



Drummer's Buyers Guide

Here are some key questions every drummer should ask before purchasing a used/player-grade kit or snare drum.

- **“Are the shells out-of-round?”** - This is usually caused by the drums being stored in a bad environment for a VERY long time. (i.e. - extreme humidity, water damage, extreme heat/cold, etc)
 - **“Yes.”** - Out-of-round drums are pretty much unplayable.
 - **“No.”** - You’re in the clear.
 - **“I don’t know. How do I check?”** - Remove the hoop and see if the drumhead wobbles or sits flat on the drum. You can measure the drum's diameter all the way around.
- **“Are the bearing edges damaged?”** - If the bearing edges are cracked, chipped, or uneven, this could cause problems in tuning and overall sound.
 - **“Yes.”** - Minor bearing edge issues aren’t a deal breaker. If the edges are bad you can have them re-cut by a professional, but this can be costly.
 - **“No.”** - Great!
 - **“What’s a bearing edge?”** - The bearing edge is where the drum heads make contact with the drum shell. Run your finger around the bearing edge and feel for dips, cracks, etc.
- **“How’s the wrap? Is it bubbling or cracked? Seam separating?”** - This doesn’t affect sound, but it’s something to look out for. This comes down to how nice you want your drums to look.
 - **“Yes.”** - Honestly, this isn’t a deal breaker. Older drums will have scratches, chips, and/or small dents in the finish. On the other hand, sometimes really bad cosmetic issues lead to deeper problems; this is where you check the roundness of the shell and the condition of the bearing edges.
 - **“No.”** - Awesome!

Non-deal breakers

- **Hardware** - It doesn't hurt to ask if all the hardware is original, has been replaced, or if any has been added.
 - **Hoops** - They should be in round and flat. If you do notice a dip in the hoops, this might be an indication that the drum has been dropped, so check the edges.
 - **Lugs and T-Rods** - Pitting and flaking will occur on older drums, especially cheaply made ones like MIJs (Made in Japan). I wouldn't worry too much about this since they can be cheap to replace, unless you want to go with era-correct hardware, which can be costly.
- **Snare drum** - If you are looking at purchasing an older snare drum, I would recommend asking about the throw off. Make sure it works as it should. If it's been replaced, ask if new holes were drilled or if they used existing holes.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - **Budget** - If you have a few hundred dollars, you might have to compromise on a few things. If you have more than a few hundred, with a little patience you can find a great deal on used drums.
 - **Where to look** - Shopping local has its benefits. Check your local drum shop, Facebook Marketplace, and Craigslist. This way, you have the ability to touch and hear these drums before taking them home.

Summary

This guide is a tool to help you navigate purchasing used drums. I think it's important to ask these questions so you know what to expect when you set them up. If you can't check out the drums I would recommend asking for pictures of all perfections and imperfections. I would highly suggest you ask these questions when purchasing drums on Craig's List, Facebook Marketplace, and sales with little to no description. Drum shops usually do a good job with adding descriptions on their sites. You are about to make a personal investment, so questions should be welcomed.

I would recommend joining a community of drummers on Facebook who love vintage drums. There are plenty of groups with welcoming members who are willing to answer any questions you have. There is also the [Vintage Drum Forum](#) you can join. Just because a post has the word "rare" doesn't mean it should cost you an arm and a leg. Being in a group with like minded drummers will help ease "buyers remorse". Don't pull the trigger on the first thing you see without doing your homework.

I hope this guide helps you get the drum kit or snare drum you deserve. Happy drum hunting!

- Edwin Rivera III