

Chapter 4: Playing Positions

Bongos are commonly played in either a seated or standing position. Before you start to play or practice, take some time to adjust your equipment to fit your body. If you're using a seat, make sure it's at a height that allows for natural arm movements and good posture. If you decide to stand, adjust your bongo stand so it holds the drums at a height that encourages good posture and facilitates proper technique. By adjusting your equipment before practicing or performing, you form good playing habits and minimize the risk of injury.

Sitting

The bongos are traditionally played in a seated position with the drum placed between the legs. This may seem a little awkward at first, but I've discovered some ways to make playing in this manner more comfortable. Here is the key: Place the small drum on your left thigh above the knee, and the large drum on your right calf below the knee. This way, the bongos are locked into place and you don't have to use so much leg muscle to hold them.

The angle places the hardware in alignment with your legs so you won't feel it as much as when holding them parallel to the floor with the tension rods digging into your thighs—ouch! I also recommend using a standard drum throne, a backless stool, when playing in a seated position because it can be adjusted to various heights and the tripod base provides ample legroom.

An option for sitting without holding the drum is to use a short stand that holds the bongos at a comfortable height, such as the *Sienta* bongo stand from Peripole-Bergerault, Inc.



Standing

If you're playing a variety of drums and percussion instruments in one setup, or you prefer not to sit and hold the drums between your legs, you may place your bongos on a stand.

Stands allow you to place your drums at various heights and at different angles. They are particularly useful in classroom settings where the drums are shared by several students, or in drum circles where standing may be preferred to sitting. They are also useful when playing the bongos in conjunction with "standing" drums such as timbales and djembes. Some conga stands have bongo stands built right in. Check with your local music store to see what's available.

