



Tuning

A few notes about tuning a didgeridoo.

No two didgeridoo's sound the same. So if you are making a didge and trying to create a particular sound, not only will you need to tune the instrument to achieve this. Everything you do to the wood will affect the sound, this page helps sort out what's what.

From when the clamps are removed from gluing the halves together I regularly and continually play the didge to assess any change in sound. When it sounds good, STOP. I have made didgeridoos that have been so near to sounding fantastic but due to an insatiable urge to make it sound better, the quality of sound was completely destroyed, and as I have found (on several occasions) to my cost it is very difficult to add the wood back on again afterwards. So I repeat, when you are happy with the sound STOP.

This is the weird thing with this musical instrument, there is no base or standard sound. Two didgeridoos in the same key, made with the same wood, at the same time, with the same dimensions will sound differently. The sound produced may be accurate as far as playing a particular note is concerned, however, the timbre, resonance, depth of sound may be different. Another factor to consider is the human being playing the instrument. What and how I play may sound radically different from another person playing the same rhythm. The sound that comes out of the didgeridoo derives from the sound we put in and as we all put it in differently the resulting sound will be different. Therefore I try to aim for what I consider to be a good quality sound, and through making didgeridoos again and again this awareness improves.

This is why, with each didgeridoo I make, I try not to rave on about how they sound. Firstly I don't like being egotistical with my work, and secondly I may like the sound, whereas others may not, and vice versa. What I try to do is provide examples of the sound and let the listener decide.

Having said all that and getting on my soap box, there are a few basic principles that can assist in the making of a didgeridoo.

- **The longer it is, the deeper or lower the sound will be.**
- **Shorter didgeridoos mean the pitch or key will be raised.**
- **The wider the bore, the lower the pressure, the lower the resulting sound.**
- **The wider the bore the harder it is to blow overtone notes.**
- **Thinner didgeridoos tend to have greater backpressure making overtone notes easier and faster more percussive rhythms can be played with greater clarity.**
- **Widening the bell makes the pitch rise and a narrower bell will lower the tone.**
- **The variety or species of wood will also affect the sound. For example, I have consistently found that didgeridoos made with Silver Birch produce a softer sound than that of, say, Yew.**



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