



## TUNING YOUR NEW DRUM

When you're a beginner, it's hard to tell if your Djembe is in tune. You need good technique on the basic strokes to be able to judge tuning, and good technique takes time to develop. The sounds of a Djembe are also extremely complex. It takes a while to learn to analyse those sounds and hear subtle differences. So your ability to tune a Djembe will naturally improve as you gain experience and get familiar with your drum.

In the meantime, you might want to have your teacher or another experienced player tune your Djembe for you.

The goal of tuning is to get the drumhead to a level of tension where slaps, open tones, and bass strokes all sound good. If the head is too loose, it will be hard to get a crisp slap. If it's too tight, the open tone may get choked and the bass may lose its bottom. Beyond this, tuning is a matter of personal preference. It's your drum. You're the one who's going to be playing it. So the most important thing is that it sounds good to you.

If you've got a traditional Djembe that's tuned with ropes, there are many different ways of tuning it. All are confusing at first and a little hard to explain. We've picked the method we like best and that's what we'll be explaining to you. Our explanation will make the most sense if you've got your drum right in front of you and you follow along with each step.

The process of tightening with ropes is called pulling a diamond because when one rope is pulled over another it creates a diamond shape. To get ready to pull a diamond, the first thing you need to do is find the loose end of the rope on your drum. If it's wrapped around the base of your drum then unwrap it. If it's threaded behind ropes, unthread it until it's coming through the center of the last pulled diamond.

Now check to see which direction you're going to be pulling. If you're heading to the left with your next diamond, refer to the first diagram below. If you're heading to the right, skip to the second diagram:

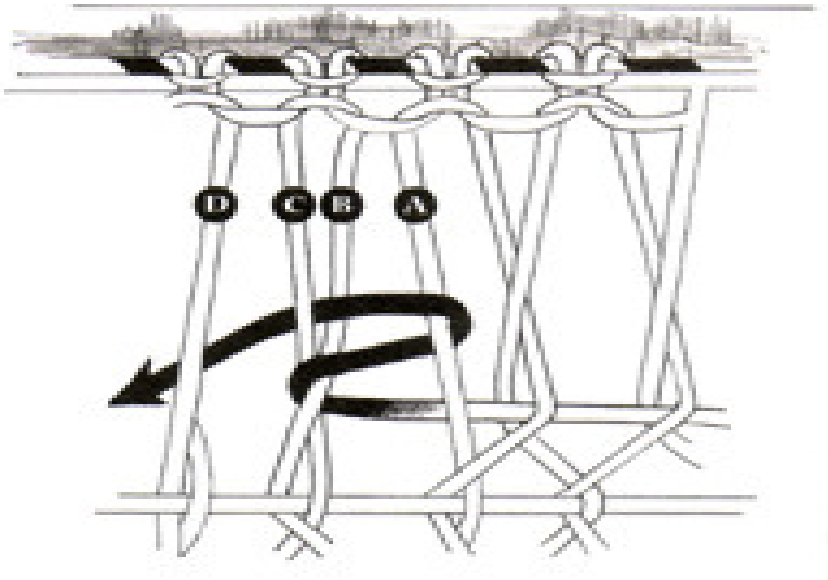


Diagram 1 – heading left

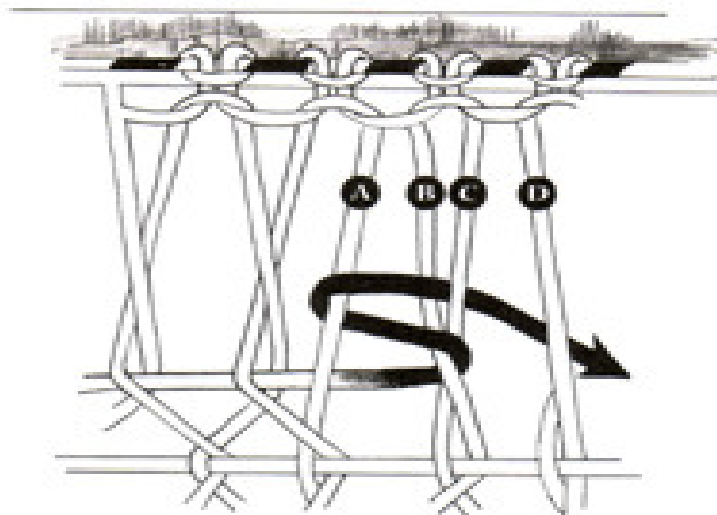


Diagram 2 – heading right

The rope pattern in these illustrations is called the Mali weave. Here's the formula for creating it: under 2, over 1, under 1, over 2. The illustrations above indicate an additional step of "under 2," which keeps your first diamond from coming loose after you've pulled it and becomes the first step towards creating the next diamond.

Now let's take it step at a time.

Under 2: Take the loose end of the rope and run it behind the next two vertical ropes, ropes A and B. If it's hard to get behind a vertical rope, use a screwdriver to hold it away from the drum.

Over 1: Bring the rope back over rope B, so you're heading in the opposite direction.

Under 1: Run the rope behind rope A.

Over 2: Bring the rope back over ropes A and B, heading in the original direction. Pull the rope down towards the bottom of the drum until it's horizontal.

Under 2: Run the rope behind the next two vertical ropes, ropes C and D.

Now you're ready to pull the diamond. Lay your drum down on a surface where it won't get scratched, with the base of the drum towards you. Then wrap the rope around a sturdy stick or a hammer so it won't dig into your hands when you pull. Now sit down and brace the drum with your feet. Then lean back and pull the rope out and down towards the base of the drum. A diamond will magically appear. And because you've run the rope behind the next two vertical ropes, your diamond won't come out.

Some drummers believe it's important to pull a whole row at one time so there's even pressure on the head. If you want to get even pressure on the head without pulling so many diamonds, you can pull a diamond at every other pair of vertical ropes or even every third pair.

To see visual demonstrations of Djembe tuning visit [utube](#) and search Djembe tuning.