak the drumhead and retighten.

8. Leave the drumhead to dry for 24 to 48 hours. Do not tap on the drum head or attempt to play it before it is thoroughly dry, you will stretch and loosen the drumhead. Resist!! Be patient.

9. Ornaments, baubles and beads may be easily attached to the ropes on the drum for decoration. Drawing designs on the drumhead itself is also common. Pencil in a sketch of your design then carefully use ink and brush for the permanent design.